

St. Luke the Real Man of Mission

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Chapter 1 Luke the Real Historical Writer

A question which was raised early in my theological education was concerning the historical reliability of the gospels. It seemed strange to me that when I became a new Christian that everybody at church seemed sure about the gospel story as historical fact. On entering seminary finding my self challenged to test the reliability of the vital sources of information for Christian belief was a real shock! Having read Luke's gospel a number of times by the time I entered seminary, and having come instinctively to feel the influence of Jesus words and works recorded there, it seemed strange that the historicity of Luke-Acts should be questioned to the point where the German theologian Rudolf Bultmann¹ contended that nothing could really be understood about the real historical Jesus from these documents. Liberal Christian scholarship seemed to find the historicity of the documents un-important, and even conservatives were reticent to challenge the so called "higher critical" school of thought. I, and others, were challenged to think that it was no more possible to prove the authenticity of the New Testament documents, than it was to disprove them!

So where did this leave me, and others, who felt challenged to examine the scholarly debates surrounding the very heart of the credibility of the Christian faith? Well I must say it became an issue of importance to me, and I must say that as I have travelled on a journey through this field it has often left me bewildered, but never without God's guidance, and I really thank our Lord Jesus Christ for that. This paper

¹ Bultmann R, Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting, 1956. Bultmann's views have affected the way that modern theology degrees are taught in at least two ways. Firstly, he among many others questioned the gospels as true historical accounts of Jesus life and teaching – taking the view that the real historical Jesus could not be known from the gospels. Secondly, that the Jesus we find in the gospels is essentially a man of myth and legend – hence there is a need to demythologise the gospel accounts. Miracles stories being one case in point – which cannot be taken literally.

evolved from the strongest of convictions, that I believe the best evidence points to Luke as a real Christian man, who was a companion of Paul. He applied the highest standards to testing his historical-theological material about Jesus life, deeds and teachings. And he did this in the time of the first generation Christians who had heard Jesus, been his apostles, and disciples. Luke's claim that he got his data from "eyewitnesses"² is supported by the evidence so as to prove the historicity of Luke and the gospel tradition beyond any reasonable doubt.

I recognise it has become very popular these days for mysteries and conspiracy theories to capture public attention. These tend to undermine confidence in the historical facts about Jesus found in our New Testament for those who are uninformed. It has become very necessary for Christians, and enquirers into Christian faith, to get hold of the real facts. So this paper "St Luke the real man of Mission" starts off with a fundamental premise that:

"We know enough information just by considering the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts to understand the real Christian man – Luke, as a real historical figure, with a deep desire to give his readers provable data concerning the reliability of his information about Jesus and the early church".

It is the aim of this short work to unlock the secret mysterious Luke from the facts we have!

² Luke 1:1-4

So this paper is not primarily about the gospel of Luke or Acts. It is rather a study of the man – Luke. It has been contended that we know very little about the writer of Luke-Acts. There are no biographies of the writer. All we possess are the documents which have been traditionally assigned to “Luke” from the earliest period. Who was Luke? Do we know anything about the man? Is it possible to gain any information which would reach the standards of acceptable criteria in historical terms?

Text Criticism & Luke-Acts

There was a period of biblical criticism which severely judged against the authenticity of the claims of Luke-Acts and the New Testament documents generally; at the most fundamental of levels – by attacking the transmission of the very text of the canon itself. The argument went that Luke-Acts had been through many revisions over the centuries, and that it was not possible to fix an early date for the “Lukan corpus”, or to guarantee that the text we have was anything like the original autograph.

On this first point it is true to say that the text of Luke, and particularly that of Acts, went through some changes and glosses in later generations as copies of copies of manuscripts were made; with the result that the Western text of Acts was found to be 10% longer than the Alexandrian text.³ However, with the discovery of early manuscript evidence, such as the Codex Sinaiticus, it became possible to locate all of the Gospels, Acts and Pauline epistles early in the second century AD.

³ Metzger Bruce, M., A Textual Commentary on the New Testament, pages 259 – 272, and Bruce F.F., The Books and the Parchments, Pages 166 – 180. Also Stott John R., W., The Message of Acts, see on the Introduction.

That is not to say that these documents were written then, but that they could be established by early attestation through the study of primitive text types, and comparison of earlier and later families of texts, which enabled textual critics to arrive at an early textual type for the New Testament documents. In fact a fragment of the gospel of John [p46] can be placed early in the second century – so close to the composition of the autograph copy as to make arguments against apostolic authorship obsolete for that Gospel. Indeed the date of this copy of copies could be as old as 90AD thus making the original autograph possibly being composed before 70 AD. A fragment of Mark’s gospel has been found in Cave 7 at Qumran, which was connected to the Essene community, on palaeographical grounds it is to be dated before AD 50⁴. In Fact the papyrologist and scholar Carston Peter Thiede considered even 40AD to be too late for the composition of Mark’s initial gospel draft. Mark was clearly in circulation from the late thirties to early forties. As both Luke and Matthew had access to Mark as one of their sources it is not insignificant to maintain an early “Markan” composition.⁵ Professor John Wenham, of Oxford University, would date the composition of the synoptic gospel Matthew earlier than 42AD.⁶ . In terms of my own view here I would place the composition of Matthew as early as 32AD in an

⁴ Thiede Carsten, Jesus Life or Legend, Pages 96 – 103. The evidence for the fragment from marks gospel found in cave & at Qumran would place the writing of the gospel of mark before AD 50. Probably as early as 44AD. This has revolutionised the field of Gospel criticism as there is now real scientific papyrological evidence to place the composition of the Gospels in the life time of the Apostles.

⁵ Guthrie Donald, New Testament Introduction, Chapter 5. He gives a detailed discussion of the Synoptic debate. Although as an earlier writer he was not aware of the existence of the early fragment of Mark’s gospel his discussion of the synoptic problem will help the student to understand the issues related to this field of scholarly study.

⁶ Wenham John, Redating Matthew Mark Luke and John. Also See on Wenham John, Easter Enigma are the resurrection accounts in conflict? The whole book is a useful text in terms of the way it aids the student to obtain a useful working hypothesis of a harmony of the resurrection accounts. As Wenham an Oxford scholar is flying in the face of modern scholarship in his belief that the gospels are indeed reliable historical sources the processes he goes through to demonstrate this position give the student a useful and credible set of working tools based on the authority of one of the foremost thinkers in New Testament criticism.

Aramaic dialect as the church father Papias indicates.⁷ Luke's gospel was probably in written form to some extent by the mid forties, with the published gospel being dedicated to Luke's high ranking patron Theophilus in 57/58AD. The book of Acts was probably at first drafted in part, and circulated from Syrian Antioch as early as the forties, with the final draft having been delivered to Theophilus by 62AD. Luke's gospel was probably in the makings in the forties too as far as collation off source material goes. It may also be inferred that Theophilus funded an official publication of Luke-Acts for general circulation later. He must have been a high ranking Roman official who had taken on his new Christian name. Indeed we know that even some of Caesar's household were Christians, and visited Paul during his imprisonment in Rome.⁸ High ranking officials may have had their identities disguised during Emperor Nero's psychotic reign, but they nevertheless connected themselves with the Saviour and his Apostles. At any rate Theophilus must have been Luke's patron meaning that copies of Luke-Acts would have been made available even in the great library of Rome; as this equates well with the practices of endowments made by the rich to the centres of education and learning.

Hence the harsh judgments against the authenticity of the New Testament documents by secular and liberal critics are taking a hard if not mortal blow given the latest evidence for an early circulation of the story-history of Jesus and the church in the gospels and Acts. Even before these recent views on dating there was consensus on the reliability of the New Testament documents. During the first half of the 20th century the writing was on the wall for liberal scholarship. The great palaeographer,

⁷ Holmes Michael W., The Apostolic Fathers, Page 569. This is what Papias says of Matthews' gospel: "So Matthew composed the oracles in the Hebrew language and each person interpreted them as best he could."

⁸ Philippians 4:22.

archaeologist and historian Sir Frederick Kenyon states the case of the certainty of the text of the New Testament in the following terms:

“The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.”⁹

So we may note here that two strands of opinion have secured the text of the NT. Firstly the text critical reliability of the New Testament documents go back to autograph integrity, and secondly, modern historians view the early dating of the Gospels and other documents to have been written so close to the events they record as to make them credible as real factual sources based on eyewitness testimony!

This makes the claims that often get an airing in the popular media, which announce that Christianity is not based on firm early evidence ridiculous! To this day as archaeological and palaeographic evidence mounts negative views are dealt a deadly blow. The work of dedicated biblical scholars alluded to above in part, must be applauded as they have retained faith and pushed the boundaries back in terms of dating so as to make mythological insertions into the gospel narrative impossible; for such insertions would have needed time to elapse and for the first generation Christians to have passed away. The names I have alluded to are only a small cross

⁹ Kenyon F., G., The Bible and Archaeology, 1950. Page 226.

section of the extent of positive opinion for the early writing of the gospels and Acts. And the fate of Luke is directly affected by the positive evidence for the early composition of Matthew's gospel by the Apostle of that name, and John Mark's account – as he himself must have been an eyewitness of the arrest, death and resurrection of Jesus. Wenham has this to say concerning him:

“It would be wrong to suppose that Mark allowed no place to his own observations and individuality in his writing, especially in events in which he played a part. The incident in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the young man who was seized at the time of Jesus' arrest ran away naked leaving his sheet in his captors' hands, has traditionally [and plausibly] been regarded as Mark's own signature to his book.It has been suggested that the garden belonged to Mark's Father. The case for this is by no means negligible, for it can be shown that Mark's home played an important role in the life of the early church, and that the role almost certainly began before Pentecost.”¹⁰

This makes Mark at the forefront of information about Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection. It is not surprising that he accompanied Peter to Rome, and wrote his gospel based on Peter's preaching. The early composition makes mistakes entering the accounts impossible in any substantial way. Hence not only do we have the text of the New Testament secured to autograph integrity, but we also have the autographs of the Gospels and Acts, and indeed other New Testament documents, secured in terms of their early veracity as accurate historical and theological accounts of Jesus' life including the early Churches' establishment.

¹⁰ Wenham John, Easter Enigma are the Resurrection accounts in conflict? Page 47.

All of this makes modern pop pseudo histories, which aim to knock the historicity of the Gospels, all the more shocking! One example [April 2006] takes the biscuit, so to speak. This is the fictional novel written by Dan Brown “The Da vinci Code”. He writes a good story, which has sold millions – his ability as a novelist is not in question. But the central premises of the book are based on poor evidence. This has not stopped it being popularly hailed as clear evidence against the facts of the Christian faith. Yet Brown’s credentials do not include any qualification which could compare with the great F.F. Bruce, or Sir Frederick Kenyon, to name but a few. There is no doubt that Brown is a good novelist, but a poor layman of textual criticism and that is where his credentials ought to remain!

The real fact is that Luke-Acts represent for all intents and purposes a very close equivalent to the original autographs on text critical grounds; containing the highest credibility as historical factual accounts. There are minor variations between the evangelists, but the substantive facts are as good as guaranteed. We owe a great deal to the hard work undertaken by the science of textual criticism, Archaeology, Greco Roman Historians, translators, palaeographers, and dedicated evangelical theologians. The many hours that have been spent in giving us our modern English translations deserves the highest recognition! The work of dedicated scholars who uphold the integrity of these documents, often with the background noise of derision and dismissal must not be forgotten.

Of course the establishment of the text of Luke-Acts by critical empirical methodology is only part of the picture in aiding us to discuss the historicity of Luke

the real man, and we need to ask ourselves other questions as well. Indeed the whole field of textual criticism of the New Testament deserves far more discussion than my few brief paragraphs, as it is a complex field, but it is not in the scope of this paper to study it. Kenyon's conclusions represent my opinion of the state of present knowledge on the security of the text, which is fundamental to consider before further studying the Historical Luke in his first century setting.

Luke the Author

So let us return to an earlier observation that outside of Luke-Acts there is precious little to be found about the man Luke. The church Fathers make reference to Luke the individual. They recognise him as a companion of Paul. He is identified as a doctor, and artist. He is also considered to have been a companion of Paul on his second and third missionary journey's and during Paul's imprisonment in Rome [62 AD].

Paul makes reference to one "Luke" the "beloved physician"¹¹ sending greetings to the church at Colossae. This Luke was with Paul during his imprisonment in Rome as he wrote this letter in 61/62 AD. Luke is mentioned as Paul's companion once again in his epistle to Philemon¹². This was also written during the incarceration. Close to the time of Paul's execution he writes to Timothy informing him that "Luke alone is with me."¹³. Professor Wenham considers that Luke's gospel is referred to in 2 Corinthians 8:18: "We are sending with him [Titus] the brother [probably Luke] who is famous for his gospel throughout all the churches." [My Translation]. 2 Corinthians

¹¹ Col. 1:14

¹² Philemon 24

¹³ 2 Tim. 4:11

is to be dated around 56AD; hence we may safely conclude that the gospel had been in circulation for some time previously. Indeed the church Father Julius Africanus informs us that Luke wrote his gospel in Achaia of which Corinth was a part.¹⁴ Although in my view Africanus cannot be relied on to much in this respect, it nevertheless strengthens the case for Luke's gospel being known in Corinth and its surrounding environs.

Although the evidence at first glance seems sparse concerning the identity of the writer of Luke-Acts, being the Luke that Paul mentions in the examples given above; there are good reasons for accepting that Paul's Luke is the writer of the "Lukan" material. Perhaps the great William Barclay states the case the best when he writes:

"Tradition has always believed that Luke was the author and we need have no qualms in accepting that tradition. In the ancient world it was the regular thing to attach books to famous names; no one thought it wrong. But Luke was never one of the famous figures of the early church. If he had not written the gospel no one would have attached it to his name."¹⁵

This incisive observation is not contradicted by one early Christian writer. Marcion, the Gnostic heretic, accepted that Luke, companion of Paul, wrote the gospel and Acts.¹⁶ Although he deleted from his version the infancy narratives, as he did not accept any reference to the Old Testament, nevertheless, he did not dispute authorship. Irenaeus, the apologist, writing also about 160 AD recognises Luke companion of Paul as the author. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, disciple of the Apostle

¹⁴ Catholic Encyclopedia page 3.

¹⁵ Barclay William, The Daily Study Bible The Gospel of Luke, Page. 1.

¹⁶ Guthrie Donald, New Testament Introduction, page 99.

John, makes reference to the book of Acts quoting it as scripture in his letter to the Philippian Church.¹⁷ This is significant as Luke spent some considerable time living in Philippi Macedonia, and he certainly was an active member in that church.

Polycarp's reminiscence of Acts [He quotes from Acts chapter 1 using the Western text] must have brought back fond memories to the older Members in Philippi who would have had parents and grandparents who would have spoken about Luke and his time spent with them in the early days of the church communities' establishment.

Moreover, Eusebius the first true church historian writes concerning Luke:

“Luke, by birth an Antiochene and by profession a physician, was for long periods a companion of Paul and was closely associated with the other apostles as well. So he has left us examples of the art of healing souls which he learnt from them in two divinely inspired books, the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. The former, he declares, he wrote in accordance with the information he received from those who from the first had been eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, information which, he adds, he had followed in its entirety from the first. The latter he composed not this time from hearsay but from the evidence of his own eyes. It is actually suggested that Paul was in the habit of referring to Luke's gospel whenever he said, as if writing of some Gospel of his own: “According to my gospel.”¹⁸

The final part of Eusebius's statement demonstrates the close relationship between Luke and Paul. And this link is significant as the writer of Acts puts himself with

¹⁷ Holmes Michael W., The Apostolic Fathers, page 206. This is taken from Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians Chapter 1 verse 2 in which Polycarp quotes from the western rescension of the text of acts.

¹⁸ Williamson G., A., Translator, Eusebius The History of the Church, Book 3:4.

Paul as his companion during the 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys.¹⁹ Paul was probably a patient of Luke's on more than one occasion. Luke may have played the role of personal physician to Paul who suffered from his old malady, his thorn in the flesh.²⁰ This has been reckoned by many to have been a medical condition, perhaps poor eyesight or chronic malaria. Luke clearly bore a great deal of love towards the Apostle. After all he was the only one to be found with Paul during his final days.²¹ No wonder that Eusebius postulates the close relational ties that in his view united their literary affiliation as one gospel.

Clearly Luke and Paul were well suited to each other, both being intellectuals. Paul being a Pharisee who sat at the feet of the great Jewish teacher Gamaliel;²² Luke being a doctor trained in all the art of ancient medicine and Philosophy. Possibly he did much of his classical training education in Asia at the medical training centre in Tarsus, which was equal in status to the same facilities in Alexandria, Athens and Rome. Certainly Asia had its own highly reputed educational centre for the continued tuition of its doctors. These physicians were in a class of their own compared to the so called "quacks" who were often referred to in writings of the period; these "quacks" were thought of as unprincipled, untrained, uneducated and money grabbing thieves and charlatans, who had nothing to offer except useless remedies. Their treatment in classical literature is to deride them.

Moreover, the writing of Luke-Acts demonstrates the writer to have been a well educated man. The prologue to Luke's gospel is written in probably the best style of

¹⁹ Acts 16:10 – 40; 20: 1 – 21:15; 27:1 – 28:31

²⁰ 2 Cor. 12:7.

²¹ 2 Tim. 4:11.

²² Acts 5:34.

Greek in the New Testament.²³ Luke belonged to the educated elite of medics, and, much of their basic training was lost after the fall of Rome; Not being resurrected again until the leaps forward in medicine and surgery which occurred in the 19th and early 20th century. We will return to the education of Luke the physician later [Chapter 2].

Moreover, the book of Acts itself contains the famous “we” passages, in which the writer puts himself with Paul during his second and third missionary journeys [see on note 18]. He is with him during his arrest at Jerusalem and his incarceration in Caesarea, near Jerusalem, for two years [see on Note 18]. Luke the eyewitness fits in well with his claims to consulting many other eyewitnesses in the introduction to his gospel; for surely his two years spent in Palestine afforded him time to conduct his research for the gospel.

This evidence alone, taken alongside Paul’s statement that Luke was with him in Rome, seems conclusive. Clearly the writer of Acts does not quote from any of the Pauline epistles, which one would have to expect as a certainty if the writer of Acts was writing after the time of Paul, when we know from our study of the so called Apostolic Fathers his epistles had been collected together and circulated widely throughout the empire. 2nd Peter speaks of Paul’s writings as hard to understand – when he writes from Rome in the 60’s.²⁴ Although some challenge “Petrine” authorship of the epistle, it is my view that it was indeed Peter who wrote it by the hand of another Scribe. This statement attests the early collection and circulation of Paul’s epistles, fragments of some of his letters have been found with the so called

²³ Luke 1:1-4.

²⁴ 2 Peter 3:16.

Rome jar in fragmentary form in Qumran cave 7 [put there in 66AD] which demonstrates they were in circulation and use as scripture by the late fifties to early sixties in the first century.²⁵ This must have been the case for the Essenes were not Christians, and they obviously obtained these epistles from Rome for study of the new Christian movement along with a copy of Mark's gospel. The letters, and possibly more than Mark's gospel were hidden in cave 7 by 66 AD, close to the time when the armies of Vespasians' dispersion of their community. It is not a stretch to consider that Luke and Acts were among the parchments stored in the so called Rome Jar in this cave.

Irenaeus of Lyons says of Luke:

“That this Luke was inseparable from Paul and was his collaborator in the preaching of the Gospel, he himself makes plain, not boasting but led by the truth itself.Since Luke was present for all these events, he carefully recorded them. He cannot be described as a liar or a boaster, for all these facts hold together and he was prior to all who now teach something else and he knew the truth.”²⁶

Probably one of the most telling pieces of evidence for “Lukan” authorship is that words from his gospel are quoted by Paul as the Words of Lord Jesus; they are found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

²⁵ Op Cit, Thiede, Page 102 – 103.

