

[The Beloved Physician] / Gospel of Luke 1:1 – 4

~ Our Spiritual Safari is praying that the Holy Spirit will reveal our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ on every page of our expedition through the entire Word of God. Beginning in this report, we have a very personal and private appointment with the Great Physician Himself! After the dreadful but enriching safari through Leviticus, we need to see a doctor - at least, I feel like I do! Who knows what we caught and brought back from the Old Testament? Thank God we have this quarantine time between where we just came from and the Book of Numbers that we go back to after this! Without this time of healing – honestly – there is no way we could make it like that. If you thought Leviticus was a tough, troublesome, tiring and terrifying book; wait until we embark through Numbers! As the old saying goes – you ain't seen nothing yet! Here, however, we have a Gospel that is one of the finest and most important books in the Bible; of course, I say that about all of the sixty-six wonderful books in the Word of God, so....

We can say accurately and truly that this Gospel account is critical to an overall understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ and His life and mission in going to Jerusalem. As with each of the other Gospels, we have a very definite purpose and specific audience for Luke. Each of the Gospel writers has a very specific segment of society they were targeting with their writing. Matthew was written to the nation Israel and to the religious man. Mark was written to the strong Roman man living under Roman rule. This Gospel is written to the Greek man; that is, the THINKING man - the Greek intellectual mind. As with any doctor, a background is important; so, we're going to take the time to get a thorough and complete resume of Dr. Luke's qualifications and experience before we consider his words. I think you are going to find this Gospel thrilling to examine - and to be examined by.

When the nineteenth century ended, there was a wave of skepticism that rolled over Europe and the British Isles. Disillusion and disappointment with the dimming optimism of the Victorian aristocratic era had taken full bloom. On the lighter side, the "gay nineties" were ushered in. However, an unusually large band of scholars were drawn to investigate the Bible at that time - as seems to be taking place again today. Some became skeptical and some became cynical as differing doctrine and theology went

absolutely wild. At that same time in history a brilliant young man was attending Cambridge University, and his goal in life became to disprove the accuracy of Scripture. Well, this man jumped right in and attacked Luke, because later in Scripture, Luke presents an historical account of a record of missionary journeys by the apostle Paul. Naturally, all historians make mistakes, so Sir William Ramsey set out to publish and exploit the Biblical error in Luke's accounts of Paul's journeys. If that could be shown to be mistaken - then the integrity of his Gospel would fall with it. Frankly, the entire Word of God would have become untenable.

So, Luke wrote this Gospel because the spiritual message is utterly astounding! Luke presents the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ as we have not yet seen Him on safari, not even in Leviticus! We'll get up close and personal with Him in this book of the Bible. Jesus is the perfectly divine man, and He is the Savior of the world! The Lord Jesus Christ was God manifest in human flesh. He is the Blessed Hope of the world. Luke and John will say the same thing - but they'll frame it much differently.

Luke is the ONLY Gentile that made any contribution to the canons of Scripture; and is responsible for two books in the New Testament. Of course, the other one is the Book of Acts! We know that Luke was a Gentile from the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Colossians. Paul knew Luke well and Luke was Paul's companion; Luke joined Paul and traveled with him on the second missionary journey - and probably the third. In Acts, we find Luke says, "...we" went into Macedonia. Luke was with Paul from at least that point on in Paul's second missionary journey in which they made the historical crossing over into Europe. This is a very important background to consider as we take a look at what Luke has to say about Jesus. I feel Luke was likely a convert that Paul made somewhere along the way. We know Luke was with Paul until the very end, too. When Paul wrote second Timothy, he concludes by saying only Luke was remaining with him now. That's when Paul calls Luke the beloved physician.

Luke is a definite scholar and a brilliantly intelligent man. He was well-acquainted with the Greek language and culture of the day. Luke wrote all the poems that are associated with Christmas in some of the best Greek writing found in the New Testament – along with Paul's Greek writing. Luke

will place the stethoscope of inspection on the baby Jesus. Luke performs the autopsy on the body of the Person of Christ as he dissects Him, examines, tests Him; and Luke concluded the determination of the cause of Jesus death. Luke pronounces Jesus dead; but on the third day, Luke gets out his stethoscope again and declares Christ alive! All of this information is laid out very carefully for us in this Gospel.

