

Place: Lurgan Baptist 17:11:2015

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

43. THE BOOK OF LUKE

Reading: Luke 1:1-4

Ray Steadman tells the story of King Canute, the Danish King of England in the tenth century. He was surrounded by a court of fawning yes men. “*Oh, King,*” they said “*you are the greatest ruler who ever lived. You are invincible there is nothing you do not know.*” Weary of all this empty praise, King Canute ordered his palace guard, to carry his throne to the seashore. There, he sat down upon his throne at the water’s edge while his perplexed yes men wondered what the king had in mind. Looking out to the sea, King Canute stretched out his arms and commanded “*Waves be still. Tide be stopped.*” But the waves continued to roll onto the shore and the tide continued to rise. The sea came up around King Canute’s ankles, then his thighs, then his chest. Yet he continued to command, “*Waves be still, Tide be stopped.*” Finally, a wave crashed over him, toppling the throne. King Canute was washed up on the sand gasping and sputtering.

The yes men stared at the king, thinking that he had completely lost his mind. The king stood up, wringing wet and ordered the guards to carry his throne back to the castle. When the entourage arrived at the throne room, King Canute pointed to a cross on a wall. “*Do you see this man ?*” *He commanded the waves of the sea. He is*

the perfect man. As for me I am just a man.” Now I am not for idolatry but I use this story to show that the gospel of Luke is the story of the Man who was perfection incarnate, the only perfect human being to have ever lived. You see, this third gospel presents Jesus Christ as the Son of Man. Indeed the key verse in Luke’s gospel says, “*For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*” (19:10) That was our Lord’s favourite title for Himself, a title that He used more frequently than any other name. Now as you read the gospel of Luke you meet the same person you meet in Matthew, Mark and John but there is a different emphasis.

The Gospel of Matthew: was written to the nation of *Israel*. It presents *Christ as the King and is Lion-like*. (Ezekiel 1:10)

The Gospel of Mark: was directed to the *Roman*. It presents *Christ as the Servant and is Ox-like*.

The Gospel of John: was written to *Believers*. It presents *Christ as the Mighty God and is Eagle-like*.

The Gospel of Luke: was written to the *Greeks*. It presents *Christ as the Perfect Man and is Man-like*.

Now is this not,

1. The PURPOSE of the Book:

Look at the purpose of the book **Personally:** The gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts clearly were written by the same individual for the name Theophilus appears in both. Do you see how Luke describes him ? “*Most excellent Theophilus.*” (1:3) It literally means “*lover of God.*”

“ *Most excellent,*” possibly signifies that Theophilus, “ *was a well-known Roman dignitary, perhaps one of those who had turned to Christ in Caesar’s household.*” (Phil 4:22) And the reason Luke was writing to him was to confirm in the mind of Theophilus the things he had already been told. You see, this gospel was intended to stop the spread of spurious gospels and untruths concerning the Life of Lives. And so Luke tells us that his method was to draw up a statement derived from his personal investigation and interviews with those who were eyewitnesses and “ *ministers of the word.*” Of course he had direct divine revelation from the Holy Spirit for he says that he had “ *perfect understanding of all things from the very first,*” or “ *from above.*” (Jn 3:31 19:11) It speaks of the inspiration of the Spirit of God on the message that Luke wrote. You see, Luke wrote his gospel so that his readers might have an accurate and orderly account of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But Luke envisioned a much broader audience for his work than this one man. For,

