back←to basics
returning to the simple and most important things

Luke-Acts

Talk No.1 **31/08/2022**

INTRODUCTION

The last book we looked at was Job which is one of the oldest books in the Bible, before that I talked about Ezra and Nehemiah, – two books at the end of the OT canon.

The NT opens with 4 Gospels, which are accounts of Jesus' life, teaching and ministry. I have talked about Matthew's Gospel already and now I will talk about Luke's Gospel, followed immediately by Luke's account of the Early Church in the book of Acts. Luke forges a strong link between his Gospel and Acts, joining the two books together, intending that they should be read as the continuation of one story, a story which continues today.

Each of the Gospels were written by apostles, or by those men who were closely associated with apostles. Matthew was an apostle of Jesus, Mark was an associate of the apostle Peter, Luke was a travelling companion of the apostle Paul and John was an apostle of Jesus. Resulting from these personal associations with Jesus and His apostles their Gospels were quickly accepted in the church. Of course, the 4 Gospels are a unique genre in biblical literature, focusing on the Person of Jesus – His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection and His ascension. The teaching of Jesus and His ministry, but also His training of disciples. Begin to study the life of Jesus from the Gospels and a "Harmony of the Gospels" (the Gospels placed side-by-side for purposes of comparison) will prove helpful.

One final word about the writer of both Luke the Acts. Try to imagine if we did not have Luke's account of the early church! This book may well be (after the Gospels) the most important book in the NT. To have written both books put his writings alongside those of the apostles Peter, John and Paul.

We must take note of the first verses of Luke's Gospel because he explains his methods and motives in writing, he explains why he wrote his Gospel and he now presents it to Theophilus to further establish the facts he has already been taught,

> *"Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Lk.1:1-4).*

Luke makes a direct link with this reference in Acts ch.1,

> ***"****In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach …" (Read vv1-5).*

Theophilus, simply means "God-lover" or "lover of God" - a beautiful name for a Christian convert.

Luke's profession has been discussed at length, he has been called a ship's doctor, based on his knowledgeable account of the shipwreck in Acts 28. He was a travelling companion of Paul, evidenced by the "we" passages in Acts, where Luke is present with Paul on his missionary travels. I think it is significant that Luke is seen to be a co-worker with the apostle. I am sure this is reflected in his writing of Acts. Undoubtedly, he is not only a traveller but also a theologian, particularly focused on the activity of the Holy Spirit – this fact is also apparent in his Gospel and begins with the Birth Narratives.

True to his original statement about his account which engages Jesus' story from the very beginning, he takes us back to the two holy families – the parents of John and Jesus. No other Gospel does this. I would call Luke an investigative journalist.

I have talked at length about the Birth Narratives on New Life Radio. I always return to them at Christmas-time. It is a great opportunity to re-visit these wonderful Scriptures. As a preacher I always sought to collect books, stories, poems and sermons about Christmas.

The birth and childhood of John and Jesus are found in ch.1-2, ch.3 takes up the ministry of John the Baptist. The annunciation of the angel to Zachariah is parallel to the one to Mary (and Joseph). The two stories link at Elizabeth's house where Mary's arrival is greeted by Elizabeth's loud prophetic word of greeting, John's leaping in her womb and Mary's beautiful prophetic song known as the Magnificat. What rich and precious scriptures these are! – and how the Holy Spirit is active throughout the narrative, beginning with the angelic announcement to Zachariah at the altar in the temple followed by the angel's announcement to Mary in the privacy of her home. The narrative concludes with the dedication of Jesus and the entry of Simeon and Anna into the temple at that precise moment, speaking prophetic words over the infant Jesus and Mary His mother.

We have Luke to thank for his accounts of things from the very first and we believe that he gained his information directly from these two families.

Next week we will take up the story of John the Baptist which continues in ch.3.