Luke's spiritual purpose presents Jesus as the perfect and divine Son of God! In Matthew, Jesus was the Messiah and the King and Redeemer; in Mark, Jesus was the mighty and strong conqueror and the virile ruler of the world, but here we see our Great High Priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and we see the only One Who can extend love and tenderness and mercy to us. Luke wrote to his fellow countrymen just as Matthew wrote to like-minded men. The Greek mind was one of the most important segments of humanity in the known world at that time. They are, actually, still a very important slice of world community intellect today, although they do have other very serious problems as a nation.

During the fourth century B.C., the Greeks placed the most scintillating display of human genius that mankind has ever seen on the world's stage. It's called the Periclean age and we will see references to it as we move along with Luke. The Greek of the day was attempting a perfect humanity; similar to what the Germans attempted later. The Greeks attempted to develop the perfect man in the physical realm. All of the Greek writings, statues and the works of Phineas or Praxiteles all ascribe to the presentation of the perfected man. That philosophy of grandeur also carried over into the mental realm, as well. They not only presented a beautiful man but man of reason and higher critical thinking. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, of course, all were Greek philosophers, just to name a few. Homer, Euripides, Sophocles, Demosthenes and many others were great literary Greek products who attempted to attain to a universal man. All failed. All are outdated and quaint.

Further, all Greek gods were made in the likeness of man. The gods of the Greeks were merely dreamy projections of what they could physically see with their eyes. Beautiful statues were made of Apollo, Venus and Diana. These are a far cry from the ugliness of the paganism that came out of the

orient, by the way; but it all still seeks only to deify man! The Greeks also had base passions, too; there was Aphrodite, Cupid and Pluto and the gods of Pan. They are absolutely puerile. Even so, the wonderful culture that Alexander the Great scattered abroad brought most of the ancient philosophies and many of the languages that we have today. Meanwhile, over in Alexander of Egypt, the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew into Greek and became the Septuagint, which is one of the finest translations we have available to us today of that part of the Bible.

The New Testament was written in Greek. The Greeks provided the vehicle containing the most marvelous language of expression and communication that could be afforded to the cause of Christ and furtherance of the Gospel to all of mankind. Greek remains one of the finest modes of expression to communicate a thought. For an entire millennium, the Greeks attempted to perfect humanity. Unfortunately, and naturally, the Greeks fell far short. Utopia never arrived in the Greek isles and their hopes were dashed. The Greeks never came upon those elusive fields of dreams; but what they did do was lose sight of the spiritual truths of the True and Living God. The world is nothing but a graveyard, friends, but the Greeks want it to be a playground and a home and a workshop. Dr. FW Roberson states, "...the more the Greek attached himself to this world the more the unseen world became dim." That's the primary reason we are going to see them make an image to the unknown god.

The unknown god is where Paul is going to begin with the Athenians. When Paul came to town these cultivated Athenians were severe skeptics. Paul will be mocked and called a "babbling." Paul wrote, "...the Gospel to the Greeks is foolishness" and when he wrote that, he was writing to the Greek mindset! This book isn't something to play with, my beloved – because someone who knows the Word of God can absolutely wreck your faith and ruin your life with words if you continue to reject the True and Living God - the Lord Jesus Christ. The Ephesians were also Greeks; and Paul said to them, "...you were in times past Gentiles having no hope and without God in the world!"

In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son, made of a woman and made unto the law. Well, a little later on we will walk down a Road in Rome with

Paul who has a universal language and will be preaching a global Gospel about the perfect man they sought to emulate. See, friends, the religions in Israel could produce nothing but a Pharisee. All Rome could produce is a Caesar type. All the philosophies of Greece combined produced nothing but a global giant like Alexander the Great. He's dead. His dynasty is gone and all but forgotten. Here, we see Luke writing to the Greek mind and also presenting Jesus as the Perfect Man. The very One that the Greeks were looking for in a universal man was being offered to them by Luke and Paul. All of that is going to unfold in the Gospel of Luke as we consider this account of Christ very, very carefully and thoroughly....

