

Heritage Part 1

Each day as I look around me at this generation that we live within, and are very much a part of, it seems that the vision that most of us hold is of a very short-sighted and immediate nature. And that seems to be so not only for the unbelieving world, but also for many of us Christians. We seem to live as if the person we are and the behavioral matters and conduct of our daily lives are only of an immediate nature and are very private to ourselves, "our own business", having little or nothing to do with anyone else, except perhaps some of our close family members.

But is that so? Is that so? Are we each, as the saying goes, "an island unto ourselves"? Or perhaps instead, does the person that we are, and the matters and conduct of our daily lives today have an impact on others. And not only on those closely around us today, but also upon our children, and even our children's children yet to be born.

And further, does who we are, and the matters of our daily private lives become a "heritage" that we pass along to the next generation and perhaps even many generations yet to come.

In our scripture passage for today here in the Book of Luke, we find that God thinks that it does, that who we are and the "life-style" that we live does become a "heritage" that we pass along to the next generation. And yes, it can have a profound effect on each of those sons and daughters who will follow along in our genealogical line, even for many, many generations yet to come.

Here in these words of our scripture passage, the Holy Spirit has given us the "heritage" of our Lord Jesus. And as we read and study these words carefully, we quickly find that we really are not "an island unto ourselves", that by God's design, the "heritage" that each of us receives and then passes along to the next generation is indeed of great importance.

So, for that reason, I would like for us to take the time, three, even perhaps four of these messages, to dig deeply into the significance and the meaning that God places on this matter of "heritage", beginning here with these words given about the "heritage" of our Lord Jesus, the step by step impact that each previous, and then future, generation contributed to who Jesus was as He came in His human form to carry forward the mission that the Holy Trinity had designed for Him long even before the worlds began.

And then also, perhaps we will examine the special impact that our own “heritage” can have upon us in our generations, those past generations, and also those generations yet to come.

And may I say at the onset, that this concept of an impact that past generations can have upon future generations, is for me, one of the more mysterious and sometimes confusing concepts given within these scriptures.

So then, with that being said, please turn with me to the Book of Luke, chapter 3, beginning in verse 23, and let’s read about the special “heritage” of our Lord Jesus. And yes, this reading can seem a bit repetitive, but it is of great importance, else God would not have put these words in His precious Book. Listen!

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, ²⁴ the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janna, the son of Joseph, ²⁵ the son of Mattathiah, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, ²⁶ the son of Maath, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Semei, the son of Joseph, the son of Judah, ²⁷ the son of Joannas, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, ²⁸ the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmodam, the son of Er, ²⁹ the son of Jose, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, ³⁰ the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim, ³¹ the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David, ³² the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, ³³ the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, ³⁴ the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, ³⁵ the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, ³⁶ the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, ³⁷ the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan, ³⁸ the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. (Luke 3:23-38)

We know from these scriptures that the Hebrew people placed a great deal of significance and reliance upon the genealogy of a person. Their bloodlines brought with them inherited rights and responsibilities, passed along from generation to generation. Property ownership rules and family responsibilities

were ingrained within the bloodlines of each tribe and could not be violated by anyone within the individual tribes, nor could those rules be violated by other tribes. Genealogy and their adherence to it was utmost within their culture.

And, as we will see as we study these words, God Himself is intimately involved within the lives and behaviors of each person. And not only as they would live within their generation, but also the impact that their lives and behaviors would have upon the next generation and the next, and the next.

Simply put, God places both great worth and strong consequence within the genealogical makeup of each individual person, especially as it would concern these, His chosen people, Israel. And He clearly expresses to His people that He will hold each person accountable for their responses to Him both with great “blessings”, but also with “strong consequences” of “curses”.

We read about that accountability in the Book of Deuteronomy, words given to the Hebrew people during some of the earliest days of their existence as a nation. Here, beginning in verse 15 of Deuteronomy 30 we read.

