

## A man with a Missionary Vision

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- ❑ This evening I want to encourage you to go away and read two specific missionary books.
- ❑ This author is described by William Hendricksen as *“the forerunner of all the medical missionaries whereby the church and mankind have since been abundantly enriched”*.

2

❑ Luke, despite word for word writing more of the New Testament than any other man (including Paul), we only find his name mentioned three times in the whole of scripture **Col 4:14** p1185; **2 Tim 4:11** p1197; **Phile:23-24** p1200.

❑ Neither of the books of Luke and Acts mention his name; we accept his authorship from the testimony of the title of the gospel account and also through reliable early tradition.

❑ **Readings:** Luke 1:1-4 p1025; Acts 1:1-3 p1093

3

❑ Luke undertakes perhaps the most ambitious task of all the New Testament writers; namely a two-volume work covering the work and teachings of Christ while here on earth and then the history of the spread of the church throughout its first thirty years.

❑ From the point where he starts with the birth of John the Baptist in Luke 1; until Acts 28 where the gospel is being preached in Rome, Luke covers a staggering 60 years of historical narrative.

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❑ As we see in Col 4:14 Luke was a doctor, explaining the medical detail he includes in his account of Jesus' miracles and his unique record concerning the virgin birth.

❑ He was a Gentile. Compare the surrounding verses i.e. **Col 4:10-11** p1185 and **4:14**. (Luke was not Jewish).

❑ Luke unique was the only New Testament writer who was a Gentile. His gospel account is primarily directed towards Gentiles, which explains why his genealogy of Jesus traces right back through the line to Adam rather than to Abraham as in Matthew.

5

❑ He was thought to have been born at Antioch in Syria.

❑ Antioch was an important city when we think of the spread of the gospel. It was from here that both the first and third missionary journeys of Paul began (**Acts 13:1-3**; **18:23** p1107).

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- ❑ The date of Luke's conversion is uncertain. The opening verses of Luke show he was not an early follower of Jesus (he does not number himself among the eyewitnesses referred to in Luke 1:2).
- ❑ Again, in the opening of Acts he implies that he was not on the scene during those early days after the resurrection (Acts 1:3).
- ❑ Whether as a resident of Antioch he came under the gospel as it spread out of Jerusalem after the great persecution and scattering in Acts 8, or whether he came to faith directly as the result of Paul's first missionary journey, is uncertain.

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- ❑ By the second missionary journey there is no doubt about his faith.
- ❑ It was during this period that Luke linked up with Paul at Troas.
- ❑ Up until this point in Acts Luke has written in the third person e.g. **Acts 16:6-8** p1111.
- ❑ Note the change in **Acts 16:10-11** to the first person.

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- ❑ We tend to think of Luke as a writer doctor.
- ❑ On closer examination we find a major player in the spread of the gospel and the growth of the early church.
- ❑ Paul in **Phile:24** p1200 describes him as a 'fellow worker' in the gospel.
- ❑ Luke was a missionary evangelist in his own and stands out as a faithful servant of Christ.

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- ❑ **Acts 16:10** p1111 Luke shared a clear vision of the work to be done - to preach the gospel. Notice his word "us" in that verse!
- ❑ Furthermore a few verses on in Acts 16:13, we find on the Sabbath in the city of Philippi that "we sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there".

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- ❑ Luke's commitment to the spread of the gospel is reflected in his narrative both in Acts and Luke.
- ❑ E.g. His attention to detail in the records of the sending out of the disciples to gospel work in Luke 9 and 10; the parables of the 'lost' in Luke 15; and the conversion of the thief on the cross in **Luke 23:39-43** p1060.
- ❑ Whilst it is easy to focus on the medical influence in his writing, the preaching of the gospel and the need for a response in faith are a key part of what Luke wants to record of both the life of Jesus and the beginnings of the Christian church.

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- ❑ "*Luke is the only Evangelist who makes a preface to his Gospel, for the purpose of explaining briefly the motive which induced him to write*" (John Calvin).
- ❑ "*Luke wrote for people removed from the ministry of Jesus, both in geography and time, and his task was to provide them with such an account of the story of Jesus as would enable them to see that the story with which they had already become partially acquainted was a reliable basis for their faith*" (I. Howard Marshall).

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❑ Luke's commitment to the gospel never wavered. His account of the early church in Acts never really closes completely.

❑ Instead he signs off with the ongoing and unhindered spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ despite the fact that Paul is imprisoned and his life in jeopardy **Acts 28:30-31** p1127.

13

❑ Back in Acts 16 Paul and Silas are imprisoned in Philippi; although again Luke shows that this did not hinder the work of the gospel.

❑ The jailor and his whole household were gloriously converted and baptized.

❑ However, when Paul and Silas were released at the end of Acts 16 they have to leave Philippi.

❑ It is at this point that Luke's historical narrative assumes once again the third person **Acts 17:1** p1113.

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❑ It is some seven more years before Paul returns to Philippi and he and Luke join forces again Acts 20:5.

❑ It is suggested that in the meantime Luke spent the time in and around Philippi, preaching the Gospel and looking after the new Christians.

❑ If this is so, then Luke plays a key part in the development of perhaps the most loyal and generous church of that day; described by Paul as his "*joy and crown*" (Phil 4:1).

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❑ With the Apostle, Luke now leaves Philippi and returns to Jerusalem via:

i. Troas where Eutychus is raised from the dead (Acts 20:7-12)

ii. Miletus where Luke is present at the meeting between Paul and the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:13-38

iii. Tyre where there is an impromptu prayer meeting with the believers on the beach (21:5)

iv. Caesarea where the party spends some days with the evangelist Philip and his family (Acts 21:17).

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❑ How much he must have learnt during these visits; not only serving but being built up in his own faith.

❑ That tearful farewell to the Ephesians elders must have been an occasion when Luke must have particularly felt the power of fellowship in the gospel.

❑ No wonder in **Acts 21:1** p1117 Luke counts himself among those who have to 'tear' themselves away from these dear brothers.

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❑ Later we find Luke stood by Paul through his trial in Jerusalem and accompanied him to Caesarea where he faced the Governor Felix and the King Agrippa.

❑ In Acts 27:1 we see him boarding a ship with Paul for the long and dangerous trip to Rome.

❑ That vivid description of the storm in which the ship was completely broken up and the ship's company shipwrecked on Malta in Acts 27-28 could only come from someone who was right there e.g. **Acts 27:29-32** p1125.

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- ❑ The reference to Luke in 2 Timothy 4:11 reveals something else about him.
  - ❑ Luke was not only an accurate historian but a faithful and loyal friend. As Paul writes this letter he is preparing to stand before Caesar and is convinced in his heart that he is approaching the end of his earthly life.
  - ❑ Having spoken in the previous verse with a broken heart concerning those brothers who had either deserted him or had to leave him out of necessity when he most needed them, he writes "*only Luke is with me*".
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- ❑ This short study does not even begin to do justice to how the Lord used this man Luke to encourage the church and in particular Paul in his ministry to it.
  - ❑ However there is a legacy that continues today in the books of Luke and Acts.
  - ❑ They follow on from each other and show God's work on earth; through His Son and then by the work of His Spirit in the early church. They are still a blessing today!
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