Look at the purpose of the book ***Publically:*** The Old Testament said, “ *Behold the Man.*” (Zech 6:12) and in Luke’s gospel we see the Perfect Man. Luke is especially concerned with the human nature, the manhood of our Lord so he has to tell us more about that wonderful birth and babyhood and boyhood of the Lord Jesus. *And if Luke wrote for the Greeks is this not significant ?* You see, the Greeks were the custodians of the world’s culture, language, art, science and philosophy. They were the intellectuals of the ancient world, their great ideal being perfect manhood, why their Olympic Games were

intended to display such manhood. So Luke presents to the Greeks a perfect Man. He says to them in effect, “ *Here’s the perfect Man you have been seeking. His name is Jesus Christ. Project the lines of His personality into infinity and you will find that unknown God for whom you have been looking so long.*” Jesus Christ is God in focus. Now this gospel has a universal outlook. When the eager angels troop down into the night sky, the message is “ *Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people..*” (2:10) The aged Simeon prayed, “ *Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles.*” (2:29-32) Here is a book with a message for everyone because Luke is stressing the Lord Jesus as the Saviour of the whole world. But who is this man Luke ?

2. The PENMAN of the Book:

Although we owe to Luke the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts we know less of him than any other New Testament writer. Luke, a Gentile and possibly is referred to by name only three times in the New Testament. (Col 4:14 2 Tim 4:11 Philemon 24) and from those references we discover that Luke was,

A Travel Companion:

He was a travel companion of Paul. Have you ever noticed when reading the Book of Acts the change from

“ *they*,” to “ *we*.” (Acts 16:10) Paul’s second missionary journey brought him to Troas. Doors were closed he did not know where to turn. Then in a night vision he saw the “ *man of Macedonia*,” urging them to Europe. William Ramsay the great scholar believed that Luke was the “ *man from Macedonia*.” One thing is certain from then onwards Luke was Paul’s ever dependable travel companion. He is with Paul in Jerusalem when Paul is almost lynched by a fanatical mob. He is with Paul during the two years of imprisonment in Caesarea (Acts 24:7 27:1) He is with him during the shipwreck on the way to Rome (27:1-28:16) He is with him through all his prison detention and trials before Nero. Luke is with Paul right to the hour of his martyrdom. (Col 4:14 2 Tim 4:11 Phil 24)

A Medical Doctor:

For Paul refers to him as “ *Luke the beloved physician*.” (Col 4:14) My here is the first medical missionary doctor. No doubt when he joined Paul’s group he had to give up ordinary medical practice, though it’s possible at places where they stayed long he would resume temporary practice. Later however he seems to have sacrificed everything so that he could be Paul’s private doctor.

A Beloved Brother:

Here was someone who was very dear to Paul. According to tradition Luke was a Gentile and Paul seems to confirm this when in the Colossian letter he distinguishes Luke from those who were “ *of the circumcision*,” (Col 4:11)

That would make Luke the only Gentile to pen any books of the Bible. But do you know what Paul writes about him ? He talks about “ *Luke the beloved physician*.” (Col 4:14) This man is dear to the apostle Paul. Here they were fellow-believers in the Lord Jesus, but more than that. They were both persons of education superior in a literary sense to the many. Do you recall that we discovered that Peter had an influence when Mark was writing his gospel, I wonder had Paul had an influence when Luke was writing his ?

A Faithful Servant:

So far as we know, 2 Timothy was Paul last letter before he was martyred. In it he says, “ *Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me. For Demas hath forsaken me having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica, Crescens is Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me*.” (Col 4:11) How much Luke means to Paul now. The final trial at Nero’s judgment seat is at hand. Professed supporters have fallen away. “ *At my first answer (defence) no man stood with me, but all men forsook me*,” (2 Tim 4:16) Demas has given to the way to the pull of the world and deserted. But “ *Luke is with me*.” What courage in the face of danger. What affection for the great apostle who lies in his solitary dungeon fettered, forgotten and forsaken. So this is Luke. The travel companion, the medical doctor, the beloved brother and the faithful servant. His name Loukas is Greek. And it seems that Luke wrote for Gentiles and especially Greeks. So we can see 1, 2, notice,

3. The PARTICULARS of the Book:

Luke is the Gospel of the Outcast: Luke has a great interest in any people whom others treated with contempt. The Shepherds, the ten lepers, Zacchaeus the tax collector, the prodigal son and the dying thief. My is this not an emphasis we need to recapture ? Instead of turning our churches into comfortable little clubs for folk who are to delicate to touch the world of lost sinners, we need to remember that Christ “ *receiveth sinners.* ” (15:2)

Luke is the Gospel of Womanhood: Think of the women we meet in this wonderful gospel. Elizabeth and Mary, Anna, Martha and her sister Mary, Mary Magdalene.

