

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 3: 21-33

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue reading Luke chapter 3, verses 21 to 33.

Verse 21 a: "When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized;"

In the previous section Luke spoke about some deeds of John the Baptist; next he turns to the ministry of John the Baptist. All the people came to John to be baptized, and Jesus also was baptized—of course, baptized by John the Baptist. Luke records it very concisely, without any description or explanation. If we read Matthew's Gospel, the account is quite different.

In Matthew 3:13 it says that Jesus came to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. John knew Jesus, so John tried to prevent Him, saying: "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" Because John recognized Him as the coming Messiah, the King; John felt he was not worthy to baptize Jesus.

Actually, Jesus did not need to be baptized, because the baptism John preached was a baptism of repentance. When people have sin and recognize their own defilement and uncleanness, they come to John to be baptized. Therefore John tried to prevent Jesus. Jesus had no sin from beginning to end, and since Matthew is presenting Jesus as King, he records this section. "But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.'" Jesus was determined to be born under the law and to fulfill every regulation of the law under the law, so that He could redeem the people out from under the law.

But Luke records Him as an ordinary person; not only ordinary, but a perfect person. Because He was ordinary, He was baptized just like the others—the people were baptized, and Jesus also was baptized; yet because He was perfect, there is the following record in Luke.

Verse 21 b: “...while He prayed, heaven was opened.” (Luke 3:21b NKJV)

When Jesus received the baptism of John the Baptist, Jesus opened His mouth to pray. The other Gospels do not record this. We must thank Luke; his record lets us know that at the time of His baptism He prayed to the Father, and while He prayed, heaven was opened—this is actually a very good practice.

When each one of us receives baptism, if we can learn from Jesus and, based on our limited experience and with a thankful heart, be willing to open our mouth to pray to the Father, then heaven will open to us. What does it mean for heaven to open to us? It means we begin the spiritual journey of following the Father. Before this we were busily occupied with earthly things; but from the day we are baptized, we are willing to pray to the Father; from today onward we are willing to set our mind on things above. While Jesus prayed to the Father, heaven was opened.

Verse 22: “And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, ‘You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.’”

Although Jesus was willing, like an ordinary person, to fulfill all righteousness and receive the baptism of John the Baptist, when Jesus prayed to the Father, the Father had to answer; therefore the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came from heaven saying: “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.” This voice is the voice of the Father God.

In this short verse we see the operation of the Father God, the Son God, and the Spirit God together. The Son God, in human identity, received the baptism of John the Baptist; the Spirit God descended like a dove—the dove in Scripture is used to describe the gentleness, meekness, and simplicity of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus Christ proved that He is the Anointed One anointed by God with the Holy Spirit. Then the Father in heaven spoke with a voice: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Jesus went through thirty years of human living; in those thirty years He always maintained His human position; in those thirty years He passed through many trials, proving that He was a complete and perfect man. Therefore at the time of His baptism the Father loudly declared: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Next, Luke turns his pen to the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Verse 23: “Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli,”

When a priest could begin to bear responsibility, it was also the time Jesus began His public ministry. Thirty years old—according to human reckoning, He was the son of Joseph. Luke knew very clearly that Jesus was conceived by Mary through the Holy Spirit, but nominally Joseph was His father. Therefore he says “as was supposed,” or according to human law, He was the son of Joseph; in reality He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary. The fact that Jesus was conceived in the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit is recorded very clearly and precisely in the Gospels.

Only two Gospels have genealogies: Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 3. In Luke’s record it says “being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph”; in other words, according to human law Jesus was reckoned to Joseph. In Matthew 1:16 (NKJV): “And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.” This is also very clear: nominally it seems Joseph held the position of Jesus’ father, but in Matthew’s record it only says Joseph was the husband of Mary, and Jesus who is called Christ was born of Mary—possibly only a nominal father-son relationship with Joseph.

Another thing we need to be clear about is that in Matthew 1:16 Joseph's father is Jacob, because it says "Jacob begot Joseph." Matthew's record, like all Old Testament records, is "who begot whom"—the father-son relationship is unquestionable. But in Luke's record it is the opposite: it starts from Jesus and goes backward, so Jesus, according to human reckoning, is the son of Joseph, and Joseph is the son of Heli. We know Joseph's father is called Jacob, so Jacob begot Joseph—no problem there.

But in Luke's record Joseph is the son of Heli. Although he is the son of Heli, he may not be begotten by Heli; he could be an adopted son. Of course, according to the study of commentators: we know Mary's father was called Heli, therefore Joseph was the son-in-law of Heli, and a son-in-law is nominally also his son. So the entire genealogy in Luke records the family line of Mary. Because from Joseph it connects to Mary's father Heli, and then from Heli it traces upward. Next is a series of names; we will read them through:

Verses 24–31: "...the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janna, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Semei, the son of Joseph, the son of Judah, the son of Joannas, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmodam, the son of Er, the son of Jose, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David,"

We will pause here for now. From Mary's genealogy, from Mary's father Heli all the way back, it traces to Nathan the son of David the king. If we look at the corresponding genealogy in Matthew, Matthew traces downward from Abraham: Abraham to David, to verse 6, Jesse begot King David, David by the wife of Uriah

begot Solomon, Solomon begot Rehoboam. David had many sons; among David's sons the one who inherited the throne was Solomon.

Therefore Matthew's genealogy records Joseph's line, and Joseph's line ultimately traces to David, but through the line of Solomon—the kingly ruling line. Matthew's genealogy is very clear: three sets of fourteen generations. The second fourteen generations are from David to the deportation to Babylon, that is, when the kingdom of Judah fell; there it records fourteen generations. After the deportation there was no more throne; from the deportation to Babylon until Joseph the husband of Mary, another fourteen generations, totaling forty-two generations.

But from Mary's side, from Heli backward to King David, though also of royal descent, they were not in the kingly line. Luke spent much time carefully examining the genealogy of Mary's family. He simply wanted to prove that Jesus Christ was a very real human being; from Mary's genealogy all the way back, it can also trace to King David.

For Luke we should truly offer our thanks and worship. He clearly records that Jesus is the Seed of the woman—that is, the last Adam. He is a complete and perfect man, able to take the way of the cross for humanity. He is also the beloved Son of the Father; when He prayed to the Father at His baptism, the Father declared: "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased." Because He came to earth according to the Father's command and lived thirty years of perfect human living, in Him no blemish could be found; therefore He was prepared to begin His earthly ministry.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. For our sake You personally became incarnate, from the infinite God becoming a finite man. In all limitations You lived out a perfect human life. This preparation was for one day to take the way of the cross for us. We are truly full of gratitude; because of Your sacrifice we can receive the salvation that comes from the Father. Bless my life today. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.