²⁶ Grant Robert M., Irenaeus of Lyons, Book 3 14:1.

Hence in his letter to the Corinthians ²⁷ he Quotes the words of Christ, during the last supper, when the Eucharist was first established. The words he uses agree with near exactness to the same words recorded by Luke;²⁸ there is good etymological agreement word for word with the words of Jesus uttered on the night of the last supper and the Corinthian quotation when it comes to the words of our Lord recorded by Luke. Both Mark and Matthew phrase Jesus words differently to that of Luke, and the etymological linkages are not to be found. There is a significant difference between the language in Mark-Matthew's syntax compared to agreement between Luke and Paul's record of the Lord's words at the supper. It must be noted that although Matthew-Mark utilise different words and syntax they agree in essence with what Luke records of this occasion. All three agree in substance, but not in exact language.

The Luke-Paul agreement [Luke-Corinthians agreement] demonstrates that Paul was quoting Luke's gospel or a close memory of it. This would once again place the existence of Luke's Gospel around about 55/56 AD when Paul wrote to Corinth from Ephesus, or Greece, during the third missionary journey. In another chapter we will consider the ministry of Luke the Evangelist [this chapter is not included in this short paper], as the "we" passages in Acts strongly indicate that Paul left Luke overseeing the work in Macedonia-Philippi for some time between the second and third journey. The same "we" passages demonstrate that Luke was with Paul during the writing of the letter to the Corinthians. Paul had access to the material Luke has left in his record for us! Hence Eusebius's words bear real significance here, when considering the close affiliation between Luke and Paul's ministry [as quoted already]:

²⁷ 1 Cor. 11:23 – 25.

²⁸ Luke 22:19 -20.

“It is actually suggested that Paul was in the habit of referring to Luke’s gospel whenever he said, as if writing of some Gospel of his own: ‘According to my gospel.’”²⁹

The close link between Paul and Luke made them like inseparable brothers through thick and thin; In Mission, evangelism, stress, joy, health, persecution, illness and finally facing execution. In a real sense they owned each others labours of love for the Lord, both materially and spiritually. Eusebius, based on his own extensive reading of sources, now lost to us [and not all recorded by himself but echoed in his opinions], concludes that Luke and Paul shared the great task of spreading the gospel even in written published documents like Luke-Acts. This shows the importance of Luke and Paul’s shared literary output. It is not a far stretch of the imagination to think of Luke, and other co-workers, preaching the gospel, or reading it and explaining it from Luke’s gospel material, whilst Paul taught with particular emphasis on the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus in the form of Didache [teaching]. Acts itself gives significant insights into the evangelistic endeavours of Paul, Luke and others. In terms of missions theology we must take note of the practical resources that Paul’s Apostolic support team facilitated. Every great movement needs good promotion through literature and living human examples who are on fire with a passion for their product. And Jesus is no product!

The close relationship of Luke-Paul in the missionary context is also reflected by many ideas and words used commonly in Paul’s letters and Luke-Acts. Paul’s and Luke’s writings share over a hundred words in common which both writers use compared to very few examples from the other gospels studied in the Pauline writings

²⁹ Op Cit Eusebius Book 3:4.

compared to other Evangelists. When people become close friends they also can share close similarities of language, thought and ideas. Just consider how husbands and wives come to share many similarities of gesture, behaviour and language. Eusebius is probably reflecting a well accepted point of view, which was known from the earliest times, that Luke and Paul saw their work as a work together shared for the purpose of drawing attention to Jesus as the Saviour of mankind. Their work was one work not owned by them in terms of modern concepts of copyright, but owned by Christ and his Church as the church continued to grow and expand. One can imagine that Paul encouraged Luke to use his command of Greek, and his literary training in the classics, to write a gospel fit for publication. This must help to inform our own efforts for the Lord. Surely we must combine our resources rather than keeping them to ourselves in our own denominational corner. We cannot copy write Lord Jesus! Although if the Devil could do it in the international world of licensing he would I'm sure. Any thing to try to limit the appeal of the gospel by tying it up in some way!

Having considered these aspects in the light of the evidence we can answer our initial questions above to a large extent. Taking as our starting point the view that Luke and Paul were close companions we can say that the identity of the gospel and Acts with Luke-Paul would mean that we know:

[1] That Luke had written some early drafts of his gospel as early as 45/50AD – during the time when the Apostles were still alive – hence giving Luke his eye-witness sources for his gospel and the Acts.³⁰

³⁰ Luke 1:1-4 & Acts 1:1-5.

[2] We know that Luke was a doctor.³¹ We know from his writing style that he was an educated man being aware of the literary works of his age – he quotes the words of two pagan poet’s Epimenides of Cnossos and Aratus of Cilicia When Paul debates with the Epicureans and Stoics by the altar to the unknown god in Athens; doctors of this period were well aware of the great body of classical literature, and as a doctor Luke would most certainly have read what we know as the classics today. The so called philosophical education of the time demonstrated a high regard for checking sources and using evidence. Luke’s ability as a man employing the empirical method to his sources, as he would a patient, must not be under-estimated [see further on in Chapter 2].

[3] We learn much of Luke’s character, he was a true friend to Paul through thick and thin. We witness his beliefs as a Christian through what he wrote. We learn about his evangelistic-teaching material which he must have often spoken to enquirers and believers about in the form of the gospel. We find his love for Jesus. We discover his integrity. We find the man who searched carefully for the real truth as a doctor sought accurate knowledge for a proper treatment for a patient. He was convinced of the historical truth about Jesus life, death and resurrection, because he had learnt historically about the life and works of Jesus from real “eye-witnesses” to the facts.³²

[4] We learn about Luke the traveller. And he was truly a well travelled man. Again and again Acts accuracy in terms of customs, beliefs, buildings, persons, rulers and religious customs shows Luke’s intimate knowledge of regional variance, custom,

³¹ Col. 4:14.

³² Luke 1:1-4.

religious and administrative systems. It would be ridiculous to argue Luke's unreliability concerning Jesus life [as radicals do], and then to imagine him carefully researching every bit of information he could get hold of about places he mentions. Only a well travelled, intelligent man of integrity could have written as Luke did. And why did Luke take so much trouble over giving so much attention to careful dating of events, and places mentioned? Because it was possible for people of his time to verify the facts of what happened at the times and in the places mentioned for themselves. Nor would the writer of Acts have gone to all the trouble of getting his various pieces of regional information perfect, and then simply have fabricated a mythical Christian story on such an accurate demographic skeleton. If Luke is accurate about historical events, and regional information, then he must be completely reliable in the most basic terms concerning Jesus' Life, words and work. And in turn we must expect him to have scrutinised and sifted information gathered about Jesus from his interviews with eye-witnesses. Luke had first hand knowledge of the places he visited with the Apostle. In the last century, before many archaeological discoveries had been made to corroborate the "Lukan" accuracy it was argued by the German radical destructive critics that Luke was not a good historical source. However, this assertion has been refuted again and again by archaeology to the extent that radical criticism should really slink away with its' tail between its legs. Even the last 20 to 30 years have brought new data to light in confirmation of Luke the historian. What is surprising is that bad press always gets a good airing concerning Christian belief, but precious little has been circulated by popular press concerning archaeology that supports Christian faith! One might ask "why is this?"

Theide's words bear special significance concerning the negative criticism of the sceptics. He writes:

“Many sceptics have been tempted to dismiss Luke's texts as subjective theology, with perhaps just a few credible historical snippets here or there. Professional historians, on the other hand, have learned to trust Luke as one of the outstanding virtuosos of classical historiography.”³³

It is not unfair to consider the irony that modern day historians have faith in Luke's record which secular theologians have abandoned for themselves! Moreover, Thiede was involved in re-dating the so called Magdalene Papyrus [P66] – which was copied from the autograph no later than 66AD, and possibly as early as 40AD.³⁴

Moreover, it was claimed at one time that Quirinius, mentioned in Luke's dating of the nativity story,³⁵ was not the governor of Syria at the time of Jesus birth about 6 – 4bc. But discoveries have shown that Quirinius or Cirinius was special legate sent by the emperor with powers of governorship jointly shared with the governor of Syria from 10 – 6 BC. Indeed a coin has been found with Quirinius identified as governor coming from the exact time period Luke puts him in during the era in which Jesus was born.³⁶ Critics made much of the lack of evidence for Quirinius' governorship before evidence was found to the contrary, making much of historical silence to try to refute

³³ Thiede Carsten Peter, The Emmaus Mystery, Page 12.

³⁴ Thiede Carsten Peter & D'ancona Matthew, The Jesus Papyrus, Chapter 5. See also The Quest for the True Cross, written by the same authors. In this book Thiede demonstrates his scholarship once again as one of the leading palaeographers of the 21st century. A fragment of wood which probably came from the “titulus” the board with the accusation against the crucified Jesus is examined. This artefact gives compelling evidence for the historical claims of the gospels concerning Jesus death on the cross, and the accusation laid against him which was placed on the board nailed above his head on the cross.

³⁵ Luke 2:2.

³⁶ Catholic Encyclopedia, Page 13.

the historical reliability of Luke. However, in this case they have once again been found wanting in their claims concerning Luke. Hence Luke the historian is to be trusted. In fact it is even more to the point that A.N. Sherwin-White at Oxford University writes concerning Acts:

“The historical framework is exact. In terms of time and place the details are precise and correct. One walks the streets and market-places, the theatres and assemblies of first-century Ephesus or Thessalonica, Corinth or Philippi, with the author of Acts. The great men of the cities, the magistrates, the mob and the mob-leader are all there. [He continues later] It is similar with the narrative of Paul’s judicial experiences before the tribunals of Gallio, Felix and Festus. As documents these narratives belong to the same historical series as the record of provincial and imperial trials in epigraphical and literary sources of the first and early second centuries AD.”³⁷

It is this sort of judgment that makes Luke-Acts 100% authentic in all important details of Christian faith, belief, facts about the historical Jesus, and his teaching. It would be considered to be inadmissible evidence in a court room if somebody who was not a witness to a crime were to give evidence based on supposition. However, radical critics writing 1800/1900/2000 odd years after the early church Fathers [their criticisms cover the last 200 years at least] , and New Testament documents themselves, put themselves above the empirical evidence. This is not good science. If we apply the simple scientific principle known as Ockham’s Razor to the early written evidence we have, then we have the best starting point in coming to know the

³⁷ Sherwin-White A., N., Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament, Page 186.

real Luke, the real Jesus and the historicity of the New Testament documents.

Ockhams' razor is: "All things being equal the most simple explanation is usually the right one where no other compelling evidence can be shown to contradict it" [this is a rough rendering of the principle]. No compelling evidence exists to refute the historical reliability of Luke-Acts! All of the significant objections to Luke the historian in fact point to him as the best source compared to any other sources among ancient historical literature. Objections to Luke's veracity are not founded on good empirical data!

In the case of Luke-Acts, and the "Lukan-Pauline" relationship, this principle would make me believe that all available evidence can be trusted for what it is!

As I started off by mentioning, this paper is not about the gospel and Acts as much as it is about the man – Luke. But Luke has to be set in a context as we find out about him from our primary sources [Luke-Acts]. So our next question moves on from Luke the author and historian to Luke and his place in history as the man of medicine and classical scholar. It is a fair deduction to consider Luke as a well educated man of first century science, medicine and philosophy, and the evidence we will discuss next will make for a compelling case!

Reflection Exercises

[1] What in your view makes it important to establish the historical reliability of the Gospel of Luke?

[2] Give 3 pieces of evidence that Luke was the companion of the Apostle Paul?

[3] Paul was a great missionary minded man – what does Luke's close association with him tell us about Luke's attitude to missionary work?

[4] What does the early manuscript evidence for the production of the gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke tell us about the relationship of these documents to the Apostles and their missionary teaching?

Chapter 2 Luke Medical Doctor

In Colossians³⁸ Paul speaks of Luke as “the beloved physician”. This simple reference was never seriously doubted in the early church period. Later, Eusebius accepts it. The general rule of thumb among the church fathers was to accept that Luke the Physician was the writer of Luke-Acts. It is really only in the last century that doubts were raised. And we must understand the basis of them – at least as a thumb nail sketch.

Perhaps it is best to start with Hobart’s book entitled: “The Medical language of St. Luke” [Dublin 1882]. Hobart did an exhaustive study of words and phrases in Luke-Acts and demonstrated that such medical writers as Hippocrates, Arctaeus, Galen and Dioscorides employed the same sort of language as Luke to an impressive degree.

³⁹Others are more cautious pointing out that other classical writers also use the same sort of assumed medical language without themselves being doctors. An important name is H.J. Cadbury whose position is well summarised by Leon Morris in his commentary on Luke:

“...H.J. Cadbury has convinced most people that the language is not especially medical, by pointing out that most of the examples cited can be paralleled in writers who were not medicos. It seems generally agreed now that there was no special technical medical language in our sense of the term, for writers such as Hippocrates and Galen seem to have used the ordinary language of

³⁸ Col. 4:14.

³⁹ Hobart William Kirk, The Medical Language of St. Luke. See on the whole text for Hobart’s detailed examination of the medical language of Luke. Although not all have found his conclusions warranted it would seem that this has mostly been due to over conservatism rather than a failure by Hobart to demonstrate his thesis.

educated people. But if Cadbury has made it difficult to think of the language of Luke-Acts as proving that the writer was a physician, he seems to have turned up nothing inconsistent with the hypothesis.”⁴⁰

And there is the crux of the matter. There is no proof that Luke was not medically trained. Indeed the Catholic Encyclopaedia reporting a scholar called Plummer makes an important observation that counterbalances Cadbury’s cautious conclusions, when he writes:

“The argument”, [such as Cadbury’s] “is cumulative. Any two or three instances of coincidence with medical writers may be explained as mere coincidences; but the large number of coincidences render their explanation unsatisfactory for all of them, especially where the word is either rare in the LXX, or not found there at all.”⁴¹

This view accords well with my view that Luke’s language does have a larger number of medical terms than one would expect from the point of view of volume of occurrence. Just because non-medics used similar language themselves does not exclude that Luke was using medical language in his own mind as he followed in the footsteps of his predecessors like Hippocrates. Given that it is hard to identify the “beloved physician” that Paul mentions by name as Luke from the writer of our gospel [see on chapter 1] then the language is not surprising being in fact confirmation of my hypothesis. One very interesting example is found in Jesus’

⁴⁰ Morris Leon, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries Luke, Pages 19,20.

⁴¹ Op Cit Cath. Encyc. Page v5.

saying about the camel and the needles eye.⁴² For the word needle both Matthew and Mark use the Greek word “Raphis” which is the word used for a tailors needle; Whereas Luke uses the Greek word “Belone” which is the term for a surgeon’s needle. Barclay concludes about this:

“Luke was a doctor and a doctor’s words came most naturally to his pen.”⁴³

Surely a common sense view like this is to be preferred to elaborate investigations into words used by other non medical writers such as Cadbury’s immense study on this has attempted. Nevertheless it is true to say that there was not a technical /special medical language in Luke’s time. However, the usage of language used by specific medical writers when discussing conditions would strongly support that Luke was a doctor. He shows his hand on many occasions in convincing ways. This is particularly convincing when he differs in the words he uses compared to those used by his synoptic counterparts. The use of similar language reveals a conscious awareness of the writings of Hippocrates and others, and this is evidence of Luke’s training in the universities of his day in which medicine was one of the things taught in the philosophy courses offered. Upon graduating from these institutions the graduate could choose which career path to follow as his training had covered politics, philosophy, mathematics, science and medicine. Surely Luke’s medical knowledge was gained in such an institution and by extension his identity as physician by Paul, and the close relational ties that Acts demonstrates with him in the “we” passages make the connection certain a priori. The epistemology of this connection is beyond reasonable doubt!

⁴² Mt. 19:24; Mk. 10:25; Lk. 16:25.

⁴³ Op Cit Barclay Acts Page 2.

It must also be noted that it was generally true that most rich and well educated Romans had some very useful medical knowledge themselves. They certainly had books with remedies, and the head of the Roman household often acted as General practitioner for the family. There are even instances of the head of the house carrying out minor surgery on household servants. The well educated read philosophy as part of their schooling, and part of this was to read Medicine being inclusive of the well rounded Roman approach. This would also leave the student with a wide range of choices as to what direction his professional life would take. Luke writing to the influential Theophilus would have gained even more respect by virtue of his very evident educational background. We must remember that many early Christians often came from the poorer, less well educated class, so Luke's gifts gained even more significance as Luke publishes his gospel in the capital of the Roman world as an equal with the so called higher educated classes.

So in one sense it is harder to argue for Luke's medical background as a doctor on linguistic grounds alone, but the medical aspects of Luke's training would have stood out as part of the type of knowledge that a well educated man like Theophilus would have recognised. The early evidence from Christian writers, who knew from their sources that Luke was a doctor, as well as Paul's identification that he was such, is the final proof that we need not doubt! And we must not neglect the conclusion that Luke's use of language equates well with a classically trained Roman/Asian medico. As we will consider soon the medical training available in first century Rome was not replicated again until the 19th century, with many of the Roman concepts on preventative medicine only becoming widely practiced again in the 20th. Indeed the

Roman medical writer Galen was read up until the 19th century as a basic text for all true physicians. In a real sense modern medicine owes much to ancient medicine. The dark ages, in Europe, were a real step back in medical knowledge, and what we term advanced today finds much of its basic background in ancient 1st century Rome. The fundamental grounds of Roman medicine were based on observation [to identify the illness and to see which treatments worked best on a disease], and also on communication in written notes on new or improved methods of treating conditions. This information was kept in the leading teaching institutions, and was made available to educated physicians like Luke. Concise observations about the degree of an illness, its' threat to a patient and its treatment were all part of the empirical data doctors recorded. Each physician would keep his own patient notes, and would make his experience available to others. Luke demonstrates his empirical training well. He was not an-other-worldly-minded man who was of no earthly use to anyone else. He went with treatments that worked. Jesus' continued presence by his Spirit demonstrated fantastic cures, but Luke also knew that God expected that each man and women use their gifts and knowledge to aid others. Luke was, therefore, a good Christian physician in his practice of medicine. Luke the Christian doctor practiced Christian medicine to a high, caring, ethical standard – so should we practice our chosen career in a similar vein.

If we study Luke's writings we find every reason to accept this position. He does take more interest in describing the degree of illness experienced by individuals mentioned in his gospel compared to the others. This shows his desire to depict an accurate picture of the illnesses that Jesus healed – only a doctor would think in this way! Where Matthew and Mark speak of a fever Luke clarifies it by identifying it as a

“High Fever”.⁴⁴ This ratifies the sensitivity of Luke to his profession. He recognises that the real danger to life, in the story of Peter’s mother-in-law, was the extremity of the condition. A physician of experience would be best positioned to note this. A high fever often led to loss of life through multi organ failure. On another occasion he mentions that a man did not simply just have “leprosy”, but that he was “full” of leprosy, in other words it was an advanced case – which to a doctor of the time would further highlight the magnitude and un-treatable nature of the condition.⁴⁵

In his record of the woman who had serious gynaecological haemorrhaging he points out that “she could not be healed by anyone.”⁴⁶ Whereas, Mark says she had suffered at the hands of many physicians.⁴⁷ We can see here how Luke’s professional pride defends his profession. It was not that physicians had caused her suffering, but that it could not be cured given the current state of medical knowledge at the time. Luke is careful to point this out. As a good doctor he cannot think of any professional that he knew of deliberately causing further suffering. The Hippocratic oath alone “first do no harm” was something that accorded well with Luke’s notion of medicine being the healing of the patient not further harm. He holds up the highest standard for his profession in his report of this story so as to show that doctors find their best example of supreme practice in Jesus! A comparison between Mark and Luke means that the distinction cannot be missed to the modern reader. This alone is excellent grounds to see our physician at work.