Luke is the Gospel of Song: Here alone among the gospels we find four songs that surround the advent of the Lord Jesus. (1:45-55) (1:64-79) (2:29-32) (2:14)

Luke is the Gospel of Sympathy: Here we see the heart of Christ reaching out all in need. He is the friend of sinners.

Luke is the Gospel of Salvation: It contains the word “ *sinner,* ” more often than all the other gospels put together. Luke is very fond of words that are used by Paul such as grace, forgiveness, salvation, repentance and faith. Renan the sceptic said that “ *the gospel of Luke was the most beautiful book in the world.* ” I have divided this book into four sections.

(1) The Son of Man: HIS ADVENT: 1:1-4:13

And this covers the first thirty years of the Saviour's life. Now please keep in mind that Luke emphasis's is on Christ as the perfect Man. So where does he begin ? He begins with,

(a) *HIS BIRTH: 1:5-2:39*

And it is Luke that gives is the fullest account of the nativity. Look at (1:30-37) I want you to notice here that not one word is said about Joseph. Mary is wondering how this is going to be done and the angel says, “ *It's not going to be done through Joseph but through the power of the Holy Spirit.* ” This is the miracle of the Virgin Birth or Conception. Did you notice that this baby was going to be “ *a holy thing.* ” That means “ *set apart,* ” in this case “ *sinless.* ” Peter said of Christ, “ *He did no sin.* ” (1 Pet 2:22) In order to do no sin, you must have no sin in you. That's what John says, “ *In Him is no sin.* ” (1 Jn 3:5) That's why He did no sin. In fact Paul says, “ *He knew no sin.* ” (2 Cor 5:2) What a miracle this was. The Lord Jesus was conceived in the womb of a virgin. In the Book of Hebrews the Lord Jesus said, “ *A body hast thou prepared me.* ” (10:5)

You see, Adam was given a body directly by God without a man or a woman. Eve got her body from the man. Cain and Abel got their bodies from a man and a woman. The Lord Jesus got His body through a woman by the power of the Holy Spirit without the intervention of a man. “ *For with God nothing shall be impossible.* ” (1:37) My God is not able to do the difficult but the impossible. Do

you believe that ? Have you proved that ? Do you need to prove that afresh this ? (a)

(b) HIS BOYHOOD: 2:40-2:52

Its interesting that the only incident recorded about Christ between His babyhood and His manhood is this story when Jesus was twelve years old. (2:42) This was an important age in Jewish life because at this age a Jewish boy became a “ *son of the law*,” and assumed responsibility for his behaviour. As a responsible son of the law Jesus went with Joseph and Mary to keep the annual feast of the Passover (Ex 23:14-17) When they were returning home they left Christ behind. Distraught they returned to Jerusalem and found Him in the midst of the doctors. Mary rebuked Him, “ *Thy father and I sought thee sorrowing*,” she said (2:48) Now here are the first recorded words of Christ, “ *How is it that ye sought me ? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business ?*” (2:49)

Joseph was not His father. They knew it. He knew it. His Father’s business was not the work of a carpenter, it was the work of a cross. But I wonder like Joseph and Mary, have you lost the consciousness of His presence ? Christ is there but are you just too busy to be aware of it ? Is He near or does He seem far away ? (a) (b)

(c) HIS BAPTISM: 3:1-22

John baptised Christ in order to present Him to the people and not because Christ was a repentant sinner.

