

Luke Chapter 2

There is quite a bit of time crammed into this chapter. We begin with the birth of Christ and we end with Jesus at the the age of twelve. The Gospel of Luke is not like the other Gospels, in that it doesn't have the same feel of the other Gospels. The reason for this is that Saint Luke is trying to document the events in order to give an ordered account of what really happened. Because he was a doctor, he is trying to show the Gospel in its historical setting. In the Bible there aren't many people who we would call historians in the normal sense of the word. For historians of the past it was usually the date of a war. For the Bible it is an account of the spiritual war, the war against good and evil. Historians include details regarding certain monarchs, the reign of kings and queens. For the Bible it is about the King of kings. Don't get me wrong, the Bible does include within it historical facts, but it is also more dynamic than just a list of dates regarding a war or a reign of a monarch. The Bible deals with everyday historical events, the events to do with every day people in an extraordinary period of history.

Saint Luke's Gospel was written to put the story in its true historical setting. That is why Saint Luke includes information regarding people that served a particular post, whether it be in the Temple or in government authority. What Luke is trying to do is give as much background information as possible so that anyone can cross reference this information with secular historical sources, for example, we are told that the birth of Jesus occurred when Caesar Augustus gave out a decree that all the world should be taxed (v1). We are also told that Cyrenius was governor of Syria (v2). Saint Luke calls on eye witnesses to bolster his case that Jesus was the true Messiah and his case is truly compelling. We are told of the shepherds (v8-18). We are told of Simeon (v25-35) and Anna (v36-38). Most importantly we are told of Mary, the mother of Jesus, who we believe was St. Luke's main source of information. Anyone at that time could investigate Luke's sources and even today we can cross reference his information with what we know of secular history.

When trying to document the events of an historical nature we need to include as much information as possible, no matter how mundane or trivial, for example. Times and dates, eyewitnesses, what positions people held at that time or what other events were occurring. The more information we have, the more compelling our case.

Why do I always try to take a camera with me when I do one of my long walks? One reason is because it is for my own memories. Another reason is to prove that I have done what I say I have done. Now pictures from a camera don't prove that I have done these things. People can doubt everything. What these pictures do do is add to the evidence in my favour. If people genuinely want to know the truth then they can cross reference with other facts and other information that I have included, for example, times, distances, people, places and events.

Saint Luke, of course, didn't have a camera, so what he did was give other information, people, places, events, eyewitness testimony. All of these things we can cross reference with known historical facts and with other facts, for example, geography. We can also cross reference with other passages of scripture, for example, the other Gospels.

Of course, non of this will convince the person who shuts their eyes to the evidence, but anyone who is willing to seek out the truth and examine the evidence will find a truly compelling case.

Prayer:- Heavenly Father, help people to see the case put forward by Luke and the other Gospel writers, to investigate the claims for themselves and not to shut their eyes to the truth. Help us all to seek Jesus, diligently, like Mary did when she thought they had lost Him and know that He is never very far from each and every one of us and about His father's business and in the right place, if we only know where to look. Amen.

By Philip Catherall.