

The Gospel Account

I have said to you on other occasions, that sometime early on in this ministry of the Lord, I was lead in my preaching and teaching to simply start at the beginning of a Book of the Bible and to then deliberately and carefully preach and teach word by word, verse by verse all the way through that particular Book.

We have done that with the Book of James, and now I would like for us to consider the Book of Luke, the third of the Gospel accounts of Jesus. And there is no mystery as to why I choose one Book of the bible for us to study over the other books. I simply pray and ask the Lord which book I should choose next, and then, right away I am led to the right one. And this time, it is the Gospel of Luke.

Also at this time, as I listened to God's leading, I also sensed the reason "why" God would have us study this Book of Luke. It is "so that we might know more about the Person of Jesus Christ". And yes, all of the books of the bible reveal Jesus to us, but these gospels are especially helpful in revealing some of the most intimate details of His personal life and ministry.

And why is this so important for us, and especially for me personally? It involves a question that I once asked my favorite Christian mentor, Dr. Paul Culley. I asked him to tell me the "secret" to his personal relationship with Christ. And, without hesitation, he answered that it was "his personal intimate love for the Person of the Lord Jesus". Folks, those were some of the most important words that I have ever heard. And I want to experience that same kind of love for the Lord Jesus that I perceived was in the heart of Dr. Culley. And I also want that for each of you.

And also, for me, as I consider that I am now in the latter years of my earthly life, more than ever, I'm aware that there is a very soon-coming "face-to-face" eternal adventure with the Lord Jesus that lies just ahead of me. And that makes me want, all the more, to know Him better, right now, in these living years.

And so, today we will begin on a fresh journey of getting to know and love the Person of the Lord Jesus more and more. And we will use these words given to us by this chosen man of God, Luke. Listen, as Luke gives a special introduction to the study that He had endeavored to accomplish. Verse 1,

1 Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, ²just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, ³it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed. (Luke 1:1-4)

What do we know about Luke, this specially chosen man of God? The first matter of note is that next to the Apostle Paul, Luke is the most prolific writer in the New Testament, having written the words of this gospel and then also, the Book of Acts.

And we know from the words recorded in the Book of Acts that Luke was with the Apostle Paul through most all of Paul's missionary travels, recording Paul's preaching. And He also probably tended to some of Paul's physical needs, the Book of Colossians referring to Luke as being a Physician. And Luke is also believed to have been of Gentile birth. But other than those few things, we know very little about Luke personally.

His recorded words that we read in these two books of the bible span over sixty years, starting with the birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner to Jesus, and ending with the final chapter of the Book of Acts, with the gospel being preached in Rome.

No other writer wrote such a comprehensive history of Jesus and of Jesus' impact on mankind. And no other writer goes all the way from John the Baptist to the gospel having reached the capital of the Roman Empire. With his words, Luke is the most complete storyteller of the miracle of the gospel in the whole New Testament. But again, he, himself remains mostly unknown to us.

Also of note, as we study these words, we'll see that in the twenty-four chapters of this gospel and in the twenty-eight chapters of the Book of Acts, God has

chosen for Luke to almost never refer to himself. He instead lets the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the focus of his writing, to dominate his words completely. And in doing that, God has presented Luke as being a very humble man.

And as we are told in these words, Luke has given a thorough and complete account of the gospel, absolutely accurate and absolutely inerrant.

But also, in saying all of this about Luke, may I address a point that I believe is sometimes a confusion to many of us, a confusion about the exact role that Luke and the other writers of these scriptures fulfilled as they penned the words that we now read.

Here in these beginning words of this Book of Luke, it would almost seem as if Luke was about to present historical information about Jesus that was gathered from his research. And it was, and he did. But the information did not come solely from his detailed research.

And I do fear that many are confused about that. Because these words did not come solely through Luke's intellectual pursuits, but they came also through the intimate assistance of God's Holy Spirit. Listen again as we read these words.

1 Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, ²just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, ³it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed. (Luke 1:1-4)

Luke begins by describing a process that many historians use even today as they attempt to research and to set down in writing the accounts of specific historical events.

And taking these words at face value alone, we might assume that all the things that we will read over the next 24 chapters are facts that Luke learned simply through research. But that's not so! And that will become immediately obvious as we read further into this gospel.

Apparently, there had been many accounts circulating about the person and life of Jesus, some of them reasonably accurate, but also, no doubt, many of them wrong and inaccurate. And God, having the desire for us to know the real truth, appointed Luke to the task of putting down in writing a “perfect understanding” of the account of Jesus.

The next question would be, “Why Luke”? Why would God use Luke over and above another writer? There is no mention in the gospels that Luke was a personal “eyewitness” to the ministry of Jesus. He was not one of the twelve disciples, and neither is he mentioned as being one of the many other disciples who followed Jesus.

So then, why did God choose Luke to write this gospel? I really don't know the answer to that question, but one reason seems to be that God uses various unique personalities to describe His plans and His purposes. And just as Matthew, Mark and John were used of God for their unique personalities, so also God used Luke's personality to tell about the life of Jesus.