⁴⁴ Mt. 8:14; Mk. 1:30; Lk. 4:38.

⁴⁵ Lk. 5:12.

⁴⁶ Lk. 8:43.

⁴⁷ Mk. 5:36.

Surely miracle healings of suffering patients were a wonderful release for Luke the caring and sensitive physician who hated incurable diseases which he had had to sit by and watch in their terrible progression and suffering for his patients. Many of the medical problems confronted by doctors of his time were those specifically suffered by women. As we consider the gospel, we find Luke's awareness of feminine issues particularly highlighted in the very careful record he makes of the pregnant Elizabeth and Mary.⁴⁸ He shows a doctor's understanding of feminine psychology and the response to pregnancy. The beautiful record of Mary's song is recorded so well for us because Luke the doctor understood the complicated matrix of the whole cycle of pregnancy [If you wish to read the passages concerned then particularly read Luke 1 and ask a pregnant friend to read it for you as well. Many women express their surprise as to the accuracy of the feminine response in the reproductive cycle in terms of the mothers' thoughts and wishes for her child to be].

What is striking is that Luke understood feminine issues very well, and it has been recognised by many scholars that his gospel is particularly the gospel of women. The centrality of women in Jesus ministry is very much at the forefront of Luke's record.⁴⁹ Certainly it is striking that the first witnesses to the resurrection were women.⁵⁰ In a general culture, even in Rome, where women's rights were not considered, we have this brilliant snap shot of the first credible witnesses Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James.⁵¹ Clearly Luke had a high regard for the place of women in the church. It may also be noted that he may have been specialised in women's medicine in his professional career. It is known that there were special medical

⁴⁸ Lk. Chapter 1.

⁴⁹ See on Lk. Chapter 1 for example. Also Luke resided in Philippi Macedonia. Macedonia gave women a status which was not found any where else in the Greco-Roman Empire.

⁵⁰ Lk. 24:1.

⁵¹ Lk. 24:10.

practitioners for Ophthalmology, Gynaecology etc within Rome itself. Excavations at Pompei have unearthed the very treatment rooms with the speciality of the doctor clearly assigned to treatment facilities.

Luke may well have had a clientele of a broad spectrum. The gospel demonstrates his interest in showing Jesus love for the outcasts.⁵² All stratus of society were open to his caring professional touch, including the rich and well educated. This is arguably the way he came to know Theophilus to whom he dedicates his gospel. One can imagine that he ministered to his families' medical needs and during the process to their spiritual ones as well. Surely his gospel was written to help inform those best placed in government and society so that they may be convinced about Jesus Christ, and then Luke may well have hoped such high ranking officials may also get a vision, and mission for the suffering classes. High ranking Roman disdain for the plebeians was notable, but to Luke it would have been of greater note if this weaker stratum should receive aid from their grander contemporaries. There is no better place to change the world, than to change the attitudes of the people of influence. Perhaps Theophilus was one such person. Luke was convinced that the only hope for helping the poor and needy was the message of the gospel. If the hearts of the leaders could be won to Christ the great servant of God, then they themselves could become powerful influences under the direction of the sacrificing Spirit of Jesus. True leaders are those who serve others sacrificially, not themselves!

What about you and I? What about the church today? Do we have Luke's Vision?

What can the church in the multiple resources of its members do to be a real influence

⁵² Lk. 4:18,19; 15:11- 31; 17:12.

for good in society? It has struck me that my first point of ministry should be my family, my extended family, my friends, and also significantly my work colleagues. If I draw a circle of the sphere of my influence on others then I find that I have many opportunities to speak about my relationship with Jesus. But equally as importantly I need to be the face of Jesus to those I influence. My face, my actions and my attitudes will perhaps be the only chance some have to get to know the Lord. Only by maintaining a Spirit led relationship with Lord Jesus can I represent his face, his sacrificing heart and his mission where he wants me to share his influence today.⁵³

Luke understood this responsibility well. His ministry was a ministry of healing that looked at the whole person, the whole social order, and he thought big! We need a big world view of what we can do to influence others so that they may in turn use their resources, once won to Christ, for the greater glory of introducing God's love to a world that is in need of him. We need Luke's conviction that Jesus is the only complete answer to the human condition! Luke diagnosed the Lord Jesus rightly when he came to the conviction that he is the only name in the universe by which mankind can "be saved".⁵⁴

Luke was a pragmatist as a practitioner. What worked best to alleviate the sufferings of his patients was at the heart of his medical mission. Of course Jesus was supremely the only full answer to him [as we can read in his two books]. He clearly believed that he had a duty to do all that he practically could to alleviate human suffering even when it did not lead to immediate conversions and saving faith for the recipients. He did not miss Jesus concern for the physical person in his miracles, faith often came after; even if in the case of the 10 lepers who were healed only one gave

⁵³ John 5:19.

⁵⁴ Acts 4:12.

God the glory ⁵⁵ – Jesus still aided all ten and Luke understood Jesus love for sufferers, some of whom never turned to him. It has always been part of the awesome wonder that I have for Jesus that he genuinely cared for all people despite their thankfulness, or acceptance of God or his mission to eternally save them! Luke is the only one among the synoptic gospels to record this story. Luke the doctor did not think only of the spiritual target group who accepted Jesus, but also of others that Jesus healed who never acknowledged him, this distinction was Lost sight of by Mark and Matthew, but not to Luke’s searching eye as he consulted eyewitnesses to these things! Only a doctor in touch with the heart of Jesus would do that! When Luke visited patients I am sure he engaged in prayerful treatment, but treat them he did! It is easy for us to say to people “I will pray for you” when they are facing a crisis, financial, or whatever, but we need to be practically caring too by getting our wallets out, or by doing whatever we can to really aid another. Luke knew very well about miracle healings, but he did not pass the buck concerning his responsibility by turning his back and simply saying a quick prayer for people. If God did not answer prayers for a speedy miracle recovery then Luke prayerfully continued treating his patients in faith and hope. The abundance of miracle healings in the early church did not stop Luke practicing medicine. Extreme charismatic healers need to beware of their claims that all can be healed if they have faith – berating people when they do not get results for not having enough faith. No where in Luke’s writings do we get the impression that this was a practice of Jesus, his apostles or by extension of Luke! Whatever the results in terms of conversions Luke understood the heart of Jesus on this – aid all who have a need even if they turn their backs on you. Have we turned our backs on a suffering indifferent world? Is Jesus in our midst at church patting us on the back for

⁵⁵ Lk. 17:12.

being good Christians, or offering prayers without action? Where is Jesus today? He is out there seeking to aid all! What does he see in our churches? Is he sickened by our lip service love that does not love as he does? Is he about to take away our church candle from his presence?⁵⁶ Is he about to spew us out of his mouth?⁵⁷ Is the church's love being transformed into a sick and selfish hard heartedness to helping others whether the welfare state or medical institutions do or not? Is Jesus sickened by our slumber and lack of real practical love for a dying world? Luke the Christian man makes me ask myself these questions. Lord please enable me to wake up to the needs around me! Lord please awaken your people! In Jesus name Amen!

Doctor Luke's training and education

The Catholic Encyclopaedia commenting on Saint Luke's training as a doctor suggests that he studied at the famous school of Tarsus in Asia Minor. This school rivalled Alexandria and Athens. Rome itself had established military medical training centres. It is quite possible that Luke served on a military ship as doctor – as the book of Acts demonstrates his intimate knowledge of sea faring; which to this present day has been recognised by expert mariners.⁵⁸ Certainly one may assume that this would explain his contact with Paul, and their shared interests because of shared background, love of travelling, and Love of Jesus.

If he had contact with the sea faring Roman military wing then he too may have furthered his training and experience by studying in one of Emperor Augustus's

⁵⁶ Rev. 2:1-8.

⁵⁷ Rev. 3:18 – 21.

⁵⁸ Op Cit. Cath Encyc. Page 2 & See on Acts chapter 27.

famous medical centres, established early in the first century, and remaining for 500 years after.

Tanya Marton, writing in 1999 has this to say about Augustus's achievement:

“In particular, the fifteen-year civil war directly following the assassination of Julius Caesar led to significant medical innovations. The war was fought between the best armies of the world and yielded such high levels of injury that the newly emerged emperor, Augustus, formed a professional military medical corps. Before this, doctors had fairly low status. August, realizing that they were key in an empire and especially an army, gave all physicians that joined his new army medical corps dignified titles, land grants, and special retirement benefits! For the next five hundred years, fuelled by the motivations and opportunity for medical advancement supplied by the many battles, and supported by the powers that be, this serious group advanced the study and practice of medicine to a level not seen again until late in the nineteenth century.”⁵⁹

Luke would have had every advantage to learn from Roman medical practice whatever his relation to the military class. Certainly by the time he is with Paul he is established in more of a general practice, or specialised in Women's matters.

⁵⁹ Marton Tanya, Ancient Rome, Sophisticated Doctors, Page. 1.

The level of medical advance in Rome is testament to the type of doctor, and medical science Luke would have obtained. Medicine was:

[1] Split among different specialities, such as internists, urologists etc;

[2] All surgical tasks were performed by appropriate specialists

[3] Surgeons used practically the same instruments as used only one hundred years ago, and some are still used in principle today. The tool kit consisted Forceps, scalpels, catheters, arrow extractors, clamps to tie off blood vessels. Yes they did have an understanding of the pulmonary system. They could perform quite advanced surgery – such as amputations, even caesarean section in a rudimentary form.

[4] They had a wide range of pain killers to help in surgery – like extracts of opium still used today in morphine.

[5] Herbal remedies were used, tested on the battle front. Those that had a successful effect were documented and passed on.

[6] Doctors sifted through results tested in real life medical emergencies and treatments and came up with accepted treatments further passed on and taught through the medical schools.

[7] They had hygiene techniques not used again until the rebirth of successful sanitary medicine in the 19th century. They boiled tools. They washed hands between patients and they changed wound dressings and quarantined serious infectious disease. They washed wounds with acetum which is actually a better antiseptic than Joseph Lister's carbolic acid. It must be noted that Lister rediscovered antiseptics in 1860.

[8] It was common knowledge that arteries and veins carried blood. This was lost sight of for many years.

[9] They recognised the need to amputate to prevent deadly gangrene.

[10] Also battlefield epidemics were stemmed by doctors quarantining, and moving armies away from swamps and disease infested areas.

[11] City building projects were influenced by medical knowledge. Clean running water was brought in via aqueducts. Sewage was removed from cities. Hypocausts brought heat. Houses were not built close together. Cities were airy open places with market places, and good wide open roads. ⁶⁰

It is true that there were two classes of doctor in Rome. The quacks who lacked education; who knew nothing of the great medical practices of the educated military class, and also of those who had studied at a proper medical school like that in Tarsus. But there was also the well educated medical class who could not be called non-advanced, or living in dark ages of superstition without science and well thought through medical practice. Luke's education certainly came from this latter branch. His command of Greek in Luke 1:1-4 especially evidences his classical roots. He was among the best doctors of the age, and his insights into the process of empirical medicine and treatment would have been thought revolutionary not more than 140 years ago. The way he tests his sources, and gives exact details and information about practices found in various provinces is at the height of the best historians of his age which modern day Greco-Roman historians rely on without overly questioning their reliability. Luke meets the peak requirements of reliable data. His basic empirical method is still the starting point for all medical practice, education and advancement today. Luke was one of the best when it came to the pursuit of the truth about good medicine in what worked and what did not. He would have known how to sift

⁶⁰ Ibid See on whole article Tanya@mcattmaster.com

information rejecting what was of no value, and accepting what was on the side of good and true ethical medical practice.

The great early 2nd century doctor Galen describes the highly scientific attitudes and practice expected of good doctors:

“The aim of the art of medicine is health, but its end is the possession of health. Doctors have to know by which means to bring about health, when it is absent, and by which means to preserve it, when it is present.

.....

Talking of the empirical method he continues:

“An experience is imitative if something which has proven to be beneficial or harmful, either naturally or by chance or by experimentation, is tried out again for the same disease. It is this kind of experience which has contributed most to their art. For when they have imitated, not just twice or three times, but very many times, what has turned out to be beneficial on earlier occasions, and when they then find out that, for the most part, it has the same effect in the case of the same diseases, then they call such a memory a theorem and think that it already is trustworthy and forms part of the art.....

Moreover, commenting on the doctors’ attitude to history he says:

”History, on the other hand, they called the report of one’s own perception. For the very same thing counts as one’s own perception for the person who has made the observations, but as history for the person who is learning what has been observed.””but, once one has put what one expected to the test, it already is trustworthy, if it has been confirmed by this, no less than if it had been observed many times to happen in the same way.”⁶¹

Luke was not just an observer or experimenter, but he also was able to weigh evidence for its accuracy by checking results, and testing sources in order to judge their accuracy and benefit to his patients. He certainly would have applied these advanced concepts of testing his sources to his collection of his history about Jesus. Thiede in his ground breaking work “The Emmaus Mystery” demonstrates that Luke must have actually walked many of the routes measuring distances from place to place thus testing the geographical and topographical data in his gospel and acts.⁶² Indeed Luke 1:1-4 makes this plain:

“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed.”

⁶¹ Walzer R., & Frede M., Translators, *Galen three Treatises on the Nature of Science*, Pages 3-5.

⁶² Op Cit Thiede, See on the whole book for a detailed description of Thiede’s archaeological research into the identification of Emmaus. Thiede himself walked the route from Jerusalem to Emmaus, and imagined that Luke had probably done the same during his stay in Palestine during Paul’s arrest there in 59 – 61 AD.

Part of this “narrative” that was “delivered” to the “us” of Luke was based on accurate “eyewitnesses” as sources of the exact places and events found in the time of Jesus earthly mission. If Luke wanted to test things further for accuracy then he would visit the places where events happened, and take note of important travel information.

Luke the objective writer

Luke seems unhappy with the “other” written accounts he has read about Jesus. May be because they were not good literary productions, or may be because not all the sources were properly tested for accuracy. He himself used eyewitness accounts which were verified by the Apostles themselves.⁶³ In terms of his use of Matthew and Mark as sources he seems to have selected what is of the most importance for the gospel record as it applies to Asia and Europe as this is his primary target audience.

Whatever his concerns he aimed to give Theophilus an accurate account based on eyewitness primary sources. Real witness from those who had actually seen, touched, tasted, heard and smelt events was far more highly valued in tactile terms compared to our present culture which has come to value what is seen and heard mostly through the media of television.⁶⁴ Luke clearly applied his objective ability to test information and record it as he would his medical findings. He was concerned to give a good empirical evidence base to what he wrote as a witness, whatever he could do to enhance the peculiar tactile needs of first century culture were included – for instance we may consider the way he notes Elizabeth’s recognition of the foetus of John the

⁶³ Luke 1:1.

⁶⁴ 1 John 1:1-3.

Baptist leaping in her womb when Mary visited her.⁶⁵ This is indeed a high standard which modern historians also aim to achieve – especially in archival history, although the tactile experience base of this has only become particularly significant with the advent of family history searches carried out by people seeking to trace their roots, and with the desire to trace present familial characteristics on the basis of information from past relatives – reasoning that there is a DNA link. Accuracy is very important to modern man as far as it aids his obsessions. Luke uses advanced methodology in his gospel and the Acts. What we read when we consult them is 100% reliable as a true reflection of Jesus Christ and his church as a historical reality.

He aimed to give an orderly account. Roman hospitals were highly structured. They had rooms dedicated to specialities and disciplines in medicine. There was an orderly process of treatment for patients. There was an orderly system of keeping records. Luke the Christian doctor prizes order, not chaos. His exacting medical nature wants to make sure events are put in their proper context. This included beliefs of the church which had arisen directly by careful reference to the teaching of Jesus. He was trained to list symptoms, possible causes, patient history, outcomes of treatment and further treatments which may have been related to a condition. For instance we can find a ready source of information in the “treatise of Aretus of Cappadocia” [a second century medico] who described the symptoms and treatments for diabetes. In other words there was a ready made approach which led to good practice. This was due as a general phenomenon to Augustus’s establishment of medical centres of knowledge. When Luke writes of Emperor Augustus⁶⁶ it may well have been in the light of a

⁶⁵ Luke 1:41.

⁶⁶ Luke 2:1.

special respect for the man who had moved medicine on in such an enlightened fashion.

Moreover, Luke was drawn to the compassion of Jesus for sufferers. The pericope of the man with the withered hand records the compassion of Jesus' for his suffering soul.⁶⁷ He was attracted to the quality of Jesus the healer and Saviour. This in turn arose from the highest qualities fostered by the medical schools, in their pursuit of quality control of candidates. Only competent practitioners graduated the August schools with qualification. Luke exerts all of his will to maintaining quality control to the sources he used.

Modern scholarship has started to turn back to Luke the accurate and principled historian. Taking his work seriously was a matter of jest among many. Secular theologians seem to have little respect for those who love Luke. But this probably shows a deeper motive, which does not want to accept Jesus as the God-man of history. The conviction seems well founded that Luke the physician only related the truth!

But truth to Luke was based on his desire to only share what was true about his beloved Lord! And it is evident that his caring doctors heart bled when he considered his suffering Lord. He beheld the suffering Saviour on the cross in his minds eye. He listened again to the words of forgiveness for his persecutors and his concern for the dying thief.⁶⁸ The agonised Jesus takes time for the agony of others. The face of God is revealed in the love of his son, and in the distress of his son that drove the heart of

⁶⁷ Luke 6:6.

⁶⁸ Luke 23:34.

God to the cross. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.”⁶⁹ Luke saw this symbolised in Jesus’ position raised up in a racked, ruined and tortured body between two thieves. One calls for Jesus saving help [representing those for whom Jesus death meant salvation] the other derides the Lord [picturing the world and its determined self destruction in the face of love].⁷⁰ What Luke understood so well in recording this event was that Jesus loved and loves both categories of people. His sacrifice on the cross shows that God had to suffer to save us. It is against his nature to force us, so winning us by his love by receiving all of the sins of the world, and pouring them out on his Son is his solution. Jesus is punished for us. As the great physician of mankind he prefers to suffer rather than his patients if this means an effective cure, and perfect eternal health. The punishment that bought us peace was upon him. Father, Son and Spirit can do nothing more to win the hearts of men. If we turn away from Jesus here then we have missed the heart of salvation which is found in him alone.⁷¹

⁶⁹ 2 Cor. 5:19 RSV.

⁷⁰ Luke 23:39 – 43.

⁷¹ Acts 4:11.

Reflection Exercises

[1] Luke was clearly academically trained in a Philosophy of science programme. In what ways did his conversion to Christianity help him to use his academic skills in promoting the mission of Jesus in spreading the gospel?

[2] We hear much of miracle healings today. Some charismatics claim that it is God's will that all Christians should be healed, and that if an ill person is not that it is a sign of a lack of faith. In what ways is their view corroborated by the Lukan account – if at all?

[3] In what ways can Luke the GP help us to understand how we can serve as Christians in our professional lives whatever we do as jobs or careers?

[4] In what ways does Luke's literature demonstrate the influence of his medical background on the formation of his gospel?

Chapter 3 - The Prime Motivation in “Missional” Theology

A Personal Prayer

Holy Spirit give me your passion for Jesus. Give me your desire to focus on him alone. Help me to be filled with admiration for all that he is, and all that he represents. Let him be my king – the mentor of my life’s game plan; the first thought in the morning and the last thought at night. May he be manifested in the way I conduct myself. May he be the one I reflect on, speak of and build my own self image on. Let his values, and his qualities grow in my heart. Help me to take up my cross of self sacrifice each day. O that I may see your face, and be in your presence forevermore! I want to be enabled to bring as many others with me to join with you and I when we meet at your coming. In Jesus name Amen.

