

Introduction for August 15, 2010

Dr. Luke's gospel is the longest of the gospels and, when placed with Acts, comprises over one quarter of the New Testament. He is both theologian and historian. He does not blur the facts of history to do theology and his theology is supported by the history which he writes. As I. Howard Marshall suggests, "It is better to refer to Dr. Luke as an evangelist who, in writing his account of the life of Jesus, does so as an historian and theologian." Luke's aim was to present Christ as Savior and Lord in the fulfilling of God's plan of salvation for the world. He bore witness to Christ as the Savior and His finished work on the cross to save sinners, thus his history and theology do not stand in opposition to each other but rather support and confirm the truth of the gospel.

Luke's history is based on the tradition handed down by the apostles, and his theology is based on that same tradition. Luke was not an innovator, but a faithful evangelist doing the work assigned to him by God Almighty.

Luke stood in awe of the majesty of Christ, whether in writing of His command over the physical elements of creation, or of His authority over demons. He bowed in adoration before Christ as he learned of His power to forgive sin, heal sickness and deliver from evil. Luke worshipped as he understood Christ's compassion and love for sinners and was stunned by His greatness and glory as He revealed Himself as the Son of God. But more than that, Luke was overwhelmed by Christ's sacrifice as displayed at the cross and through His resurrection and ascension. His writing of the gospel found its climax in the passion narrative and Christ's subsequent triumph over the grave, death, sin and hell.

Luke's goal in writing to Theophilus was to answer critical questions that would encourage and securely affirm Theophilus in his faith: Is Christianity what I believed it to be, sent from God? What about the Gentiles and their becoming a part of what began as a Jewish movement? Has the generous offer of God's salvation caused the church to suffer? Will the rest of God's promises come to pass? Has most of Israel rejected the promise of the gospel? Can one really be sure that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises of God now and in the future? Luke answers all of these questions faithfully and clearly, both in the gospel and in Acts. As we begin our journey through this magnificent gospel and learn of Jesus, may we take to heart His Words to Martha in Luke 10:41-42, "But the Lord answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part which shall not be taken from her.'" (NASB)