

While at theological college I was assigned to a parish for weekend ministry. Serving under a Rector whose preaching style included much arm waving and finger pointing. One Sunday, preaching on John the Baptist, he dramatically pointed into the congregation while paraphrasing John's words, *'You snake in the grass'*. One lady felt cornered by the fiercely pointed finger. Cringing in the pew she cried out in a shaky voice, *'Not me. Not me.'* The preacher's message got a response. John the Baptist's Holy Spirit empowered preaching got a response too. Moving people to repentance and baptism. Raising expectations John was the one. *'The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah.'* **3:15** Quickly quashing their expectations, John points to the one to come. With the superior ministry of internal new birth. Of transformation through baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire. Expectant crowds, unanswered questions. Who could it be? How will we know? Their answer; waiting in line to be baptised by John. *'When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too'*. **v21** Dr Luke's purpose in today's passage: reaffirm for Theophilus and generations of readers the identity and majesty of the Messiah. Through the account of a baptism and a boring list of names. Dr Luke's conclusion: Jesus is the Messiah. The anointed one sent from God. Dr Luke's meticulous research reveals a Messiah greater than Israel expects. The waters of the Jordan river the setting for this revelation. *When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* **3:21-22** Luke did not see or hear what happened that day. John the Baptist did. His remarkable testimony recorded by the Apostle John, *Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."* **John 1:32-34** John the Baptist died before Luke came on the scene. Luke relies on other eye witnesses. Giving him confidence Jesus' baptism took place as described. Brothers and sisters, don't allow your familiarity with the event to dull your heart to the glory revealed. Three supernatural disclosures identifying Jesus as the divine Son of God. Visible opening of the heavens. One of God's means of

revelation. Experienced too by Ezekiel, Stephen, Peter, the Apostle John. Visible descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. Never repeated in Biblical history. Signifying the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit with Jesus. Audible voice of the Father speaking from open heavens. Revealing the uniqueness of Jesus. His words pointing to Old Testament verses about the Messiah.

Psalm 2:7 *'You are my son; today I have become your father.'* A Psalm about the kingly rule of God's anointed one. Jesus has a unique relationship with God the Father. **Isaiah 42:1**, *'Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.'* From a passage about the suffering servant of the Lord. Fulfilled in Jesus. The Messiah who will bring perfect justice through his suffering on the Cross. Jesus' baptism reveals the divine Son of God. Uniquely related to the Father. As the Apostle John says, *'No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.'* **John 1:18** Sisters and brothers, do you believe Jesus is the divine Son of God? God in human flesh? The divinity of Jesus fundamental to authentic Christian faith. Setting Christianity apart from other faiths that deny the divinity of Jesus. Strip Christianity of the divinity of Jesus. What's left is little more than an in-depth guide for ethical behaviour. Jesus' death only a model of self-sacrifice by an extraordinary human being. The central truth, that God gave himself so our sins can be forgiven, lost. What does your family tree look like? The Hanger family tree begins with Henry Hanger born in England in 1816. Convicted of sheep stealing on the evidence of his sister in law. The fresh lamb on the kitchen table didn't help his case. Transported to Australia for life. After the dramatic account of Jesus' baptism, Dr Luke turns to Jesus' family tree. More insights into the greatness of the Messiah. Jesus family tree far more exciting than mine. Far more revealing. Far more important. Don't be fooled by the boring list of names from **v23-38**. Never dismiss the significance of lists of names in the Bible. Jesus' family tree shows he is part of the human family. There's another version of Jesus' family tree in Matthew's gospel. Obvious similarities and significant differences. Some different names. Luke reverses the order. Goes beyond Abraham. Much scholarly debate about the reasons. A clue in **v23**, *'He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph,'* Jesus had no earthly father. Yet the family tree appears to follow the line of Joseph casting doubt on its purpose. Highly possible it follows the line of Mary. That Heli is Mary's father. Adopting Joseph as his heir because he had no sons. A unique family tree tracing Mary's line back to God.

Through Adam, the son of God. Luke's conclusion: Jesus, like Adam a human son of God. The unique divine Son of God also part of the human family. Our flawed human family. He is one of us. Jesus, fully God, fully human. The only person qualified to redeem flawed humanity. **Hebrews 2:17-18**, *'For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.'* Brothers and sisters, what a liberating message. Jesus, God's promised anointed one has come. Not another saviour like Moses, Joshua, David. The Saviour. The unique Son of God. 100% God. 100% man. Author of eternal salvation. Model of perfect humanity. As we shall see next week, God in human flesh beginning his ministry as an authentic human being. Sisters and brothers, three applications for our lives. **First**, if you struggle to understand how it is possible for Jesus to be 100% God, 100% man. Acknowledge the struggle. Accept the revelation. I believe it not because I have worked it out. But because the Bible tells me so. Look for it as you read of Jesus in the Bible. **Second**, guard this truth. It is under attack. In other faiths that deny the divinity of Jesus. From preachers who do likewise. From non-Christians who can't comprehend God coming into the world. **Third**, live in the light of this truth. Have confidence in your salvation and the assurance of forgiveness of sin. Achieved for us not simply by a perfect human but by God in human flesh. Be confident that in his humanity Jesus understands our struggles, joys, temptations, sorrows. Know you can share anything and everything with him. Remember his Spirit, the Holy Spirit lives in you enabling you to overcome. Honour him: not taking his name in vain by using his name as a swear word. Don't dishonour him in the way you live. Not treating him on equal terms as a heavenly buddy to hang out with. Rejoice the one true God chose to be one of us. Worship him, remembering the words of the old hymn, *'At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, every tongue confess Him King of Glory now.'*