An Existential Connection

Although this is my prayer, I believe that it does in some ways reflect the heart of what Luke’s life was about as well. Of course I have many inadequacies and I do not put myself on a level with him. Each of us has special gifts. The Lord had a particular plan for his contribution to the church. The primary focus of Luke’s mind was based on his passion for Jesus. What he communicated in word and writing is the abiding testament to his special role. He has remained one of the most influential men in history; leaving the Gospel and the Acts. Millions meditate on them every day!

Luke begins Acts with the words: “In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach. Until the day when he was

taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.”⁷²

He mentions his first book, the gospel of Luke. In this volume he recorded all that Jesus “began to do and teach”.⁷³ In other words Jesus mission is the great starting point. Through him all the resources of God are made available to the church. In his second volume, Acts, he identifies the work of the Holy Spirit as the medium by which Jesus continues to influence the world. For example, he speaks of the “Spirit of Jesus” guiding Paul to go to Macedonia.⁷⁴ The Holy Spirit is really the “Spirit of Jesus”. This is because it is by his agency that Jesus further facilitates his mission.

Jesus remains active by the evidence of his Spirit, who enables the miracles and teaching of the Lord to carry on through individual followers. It is not enough to have a written body of literature about Jesus, or stories to tell, Jesus has to be really alive in the communication of them. It is because he is alive now, active now, and present now that they obtain real significance. On their own they become interesting but not life changing. It is because Jesus is alive, and interested in us that is the real issue!

God is universally revealed to each believer as they are filled by his Spirit. Indeed the means of knowing that the first Christians were accepted by Jesus was because they were filled with the Spirit of Jesus. Cornelius being the first named gentile convert, among many others that were to follow, was accepted by Peter, and the church, because he and his household had been filled with the Holy Spirit [Acts 10:44;

⁷² Luke 1:1,2

⁷³ Acts 1:1.

⁷⁴ Acts 16:8.

15:8,9].⁷⁵ Luke also knew Jesus because he had come to live in him. Luke is not just writing a story which he feels somewhat interested in, but he is sharing the depths of intimacy with each of his readers because the stories he tells are real to him!

Passion for Jesus

For the early believers, the apostles and disciples, their love for Jesus was focussed on him because they had seen all that he had suffered for them on the cross. It was this that revealed God's compassion poured out through his only Son. The disciples accepted him they loved him supremely beyond anyone and everything else. When they met the risen Jesus again, and witnessed him ascend to heaven, with the promise that he would come again,⁷⁶ they needed no other excuse or motivation to tell others about him. But they still needed his power and guidance until he returned.⁷⁷

As Luke records, Jesus once said "the kingdom of God is within you";⁷⁸ the believer is no longer part of the present world order, but he or she can now reckon him or herself to be in the realm of the Kingdom of God. The indwelling Spirit means that we have accepted him as the complete master of every fibre of our being. Of course this does not eradicate individuality, and personal struggle. Luke knew that God lived along side him, and in him, he wanted to share in all of his values, his attitudes, and his power to do anything for good. Luke valued his guidance, and it was because he loved the direction that the Spirit of Jesus motivated him to take that he went where he was sent; one only needs to consider his extensive travelling to have a measure of

⁷⁵ Acts 10:44; 15:8,9.

⁷⁶ Acts 1:11.

⁷⁷ Acts 1:8.

⁷⁸ Luke 17:21.

his passion. He knew God to be self giving, rather than demanding and self seeking. It was more important in his values system to give people everything, as Jesus had, by sharing the story of Christ with them. Gold, silver or fame as a great physician could never reward him as much.

He came to understand that God desires to help humanity to learn not only how to give freely but also how to receive gift after gift from God. The book of Acts demonstrates that early Christians knew how to share, and this was because they knew how to happily give things away, as well as how to gratefully receive things in return. It is this gift love which motivated Luke to receive from God so that he shared in his joy of giving to others. The Christian may be termed a son or daughter of God because he or she willingly becomes, as the saying goes “Like mother like daughter.” Luke recognised that Jesus was the definitive Son of God. He is the eldest brother that his brothers and sisters look to for guidance. To look at him is to find the bench mark for all believers to imitate. The Spirit of Jesus transforms people into authentic family members as well. Luke was such a son of God. This was the key to all his evangelistic efforts for Lord Jesus. This indeed may be said to be at the heart of the theology of Acts. Acts is first and foremost about the continued work of Jesus by the Spirit; this is the principle motivation for each Son and Daughter of God’s actions. Hence family membership is evidenced by possession of the Spirit. Christians are to be the shop front window that lost people can view to see if they want to share in the goods. They too can become members of God’s family. What they need to discover is that the only true place of security for them can be found by coming home to God. His household is stocked with infinite resources.

Luke the healer knew this was the only real healing that ultimately mattered. Hence his change in career from physician to evangelistic doctor of souls; this was a logical step for him to have taken! Have we lost sight of the real meaning of Acts? Luke the evangelist was inspired by the Holy Spirit to record the nature of the work of the Spirit of Jesus so that the church could always be reminded about the true blue print! The Spirit of Jesus brought about a new dimension of intimacy so that all efforts found their focal point in bringing lost souls home.

The passion story was at the hub of the first disciples love for Jesus. Their inner most souls were open to him, so when his Spirit arrived on Pentecost the doors were wide open, and he became their all in all for-ever-after.⁷⁹ Indeed the story of Jesus last days among men were celebrated again and again in the Eucharist almost every day, and certainly on Sundays – which is arguably a living historical sacrament which always reminds us of what is at the centre of the gospel.⁸⁰

If we consider Peters' first sermon we find his whole message saturated with the story of Jesus passion for mankind. His death on the cross and his desire to give each new believer a new inner principle for living which turned them from self serving to serving Jesus on the basis of his sacrifice for human kind. All who believed received the Holy Spirit's passion for Jesus - 3000 people being converted on the first day alone.⁸¹ The Holy Spirit is overwhelmed with love for Jesus. He fills us with his admiration, and the church was a power house of passion for God.⁸² Let us not forget

⁷⁹ Acts 2:1-5.

⁸⁰ Acts 20:7.

⁸¹ Acts 2

⁸² Acts 2:35 – 42.

we do not just get these profound glimpses into the hearts of early Christians, but we also get a clear picture of the heart of Luke the real Christian man's prime motivation – with a heart passionately on fire for Jesus. It was because Luke valued Jesus so much that he recorded these stories so that we all might value them with Luke who loved them!

The Apostles did not stop speaking about Jesus to the day they died. We know from one early church source that Luke did not stop speaking about him to the day of his departure [dying aged 74 years]. The fire that had been kindled roared in his being like a furnace. Luke was overcome with this passion, and it made him a doctor of souls. His evangelism was to point to Jesus the healer in every situation, and at every opportunity, as the only answer for mankind.⁸³ This love was what motivated his game plan every day of his life!

The Game Plan

The commission given by Jesus to the church is:

“But you shall receive power [Greek Dunamis, power, the word dynamite is derived from this word] when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”⁸⁴

⁸³ Acts 4:11,12.

⁸⁴ Acts 1:8.

Luke based his evangelistic orientation on the game plan that Jesus simply set forth. Firstly, he always sought the guidance and power of Jesus' Spirit.⁸⁵ Prayer has always been recognised as one of Luke's priorities in his written material.⁸⁶ He must have prayed earnestly that God would show him how to proceed in his efforts, and he must have sought to align his energies with those of the all powerful Spirit of Jesus. Secondly, Acts demonstrates how the church followed Jesus game plan precisely. They evangelised Jerusalem first, then Judea, then Samaria, then Syrian Antioch, Asia, Europe and Rome the heart of the then known world. But it must never be thought that they did this by their own resources; their game plan was guided by the Spirit of Jesus, and resourced by his limitless creative potential. The story of the conversion of the Roman Cornelius demonstrates the way that an Angel of God tells him to send for Peter – he follows the instructions, and Peter is likewise directed by a vision from God and the Spirit's inner voice to go to Cornelius to preach the gospel. The final evidence of the acceptance of the Gentiles into the Christian church is that they too receive the Holy Spirit even before they are baptised.⁸⁷ Luke knew these stories were crucial for believers to understand as they authenticate the way the Spirit of Jesus works. Luke was among those who recognised the Spirit's voice when he directed the Apostle Paul's evangelistic team to go to Macedonia. Christians need to learn to listen to the Spirit of Jesus!

Moreover, after Jesus had uttered the words: "You shall receive power", the Scripture tells us that the disciples witnessed him ascend through the clouds as he returned to the Father in heavenly realms.⁸⁸ The church went forth telling the world about Jesus

⁸⁵ Acts 16:8.

⁸⁶ Op Cit Barclay Luke, Page 4. See on Luke 3:21;5:16;6:12;9:18;9:29;23:46;22:32;11:3-13;18:1-8.

⁸⁷ See on Acts chapters 10,11.

⁸⁸ Acts 1:9 & Eph. 1:18.

because of their passion for all to meet him one day face to face. Two angels told them to expect his return in the same manner as he had departed.⁸⁹ The message had the force of dynamite. It was an explosion of Love for Jesus which transformed each new believer. The motivation was to be with Jesus in person forever. This was their great and passionate desire! The game plan of the church was always carefully thought through by prayerfully seeking what Jesus wanted to happen next – so that the gospel may go to the world thus speeding his return.⁹⁰ The game plan is not humanly derived, but cooperatively arrived at, as men and women seek to align their plans for evangelism with those of the Spirit of Jesus. If we live by the Spirit then we will “walk” by it says Paul.⁹¹ This means that we learn to love the things God loves to do, and that we do what he wants of us because we want to do it as naturally as we eat, drink or sleep. The book of Acts demonstrates this advanced level of discipleship! That really calls for us to have an intimate and open relationship with Jesus through the agency of his Spirit of Truth.⁹²

This sort of naturalism can only occur by letting the Holy Spirit open dark doors within us, which we have kept closed because we do not want to let the things behind them go. We need to put our inner houses in order. Selfishness will have to be swept out before real love can come in.⁹³ When we let go of our selfish control freakish egos then we will be able to receive Jesus’ burning, self giving desire, to love all others as they come to join his eternal family. Doctor Luke knew that the cancer of selfishness

⁸⁹ Acts 1:11.

⁹⁰ Acts 1 – 2:1-5; 14 and 15.

⁹¹ Gal. 5:16.

⁹² John 14:15 – 24. Jesus words recorded to his disciples on the night of his betrayal and arrest show that the Holy Spirit’s prime work is to reveal Jesus. John 14 – 17 show the passionate inter relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is Jesus who was in the bosom of the Father John 1:18. There is a loving family of God represented in John. The close relationship between John’s picture of Jesus and the post resurrectional manifestation of the Spirit in Acts, and implied in John shows that Luke-Acts-John share a close affiliation of hermeneutical correspondence.

⁹³ Luke 11:24.

needed excising so he has left us with a ready diagnosis of the condition of man, and a treatment plan that works!

Without the Spirit of Jesus we are lifeless. The church needs to be filled again. 21st century selfishness, and materialism need to be sacrificed, and we need to open the door. Cynicism and scepticism need to be buried at the cross. They need to be forgiven, and we need to forgive many who have wounded us. The Holy Spirit needs to be allowed to do this in our hearts soon – now – today!

The Roman world of Luke's time was much like ours; full of scepticism and hard heartedness. The Pax Romana [Roman peace] had given the world of then some security, but selfishness was a fast growing weed in its protective soil. Rome eventually some hundreds of years later disintegrated because of its hedonistic life style, and it was against the back drop of this empty selfish way of life, that desperate people discovered the freedom of God's grace. After all Rome embraced Christianity not only politically under Constantine, but also because the contrast between Christian life styles and pagan infidelity were so marked as to demand change. Good arguments and excellent evangelistic campaigns did not win the heart of Rome in the end, but lives which simply modelled passion for Jesus, forgiveness of enemies, and unconditional love which sought not retribution for years of Christian persecution who were ethnically cleansed by pagans. Real passion was born in the new soil of the free gift of salvation found only in Jesus. The empire may have been an excellent forum for a selfish grabbing society, but the kingdom of God offered a new way of living based on giving and receiving. The only thing we can take with us when we die is a character based on the Love of Jesus. The real meaning of the Kingdom of God,

of which we should now be a part by the experience of the Spirit, is love.⁹⁴ “Agape, the Greek term for the highest type of love, is the word used by Paul to the Corinthians. C. S. Lewis calls “Agape” “gift love”.⁹⁵

Luke’s gospel was probably written at the same time as Paul penned the words defining love to the Corinthians, and we should consider that carefully.⁹⁶ Luke the evangelist was full of Jesus’ passion. Early Christians had Jesus’ love for lost men and women burning in their hearts. They could not bear to think of anyone not being with them on the day they were physically to be reunited with the Lord. The great commission given to us by Jesus is to take the gospel into the whole world. It was not a duty bound obligation for the first believers, but a passion derived force for every lost individual burning in their hearts.

The focus of all early Christian preaching was founded on passion for Jesus, his suffering in our place, taking our punishment that we so richly deserved on to himself so that we may enjoy living in his self giving, and rewarding presence, for all eternity. Luke’s evangelism was catalysed by his passion for Jesus. All of his writings are a testament to what Jesus said, on what Jesus did, and continued to do by his Spirit for all mankind. This is what is at the heart of the missions’ theology in Luke-Acts. His love is for all who do not deserve it! That includes you and I! The reason why I am taking time to elucidate this message is because this message gives us a great insight into the heart of Luke, and the hearts of all early Christians!

⁹⁴ See on 1 Cor. 13 – 14:1.

⁹⁵ Lewis C., S., The Four Loves, See on Chapter 6.

⁹⁶ 1 Cor. 13- 14:1.

Luke's gospel is all about Jesus. Gabriel tells Mary to call him Jesus.⁹⁷ The Shepherds go to worship Jesus.⁹⁸ Jesus is baptised and identified by God as his one and only dearly beloved Son.⁹⁹ Yes Father God has a passion for Jesus. The Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are filled with love and passion for each other, and for all of their creation. God gave life to creation through Jesus the "author" of life.¹⁰⁰ God's authorship is forever based on his pre-eminent desire to give life to everything freely. His self giving heart awakens a gift love in those who belong to him, so that they in turn may freely choose to give everything back to him. So the circuit of joy is complete. The power of God's passion freely flows through us in all of its almightiness, and it returns to him, completing the circuit of beneficence again and again! The catalyser of all of this is the Spirit of Jesus.

The kingdom of God is the person of God. It is Jesus, it is Father and Spirit. It is based on a passionate relationship which seeks nothing for itself, and gives to others freely. This was the Spirit of the early church. They shared all things with each other as if they were all commonly owned.¹⁰¹ And because of the multifaceted beneficence of Jesus self giving love burning in believer's hearts the circuit was completed; Each one looked out for the other and none needed anything.¹⁰² When Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives for selfishly keeping things promised to the church in the Spirit's name it was a stark practical lesson that their deep rooted dishonesty and grabbing selfishness has no part in the kingdom of heaven.¹⁰³ As a doctor Luke

⁹⁷ Luke 1:31.

⁹⁸ Luke 2:8.

⁹⁹ Luke 3:22.

¹⁰⁰ Acts 3:15.

¹⁰¹ Acts 4:32 – 37.

¹⁰² Acts 2:43-47.

¹⁰³ Acts 5.

understood the stark choice we all face, either let the cancer of sin destroy us, or let God the Spirit radically remove it!

The “Lord added” to their number daily, that is those whom he knew were to become part of his family – thus meaning they were “saved”.¹⁰⁴ Only those who wanted to belong belonged, and the Lord brought them to his church through the message preached by his Apostles. Luke was part of all of this, and these are the first lessons he wants to communicate to us right now in what the Spirit of Jesus inspired him to record for us. So here are Luke’s fundamental building blocks that should inform every church’s evangelistic game plan:

The Game plan summarised

[1] That preaching about Jesus is based on having passion for him rather than telling others out of duty.

[2] It is the Spirit of Jesus who fills us with passion for him, and his passion for others.

[3] It is not our plans that make us qualified or successful in seeking out and saving the lost, but it is Jesus passion for the lost which means that he adds to our number daily. It is his work which we share in with him! Our prayer should be:

“Lord let me see what you are doing today. Guide me to those who are to be saved, and them to me, so that we may love you together Jesus. Amen.”

¹⁰⁴ Acts 2:47.

[4] Jesus will only add to our number if we really care! If we are not filled with his passion for the lost then he won't trust us to be part of his new followers home.

[5] Luke the evangelist had a game plan which is simply defined: "the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." John's gospel records Jesus formula for action, Jesus says:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all that he himself is doing, and greater works than these will he show him, that you may marvel."

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Jesus later said:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father."¹⁰⁶

These words were fully understood by Luke for the whole book of Acts is a demonstration of them! You and I must fulfil them in ourselves by Christ's enabling Spirit. May it be so, Amen!

[6] Luke was full of love for Jesus. He was overwhelmed with his sacrifice for him. He was full of the Spirit of Jesus, and he sacrificially gave everything to aid others,

¹⁰⁵ John 5:19,20.

¹⁰⁶ John 14:12.

because he knew that Jesus was the only effective treatment for mankind. “Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!!!!” Luke shouts to the church! Have we really understood what Luke the evangelist has to say to us today? Have we grasped our need for treatment and healing? Have we heard it loud and clear? Does the Acts blueprint compare well to the structures of our churches? Are we blue print Christians? For what Luke records is inspired by the Holy Spirit and his passion for Jesus!

The Kerygma

Luke reminds us that the church had one message to preach. It was cried out so the whole world could hear. The word used to describe Peter’s first Christian sermon is the Greek word “Kerygma”. It comes from the early Greek city state practices of the town Crier – who was known as the “Kerux”.¹⁰⁷ He was the one sent out into the market place [the symbol of all city life, and interchange of public information] to shout out the latest official news for all to hear. He was the local news media; he was also the governments’ local representative. The Romans also entertained the same methods.

When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost he fulfilled the role of town crier, and ambassador, on behalf of the government of God. The heart of Christian preaching [Kerygma] was based on God’s passion for a lost world who needed saving by the sacrifice of Jesus for their sins.¹⁰⁸ We must always aim to fulfil the role of the “Kerux” in our missional¹⁰⁹ orientation. Acts is a demonstration of the active careful planning of the government of God to proclaim this message to the whole world.

¹⁰⁷ “Kerux is the Greek word for “town Crier”.

¹⁰⁸ Acts 2:6 – 38.

¹⁰⁹ It must be recognised that the word “missional” is not a proper English form.

Jesus the Prime Minister commissions his ambassadors to go into the whole world with the message of the gospel. The central architect is God who has planned all of this, including the systematic region by region witness to all nations. Luke wants to draw the following points to our attention in Acts:

Systematic Proclamation

[1] That God had planned the exact time of Jesus death for the sins of the world.¹¹⁰

[2] He had planned that this message be that all should repent for their part in the death of Jesus.¹¹¹ That they should accept his death for their sins, and that they should commit themselves to live without practicing known offence to God thereafter.¹¹²

[3] That he planned to preach this gospel of forgiveness to the whole world, to every person – pointing to Jesus as the only name under heaven by which people could be saved.¹¹³

[4] That every new believer had an eternal place in the Kingdom of God from that moment on. The Holy Spirit sets the seal on every decision made by others for God, and when he fills them it shows they are part of the family of God.¹¹⁴ They obtain the inner witness of his intimate presence.