And while Luke, obviously was called by God to invest himself in personal research about the life and ministry of Jesus, as we mentioned a moment ago, those accounts that he learned were not the sole foundational basis for the words written here. God would use His own resource for the final product that would be put down on these pages. God would use His own blessed Holy Spirit.

And we are told that very clearly in the words of 2 Timothy 3 and in 2 Peter 1. Listen to those precious words that we have studied on several other occasions.

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

And then in 2 Peter 1:20-21,

²⁰knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as *they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

(2 Peter 1:20-21)

These blessed scriptures are the very “breath of God”. And praise the Lord for that!

And here also in these words of Luke, the “key words” that express this truth for us are two words found in verse 3, “perfect understanding”. These two words somehow got lost in the NIV and in other of the modern translations. But they are still clear within the KJV and NKJV, and they stand out as the actual representation of what took place within Luke’s learning process. Verse 3 again,

³it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first. (Luke 1:3)

Luke tells us here that he had a “perfect understanding of all things” from the very first, long before he did his research, and also over and above any testimonies and historical accounts that he might have learned from other people. And such “perfect understanding” can only come from the Spirit of God.

Why? Why was it necessary that the truth of this Gospel come from the Spirit of God rather than from the minds of men? It’s because, historical facts, no matter how technically accurate they may seem to be, are filtered through the minds and the emotions of both the ones who give those facts and the ones who receive them.

In other words, the eyewitnesses that Luke would have interviewed would have had their own personal biases and would surely have given biased responses to Luke’s inquiries. Emotion and personal bias will always, always invade and alter the truth of the facts.

That is so very obvious in today’s culture as we see history being “rewritten” over and over again by biased historians desiring to present their own view of matters that have taken place in the past. Simply put, no human mind is able to perfectly separate out truth from his or her own emotion and biases.

And no human mind is able to separate out the sacred from the secular. And no human mind is able to perfectly comprehend the mind of God, so as to perfectly convey all of the plans and purposes that God has for mankind.

We see that best illustrated for us in these gospels as we view the Scribes and the Pharisees who very diligently desired to preserve and to present the truth of God, but went completely astray from it. And that is so with our modern-day kinds of Scribes and Pharisees. That is why you and I must beware of the many books we read, and the philosophies that we follow.

There are many, many today who would rewrite the gospel to include, liberal themes, financial themes, deliverance themes and other such matters, and by doing so, lead their followers astray.

Folks, this word is the truth of God and of God alone. And for this truth to give you and me the “perfect understanding” that Luke spoke about, it must come out of the mind of God through the Spirit of God.

And it did exactly that with this man Luke. God interwove His Holy Spirit into Luke’s heart, mind and hands, so that as Luke penned these words, they remained ever and always the perfect, infallible words of God.

That is why Luke can say here in these words that he has a “perfect understanding” of all that took place in the life of Jesus. And that is why you and I can accept with full assurance that these words really are the perfect truth.

Listen to the way that God declares this truth to us in 1 Corinthians 2, where we read,

⁹ as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the

spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (1 Corinthians 2:9-12)

These words, within this Book of Luke, are the “perfect words” within the mind of the Father. And knowing the mind of the Father, the Holy Spirit spoke these “perfect words” into the mind of the Luke. And not only that, the Holy Spirit remained within these words as Luke wrote them onto these pages of scripture. And then even more, the Holy Spirit continues to live within these words as you and I take them into our hearts and minds.

Considering again why God chooses to filter His words of truth through the mind and intellect of men like Luke, another thought comes to my mind. It is that God has chosen for men to be the “means” by which His Grace is ministered to the rest of His creation. In this particular instance, Luke is the “means” by which God has ministered the grace of His truth on to the many generations of people that have read and been blessed by these words.

Also, another reason why God might use men with varying personality types to give forth His truth, could be because He knows that we who read these words can relate on a more personal basis with the manner and presentation used by certain of those writers. I think that because, for myself, I know that I relate more closely with some of these writers than I do with the others.

And so, as these words tell us, God gave Luke a special “unction” within his heart and mind to go forward and to write this Book of Luke in the way and manner that men do this sort of thing, researching and collecting information that would eventually be contained within this Book. But also, at the same time, in a mysterious way that we will probably never be able to comprehend, the Holy Spirit guided every step that Luke took, guiding every thought, every idea and every conclusion. And carefully omitting Luke's personal thoughts and opinions that were not sacred truth. And praise be to God for that.

So then, Luke, like all of the other writers of these scriptures, was a chosen instrument in the hands of God, a conduit through which “words of truth” could flow out from the heart of God onto the pages of scripture.

As for this other man mentioned in verse 4, Theophilus, we don't know who he was, but perhaps his mention here simply serves as a representative of you and me as we receive these precious words. And as we are told here, we can know and trust in the certainty of these things that God is teaching us through His servant Luke.

With all this being said, over these next many weeks, as we examine these words in this Gospel of Luke, and as we see Luke's personality being revealed to us in the manner and the expression of the words, let's always remember that the content of the words is always the perfect truth of God.

What a blessed comfort it is to know that we can read any portion of these scriptures and rest in the assurance that none of it is left to any man's ideas or interpretation, even my own. These are the pure, unsullied and infallible truths of God. And no man can alter them. Listen!

²⁰knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as *they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

(2 Peter 1:20-21)