

QUESTION: If, in your suspicion, the original Gospel of Luke began at 3:1 and the infancy narrative found in 1:5-2:52 is a later addition, do you think that should be indicated in NT reconstructions and translations in a way similar to how Mark 16:9-20 is often bracketed?

RESPONSE: This is a great question. I could answer it just yes or no, but I'm afraid that wouldn't make much sense to many readers. The question itself seems simple but is actually a bit complicated, and the answer needs to be even more so!

The basic question is this. If I think, as I sometimes (often? most of the time?) do, that Luke did not originally have chapters 1 and 2 — the story of Jesus' birth (the Annunciation; Joseph and Mary's trip to Bethlehem, there "is no room in the inn," the worship of the shepherds, and so on and on) — but started with what is now 3:1, the account of Jesus' genealogy, then do I think that the chapters should be put in brackets in Bible translations with an explanation that they weren't original, or even that they should be relegated to a footnote rather than place in the text of the translation itself?

Again, I could give a short answer, but it would be better to explain the issues. This will take three posts, which will be a brief hiatus in my discussion of ancient views of the afterlife.

Two of these posts have been dredged up from over five years ago on the blog, from December 2012, where I deal with the issue of Luke 1-2 at some length. Here is the first of the two, which came itself as the final one of several posts that I had dedicate to a discussion of Luke's genealogy from Luke 3.

In my previous posts I have already said a number of things about the genealogy in Luke - possibly most of the important things:

- it differs from Matthew's in numerous ways, many of them irreconcilable;
- even though it too is a genealogy of Joseph, rather than Jesus, it traces Joseph's line through a (completely) different set of ancestors back to Nathan, son of David, rather than to Solomon Son of David;
- it is not, however a genealogy of Mary, but is explicitly said to be Joseph's;
- it is not clear why a genealogy of Joseph is given, since the whole point of a genealogy is bloodlines, and Jesus is not in the bloodline;
- Unlike Matthew it begins with Joseph and works backward from there (that is not a discrepancy, of course, just a different way of doing it);
- And unlike Matthew it does not stop with Abraham but goes all the way back to Adam - as in Adam and Eve. And it goes in fact a step further, indicating that Adam was "the son of God." This means that Jesus is in a straight line of descent from God! (Well, Joseph is, anyway) (and then again, by this logic, we all are).

There are numerous other points that can be made about Luke's genealogy, but I want to focus on just one issue, which I raise initially as a question that you may have had as well. Why is the genealogy in chapter 3 instead of ch 1? You would think a genealogy would be given at the beginning of a person's life, since that's where it seems most relevant. But this one is given, oddly, after Jesus baptism as an adult. Huh?

I think there is an economical solution to the problem, but it may be one that has not occurred to you (I'm guessing). Scholars have adduced very good reasons for thinking that Luke was originally written without what are now the first two chapters, that the birth

narratives of chapters 1 and 2 were added only as part of a second edition of the Gospel. Here are some of the reasons that have been given, that taken as a group seem to me to be pretty convincing:

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