1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;

3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

~ Those four verses constitute one periodic sentence. If you have studied Greek, then you know that a periodic sentence simply means it is difficult to translate! You have to be amongst the excelled of the learned in Greek communications to write it like this, you may be absolutely positive. You have to be pretty smart just to read it; and it takes spiritual discernment to make any sense of it. Put all that together and we have very few who understand what we are talking about in this report! Luke could read it and, obviously, he could write it. The understanding Luke was given is beyond that of contemporary mankind. Far beyond.

Let's look closely at two things that are very important. "Eyewitnesses" and "ministers" are two words that are easy to just pass over without a second thought. Well, we sure don't want to pass over them. "Eyewitness" is

derived from the two words “autopsia” – meaning “to see for oneself” and “opsis” which means “eye” – and Luke is a medical doctor, so he spoke in those terms. Luke is saying he did the autopsy on the Lord Jesus Christ! The word for “ministers” is boiled down to an “intern” - and Luke is saying that he made an autopsy, but he was just an intern! How utterly remarkable that is. Moreover, very reputable doctors have believed in the virgin birth. The stuffy theological professor that says he doesn’t believe in the virgin birth will never answer two questions: (1) what do they know about biology? - and (2) what do they know about impossibilities with God? Those questions never seem to receive an answer. We have pseudo-peanut theologians running around, and they all seem to know everything and nothing - all at once!

In this Gospel, Luke is going to detail twenty miracles for us. Six of those are recorded in no other Gospel. Likewise, Luke gives us more parables than any other writer and Luke recounts parables that no other writer gives us! Eighteen out of twenty-three parables in this Gospel account are not found elsewhere in Scripture. The parable of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan are both peculiar to this Gospel. We also have a very human account of the walk of our Lord on the road to Emmaus that day after the resurrection. That is one of my favorite accounts in the entire Bible; the spiritual truth is going to be mind AND body numbing – I PROMISE you! Luke is also going to confirm that Christ was born a fleshly body and died a human death but was raised in a spiritual body.

So, our Spiritual Safari just barely got our foot in Dr. Luke’s office door before we must rest for the day. Christ is still on duty if you have an emergency – don’t worry! In fact, we could write over this entire Gospel the phrase: Behold the Man! Christ was a man then and He is still a Man in the Glory today! We can see Him anytime we want to. Luke presents Christ made like unto His brethren. This safari does not outline Books of the Bible because we are about as unconventional as we can possibly be. We are not after the well-outlined and polished prose – we want to see Jesus - and how wonderful He can be; and if we are to do that then this thing is going to get real.

I felt like this preliminary statement would be helpful in setting us on our way. As in all of the other books of the Bible I can only wish I were adequate to present Luke properly, completely and correctly. The world rejects the Word of God today mainly because they don't find it real in their lives. Most of the commentary is stiff and overly scholarly; or unabashedly puerile. In order for the Bible to mean ANYTHING at all to us in our life we MUST begin in prayerful confession of sins. Without that time of ongoing, daily confession, the Word of God is going to remain inaccessible, closed and locked as tight as Fort Knox to us. If you do not come to Christ as a sinner, then you are locked out of the camp with no hope of coming in.

Friends, are you certain and sure today that you are a child of God through faith in Christ? Are you certain that this is the Word of God? I honestly do feel sorry for the Christian that wobbles back and forth. Most say they aren't sure, and they don't know if they have enough faith. That isn't the problem; the problem is that you don't know enough about the Word of God to rest in it. I hate to say it like that, but all of life's problems are grounded in our abject ignorance of the Word of God. See, faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. No other way! If you really knew what this Bible was all about, you would believe it. We all have difficulty believing at times – but only because we don't spend enough time in the Word of God. We need to learn to confess that our unbelief is bigger than our belief; and then do something about it. The problems are not with the Bible – the problems are us! May God bring us into the next report with a believing heart and an open mind that is capable of finally learning something as it ought be ~

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