¹⁵ “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, ¹⁶ in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; ²⁰ that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.” (Deuteronomy 30:15-20)

These words are clear and plain, and they were not just for the people of Israel in that day, they clearly were also for the generations of Hebrew people yet to come. But please know that these words are also for you and me, in our day, words clearly given, and God used them as His guide for governing all the generations spoken about here in this lineage of the Lord Jesus.

And again, as we will see as we study these scripture passages, the beliefs, the lifestyles and the behaviors of each generation clearly had an impact on the next generation that followed.

One very clear illustration of God's blessings and curses being passed along through generational bloodlines is seen in the contrast between the descending generations of the two sons of Abraham, those of Isaac and those of Ishmael.

God promised to bless both of those men and to bless their descendants, and He did, but in very different ways. Ishmael and his Arab descendants received temporal blessings. And that can be seen even today in the enormous wealth that is held in many of the countries of the Arab world.

But Isaac's blessings were to be far greater in that his blessings would be spiritual and eternal. And that too can be seen even today, evidenced even by you and me sitting in this church today worshiping the Lord. As believers, we are sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

But again, curses were also a strong element of God's generational covenants. And as any of the bloodlines committed detestable sins before God, they experienced His curses, many of which would follow down through many generations. Recall those words within the Ten Commandments,

For I, the Lord your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, ¹⁰but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Deuteronomy 5:9-10)

Note, and thankfully so, that within those words is the covenant promise of "future blessings". And one of those "future blessings" would exceed all the others, a blessing that would come through Isaac's bloodline that could wipe away all curses, all inequity, all sin. Out of Isaac's bloodlines would come a Savior, Jesus the Messiah. And He would bring salvation to anyone who would call upon His name, even and including the sons of Ishmael.

Again, yes, genealogy was very important to God. It was the means by which He chose to pass along both His covenant blessings and His covenant curses. And yes, as we can clearly see, God has a special place in His Heart for His own beloved children, Israel.

Our American culture is not nearly as attuned to the value and consequences of generational bloodlines as those we find here in these scriptures. We do

follow some of the practices of “inherited” family “rights”. Sons and daughters have inherited rights to family properties, and we carry forward our family name.

And the doctors tell us that medical conditions are passed along from generation to generation. But we don’t go much beyond that with generational concerns.

Our nation and our culture are so self-centered that if we cannot see a perceived immediate value to our own family or to our own pocketbook, we give little more than a nod to genealogical ties.

But again, that was not so with the Hebrew people. And they kept meticulous records of everyone that was born, individual by individual and tribe by tribe. And while those meticulous records were important to all the tribes, they were especially important to the lineage of two of the tribes, those of Levi and those of Judah. Those were the tribes of the priesthood and of the kings.

Why was that so important? Again, it is of first importance simply because it is God’s way of placing a firm “order” into His creation. Unlike the secular philosophies and beliefs of today that endorse the concept that all of the things and matters of life continually change and evolve from one idea, one way of life, one set of values, one physical condition to another, God has stamped an indelible order into all of creation.

Yes, we can mix and match many things and creatures and, sometimes we even end up with a very different looking result. But even science recognizes that “matter cannot truly be either fully created or fully destroyed”. Men and animals and societies and people groups can change in slight ways, but only to the extent that God permits.

Simply put, God has a special order to all of creation and it cannot truly be changed. And our lives, our ancestral lines, our genealogies must follow along according to His plan, or we simply die out. And, if all men would simply surrender their beliefs and philosophies to God’s authority on such matters, we could then be able to appreciate the matters and events of life a whole lot more.

And that is especially so as it relates to God’s intimate relationship with people. These scriptures give clear evidence that God, for reasons known only to Him, chose to reach His hand into humanity and to adopt and love a special group of people, the family and the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

We can do with that decision as we will. We can like it or not, and many don't. But it is a simple truth that these scriptures give clear evidence to. God makes choices within this humanity that He created, and I must tell you that I, for one, intend to simply accept that fact and not try to always question or deny His purposes.