¹¹⁰ Acts 2:23. It must also be noted that not only is Jesus atoning death in God's plan for redemption of mankind in Acts, but so is the believer's salvation fitted into a preordained scheme in terms of God's plan fully set in place for the salvation of all the elect before the world began. Although Luke does not go as far as to say this his language strongly implies this, and fits well with his desire to show that God is sovereign in all aspect of human life, salvation, and eternal purposes of God. See on Acts 2:47 and 13:48 – compare these verses with John 17:11 [noting the close John – Acts thought world] and Ephesians 1:4.

¹¹¹ Acts 2:35 – 39.

¹¹² Acts 2:38.

¹¹³ Acts 4:11.

¹¹⁴ Compare Acts 2:38 with chapter 11 of Acts.

[5] That each believer is part of God's plan, and that they should use their gifts and resources to preach the gospel toward the end that Jesus come again. Acts chapter two records how all new followers came to see themselves as part of a body of believers who constituted a new family thus sharing everything they had in common.¹¹⁵ The first people to evangelise Luke's home city, Antioch, were new 2nd generation Christians and not Apostles [ft]. It was after the initial conversion of Jews and Gentiles here that Barnabas was sent to establish the nascent community.¹¹⁶

[6] To Luke the evangelist, who himself was probably converted in Antioch about AD 34/35 the central principle of his life became the proclamation of Jesus' saving Sacrifice. Some think that Titus, who Paul writes to in a letter, was in fact Luke's brother [Titus being an Antiochene of Syria]; and here we see how Luke may have started his evangelism – that is, he brought his brother to faith before he went further a field to share the message.

A Formula for Christian Witnessing

Luke's formula for Christian witness was always threefold:

Firstly, mission is an organic part of the Christian's new world view. This view is built on wanting to have Jesus at the centre of our lives. He defines our personal mission statement. He gives us our directions and goals. It is for us to want to see

¹¹⁵ Acts 2:44.

¹¹⁶ Acts 11:22.

Jesus in everything we do by his Spirit's pure presence. It is not obligation driven, but belonging to God's eternal kingdom motivated.

Secondly, that every Christian should look to God every day to seek what he is about to do through them that day. He will guide them in the direction he wants them to go thus forwarding his mission through each believer's contribution for the final establishment of his kingdom, which will replace all the things of this life. In other words we no longer work for our careers, and our ends, but we work to do everything we can to aid in the establishment of God's kingdom in other's lives [for we already belong to it forever now!] –this primarily starts with our witness about what God has done for us. The way we ethically follow good practices in our paid careers has always been a crucial area that colleagues will scrutinise. Christians become leaders who others can follow; because we take our directions from Jesus those who follow our example will naturally question the source of our enthusiasm.

Thirdly, Luke records that all evangelism follows a pattern: i. Start with your family [Like he with Titus] ii. Look to those in your sphere of influence, at work, with friends' etc iii. Look out for how God may use your talents and gifts in other places – a common formula is work where you are now for God's glory, pray for that work, and look for him to guide you where to go next in order to be a further influence on his behalf. If he opens a door of opportunity for you then prayerfully walk through it. We mentioned earlier how Luke was with Paul when Jesus guided him by the Spirit to evangelise Macedonia and Greece.¹¹⁷ The same Spirit forbade him to evangelise

¹¹⁷ Acts 16:8.

Mysia.¹¹⁸ We should have such an intimacy with the Spirit of Jesus, fostering it in our lives, by getting to know Jesus in a moment by moment relationship. Our question should be “what next Lord?” Then he will reveal new spheres of operation in his game plan for your part in his saving operation to a lost world.

The final goal of the “keryma” [proclamation of the gospel] is that Jesus may come again, that he may set up his eternal kingdom with all willingly serving and trusting him. We are in that Kingdom on a spiritual level now. We belong to it having “passed over” from spiritual death to eternal rebirth.¹¹⁹ What is to be hoped for ultimately can only come to full realisation when Jesus comes again.¹²⁰

Hence all of these factors constitute the “Kerygma”, and this should be our sole focus!

How do you fit into this definition of the Kerygma?

Conclusion

If we want to be like Luke the evangelist then we must willingly follow in his footsteps – which are the footsteps of Jesus! Jesus pointed to himself as the only route

¹¹⁸ Acts 16:6-8.

¹¹⁹ John 5:24 and Romans 6:23 demonstrate the Apostolic teaching clearly on this point which Luke himself points to in Acts 13:48 – in this case he demonstrates an unshrinking belief in the so called doctrine of eternal security – God has foreknown those who are his from before the creation of the world. So eternal salvation is a past, present and future present reality from God’s point of view, and the believer can take this to be part of his or her new Christian world view.

¹²⁰ Acts 2:7 – 11.

to get to God.¹²¹ The prime motivator behind Luke's outlook on everything was the compass of the Spirit of Jesus. Luke's life map followed the game plan of Jesus communicated to him by the agency of the Holy Spirit! What about you and I?

Reflection Exercises

[1] What role does preaching have in reaching today's society? Are un-churched people attracted by preaching? Preaching to early Christians was based on the concept of the town crier who announced good news – in what ways can we do this today in the ways we communicate?

[2] Passion for Jesus was implanted in the early Christians' hearts for Jesus. In what ways can we make sure we keep that passion alive in ourselves today?

¹²¹ John 14:6 & Acts 4:12

[3] Acts 1:8 gives a simple summary of the game plan for the mission of the early church in preaching the gospel – what were its chief components? How can we follow the principles of this plan in our “missional” work today?

[4] The term “Pax Romana” was a societal reality in which the first Christians were able to preach the gospel safely from region to region. What are the similarities and differences between their “missional” environment and ours today?

[5] Luke and Acts show that God had a systematic time tabled plan for the mission of Jesus in his life, and in the churches “missional” activities – it was the Holy Spirit who communicated the continued words and works of Jesus to the first Christians. What are some of the guidelines that you can deduce for the way the Holy Spirit did this? How can we apply those guidelines to our “missional” work today?

Chapter 4 - Jesus is Joy

Resurrection and Atonement

Over the years many secular critics have pointed to Luke's supposed lack of a theology of sacrifice, concerning the cross, as a proof that early Christians did not believe Jesus had died for their sins until some years after the event. They have contended that Jesus death had not been understood as atonement for sin by the first believers, but rather it was transposed into the story later [supposedly] fabricated to explain the execution; which they maintain was never expected by Jesus and that hence it needed explaining in mythical and sacrificial terms. The so called cosmic redeemer myth was said to have been implanted into the gospel story; as a ready made solution from pagan sources. But what they have missed is that it was not Luke's lack of knowledge about the meaning of Jesus death that was really at stake; because a careful reading of Luke-Acts demonstrates that he did understand that Jesus had died for men's sins. What has been missed is the psychological environment which had let the seeds of Joy sprout because Jesus was not dead, and that this positive post resurrection frame of mind was the main thing in early believer's thoughts!

After all they had suffered terrible shock and grief when Jesus was Crucified, suffering the most ignominious of deaths possible, it is not surprising that the thing they would be talking about every where would be how he was now alive! The apostolic period was bubbling over with enthusiasm after the resurrection. Luke records this phenomenon accurately for us not only because he is being a good historian, but also because he shared the same experience. It was this joyful reality

that fostered an enthusiasm for the future, and it facilitated Christian desire to focus on everything that Jesus had won for them – forgiveness, acceptance, eternal life and the promise that they would be reunited with Jesus forever once he returned again. It was not confusion about an execution that burdened Luke's mind, but thankfulness for the resurrection reality.

In fact human responses to grief and carrying on with life when a loved one has passed away are well documented in every generation's experience. Death is the one universal reality that we all have to face, and to plan for by writing our wills. When a loved one passes away leaving us in his bequests all his worldly goods he does so in order that we may enjoy life all the more once he is gone. It is a dishonour to the dead to remain morbidly fixated on the grave, although we rightly grieve. Proper grief aids us to move on and embrace life all the more! In memory we take loved ones into the future with us. The difference in the case of Christians is that we do not just live with memories and mythical stories, but in a vibrant perception of the risen Jesus by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Our loved ones want us to live on and to celebrate life through what has been passed on to aid us by means of their contribution. Jesus contributes everything to us through what he won for us by virtue of his death and resurrection.

Luke's record corresponds well with the attitude of the early Christian's extreme devastation suddenly turned into the Joy of an eternally living Jesus at the Father's side in heaven. His written works are a celebration of forgiveness, the promise of eternal life, and a continued relationship with Jesus by his Spirit. Jesus had bequeathed all the resources of God to his followers, and the Holy Spirit mediated it

to them again and again as the miracles performed by the first disciples in his name demonstrates. Today Christians too often focus on the death of Jesus without letting the positive light of the joy of resurrection and eternal life being at the forefront of their minds. It is possible to become fixated on our sin so much that we get stuck at the cross not passing it and going on into the awareness that we are creatures of eternity. We need the cross and the resurrection in our theology, but the ultimate goal is for us to mentally locate ourselves seated with Christ in heavenly places far above all rule of besetting sin joyfully in his ascended presence.¹²² Luke was overawed, and caught up, with the greatest enthusiasm possible by the positive reality of the believers share in Christ's eternal resurrection! Luke no longer considered himself to be a death bound being, but an eternal creature in the present continuous tense with the Lord!

The critics have missed it all so badly. They have lost sight of the joy which all Christians experienced because of all that Jesus had won for them by virtue of his resurrection. Jesus wants his church [you and I] also to rejoice in life, not in death. He wants us to be thankful embracing everything that the gift of eternal life has given to us. Luke understood this. He did not consider himself to be morbidly begging at the foot of the cross for entrance into the eternal kingdom. Rather he considered that he completely belonged - being a possessor of eternal life in this world order because of the grace of God. 21st century British society seems to thrive on negative news media, may we escape the melancholic overtures of our sad generation!

¹²² Eph. 2:6.

Luke did not play spiritual tennis, one minute finding the sphere of his life struck into a state of condemnation, and another being smashed by the racket of Christ into security in the kingdom. Instead of this he saw himself as saved being part of Christ's kingdom every day into an endless future. He expresses this certainty by talking of saved Christians as those "ordained to eternal life."¹²³

He considered himself to be a co-sharer in the Kingdom of God as well as a co-worker with Christ his Lord in inviting others to sign up with the King. In other words he psychologically and spiritually located himself in the kingdom of God. This was the sum of his self perception, and thus integral to his world view. Forgiveness was a once for all time reality that he had embraced as his possession. To look back, or to let go of such a great prize, won at such fantastic cost, was not entertained by him! Death was final to Luke and he disavowed it, but resurrection was eternal and he magnified that.

Negative Higher criticism of the bible has missed the whole meaning of atonement in Luke-Acts; because it never seems to have taken Luke the man into proper consideration. Acts has been written by a living, breathing passionate Christian man who wanted above everything else to be with Jesus forever. It is true that Redaction criticism has helped us understand the role of the evangelists as being more than simple secretaries taking dictation from the Holy Spirit, but this is not the same as a careful study of a profile of Luke the individual. This the critics have missed from the equation. Christian's and critics of today cannot understand Acts properly unless they

¹²³ Acts 13:48.

consider the joy of the writer who was taken up completely in his enthusiasm over the resurrection and ascension; with all it had won, and promised to believers!

Luke was secure in his position as a saved member in God's family – by virtue of Lord Jesus' resurrection and eternal reign. Atonement for Luke is founded on a once for all time sacrifice by Jesus for men's sins, and a once for all time security founded on the eternal resurrection of Jesus. It is all too easy to forget the positive reinforcement that the promise of eternal life fostered. We all thrive on praise, acceptance and success. Luke saw the resurrection as the greatest success story ever. Mankind had been freed by Jesus death from eternal condemnation and eternal loss. Resurrection equated with forgiveness in his mind [and the apostles minds].¹²⁴ because it was the practical symbol that Jesus had won eternal forgiveness and eternal life for every believer. The ascension further enhanced the sense of security experienced by believers because Jesus was now in the presence of the one and only God of all reality – who in turn had accepted Jesus death and resurrection on behalf of mankind – by seating Jesus at his right hand [the right hand side was considered a position of favour in ancient cultures].

Hence the early church had an incredibly joyful outlook on life because of the position of Christ. God having accepted Jesus the God/man also accepted all those who put their faith in him. The Spirit of Jesus filled them with evidence of this acceptance and the joy of an intimate two way relationship with God. They were not orphans begging for a home, but sons and daughters who were in on the family plans. Each new day for the first disciples was full of the glorious sunshine of eternal

¹²⁴ 1 Peter 3:18.

forgiveness, and eternal acceptance into the family of God. Paul stated it well when he said: “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God in Christ Jesus is eternal life”.¹²⁵ Every day they prayed “Thy kingdom come!” Every morning they petitioned “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!” They wanted the kingdom to grow in their lives, and in new converts’ experiences, until the mustard seed turned into a great plant. They looked forward to preaching about Jesus because not only did they love to participate in his work in accord with his Spirit’s activity, but also because he promised he would return again when the gospel had been preached in the whole world to every being. When the mustard plant reached its’ full maturity then the harvest would take place, and they looked forward to seeing Jesus face to face!

Atonement really means “at-one-ment”. Jesus resurrection is the guarantee that we are eternally secure in the kingdom of Christ when we put our trust in him! We can consider ourselves to be at one with him thereafter. How joyful for the believer, how sad for the critics who seem to have missed the boat!

Peter declares concerning baptisms relationship to the atonement that it is a sacramental symbol of the new pure life lived with a motivation founded on pleasing God. He declares:

“Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities and powers subject to him. Since therefore

¹²⁵ Rom. 6:23.

Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same thought, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer by human passions but by the will of God. Let the time that is past suffice for doing what the Gentiles like to do.....”¹²⁶

Any one reading this passage sees the close relationship between Peter’s reported preaching in Acts, and this epistle. Peter calls the first 3000 converts on the Day of Pentecost to be baptised.¹²⁷ Clearly Luke knew Peter, and they shared much together in the days they spent in Rome. The similarities of this passage with Acts chapter 2 and Peter’s sermon there recorded are:

[1] Both speak of baptism as a sign of the believers commitment to living a new pure life by the Spirit.¹²⁸

[2] Both emphasize the resurrection as the means by which Christians can be sure that they are forgiven and will be cleansed of sins power in their lives.¹²⁹

[3] That both emphasize that Christian confidence is based on Jesus supreme place of authority and power at the right hand of God.¹³⁰

[4] Both emphasize that believers should no longer live lives based on their selfish passions as motivation for action, but that they should seek to live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit’s passion for Jesus. Clearly the early believers dedicated themselves to following Jesus from day 1 on by first of all being taught about who Jesus was by

¹²⁶ 1 Peter 3:21 – 4:3.

¹²⁷ Acts 2:38.

¹²⁸ Acts 2:38.

¹²⁹ Acts 2:36 – 39.

¹³⁰ Acts 7:55.

the Apostles, and then by going out in the power of his Spirit to live following the throb of the Spirit's passionate heart to let others know about the Son of God.¹³¹

Forgiveness is won for the Christian already! It is not a point of continuous retro-action and projection – where we are sometimes considered saved and others lost. It is rather a state of spiritual reality where we are reckoned to be like Christ himself. His perfect eternal life covers all of our deficiencies. As Peter says: “love covers a multitude of sins”,¹³² and Jesus is the King of love! John the close apostolic friend of Peter records Jesus words saying: “Truly, truly, I am saying to you, he who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has already started eternal life; he no longer will be judged, but has already passed over from death to life”.¹³³ This was the essence of the sense of certainty that the apostolic period enjoyed. Indeed it is its outstanding feature which many seek by looking for similar revival in the church now-a-days! And it is at the heart of Luke's outlook; for example he records:

“And when the gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”¹³⁴

We will have more to say on the doctrine of eternal security in another chapter, what can be said at present is that Luke saw himself as one of those who was “ordained” for “eternal life”, which was considered to be a present possession not just a future hope to the first Christians!

¹³¹ Acts 2:36 – 47; 1:8;16:1-8.

¹³² 1 Peter 4:8.

¹³³ John 5:24.

¹³⁴ Acts 13:48.

The continuous awareness of this reality in the Christian mind was based on the eternal presence of Jesus with each disciple by virtue of his resurrection from the dead, and his place of eternal ruler-ship over all creation at the side of God the Father. Early Christians believed that they were eternally secure in Christ's kingdom because he had brought them back into a right relationship with God on the basis of his eternal life. Without the resurrection Jesus death for sins would have been useless, but with it he had won eternal "at-one-ment" with God for each follower. Hence we may think of what Jesus has achieved for believers as resurrection atonement. A dead Jesus leaves us all dead in our sins, a living Jesus brings us into an eternally right relationship of oneness with the Father, and the Spirit. It is not true to advance the theory that Luke did not understand the sacrifice of Christ it is rather true to say that he magnified its potential effectiveness by helping us to understand that there is no forgiveness of sins, and no eternal life, if Christ had remained in the grave.

Luke agrees well with his protégé Paul who wrote these words to the Corinthians:

"For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."¹³⁵

A survey of Luke's understanding of Jesus death on the cross

If any doubt remains in your mind that Luke found the concept of sacrificial atonement foreign to him then please consider the following brief survey of what he recorded on the matter below.

¹³⁵ 1 Cor. 15:16,17.

I pointed out in the first chapter that Luke was almost certainly putting the finishing touches to his gospel about 57AD. He was with Paul at this time, as the “we” passages indicate [see on chapter 1]. It was during this period that Paul wrote first and then a little later second Corinthians. In first Corinthians he quoted from Luke’s gospel; as quoted above Paul understood Jesus atoning death very well in connection with the resurrection.¹³⁶ It is certain that Luke understood Paul’s theology very well too. For he listened to Paul’s preaching, and he shared in the task of evangelism with him. It is unthinkable that he disagreed with Paul, or that he should share the task of catechising, if he did not understand Paul’s theology, or agree with it. The book of Acts clearly shows he spent a great deal of time alongside Paul in the second and third missionary journey, during his imprisonment in Caesarea, and in his journey to Rome, and his imprisonment there.

Furthermore, Luke gives a succinct summary of Paul’s teaching of Justification by faith:

“Let it be known to you therefore, [Luke records what Paul is preaching] brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.”¹³⁷

If there was ever a great summary of Paul’s justification theology then Luke gives it here.

¹³⁶ See on 1 Cor. 15 for further study on this.

¹³⁷ Acts 13:38,39.

Good simple summaries of a complex idea [such as Paul's theology of justification] can only be given if the person attempting it really understands what is being communicated. Somebody who does not understand quantum physics would not be able to summarise it in simple terms [if it can be]. Somebody who had never done open heart surgery would not be able to give guidance to a student surgeon. Likewise Luke clearly understood Jesus atoning death on the cross very well, including the full teaching of Paul about justification by faith, and he simply summarised it!

Moreover, it is Luke who records Zecharias prophecy about John the Baptist and Jesus, when he records:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David.
..... To give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high.”¹³⁸

What doubt is there that he did not understand sacrificial theology given his very thorough understanding of the Old Testament, which his many reminiscences from the Septuaginta demonstrate [Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament]. The songs of Elizabeth, Mary and Zacharia are penned in good Septuaginta fashion. He would have understood that forgiveness was always accompanied by sacrifice. He

¹³⁸ Luke 1:68,69,77,78.

knew the Greek Old Testament intimately with all that the Pentateuch recorded concerning sacrifice. The Levitical code is clear:

“Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”¹³⁹

Zechariah mentions Jesus as the “horn” of salvation which involves the image of the altar of burnt offering on which sacrifices were deposited. Luke demonstrates his very intimate knowledge of Jesus sacrifice being typologically forecast by his relative – Zachariah.