(Jn 1:29-34) Our Lord’s baptism was a foreshadowing of His future baptism of suffering on the cross. (12:50) It was through death, burial and resurrection that He “ *fulfilled all righteousness*.” (Matt 3:15) Only Luke mentions that the Lord Jesus prayed during His baptism. The heaven was open. The Holy Spirit descended from on high, in visible form. The form of a dove. A voice rang out from heaven, “ *Thou art my beloved Son in thee I am well pleased*.” (3:22) The divine visitor and the divine voice set their seal of approval on every movement of His life, from the moment He stepped out of eternity into time until the moment He emerged from the river. Every thought, every word and every deed was immaculate. Notice also that Luke touches on,

(d) HIS BACKGROUND: 3:23-38

Now do you recall Luke’s purpose ? *To set forth Christ as the perfect Man*. That’s why He traces His ancestry right back to Adam, the first man. Matthew in his genealogy shows us Christ’s connection with the *Hebrew race*. He underlines the fact that the Lord Jesus was the true Messiah, the son of David (2 Sam 7:12) and the promised King. Luke shows us Christ’s connection with the *Human race*. He underlines the fact that Jesus Christ was a true man. Matthew traces the ancestry of Jesus through His foster father, Joseph, the husband of Mary. Luke traces the ancestry of Jesus Christ through the virgin Mary. Matthews shows us that Christ was legal heir to David’s throne, Luke shows that Jesus was lineal heir to David’s throne. Luke is very careful here. Do you see what (3:23) says ? You see Heli or Eli was Mary’s father.

The mother's name was not put into the genealogy so Mary is not named. We could translate (3:23) “ *When He began His ministry Jesus was about thirty years old (being supposedly the son of Joseph) the son of Heli (an ancestor of Mary).*” But He was nothing of the kind. He was the long awaited “ *seed of the woman.*” (Gen 3:14-15) People thought that Christ was the son of Joseph but they were wrong. (Matt 13:55) He was the son of Mary but not of Joseph. This was the son of the living God. *I mean can you see His Deity here ? But can you see His Humanity here ?* The fact that the Lord Jesus had a family tree at all shows us that He was really man. Isn't it interesting the way the Doctor traces Christ's development here ? Dr. Luke first calls Christ “ *a babe,*” (2:16) then “ *a child,*” (2:40) then “ *a boy,*” (2:43) then “ *Jesus.*” (2:52) He was neither superman, supermyth nor superstar. Paul says He took “ *upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.*” (Phil 2:7)

Do you know something ? That's why He understands our problems and pressures. Some years ago the dean of women of a great Christian institute wrote an article for a Christian magazine, based on her experiences with hundreds of young women over a considerable period of time. Entitled, “ *If were a Mother,*” doubtless it was a very good article but it lacked something, for after all, she wasn't a mother. Motherhood has all kinds of feeling and fears and frustrations that no single woman can ever know except academically. My the Lord Jesus is no academic Saviour. He understands our nature because He

has entered human life. Notice also that Luke touches here on,

(e) HIS BATTLE 4:1-13

Do you see here the order of events ? I mean the battle came after the benediction, the temptation came after the testimonial, the devil came after the dove. My is it not the same in our lives ? The most dangerous time in the battle with the devil is right after a mountaintop experience. But bless God, victory is possible (1 Cor 10:13) but only in the combined power of the Holy Scriptures (4:4) and of the Holy Spirit. (4:1) (1)

(2) The Son of Man: HIS ACTIVITY 4:14-9:50

For here Luke focuses on the Lord's ministry in Galilee. (4:14 -15) You can see here,

(a) THE WORK COMMENCED: 4:14-44

Luke takes us from place to place. We see the Lord in the synagogue of Nazareth, where He had been brought up as a boy. Then we see Him in a synagogue, in Capernaum a town on the Sea of Galilee where He had taken up residence. Then we see Him in Simon Peter's house where He healed Peter's mother in law. That same evening He performed many miracles of healing. (4:40-44) What a time it was as Demons were Rebuked: (4:35) Disease was Removed: (4:39) and Duty was Required: (4:43) You see, as important as it was to meet the physical needs of the people prayer and (4:42) and preaching (4:43-44)

had higher priorities in our Lord's ministry, and so should they in ours. "*I must preach*," Christ said. (4:43) Sure, His miracles had their place but they were not really the important things, they were only transient and temporary at best. (10:17-20) What mattered most was the preaching, so the Lord disengaged Himself from the crowd and continued on His way preaching in the synagogues of Galilee. The work was commenced. Preaching was predominant.