How does all of this concern about bloodlines work its way out practically in time and history and especially within the context of today's scripture text? It has to do specifically with the family bloodline that Jesus was born into. For those who do not know Christ as Savior, and even for those who do know Him as Savior, but do not bother themselves with the study of His word, as they read through this genealogical list of fathers and sons, it might seem that these words were simply noting the parentage of each generation of men, going backwards from Jesus to Adam and to God the Father. But folks, so much more is being said within these words.

In the Book of Matthew, we are given a similar listing of fathers and sons, but there in the Book of Matthew, we can quickly recognize that a different group of ancestors are listed. And why is that so?

It has to do with God's intended purposes within these listings. In the Book of Matthew God was ministering directly to the Hebrew people, to establish within their hearts, a clear connection between Jesus and the house of Abraham. That was important because Jesus was the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Abraham and to his direct descendants.

But here in the Book of Luke, the listing of ancestors has a different purpose and follows a different line. The difference is this lineage follows the bloodline of Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus.

Note here in verse 23, the name "Heli".

²³Now Jesus Himself began *His ministry* at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) *the son of Joseph, the son of Heli.* (Luke 3:23)

But we know that Mary's husband Joseph's father, was named Jacob. And we know that Mary's father was Heli.

A question that some have asked is, "Is one of these listings correct and the other incorrect?" No, not at all! God is simply making two separate points in

these genealogies. Both Mary and Joseph were from the lineage of Abraham, so both ancestral lines will lead back to Abraham.

But a clear delineation needed to be drawn on the matter that was mentioned in these words just before the mention of Mary's father Heli. Those words were, "as was supposed", or "so it was thought". Verse 23,

²³Now Jesus Himself began *His ministry* at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) *the son of Joseph*. (Luke 3:23)

Jesus was truly not the son of Joseph. Yes, He was the Son of Mary, and He was the Son of God, but not the son of Joseph. The great truth that Jesus was born of a virgin, fathered only by God Himself, is being brought out in these words. And I believe that the whole matter is accentuated clearly in that Joseph is not mentioned much at all beyond the earliest days of Jesus' life.

God was the true and only Father of Jesus. Mary was His mother. And Jesus' bloodline legitimately follows along the line of Mary, His mother.

Note though also, an important bloodline that is preserved in both of the lineages, the bloodline that reaches directly into the kingly line of Judah, the lineage from which David descended. And in coming from the lineage of David, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy given that a King would reign forever and ever upon the throne of David. Jesus was, and still is, that King.

Folks, a very important doctrine is being revealed to us in these words, and that is the doctrine of the "Sovereignty of God". Yes, we have a "free will" and yes, we do an awful lot with that "free will", some of it right, but most of it very wrong

But intertwined within that "free will" is the indelible stamp of God that bespeaks that He is sovereign and that He truly does reach His mighty hand into time and into humanity and He truly does cause many things to take place, things that affect you and me.

And for those who would diligently search out His word, God reveals Himself and His plan continually in ways like this.

Jesus was and is the promised Messiah. He is the "Only Begotten Son" of God the Father.

As you and I would become interested in our own lineage and as we would even perhaps begin to trace our lineage back through the generations, may

we not fail to remember, that as “true believers”, our true “Spiritual” lineage will also trace back through this same line.

In the coming weeks as we study about the importance of our Spiritual lineage, we will find that in some manner or another, whether biological or otherwise, as believers in Christ, you and I become a part of that special group of God's chosen people called the “Remnant”, beloved children of God, chosen before the foundations of the earth to bear His Name and to carry it forward into all eternity. Listen to these special truths from the scriptures that are given about you and me, and we'll close with these words.

Galatians 3, verse 7,

⁷Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.
(Galatians 3:7)

And in Galatians 3, verse 29,

²⁹And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:29)

And then also in Romans 8, these precious words . . .

¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.
(Romans 8:15-16)

May we pray.