Moreover, Luke is the only evangelist who definitely recorded Jesus words concerning the “new covenant in his blood” of sacrifice which was to take place directly after the last supper.¹⁴⁰ Textual evidence does not support Matthew’s and Mark’s use of the word “new” to describe the covenant symbolised by the cup of wine shared at the paschal supper. Jesus was referring to the new covenant which his death would bring about thus replacing the Mosaic system of rules, laws and regulations, which had sadly brought the worst out in humanity – making the Jews focus on their ability to keep the law on the basis of their own efforts, as opposed to God enabling them to radically change by reliance on him. Remember the Words of Paul recorded by Luke above that Christ had set people free in a way that the “law of Moses” could never achieve.¹⁴¹ The new way of grace is understood to be based on a single sacrifice for sins, and an eternal promise of acceptance in the kingdom of God, for all who believed in the resurrected Lord.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Heb. 9:7.

¹⁴⁰ Luke 22:20.

¹⁴¹ Acts 13:38,39.

¹⁴² Acts 13:48;2:49.

Jesus was clearly thinking about the prophecy of Jeremiah when he spoke of the “new” way he was to make possible:

“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, ‘know the LORD’, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”¹⁴³

The original covenant had been sealed with the blood of the Passover Lamb on the night of the Exodus from Egypt; Jeremiah tacitly refers to the Passover in the first part of the prophecy. The doors with blood on them meant that the angel of death passed by the first born of those homes. Hence blood was a symbol of protection, forgiveness and deliverance. It is interesting how Luke records that it was on the occasion of the Passover supper that the Lamb was sacrificed in remembrance of deliverance and forgiveness.¹⁴⁴ Surely he was reminding his readers of Jesus the true pass over for sins as the real lamb of sacrifice. In fact out of the other synoptic writers he is the only

¹⁴³ Jer. 31:31-34.

¹⁴⁴ Luke 22:7.

one to fully record Jesus reference to himself as a fulfilment of the suffering servant prophecy of Isaiah 53 when he records:

“For I tell you [says Jesus] that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, ‘And he was reckoned with transgressors’; for what is written about me has its fulfilment.”¹⁴⁵

Moreover, Luke’s close link to the Corinthian epistles compilation would have meant he was aware of Paul’s teaching that Jesus was the fulfilment of the Passover by becoming the anti-typical Lamb of sacrifice.¹⁴⁶

Luke also records how the curtain dividing the Holy from the Most holy place, in the Jerusalem temple, was torn in two by no human hand at the moment of Jesus death.¹⁴⁷ The temple was at the heart of the sacrificial system, once Jesus had died there was no more need for sacrifice on a daily basis, as Jesus had offered an eternal sacrifice for sins, which was once for all time. Therefore, a new way into the very presence of God by faith was offered to all Christians forevermore. The temple and the Law of Moses were abrogated forever. Jesus is the way to God from now on! It is also an interesting fact that first Peter’s strong “Lukan” underscoring suggests that Luke helped in the writing of the epistle, or was strongly influenced by its writer. The letter also demonstrates a strong flavour of the influence of the book of Hebrews. There is some suggestion that Hebrews was written by the highly gifted Apollos, who was an associate of both Luke and Paul. The “Petrine” affirmation of the theology presented

¹⁴⁵ Luke 22:37.

¹⁴⁶ 1 Cor. 5:7.

¹⁴⁷ Luke 23:45.

in the epistle indicates that there was an apostolically sanctioned publication of it.¹⁴⁸

As Luke is probably the second best writer of good Greek in the New Testament, with Hebrews being almost exhibitionist of a scholarly flare, it seems likely that Luke, Paul and even Peter had their part in developing the Hebrews corpus at least by way of sanction and encouragement to its author. Whatever we think of this suggestion, it is clear that Luke can be placed with Peter when he writes his first epistle as Luke was with Paul whilst in prison there at the same time as Peter. It is certain that Peter affirms Luke's writings by his reflection of them, as he does with Hebrews and the gospel of John.¹⁴⁹ We may safely assume, on the balance of probabilities, that Luke most certainly understood the nature of Jesus' atoning death. Probably there should we let the matter rest!

Moreover, it is significant that Luke records Jesus words of promise to the penitent thief, just prior to the rending of the temple curtain, when he said:

“Today you will be with me in paradise”.¹⁵⁰

He is hung between two thieves, one a non-repentant hardened sinner to the last, the other a repentant vulnerable being. In other words Luke means us to understand that Jesus had died for all categories of people offering all hope, both the hard hearted and the softened. He had died for all people although he knew many would never choose

¹⁴⁸ 1 Pet. 3:18 – Peter again and again demonstrates agreement with the book of Hebrews, and this is seen by this writer to be confirmation of his knowledge of the book. Moreover, Hebrews and 1 Peter demonstrate theological and linguistic links with Luke-Acts to an extent which shows a correspondence of theological agreement between the writers as well as knowledge and influence on and towards each others theology.

¹⁴⁹ 1 Peter 1:3 and John chapter 3 – the whole concept of new birth and other Johannine concepts are common currency to Peter business associate of the fisherman John. They knew each other from the earliest times.

¹⁵⁰ Luke 23:43.

to accept the sacrifice. He is in the midst of all mankind symbolically stretching out his arms reaching his finger tips so that we may take hold of him. The picture is powerful – one can imagine him pulling us close in an embrace indicative of his aid. As soon as we open our lives to him then we have acceptance, and a place in eternal paradise! Put another way there is no more need for many sacrifices that offer no help, because the Temple on earth is closed for business, with the rending of the veil into its holiest of holy places Luke informs us that now the way into the very presence of God is forever open to the believer; Jesus sits at his Father's side securing our rightful place not because of human merit, but because of a free gift of unconditional forgiveness and love.¹⁵¹

It must also be noted that Luke retains the earliest possible inside knowledge into the concept of justification by faith. Theologians influenced by the Latin-isation of the Greek New Testament into the Vulgate put the concept of grace into a legal cognitive framework which was not true of the Greek concept. In this legal model God is pictured as Judge and Jesus as defence attorney. The question is: “will I be pardoned because I am clearly guilty?” And although this forensic theology does have echoes in the scriptures, the actual Greek term for Justification does not retain a legal so much as a relational overtone in its primary etymology. When Luke summarises Paul's justification theology in Acts he does so in the clearest terms by giving the word the meaning that Jesus is the “means” by which each believer is “set in right relationship”¹⁵² with God by freeing us from sins power, and by offering us complete forgiveness, and 100% acceptance in the sight of God; for God no longer sees our imperfections,

¹⁵¹ Acts 13:48.

¹⁵² Acts 13:48.

but the perfections of Jesus life covering us in his wonderful love. Love really does cover a multitude of sins as Peter, the mentor of Luke, rightly says.¹⁵³

Finally it may be noted that Luke records Philips conversation with an Ethiopian official on his return journey to the court of queen Candace of Ethiopia where he served. This man is reading from the scroll of Isaiah at the point where it says:¹⁵⁴

“As a sheep led to the slaughter or a lamb before its shearer is dumb, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken up from the earth.”¹⁵⁵

From this scripture Philip told the story of Jesus death and resurrection, and the man became a baptised believer.

Isaiah 53 clearly points to the servant dying like a lamb for the forgiveness of men’s sins; it prophecies the resurrection of Christ, and his joy in sharing life with all who he had suffered for.¹⁵⁶ It even speaks of justification by faith.¹⁵⁷

To conclude that Luke did not understand the meaning of the cross is pretty much like trying to deny that the Second World War never happened. The evidence is clear.

Luke’s reference to the atonement is at times subtle but not absent.

¹⁵³ 1 Pet. 4:8.

¹⁵⁴ Isa. Chapter 53.

¹⁵⁵ Acts 8:32,33.

¹⁵⁶ Isa. 53:11.

¹⁵⁷ Isa. 53:10,11.

The sort of atonement Luke identifies for us is the promise that we are already seated with Christ in “heavenly places”.¹⁵⁸ These are of course the words of Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, but Luke was probably with Paul at the time of writing, and it seems clear that he spiritually located believers sharing with Jesus his place of ultimate authority, because the Holy Spirit is to him the “Spirit of Jesus”.¹⁵⁹ His record points to all believers receiving the Spirit and having dreams visions and knowledge of heavenly things.¹⁶⁰ It is Jesus who first of all reveals himself to Paul the persecutor¹⁶¹ and then after his conversion the “Spirit of Jesus” is part of Paul’s life and evangelism.¹⁶² That is why Paul knew such a deep relationship – locating himself in the very presence of Christ. Indeed in the Corinthian correspondence he emphasizes the difference between those who live by works and those who live by the Spirit by speaking of Spirit filled believers beholding the face of Christ.¹⁶³ Indeed he claims to share in the very mind of Christ¹⁶⁴ by virtue of the “Spirit of Christ” living in him.¹⁶⁵ Luke takes the route of pointing out that it is the Lord who calls those to himself who are being saved.¹⁶⁶ It is only those who already are ordained to eternal life in their present lives who truly believe.¹⁶⁷ When Stephen is stoned he sees Jesus seated at the right hand of God.¹⁶⁸ He sees this because he is already spiritually located by connection of the Spirit with Jesus there. His face looked like an Angels.¹⁶⁹ Paul speaks of us beholding the Lord with unveiled faces. Moses face shone so that he had to cover it after spending time on the mount with the Lord. The church will know

¹⁵⁸ Eph. 1:18.

¹⁵⁹ Acts 16:8.

¹⁶⁰ Acts 2:28.

¹⁶¹ See on Acts chapter 9.

¹⁶² Acts 16:8.

¹⁶³ 2 Cor. 4:7.

¹⁶⁴ 1 Cor. 2:16.

¹⁶⁵ Rom. 8:9.

¹⁶⁶ Luke 2:47.

¹⁶⁷ Acts 13:48.

¹⁶⁸ Acts 7:55.

¹⁶⁹ Acts 6:15.

when true primitive Christianity is rediscovered because it will be clear, not hidden but miraculously evident as Christ's pure Spirit shines forth from our beings. Lord please come quickly! Lord please fill me with your Spirit in all of his unlimited potential for good so I may love you supremely – in Jesus name Amen!

Reflection Exercises

[1] How does Luke understand the relationship between the resurrection of Jesus and atonement for sin?

[2] What does Luke's positive view of the joy we can share over our eternal security in the Kingdom of Jesus do to inform our approach to "missional" activity?

[3] How can we maintain a balance between a theology of our sinfulness and a theology of our forgiveness?

[4] In what ways can you re-vision the way you see yourself as a creature of eternity securely destined for everlasting life with Jesus? [Consider your prayer life – are your prayers those of thankfulness and joy for what Christ is doing in your life and ministry, or prayers of contrition for your failings – with a hope that you might be helped to do better. Which of these mindsets represents your view of your position in Christ? How is your world view affecting your “missional” activity?]

**Chapter 5 - Doctor Luke's Spiritual Surgery – The positive World View
of the “Missional” Disciple**

If we consider what Luke's medical knowledge was compared to ours today we would consider it to be miniscule. His diagnostic apparatus would have been non-existent in any terms we would recognise. However, if we consider what would have been his basic attitude toward healing then we would consider him to be advanced:

[1] He would have been used to evaluating empirical data concerning evidence for diagnosis of an illness and the best course of treatment.

[2] He would have considered it to be his duty to do no harm to a patient by his treatment, but to have sought recovery or maintenance of as healthy condition as possible given medical options available for incurable conditions.

[3] He would have considered prevention to be more important than a cure. In other words the promotion of healthful well being would have been his prime aim.

[4] Above all else his central goal would have been to achieve and maintain a healthy spiritual life for Christian patients. In this sense he had every advantage to be considered advanced, just as advanced as any Christian doctor today. Indeed it may be said given the increased incidence of psychological illness today, because of the lack of Spiritual rooted-ness that Luke was in an ideal position to give the highest form of spiritual help to his patients. Doctors today have their hands tied when offering

spiritual input because of multi-cultural issues, and the ethical constraints imposed on promoting any one spiritual system. Luke had no such constraints.

Luke was a practical man, and he realised that the working out of all spiritual life had to be understood in the context of real life case studies. Out of all the gospels Luke has more to teach about discipleship than any other. These case studies illustrate the grounds for good Christian spiritual health and well being. Luke wanted all Christians new and old to have all the information available from the ministry of the master physician, Jesus, to aid all his disciples to grow avoiding the pitfalls that would be encountered along the way.

In his gospel he records those spiritual truths which are always essential for healthy Christian life. He had discovered these truths for himself, and he knew from experience that they worked for they came directly from Jesus teaching and ministry. When we read these case studies we gain an insight into the Spirit led mind of Luke, who had searched out these stories from eyewitnesses who knew their value for themselves by experience.

So let us make a visit to doctor Luke's spiritual surgery, and let us use his diagnostic tools [case studies] in order to check the state of our health, and also to seek spiritual healing for those areas where we need to change and grow. Luke has 15 such studies, and for the sake of practicality, I will seek to be succinct, and to the point. We will meet Luke the real disciple as we progress, as much as we will have to evaluate our own discipleship so that we may become better servants of God.

It has so often been that scholarship has enjoyed the academic exercise of evaluating Luke's gospel, and the Acts whilst failing to remember that Luke the real Christian man wrote that gospel in all honesty, truthfulness and sincere desire to help others discover the means of becoming real disciples of Jesus, just as he himself had. Luke had not deluded himself by recording cunningly devised mythological stories about Jesus, but he had carefully sought the historical truth about his life and teachings. Our perspective on what he records must start with a real appreciation of Luke's truthfulness in what he records. He has recorded these case studies for us because he knew them to be vital and true. This is my radical view also– we must take what Luke says as 100% fact. We must accept that these case studies on discipleship are the only means that we may really grow in spiritual maturity and health – becoming real authentic disciples of Jesus. May God aid us in this journey to meet Luke the real Christian disciple and thus become such ourselves!

What Makes a Disciple?

First of all it will be helpful to define the New Testament concept of discipleship. The word “disciple” comes from the Greek term “Mathetus” – which primarily means “learner”. The role of the disciple is to have a “teachable” mind. He or she needs to submit his or her self to their “Rabbi” Jesus. The “Rabbi” Jesus is referred to as “Kurios” meaning master or Lord. Given the Apostle Thomas's response to meeting the risen Jesus when he exclaimed: “My Lord and my God” [ft], it must be taken as written that the Christian disciple needs to not just consider Jesus as a Rabbinic teacher, or worldly master, but foremost as God! Hence let us prayerfully assess our discipleship in this context.

Disciples can honestly doubt – Luke 7:18 - 23

The gospel story launches Jesus ministry in the time of the preaching of his cousin John the Baptist.¹⁷⁰ The importance of John's preaching was always recognised by the early church because he was the one who prepared people's hearts by means of a call to repentance and new life in God. Jesus is baptised by him giving recognition to these fundamental steps. However, John never got the opportunity to become a privileged follower and life long disciple of Jesus. He lost his life by the hand of King Herod after a time of imprisonment.

Whilst in prison doubts reared their ugly heads for John: "Was Jesus the Messiah which he had been asked to prepare the way for?" He sent his disciples to him asking:

"Are you he who is to come or shall we look for another?"¹⁷¹

At this time Jesus was healing and teaching people. He told the disciples:

"Go and tell John what you have seen and heard:.....And blessed is he who takes no offense at me."¹⁷²

John had honest doubts but he did what we all must do when we seek to be true disciples; he recognised the questions that his doubts raised and honestly sought

¹⁷⁰ Luke 3:1-4.

¹⁷¹ Luke 7:19

¹⁷² Luke 7:22,23.

answers from Jesus, and awaited an answer. Jesus answered him with the evidence. This evidence was targeted to answer John's doubts precisely.

Luke recognised that all good diagnosis of a spiritual condition begins with recognising the problem precisely, and secondly seeking help from Jesus by asking him to answer that conditions need. If we have doubts then we must do the same, and Jesus will help us by giving convincing evidence.

True Disciples always seek God where he is evidently working – Luke 7:24 – 35

Those who became disciples of Jesus always started off from among the crowds who followed what he was doing. In this passage they are wondering if Jesus is the Messiah, and they have already recognised that they wanted to find the Messiah by submitting themselves to the call of God evidenced in John the Baptists ministry.

Jesus explains to them that John was indeed a prophet, in fact the last great prophet of the Old Testament revelation, and that he was the one who had prepared the way for his ministry.¹⁷³

There were two groups in this crowd. Firstly, there were those who had gone to be baptised by John thus demonstrating their openness to the work of God in his message.¹⁷⁴ Secondly, there were the religious leaders, and those who counted themselves as holy, who had not submitted themselves to God's message by

¹⁷³ Luke 7:27.

¹⁷⁴ Luke 7:29.

baptism.¹⁷⁵ One group wanted God's aid the other group did not recognise that they needed it.

Doctor Luke wants to draw our attention to a vital step in becoming real disciples. He wants us to recognise that we need to turn to God accepting our helpless condition. His therapeutic intervention is based on us taking the medicine receiving God's help without resisting. Fundamentally we start this process by putting ourselves in the place where we see God working. This may be simply by praying for his guidance of where to start, or it may be by recognising the call of our consciences to stop doing something which is displeasing the Lord.

True Disciples seek forgiveness not self justification – Luke 7:36 – 50

Simon the Pharisee was in a dilemma. He partly accepted that what Jesus was teaching was true, but he also prided himself as a Pharisee on his high religious and moral principles. What he could not reconcile was why Jesus did not pay the leaders of the Jewish faith more respect. Why did he not ally himself with them, and win their support? At heart he did not understand what was wrong with his Spiritual heart. He had become so caught up in seeing himself as righteous, that he had lost sight of his total need of God's saving help. He had come to rely on his religion more than on God.

He is shocked when a woman of low repute comes in from the street and starts to anoint Jesus feet whilst weeping. He has insulted Jesus by not offering him the normal

¹⁷⁵ Luke 7:30.

courtesy of washing his feet. This is really a sign of his refusal to accept Jesus' ministry. The woman recognises her need of forgiveness. Jesus says of her:

“Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.”¹⁷⁶

Luke wants us to seek forgiveness from Jesus. He wants his patients to recognise their need to turn from all known sin in their lives, and to turn to Jesus seeking forgiveness humbly. High handed self justification of wrong actions in our lives has no place. Humble recognition of sin is vital! He challenges us to do this as an act of submission and humble worship. When we willingly humble ourselves by confessing our sins to Jesus we come to love him more and more because we always find the answer:

“Your sins are forgiven”.

Luke knew that the cancer of non-confessed sin allowed to grow would lead to spiritual death. A person who allows known sin to carry on in his or her heart really has become a self justifier. It is to put ourselves above God himself, and to set self up on the throne of human selfishness. This means we close our ears to what God wants us to hear! Luke wants us to take this seriously!

¹⁷⁶ Luke 7:47.

True Disciples take time to nurture the right environments in their life styles to allow God the best chance to help them to grow – Luke 8:4- 15

The parable of the sower is put right at the heart of Jesus teaching about the disciples life. He uses the different soil and ground condition to illustrate what sort of people grow and remain disciples. He concludes the parable with the words:

“And as for that [the seed, the word of God] in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.”¹⁷⁷

Luke reminds us of the key factors so that we may live as true followers of Jesus example:

[1] We make sure that we only let things grow in our thoughts and practices which are pleasing to God.

[2] That we take time to read the Bible and to listen carefully to what God says there.

[3] That we pray keeping the lines of communication open, and spend time listening asking God to guide us to what to do next.

[4] That we be completely open and honest with him, especially when we need help to let go of habitual sin.

[5] That we grow. That we become more patient if we are impatient. That we learn to rejoice if we are always being negative etc; in other words that we seek the Fruits of Jesus Spirit to grow in our inner most selves [Gal. 6 & 1 Cor. 13].¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Luke 8:15.

