



Northside Proclaimer

Proclaiming The Word Of The Lord

1 Thessalonians 1:8

Northside Church Of Christ Welcomes You!

April 12, 2015

“Luke The Historian”

Johnny Stringer

Luke’s accuracy in historical and geographical matters is so thoroughly established that to deny it would be pure folly. This fact has not always been recognized.

In the mid-nineteenth century, a scholar named Eduard Zeller launched a severe attack on the historical accuracy of Acts. Among those who accepted his flawed conclusions was an eminent Scottish archaeologist named Sir William Ramsay. In fact, Ramsay led an archaeological expedition with the intention of proving that Acts was the error-filled product of a 2nd-century writer. It turned out, however, that Ramsay proved the opposite of what he had set out to prove. His years of research compelled him to describe Luke as “among the historians of the first rank” (St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen, p. 4). In 1897 he published his conclusions in the famous volume just referenced, in which he defended the proposition “that Acts was written by a great historian” (p. 14).

Today, Luke is widely accepted as a remarkably accurate historian. The distinguished Roman historian A.N. Sherwin-White states: “For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming...any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted” (Roman Law and Roman Society in the New Testament, p. 189). Colin Hemer’s comparison of Luke with the well-known historian Josephus is telling: “The work of Luke is marked by carefulness but that of Josephus by carelessness” (The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History, p. 219). Continued on back...

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Announcements

- Remember the shut in's.
- Pray for the church and one another.
- Remember the spiritual sick among us
- Men's Bible April 12th today
- Kid's drill April 19th @ 4 PM
- Call or email me to add announcements, thanks.

Chronological Bible Reading Plan

Apr 12 1 Sam 15-17
Apr 13 1 Sam 18-20, Ps 11, Ps 59
Apr 14 1 Sam 21-24
Apr 15 Ps 7, Ps 27, Ps 31, Ps 34, Ps 52
Apr 16 Ps 56, Ps 120, Ps 140-142
Apr 17 1 Sam 25-27
Apr 18 Ps 17, Ps 35, Ps 54, Ps 63

Luke wrote of events that occurred over a geographical area ranging from Jerusalem to Rome, including such vastly diverse regions as Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. His history spans a period of about 30 years in which the political and territorial situations were always changing. Boundary lines and political offices were in a constant state of flux. And Luke did not write in generalities; he did not omit technical details so as to avoid mistakes. Yet, his detailed references have proved to be accurate. Rackham observes that such accuracy as is found in the book of Acts would have been impossible for one writing 50 years later (The Acts of the Apostles, p. xlili).

Critics have challenged Luke's accuracy, but archaeological discoveries have overturned the challenges. One such instance was the charge that Luke erred in the term he used to designate the ruler of Cyprus in Acts 13:7. The term Luke used (translated "deputy" in the KJV) means proconsul. For many years critics argued that Luke should have used the term procurator because, they explained, Cyprus was an "imperial" province, and imperial provinces were ruled by procurators. Archaeology, however, has proved Luke to be right and his critics wrong. Cyprus was indeed an imperial province, and therefore governed by a procurator, when it first came under Roman jurisdiction. However, what Luke's critics did not know was that in 22 B.C., Cyprus was made a "senatorial" province, and senatorial provinces were ruled by proconsuls. In fact, archaeologists have found coins and inscriptions on Cyprus using the term proconsul as the title of its rulers. According to Luke, the proconsul ruling Cyprus when Paul visited the island was named Sergius Paulus—an interesting point in view of the fact that an inscription discovered on the north coast of Cyprus included the words, "in the proconsulship of Paulus."

A similar example is found in Luke's account of events in Thessalonica. The word Luke used in Acts 17:6 for "rulers" is a specific title: politarchs. This word is not used as an official title anywhere else in Greek literature. Consequently Luke was charged with using the wrong title to refer to these city officials. However, once again, Luke has been proved right and his critics wrong. Archaeologists have found a number of inscriptions that unquestionably prove that the term politarch was an official title of certain city officials in ancient Macedonia. One of these inscriptions was found on the ancient arch that spanned the famous highway leading into Thessalonica. On this arch there is a listing of seven names of magistrates who wore the title politarch.

Luke's historical accuracy has held up under the most intense and zealous scrutiny. All attempts to discredit this inspired author have themselves been thoroughly discredited.