(b) THE WORK CONTINUED: 5:1-6:16

As the Lord controls the fish: (5:1-11) cleanses the leper (5:12-15) converts the sinner: (6:18-32) and calls the disciples: (5:27-29, 6:13-16) Now I want you to notice here Luke's emphasis on prayer. You see, Luke writes more about prayer than any other Gospel writer. Here alone we read that when the Lord Jesus was endued by the Holy Spirit at Jordan He was praying (3:21) that in His wilderness withdrawal He prayed (5:16) that before He choose the Twelve He "*continued all night in prayer*." (6:12) That ere He asked the Twelve "*Whom say ye that I am ?*" He was "*alone praying*," (9:18) that at His transfiguration He had climbed the mountain "*to pray*." That just before He taught the Lord's Prayer He Himself was "*praying in a certain place*," (11:1) that He assured Peter "*I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not*," (22:32) that in Gethsemane He "*prayed more earnestly*," (22:44) that on the Cross both His first and last cries were prayers. (23:34,46)

Look at (5:16, 6:12) No wonder this gospel has been called the "*gospel of prayer*." Now listen, if Christ the perfect man spent much time in prayer, how much more do you need to ? If Christ prayed after times of public service how much more do you need to ? (5:16) If Christ prayed before making great decisions how much more do you need to ? (6:12-13) If Christ prayed "*not my will but Thine be done*," how much more do you need to ? The work was continued. Prayer was predominant.

(c) THE WORK CLIMAXED: 6:17-9:50

For Luke now gives us a few snapshots of the Lord Jesus, before turning his attention to the mounting opposition He had to face. We see here a Saviour who,

Is Great: Is this not what Gabriel said ? "*He shall be great*." (1:32) And here we see the Lord going about doing good. Healing the sick, raising the dead, feeding the multitudes, empowering the disciples, and stilling the storm. My the evidence that He was all He claimed to be was overwhelming.

Is God: For at Caesarea Philippi the question is "*But whom say ye that I am ?*" (9:20) Peter's answer marks one of the most electrifying moments in the New Testament for "*Peter answering said the Christ of God*." (9:20) Christ is equivalent of Messiah the promised deliverer for whom the Jews were longing. Now it was only when they recognized His Identity that Christ revealed to them His Agony, the Cross that lay before Him. (9:22)

Is Guiding: Fully conscious that Calvary was coming closer the Lord Jesus seeks to guide His disciples in the path of quiet humility and cooperation with those who “*followeth not with us.*” (9:49) but whose love was for the Lord was very evident indeed. My it’s so easy is it not to criticize those seeking to do God’s work who do not toe our party line ? But the Lord says “ *he that is not against us is for us.*” (9:50) Now that ends the section of Luke’s gospel. *The work was climaxed. Power was predominant.* (1) (2)

(3) The Son of Man: His ASCENT 9:51-19:27

For look at what Luke says in (9:51) Glance over at (18:31) You see, you always go up to Jerusalem, this is our Lord’s ascent to the city. This is the journal of the journey to Jerusalem. Sidlow Baxter says “ *It’s filled with memorable sayings and doings, gracious replies and forthright rebukes, occasional miracles and compelling parables yet all cohere in exhibiting the mind and heart of that Matchless Man.*” I want you to notice that the way to the cross was through,

(a) SAMARIA: 9:51-10:37

Here the Lord Jesus faced opposition, gave instruction and appointed disciples. Constantly in this gospel we find the Lord Jesus facing criticism. Do you recall the scribes and the Pharisees saying “ *Who is this which speaketh blasphemies ? Who can forgive sins but God alone ?*”