This may seem like a lot, but it is basic. We cannot allow ourselves to become hard, and closed off to the voice of God as he encourages us to grow and change by living a pure and loving life. Good soil is an honest, open, obedient, trusting, loving and listening heart that does what God asks of it! Luke knew that all successful treatments were based on people recognising more than their need for help, they also needed to cooperate with the treatment plan doing their bit.

Disciples seek to understand God's will for their lives and they do it – Luke 8:19-

21

“Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him for the crowd. And he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.” But he said to them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”¹⁷⁹

This says it all for Luke. We must take time to hear the word of God and do what he asks of us. This means fundamentally that we need to seek to understand those aspects of the word of God which are absolutely fundamental for us to be real Christians. It is the attitude which is important here, we must hear, listen and understand and then do what we have been asked to do!

When Luke prescribed a course of treatment he expected his patients to do what they had been asked in order to recover properly. We must do the same!

¹⁷⁸ Gal. Chapter 6 & 1 Cor. Chapter 13.

¹⁷⁹ Luke 18:19-21.

Disciples deal with the things which are too big for them or fear by asking Jesus to save them – Luke 8:22 – 25

The disciples set sail with Jesus across the Sea of Galilee to a region known as Genasaret. A terrible storm ensues and even the experienced fishermen among them fear for their lives. However Jesus is asleep. They scream for help:

“Master, Master, we are perishing.”¹⁸⁰

Jesus awakes and

“rebuked the wind and the raging waves; and they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, “Where is your faith?” and they were afraid, and they marvelled, saying to one another, “Who then is this that he commands even wind and water, and they obey him?”¹⁸¹

There were two types of fear hear. One was the quaking heart which is terrified by that which is about to destroy it, and the other is the trembling heart which recognises that there is someone, or something, which is bigger and more powerful than itself.

It is this second type of awe inspired trembling which fills them in this case. The storm was beyond their power, and they knew that left to themselves they would die.

¹⁸⁰ Luke 8:24.

¹⁸¹ Luke 8:25.

And then Jesus simply stops it by a word or two which brings them face to face with someone so powerful and awesome that they get a true picture of Jesus as almighty God, and themselves as helpless creatures. The wonder is that Jesus loves them, and that he wants them to serve him as almighty God.

Luke encourages us to put Jesus in the proper place in our minds eye. He is Master, and we are servants. He is all powerful all knowing and everywhere present we are in total need of his help in every situation, and every place. We must seek his aid in humble trust when we are faced with every challenge and choice we make!

Disciples tell others what Jesus has done – Luke 8:26 – 39

On arriving on the other side of the lake Jesus disembarks from the boat with his disciples. They have already suffered the terror of the loss of life, but when they set foot on shore they soon discover a new fear. It was the phobia of the loss of the soul, and sanity. The terrible shock which awaits them is a man who is completely dispossessed of himself, instead he is controlled by evil forces. The devastation which this has made him like this is beyond his or their power to control. No man, priest or doctor has been able to remedy his situation.

However, when he is faced with Jesus hope sparks to life from somewhere deep inside. A spark of life, hope and sanity is on offer. Jesus frees the man from the hold that evil has obtained upon him, and restores him. Indeed his recovery is so marked he makes what is to him the only logical decision – he never wants to leave Jesus side

again. Jesus is now his master. The man recognises that he is his only hope forever after he has learnt the lesson the hardest way by losing himself whilst selfishly having tried to do what he wanted in the past.

Then even a greater miracle happens. Jesus says to the man:

“Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.”¹⁸²

The amazing thing is that the man does not argue with Jesus, but he goes away and tells everyone just what Jesus has done for him. He does not show worry that he may be gripped by the power of evil again, or lose his sanity, so pronounced is the miracle that he has complete confidence in the cure. He is certain that he will never again turn from the Lord, or that the Lord will ever let go of him or leave him. Now that is the sort of miracle which Jesus performed, and it is the benchmark of the sort of confidence he inspired in the early Christians, and it is the criteria by which all apostolic Christianity was judged. We can expect Jesus to do the same today!

Doctor Luke records this story for us illustrating that the disciple is at his or her strongest when they can go and tell others what Jesus has done for them. Not only does it reinforce the miracles of what he has done for us, but it is also by this means that Jesus can most effectively be seen to work by virtue of our testimony. Others come to think “if Jesus did this for him or her then he can for me”, and he then does.

¹⁸² Luke 8:39.

It is when we as his disciples tell others about what Jesus has done for us, and by extension can do for others, then we will experience the encouragement of seeing him act for others. This strengthens the disciple more than anything else can.

“The church is not a building or a place where people meet, it doesn’t have to have a tower or wooden pews or seats, the church is Jesus kingdom and its growing in the world, its made of men and women boys and girls” [that’s what one song says].

We are God’s living stones each being a brick in the construction of his church as Peter says.¹⁸³ Wherever we are we can seek other stones for his church as well. Our neighbours, friends, work colleagues etc. God does not leave evangelism to a charismatic professional, but to every disciple. Therefore if you want to see God act in your life more often then:

“Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.”¹⁸⁴

There is no greater remedy for doubt and lack of Spiritual growth than for you to tell others.

Reaching out is enough for a touch – Luke 8:40 – 56

These few verses deal with two stories at once which both have to do with people who reach out to Jesus from different spheres of life. The first is the leader of a local

¹⁸³ 1 Peter 2:4,5.

¹⁸⁴ Luke 8:39.

Synagogue named Jairus. He has a daughter who is so desperately ill with a fever that he knows she may well die. He is probably aware that many of the religious leaders do not judge Jesus as a worthy teacher [Rabbi], and question his miracles and methods. However, Jairus is acutely aware that if he goes to ask for help from them they will not be able to aid his daughter.

His is the desperate need of a father who cannot leave any stone unturned for the sake of his family. He hopes, yes he even knows deep inside, that Jesus can help. He a leader of the people goes to an unrecognised religious practitioner who has not gone through the recognised theological schools of his day. Jesus answer is immediate. He will help! When they eventually get through the pressing crowds to Jairus' home the message is given that the girl is dead. However Jesus assures them that she is only sleeping. Of course she is dead, but to Jesus death is only like a sleep which he has the power to waken people from.

And this brings us to the other side of the equation. When man reaches out then God utilises his power to act.

In this case Jesus utters two words of power:

“Child, arise” “And her spirit returned, and she got up at once; and he directed that something be given her to eat. And her parents were amazed;”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Luke 8:54 – 56.

Disciples, ordinary believers, are helpless left to themselves, but when we reach out Jesus will act with power. Jesus utters the words “child arise.” His words have power. For the disciple who is seeking God’s power in their lives we should come to the words of Jesus with confidence. Whatever Jesus recorded words promise that accord with the will of God for our present life situation then Jesus will act for us. The disciple can reach out to Jesus by knowing his will as it is expressed in his words recorded in the gospels; and we can be sure that what he promises he will do. This means that disciples need to know the words of Jesus well, and the promises he makes. And at the heart of these promises is the fundamental fact of this story that if we reach out to Jesus for help then he will act!

And that leads to an interlude in Jesus short journey to Jairus’ residence. While the crowds are pushing all around him on every side a woman with a gynaecological bleeding problem scrambles through the crowd with one thought in her mind, that if only she can just touch Jesus it will be enough to heal her. Indeed this happens, and she stops bleeding at that moment. The problem must have been chronic. Jesus stops in the midst of the crowd and said:

“Who was it that touched me?” When all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you!”¹⁸⁶

When the woman eventually comes forward to reveal herself, not being sure why Jesus is making such a fuss about things, and indeed probably wondering if she is in trouble, he says to her:

¹⁸⁶ Luke 8:45.

“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.”¹⁸⁷

Perhaps she feared another bill. She had spent a fortune on doctors, and none had been able to cure her, for her problem was beyond medical knowledge of that day. Luke certainly reveals his hand as a proud physician here for he makes the point which none of the other two synoptic gospels do that her condition:

“Could not be healed by anyone”.¹⁸⁸

Luke did not want to bring the best practitioners of his art into disrepute. But he also recognises the magnitude of the miracle, a touch does what medicine and money had never been able to do. Moreover, we may have a snapshot into his mentality as a women’s practitioner, if indeed as it seems likely he was, he would not want them to think that the gospel does away with man’s part in the medical arts of using his God given gifts to offer healing and assistance to others. Luke was not promoting a culture which denied the benefits of the knowledge and ability which God had given to doctors. If there was a treatment which could work for one of his female patients, or any for that matter, then Luke was committed to utilising it for their benefit. So it may be said that Luke wanted to promote Jesus at every step along the way as he told his story, but he did not want to give the impression that God had done away with the need for men and women to use the gifts God had given them to help each other. And whether needy people came to Luke for help as a doctor or Jesus he believed it was his love bound duty to do what he could to answer the request of his patients.

¹⁸⁷ Luke 8:48.

¹⁸⁸ Luke 8:43.

And here is another great truth about discipleship. Those who seek help from Jesus do not need to do anything else than simply seek his help. Neither should we as his disciples require anything else from people who enquire about Jesus with us than simply to answer them! A simple touch is enough. The touch of the woman in our present study as a simple action of faith does not go unrecognised - power willingly, yes naturally, goes out from God to heal the ailing one. God wants to heal us more than we want to ask! Health, well being, and saving actions, flow out from him as naturally as a river runs. Why has mankind so seriously misjudged their maker?

This is the secret to primitive Christianity. Disciples do not need big church programmes, or elaborate evangelistic campaigns to win people for Christ, or for Christ to act, we just need to simply reach out from right where we are now and God will act to save and help. It is natural for him. It should also be natural for us to make ourselves available to others.

When Peter and John went to pray at the temple after Jesus resurrection and ascension, and as they passed through the gate a lame man asked for money, and Peter looks at him. He has no money, but he immediately knows the man has faith to receive healing, and he commands him in the name of Jesus to stand. He is healed at once. ¹⁸⁹ I often used to wonder about this story, how did the disciples have such faith, and certainty? Well Luke tells us. Indeed these two stories tell us, they were able to accept that God is willing to help and heal people at any time any place anywhere as naturally as the sun shines or the wind blows. They were used to thinking

¹⁸⁹ Acts 3:6.

in these simple terms. They did not see impossible situations or possibly embarrassing failures looming if the man did not walk. They had been with Jesus for 3 years of ministry, and they had his Holy Spirit in them, and that Spirit of Jesus was as willing to heal by a simple few words of utterance just as much then as when Jesus had been among them in bodily form.

So this is the marvellous truth. And it is marvellous Jesus wants to aid people today as a normal and natural occurrence. What he asks of us is that we take him at his word and reach out and ask for his help, and offer it to others! We are not just talking about miracles. Sometimes it will be a listening ear, other times it will be to offer advice, money, time and effort. We will have to open our homes and hearts. We will have to miss our favourite TV shows. We might have to miss an evening in together for the sake of others! All of this is about our availability to be there when Jesus is waiting to do something through us!

Disciples have Jesus power to Act – Luke 9:1-9

And this is what Luke records for us next:

“And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal.”¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Luke 9:1,2.

And this mission was given to another 70 disciples later,¹⁹¹ and indeed to all Christians. For it is the whole body of Christ who are to receive power when the Spirit of Jesus comes to live in us.¹⁹² And we are to go out and witness about what Jesus has done. Disciples are all missional leaders, for it is their role to lead others to become followers of Jesus just as they themselves are!

Disciples must accept that they have received the Spirit of Jesus, and that we can ask his Spirit to guide us to go where he wants each day as his witnesses.¹⁹³ Jesus will guide us to those “who are being saved”,¹⁹⁴ that we might have a hand in helping them along the way. What a privilege. If we are lacking power in our lives then it might be because we have our expectations set to low. We might think: “the power of the Spirit was for the Acts church, but not for little old me!” Think again! Jesus gives us all his power, presence and guidance based on our faith in him as we grow in a relationship with him.

Doctor Luke wants his spiritual patients to know who they are i.e. that we are Christians. He wants us to know to whom we belong – Jesus Christ. He wants us to know what we possess as his family – his Holy Spirit, and he wants us to know that this same Spirit will act through us as Jesus agents today, doing the same things that Jesus did.¹⁹⁵ We are ambassadors for Christ.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Luke 10:1.

¹⁹² Acts 1:8.

¹⁹³ Acts 16:6.

¹⁹⁴ Acts 2:47.

¹⁹⁵ See on Acts 1:1 & John 14:12.

¹⁹⁶ 2 Cor 5:20.

Let us remind ourselves again, Luke is recording these stories because they meant so much to him. He saw in them case studies which will aid the spiritually ailing to find remedy to their conditions. He had proved the worth of Jesus again and again, and he wanted the facts of Jesus special treatments to reach the ears of all his disciples!

Jesus makes up for the disciples insufficiency – Luke 9:10 – 17

The crowds had remained late with Jesus and his disciples. Jesus did not want to send them home without having fed them. There were very meagre food resources available. The disciples just want to send them away what can they do. Jesus answer is challenging:

“ You give them something to eat.” ¹⁹⁷

The disciples make a search and can only find five loaves and two fish their reaction to Jesus command to feed the crowd is understandable; they think in very human terms and state that they can only meet the nutritional needs by going to buy all the food needed. Jesus has them all sit down and then miraculously multiplies the fish and bread:

“And all ate and were satisfied. And they took up what was left over, twelve baskets of broken pieces.” ¹⁹⁸

Luke was clearly impressed by this story; primarily by Jesus practical concern for the crowd. They had a long journey home, and some of the young and elderly would

¹⁹⁷ Luke 9:13.

¹⁹⁸ Luke 9:17.

naturally suffer the consequences caused by their low blood sugar, and lack of hydration. The doctor in Luke understands the public health concern. After all as mentioned in our chapter on Luke's medical training physicians of his era helped in the design of cities, buildings, and public arenas. The Romans were well aware of the need to care for public health including the proper provision of food and drink facilities in public places. So Luke is impressed with Jesus human compassion – not even the seemingly lesser details were unimportant to him.

Moreover, he recognised the significance of the combined efforts of the human and divine in the feeding of the crowd. God requires that his disciples work with him by engaging in all aspects of the work of evangelism. He wants us to think about the resources of our projects, and he wants us to take up the challenge of finding finance and other resources. The important part of this story is that Jesus transforms the very insufficient food resources into more than enough to meet the peoples' needs. He does so to such an extent that there is plenty left over.

The miracle demonstrates the fundamental reality that the disciple is always lacking in what really counts when it comes to having power and resources to do God's work of witnessing to people. It is by joining our efforts, mental, physical and spiritual capabilities with the unlimited potentialities of Christ that we come to grow in confidence in our relationship with God.

Luke illustrates that not only is human salvation only possible by a miraculous act of God, man cannot change his sinful nature into a new nature - also all of the disciples attempts to feed the lost with physical and spiritual bread must always rely on God's

unlimited resources. The work of evangelism must never be disconnected from a complete reliance on God for guidance and authority to act. This authority is founded on the disciples' mission to win new converts by introducing individuals to Jesus almighty power to transform them.

There is also another great lesson which Luke would not have missed here. The mission of the church is never to become either solely spiritual, or singularly physical. The disciple is always to seek to aid man's basic needs for food, shelter, health and well being, but it is always to connect the spiritual need as well for salvation in Christ!

Quite how this connection is worked out in each case will require that the disciple prayerfully seeks Jesus' guidance of where to start. Some people have desperate needs for simple things like a good friend to listen, often for months, or even years, to what is going on in their lives. All that you may be led to offer at first is a cup of coffee, a chair to sit in, and a shoulder to lean on. But the day will come when that needy person will look to what you have by virtue of your faith, and then that will be the time to sensitively share your story.

Luke knew all about the issues relating to human need. He understood that fundamentally Jesus was genuinely concerned for man's physical, mental and spiritual needs. He did not have a unilateral goal to use his power to help to manipulate people into following him. Anyone who came to Know Jesus knew that all the help he offered was offered only for their good, and for the glory of God.

Disciples must not only offer help to those who seem good candidates for salvation, but to all who have a need when God puts them in your path of influence.

Doctor Luke wants the Lord's disciples to understand the need to genuinely be concerned to aid others in every way that they can. The challenge will always be that we must look to Jesus to resource every effort we make for others on his behalf; not only the Spiritual needs, but also the physical, social and mental ones.

Disciples must know that Jesus is Lord of everything above all else – Luke 9:18 –

27

Jesus wants to ask each disciple one fundamental question. On the basis of our answer to it will depend our future with him:

“Who do you say that I am?”¹⁹⁹

Do we see him as an equal? Do we see him as a good man whose example we should follow? Do we consider him to be a prophet who knows what is best for our future?

Do we treat him like a Guru? Who and what is Jesus to us?

Peter gave the only answer that matters by concluding:

“[You are] the Christ of God” [9:20].

¹⁹⁹ Luke 9:20.

This recognition was a fundamental tenet of belief to the devout Jew. When the Christ came he would be the master of Jewish hopes and destiny. Peter recognises that the hope of the ages, the Messiah, has come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He is the one and only ultimate answer to the destiny of mankind. With him the new age of God's eternal kingdom is to be ushered in. The Greek title "CHRISTOS" equates with the concept that Jesus is God's final anointed king. This makes him Lord and master of all mankind. The finality of Messianic kingship became important to Jewish theology with the development of the concept of two ages. There was the present age which is evil, and ultimately to be eradicated by God with the destruction of the present order of things. Then a new age, with a new heaven and earth would be realised in which peace and justice would rule, with the Messianic king [the son of man] ruling over God's kingdom forever.²⁰⁰

However, Luke recognises what the first disciples had to take on board, that Jesus was not a king who would bring war and the overthrow of the kingdoms of the world by bloodshed, but by suffering and a cross. The disciples were not to be soldiers in an army with swords enforcing God's rule by violence, but by love, service, sacrifice and forgiveness of one's fellow man. Luke records Jesus words:

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.....For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Daniel chapter 7.

²⁰¹ Luke 9:23,25.

Luke wants his spiritual patients to recognise that the way of healing sacrifice is the way of this King, and if the disciple is to follow this king then he will need to deny his selfish habits, and desires daily following Jesus. Christians do not exist with a promise that there will a life free from suffering, indeed we can expect even more than others. To begin with in an age where pleasure, and individual fulfilment, and rights are high priorities we will have to deny many of the things which others do in the pursuit of pleasure without the thought of whether what they are doing is right or wrong. This will put pressure on us when we cannot join in some things with none Christian friends. Moreover, when people offend against us we must learn how to forgive on emotional and rational levels.

If Jesus is really our Lord and Christ then we must love others whether they be our enemies, or antagonists. We must forgive as our master modelled as our example.²⁰² The obedience we must render will not be based on fear or punishment but love because of the greater love that Christ has shown through his sacrifice for our sins, taking the penalty on himself. And before we think that what he suffered was easy or bland for him, let us not forget that he is pictured in Revelation as a continuously slain lamb.²⁰³ I think we cannot even start to understand what he did for each person until we have learnt some of that suffering ourselves by denying ourselves daily carrying our own crosses.²⁰⁴ Each disciple is a son or daughter of God and as such he or she will also have a cross to be crucified on just as their elder brother did. Luke wants disciples to understand what accepting Jesus as our Christ means. We must understand what is going to be part of the norm. Luke the psychological doctor needed his patients to have a realistic set of expectations about treatment plans. Often

²⁰² Luke 23:34 & Eph. 4:32.

²⁰³ Rev. 5:6.

²⁰⁴ Luke 9:23.

we hear of stories where Christians lose heart because they cannot understand why God has let them go through a certain hard experience. Luke reminds us that it is normal and natural to suffer like our Lord. It was the Lord's will to lay the iniquity of us all on Jesus,²⁰⁵ and although we will not be the sacrificial means for the forgiveness of sins, we will have to learn what the loving heart of our master Christ is like, by experiencing sacrifice and suffering for ourselves. By suffering he is ultimately able to help those who suffer,²⁰⁶ and to a lesser degree our experiences of sacrifice and pain will aid others as we try to help them to find the meaning of life by coming to know the Lord of all sacrifice Jesus.²⁰⁷ They will come to understand that God is defined by his all giving nature, and this will bind us to God with love for him forevermore. May this be so Amen!

Disciples will see Jesus divine glory – Luke 9:27 – 36

Luke records these words of Jesus:

“I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”²⁰⁸

Luke was not puzzled by these words. Many have been throughout the ages, but if we consider the event which directly followed their utterance we discover their meaning. Jesus took Peter, James and John up on to a small mountain to pray. Jesus knows that

²⁰⁵ Heb. 2:17.

²⁰⁶ Heb. 2:18.

²⁰⁷ Col. 1:24.

²⁰⁸ Luke 9:27.

he is soon to start a journey which will lead to his destiny on the cross.²⁰⁹ Moses and Elijah appear to him and speak of what he is going to accomplish for mankind by dying on the cross.²¹⁰ Jesus is transformed into a bright glorious shining pure divine being in the disciples' sight. They are overcome with wonder. They want to build a sort of shrine for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. However, a cloud overshadows the mount, and the voice of God is heard:

“This is my Son, my chosen; Listen to him!”²¹¹

When the cloud disappears Jesus alone is left standing among his disciples looking the same as ever.

What was going on here? Why is this story important for disciples to remember?

[1] The event proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus' Kingdom was guaranteed to be established by what he accomplished by his death, resurrection, ascension to the side of God, and the Holy Spirit's presence in each disciples life there after. In other words Moses and Elijah are symbolically handing over the keys of the kingdom to Jesus. Moses is significant here because he was the man through which God promised a kingdom for Israel, and he is the one whom all Jews looked to as their hero and leader in a special way. Elijah was important because he was the prophet who was taken directly to heaven without tasting death. He is the one who symbolically hands over the promise of eternal life to all who believe. He is a sort of proto-typical promise that all like him may reach heaven although being essentially

²⁰⁹ Luke 9:51 & 9:31

²¹⁰ Luke 9:31.

²¹¹ Luke 9:35.

born sinners. Jesus is the one that he is pointing to as God's only medium for getting there. Even Elijah looked to Jesus by faith as his Saviour when he walked the earth.²¹²

He is also sent to confirm the resurrection of Jesus in advance and the significance of that resurrection for all believers.

[2] Luke wanted all disciples to understand that they were serving the real Son of God, and that he had started his glorious reign over the Kingdom on ascending to heaven, and by virtue of establishing his presence and kingship by his Spirit in each believers' deepest self.

[3] Disciples do not taste death before they enter the kingdom on a spiritual level. From the resurrection onwards Jesus kingdom is set up in their very souls. Paul speaks of the difference between any single Christian, and Moses of old, by saying that we behold Jesus by his Spirit with "unveiled faces", whereas Moses had to wear a veil. Moses alone had been privileged to meet with God on Mount Sinai. But now all Christians meet with him by the Spirit.²¹³ We are to consider ourselves as already being in the kingdom of God, with a place promised in its future final manifestation when it will be established in the whole world. We have direct access to God without the need for priest or confessor because of Jesus. We see him without "veiled faces". We may from now on behold his glory shining in any believers face as they do not need to hide the manifestation either.

[4] Luke wants the disciple to know that Jesus will manifest himself to any Christian not just Moses or Elijah as a result of Pentecost. We can all have intimacy with Jesus.

²¹² Luke 24:44 & 1 Peter 1:11.

²¹³ See on 2 Cor. Chapter 3.

We can all see his glory, hear his voice, and feel his influence on heart and mind. Acts is an incredible demonstration of the fulfilment of this in practical action. Peter announces it all again in his sermon when he declares that all men and women will see visions and dream dreams with the coming of the Spirit of King Jesus.²¹⁴ No longer is God's special presence limited to priest, king, Elijah, Moses, the church pastor, elder or deacon, Jesus now manifests himself to all by his Spirit because we are all now kings and priests in his kingdom²¹⁵.

This is another great principle of our Spiritual doctor. This is another medicine we must take regularly. And that is that we must often spend time talking to Jesus through the Spirit and hearing him speak to us. His glory will fill us with new life, light and joy. No one can be separated from the love and guidance of God on a personal level. Nothing can separate his chosen ones from him.²¹⁶

Disciples put others first – Luke 9:46 – 48

Luke understood human relationships well. He would have learnt much as a practicing physician by way of observation and as a medical man of his era medicine had a practical socio-psychological dimension. As mentioned before doctors had much to say in the design of dwellings, cities and towns. The Roman plan was always designed to make good use of space, and to make sure that its architecture was aesthetically pleasing. Harmony of place, speaking to man's soul through environment was important. Awe was engendered in some settings, and serenity in

²¹⁴ Acts 2:28.

²¹⁵ Rev. 1:5,6.

²¹⁶ Acts 13:48 & 8:30,31,32.

others. Roman doctors, had much to say about public health whether it was physical, social, spiritual or mental well being.

As a spiritual doctor Luke came to understand the greatest kingdom principle ever uttered. Although Matthew records the words of Jesus by saying that if we wish to enter the Kingdom we must become like a child.²¹⁷ Luke describes how Jesus puts a child in his midst and declares:

“Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me; for he who is least among you all is the one who is great.”²¹⁸

The disciples had been envious of each others positions as they followed Jesus for a long time. They questioned: “Who would take the highest positions in his kingdom?”²¹⁹ This all starts to reach a head, and Jesus needs them to understand the central principle of God’s life as it was manifested in Jesus. “Whoever receives this child in my name receives me” he declares.²²⁰ Paul put it so well when he said that Jesus emptied himself of everything.²²¹ At the heart of the kingdom of God, at the heart of God’s love for us is his desire to give freely. He has been so misrepresented by those who do not understand. The forces of evil have painted such a false picture. Jesus corrects this by a simple illustration. As one who all angels of glory worship,

²¹⁷ Matthew 18:2.

²¹⁸ Luke 9:48.

²¹⁹ Luke 9:46.

²²⁰ Luke 9:48.

²²¹ Philippians 2:7.

and as the one who was the instrument of creation, he emptied himself becoming as a servant even until death on the cross.²²²

Jesus is saying to all his disciples you cannot be greater than your master, and I am God's obedient and trusting Son and child. This is how each of us is to see each other. Seek to serve each other. Do not put yourself forward like the powerful, or like parents who control the children. Rather look to how you may build each other up. Look to how you might resource others. For Doctor Luke knew that in Jesus kingdom it is as each looks out for others that real love and real family friendship can grow. There is no more need to watch your back less someone jealously tries to stab you. There is no more need to put yourself first because others may beat you to it and do you down. None of that is to be in the Kingdom. For if each looks out for how they can build up others, and encourage them, then my needs are met by others who look out for me as much as theirs by what I do for them. Jesus said do as you would be done by.²²³ This is the principle of the Son of God, and this is how he wants all of his children to behave. And what glory the primitive church experienced as all joined with glad and thankful hearts together sharing all things in common; now that is the type of People that our servant king wants.²²⁴

Doctor Luke advises his patients to practice gift love that puts others first and self second. However, because we are to treat each other like children, I am sure that he wants us to be cared for and nurtured. No one child of God should be allowed to be abused by the selfish or grabbing, and no one child of God should be allowed to abuse him or herself by not taking care to look after themselves by having time to rest,

²²² Philippians 2:7.

²²³ Luke 6:31.

²²⁴ Acts 2:44.

grow, feed on spiritual food etc. There must be balance. The church is not to be a place where people selfishly look for high places, or selfishly keep hold of them, it is rather to be an environment of flexibility to keep on asking the childish questions, “What do you want me to do next Lord?” True children of God keep on moving flexibly by listening to what God is asking of them. True children are never static, and in the kingdom they are to be guided by looking in Love to do God’s will, and to care for others needs. What a prescription!

Disciples Accept other ministries without hinderence – Luke 9:49 & 50

Not all Luke’s material records the best events in the early churches’ history. Clearly the split between Barnabas and Paul ²²⁵ was not a happy memory. The conflict between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians had been taxing.²²⁶ So Luke is naturally moved by the Spirit to record a definitive solution to possible future rifts among disciples with differing ministries by recording an incident during Jesus ministry.

“John answered, “Master, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he does not follow with us.” But Jesus said to him, “Do not forbid him; for he that is not against you is for you.” ²²⁷

Doctor Luke was used to making comprehensive notes recording patients symptoms without censure. Although he would not have wanted his material to have been overburdened with the less glorious exploits of early disciples, he nevertheless could not

²²⁵ Acts 15:39.

²²⁶ See on Acts chapter 15.

²²⁷ Luke 9:49,50.

leave his history of case studies into discipleship without a few examples. He knew, as Jesus himself was aware, that human beings naturally like to put themselves into groups, clubs, clans, nations, cults etc. We like to protect ourselves from those who we can come to see as threatening outsiders. Luke wants his spiritual patients to learn to see beyond boundaries. Even if we come across other ministries which we do not know we must not try to harm what is being done.

Jesus simply sets the rule “he that is not against you is for you.”²²⁸ We need to start to look beyond denominational barriers to see how we can combine resources to spread the gospel. We need to make our church memberships less like entry into an exclusive club to being more like recognition that people want to identify with the family of Christ. Denominations may consider that they preserve something important or essential that other Christian groups do not. Well that may be all well and good, but this should never lead on to the next step of rejecting others who are trying to win believers for the same Lord.

Paul put it well when he spoke against groups putting labels on themselves such as was happening in Corinth.²²⁹ Although Jesus does not say it out-rightly, he clearly did not want his disciples to make themselves exclusive because of their particular relationship to him. It would have been so easy for them to have put themselves above future converts saying: “We actually are more important than you because Jesus chose us in person.” But the amazing thing is that the Apostles learnt their lesson well – they shared everything with the newest member as equally and freely as with the oldest and most senior. They passed on the baton to new leaders as their time came to depart

²²⁸ Mat. 12:30.

²²⁹ See on 1 Cor. Chapter 1.

this world. The miracle of the early church leadership under the apostles is that a mixture of uneducated and unrefined men, bar possibly Matthew [the Levite], were transformed into great humble leaders who put love for Jesus and others first.

Luke records how a division arose among certain parties in the early church because the Helenists felt that certain other Jewish Christians were getting more care than them.²³⁰ The Apostles could have been resentful not wishing to let others get positions of prominence as well, for clearly the deacons were people of the Spirit Stephen being a classic example.²³¹ No, but rather, they willingly and thankfully welcomed others to work for the Lord's glory and his people.

Luke recognised the importance of disciples learning to accept the ministries that each had to offer the other, and also by further extension, to also welcome ministries which were less well known. Luke knew the value of applauding and encouraging others in the work of God, and he records this important principle for the further healthy growth of God's church. Doctor Luke knew the joy of seeing a patient recover from a long illness. He must have often been full of thankfulness when he saw a weak new little life thrive in the caring arms of its mother. We need to take joy in seeing others succeed for the Lord. We need to encourage them and let them know they are doing a good job. Lord help us to have a ministry of encouragement! Amen!

²³⁰ Acts 6:1.

²³¹ Acts 6:5.

An interlude which sets the scene for 2 great challenges of discipleship – Luke

9:51

“When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”²³²

Jesus was preparing his disciples for what lay ahead. Luke saw the importance of all of his teachings on discipleship as these led up to the great turning point in Jesus mission; for he deliberately turns his face to go up to Jerusalem allowing himself to go to death, and sacrifice for the sins of the world. It is interesting that Luke does not use the words of sacrifice to describe this step. He does not say when the days drew near for him to be offered up” as one would talk of a sacrificial animal, but he says:

“when the days drew near for him to be received up” which is the language of glorification and a mission accomplished. Indeed we may recall that Moses and Elijah had appeared to him on the mount to speak of what he was to be accomplished at Jerusalem.²³³

Jesus goes to the cross in faith, accepting that there would be resurrection, ascension and a rule by virtue of his Spirit working in his disciples. It is not so much that he wants them to be prepared for the shock of his rejection and crucifixion [although this was important] it was rather that he wanted them to know that discipleship was based on following in their masters footsteps. They may have their crosses to bear, but if they were to serve him after the Spirit of Jesus came at Pentecost then they needed to

²³² Luke 9:51.

²³³ Luke 9:31.

understand what discipleship is all about, so that they could go and make other disciples themselves.²³⁴

Their future mission is to be empowered by the Spirit,²³⁵ but it is to be informed by the teaching of Jesus. So often we hear talk of the Spirit. We see many things done in the name of the Spirit, and some of those things seem very unlike anything that Jesus ever did, or his Apostles. May be one reason for this is that in order to understand the nature of the work of the Spirit we need to understand what sort of disciples we need to be. The Spirit functions to bring to mind the things Jesus taught.²³⁶ It is his role to lead us on the basis of Jesus living words and teachings which we find recorded in our Bibles.

When Jesus sets his face to go to Jerusalem he does so to be received up because he has prepared men and women who following in his footsteps will also follow his teachings and principles about discipleship. This is why Doctor Luke has so much to say on discipleship because he saw the significance and purpose of what Jesus earthly ministry was all about. It was not just to die and rise therefore giving life, it was also to make disciples and leave a legacy of a church and people who would follow him as his disciples guided by his Spirit! He could turn his face to the task, and willingly be received up, because he knew that he had reached that part in God's preordained plan where everything had been fulfilled in that purpose for the church of the new covenant to be established with its leaders till he come again in person.²³⁷

²³⁴ Matthew 28: 18 – 20.

²³⁵ Acts 1:8.

²³⁶ John 16:12.

²³⁷ Acts 1:11.

Luke recognised that disciples need to understand that they fit in the very heart of God's plan for the salvation of mankind. They are not an accident. Their role is not unimportant but vital for they are to be the instruments of the Spirit of Jesus to fulfil his work in the world. They are to be his face. They are to be his ambassadors. They are to be his responsible sons and daughters. He is their elder brother.²³⁸ It is vital that we understand what a disciple is before we next consider how the Spirit is to work through us. Luke understands this. He knew it by experience. When people came to listen to him speak his teaching must surely have been based heavily on the meaning and work of discipleship.

Disciples do not make excuses for inaction, but choose action – Luke 9:57 – 62

It is interesting how Luke records the various excuses that people make in order not to follow Jesus just after he has recorded Jesus' vital choice not to delay his choice to go up to Jerusalem to fulfil his mission. We can read the excuses. The nub of them all is that Jesus does not let any of those who have been trained as disciples use excuses to delay following him. He puts it in stark language:

“No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”²³⁹

²³⁸ Heb. 2:14.

²³⁹ Luke 9:62.

At first this seems very harsh. We all go through times when we look back, or make mistakes, or doubt our course, or even fall into sin. Does this mean Jesus wants nothing to do with the likes of us? No, that is not the point here! Jesus whole life is a clear example of compassion and encouragement of disciples who indeed do make significant mistakes. “The sons of thunder” want to call destruction down onto towns which do not immediately accept their message.²⁴⁰ Jesus rebukes that attitude straight away. He is more or less pointing out that God is not quick to judge people. Peter the so called chief apostle of the merry band denies him, indeed we know that in later Years after Pentecost the Apostle Paul had to rebuke him for turning his back on the freedom of the gospel by trying to live like a Jew under law again instead of grace.²⁴¹ He clearly repents and dies faithful as his letter indicates,²⁴² and also Jesus prophecy of how he would die. But even in this prophecy Jesus makes a promise that although Peter would not want to die on a cross the Lord still accepted what he did, and promised in so many words to make up for his insufficiency.²⁴³

What Jesus is saying to would be disciples here is that those who want to continuously sit on the fence, without ever making a real commitment, or indeed, not even really having a heart on fire for him in themselves cannot expect to be his disciples. True disciples do fall, are weak, do go in wrong directions at times, this is all forgivable, and indeed the Lord will pull such through. It is rather the difference between a real and false discipleship that Luke wants to draw to our attention in this record. It is that these would be disciples do not have it in their hearts to want to follow Jesus now, and they really are just trying to hedge their bets. It is rather like

²⁴⁰ Mark 3:17.

²⁴¹ Gal. 2:11.

²⁴² 2 Pet. 1:14.

²⁴³ John 21:18.

the person who says: “I can’t believe God will judge me in the end I’ve lived a good life.” It is not the good life that is at stake, it is whether you really in heart, all mistakes and challenges included throughout life’s journey, it is whether you really want Jesus as your master that counts! If you do not in your heart then there is good news you can ask God to give you a new miraculous heart that wants him and loves him, and he will give it to you,²⁴⁴ but you must ask for that is the starting point of all true discipleship. The new heart that Jesus implants in us will always keep on bringing us back on course to wanting to keep our hand on the plough following the Lord by the guidance of his Spirit.

Doctor Luke knows that only when we truly face up to our excuses which stop us from choosing Jesus can we ask for help, and gain power to follow him on the basis of his Spirit’s aid who empowers us through Jesus almighty strength when we are weak.²⁴⁵

Disciples cannot buy lost peoples favour – Luke 10

Now that Jesus is turned to the road of destiny he sends out another seventy disciples to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. He is giving the message that it is not only special chosen apostles who are chosen to do his will, but also every average joe disciple. He is not only empowering a selected group. There is to be no specialist ministry so much as there are to be as many disciples as there are Christians to go out and tell what great things Jesus has done for them.

²⁴⁴ Ezekiel 36:27.

²⁴⁵ Rom. 8:26.

He sends them out with the words:

“Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and salute no one on the road.”²⁴⁶

The work of the gospel is to be based on the free gift of forgiveness and eternal life which every man and woman has a right to accept from Jesus Christ. They are not to curry favour by flashing around money, or by buying people's interest with the promise of riches such as the world offers. The real intention of the sparseness of the disciples' financial equipment is the whole point really. The disciple is not to rely on gimmicks, or new programmes, or big fantastic stage events with drums and lights so much as the free gift of Jesus power by his Spirit to transform anyone right where they are at any moment, in any place, at any time or any situation. In other words the disciple is to rely on God's unlimited resources to change lives, and show his presence, so that the disciple may always be kept on track by not coming to rely on the works of man rather than God, and also he or she must be careful not to give the impression that it was things, gimmicks, stage sets, elaborate schemes, which brought change to a convert but by God alone!

Doctor Luke knew from experience that what made the early churches work glorious was its destitution in treasures of the world, but its abundance in the treasures of God's saving mercy. Phillip speaks to an Ethiopian eunuch who is changed in a moment by meeting Christ in the Old Testament scriptures. No hype here just evidence of the word of God. Paul, Luke, Silas and Timothy move on into Europe from Asia simply because of a dream, and the gospel is spread so much so that by the

²⁴⁶ Luke 10:4.

end of Paul ministry he is able to write to the Colossians that the gospel has spread throughout the known world.²⁴⁷

Conclusion

Paul the Tent Maker earned money to fund his missions. Luke the doctor made a living by treating both bodies and souls. Peter the fisherman always could turn his hand to the boat and net. What Luke demonstrates in his record about the first disciples is that they all shared one thing in common they all fulfilled the mission as disciples telling others about Jesus because they loved to do it for their Lord, and they loved those for whom the Lord had died. May God make us into such disciples in Jesus name amen!

Reflection Exercises

[1] In what ways do Luke's snap shots on Jesus' teaching about discipleship aid you in defining the qualities you need to learn in order to be a successful "missional" leader for him?

²⁴⁷ Col. 1:6.

[2] How would you incorporate teaching on discipleship into the equipping of a “missional” team?

[3] what strategies would you use to facilitate an open learning environment for disciples?

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