(5:21) “ *Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners ?*” (5:30) And now here in this section we see a lawyer taking the approach of a scholar and saying “ *Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ?*” (10:25) I tell you this man was convicted when the Lord told him the parable of the Good Samaritan and forced to confess that the despised Samaritan was a better neighbor than priest and Levite and concluded with the thrust, “ *Go and do thou likewise.*” (10:37) Of course he would need a new heart for that. My to reject Christ is not scholarship at all it’s a species of insanity. And so it went on and on Jesus Christ rejected of men, until, in the end they nailed them to a cross. If the Lord was rejected don’t be surprised if you are. If the Lord was opposed don’t be surprised if you are. I saw a video recently of an old man of God standing I think it was at Hyde Park corner in London declaring Christ as the only way to heaven and the abuse he was taking from Muslims was horrific. Tell, are you a soldier of the cross ? (a) The way to the cross was through,

(b) BETHANY & JUDEA: 10:38-13:21

Here the Lord is portrayed as the strong man (11:22) the one greater than Solomon (11:29-32) the discernor of hearts (11:33-12:3) the Lord who cares for His people in this life (12:4-31) and prepares them for the next. (12:32-40) Do you recall that it was at Bethany that Mary sat at His feet ? What is the great passion of your life ? Is it to know the Lord ? Is it to be close to the Saviour ? The way of the cross was (a) (b) and the way of the cross was through,

(c) PEREA: 13:22-10:27

Now look at (13:22) Matthew (19:1) Mark (10:1) and John (10:40) all say that Christ moved His ministry to the east of the Jordan known as Perea and that move probably took place at this time in Luke's gospel. Therefore the cities and villages He travelled through may have included places in Judaea and Perea, but all the time the Saviour was progressing toward Jerusalem for the Cross was His goal, to die for you and me. In the words of Luke's gospel " *For the Son of Man is come,*" that is ***His Advent***: " *To seek,*" that is ***His Activity*** " *and to save that which was lost,*" that is ***His Atonement***. This is the last section of the book,

**(4) The Son of Man: His ATONEMENT:
19:28-24:53**

Is this not what the Cross is all about ? It's the satisfaction of divine justice by the Lord Jesus in His life and death which procures for sinners a perfect salvation.
(Rom 5:11) Here Luke talks about,

(a) THE GREAT CONFLICT: 19:28-23:56

He takes us to the Table and shows us the *Lord's Supper* (22:1-38) he takes us to the Garden and shows us the *Lord's Submission* (22:39-53) he takes us to Pilate's judgment hall and shows us the *Lord's Suffering* (23:25) He takes us to Calvary and shows the *Lord's Sacrifice*.

My its in Luke we find the word " *Calvary*," it's the Greek for Golgotha literally it means " *a skull*." In the King James Version it occur's only this once. Do you see it ? (23:33) Calvary, where the floodgates of God's wrath were opened full upon Him, and the billows of unspeakable anguish overwhelmed Him, and the horror pf the deep darkness enveloped Him. Calvary.

**To Calvary in spirit now
Our weary souls repair
To dwell upon Thy dying love
And taste its sweetness there
O Lamb of God Thy bleeding wounds
With cords of love divine
Have drawn our willing hearts to Thee
And linked our life with Thine**

(b) THE GREAT CONQUEST: 24:1-24:53

For death could not hold its prey. What a victory this was. Do you see here the *Opened Grave*: (24:2) the *Opened Scriptures*: (24:32) the *Opened Understanding*: (24:45) What a wonderful Saviour. Wonderful Man of Galilee. Wonderful Man of Calvary. He is the perfect pattern. He is the lovely example. Oh that we may learn the lesson of His sympathy and compassion and be " *kind one to another tender hearted, forgiving one another,*" even as we through Him have been forgiven. To say with the poet,

**Lovely Manhood, perfect Pattern
Live again Thy life through mine**

