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DOCTOR LUKE

by Henry M. Morris*

Luke—the author of the third Gospel and the book of Acts—is of special interest for several reasons. He was the only Gentile who wrote any of the books of the Bible. Furthermore, he was the only scientist among the writers.

He is also recognized as a great historian, with his excellent accounts of the key events of the most important era in the history of the world. He also was undoubtedly a devoted Christian, a truth especially demonstrated by his unselfish service and companionship to the apostle Paul. Finally, he was probably the first Christian apologist, zealously concerned to defend and establish the absolute truth of the gospel of Christ.

Luke As Scientist and Medical Doctor

We know nothing for certain about Luke's background or his medical training. He was called "*the beloved physician*" by Paul (Colossians 4:14), and undoubtedly one reason for his ongoing association with Paul was the latter's need for frequent medical care.

Paul spoke of his "*thorn in the flesh*," (II Corinthians 12:7), for example, and his "*infirmities*" (II Corinthians 12:9). We don't know what these were, although they affected him "*in the flesh*," and thus presumably needed a doctor's care from time to time. Paul had also suffered much actual physical persecution during his

ministry (see II Corinthians 11:23–27), and undoubtedly needed Luke's medical help on many occasions. We can assume that Dr. Luke could have built up a comfortable practice in such a city as Antioch (where he probably met Paul), but he chose instead to serve the Lord in this sacrificial and much-needed capacity of helping Paul. As a scientist, it is interesting to me that the only one of Paul's followers who stayed with him to the end was also a scientist (II Timothy 3:11).

Our Institute for Creation Research is happy to have many medical doctors as part of our own ICR team. The *Impact* article for April 2002, "The ICR Scientists" lists seventy-four scientists associated with the ICR ministries, of whom no less than five have M.D. degrees and are professional physicians. In addition, five M.D.'s are serving on our ICR Board of Trustees. All of these men are solid Christian creationists and have strong scientific and medical credentials.

As far as Luke's two Bible books are concerned, there is little in either book that utilizes scientific or medical facts or principles. He does refer to the infant Jesus being circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21), and he is the only one of the four Gospel writers who does.

Luke alone of the Gospel writers noted the reliability of the created kinds ("every

*Dr. Henry M. Morris is Founder and President Emeritus of ICR.

tree is known by his own fruit" Luke 6:44). Some commentators have noted the ironical relation between Mark 5:26 and Luke 8:43. Mark had said that a certain woman needing healing "*had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.*" Luke, perhaps trying to defend his professional colleagues, merely said that this same woman "*had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any.*" That is, they had done their best, but it was an incurable disease.

As an historian Luke was highly scientific in the way he compiled the data for his Gospel and his book of Acts for many sections of Acts, of course, he was simply recording carefully what he saw and heard, as a scientist should. He had not been present at the events described in his Gospel, so had not acquired the data directly as had Matthew and John (Mark also, partly through Peter). But as he said in his opening passage, he somehow "*had perfect understanding of all things from the very first*" (Luke 1:3).

This understanding was acquired in various ways. He evidently had devoted much time to interviewing those who "*from the beginning were eyewitnesses*" (Luke 1:2). Thus, for example, he was able to give the most thorough account of the events surrounding the human birth of the Lord Jesus, as well as the preceding birth of John the Baptist. He alone reported the beautiful account of the two disciples who met Jesus after His resurrection as they traveled home to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35), as well as a number of other events recorded nowhere else.

At least twenty of Christ's parables are recorded in Luke—a number of which (e.g., the Good Samaritan, the prodigal son) are found only in Luke's gospel.

As far as his own eyewitness accounts in the book of Acts are concerned, he has

achieved the reputation of utmost accuracy. One of the most distinguished of all New Testament archaeologists, Sir William Ramsay, is said to have been converted partially through his surprised realization of the precise accuracy of Luke's depiction of conditions in the first century. In his epochal work, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (1915), Ramsay said: "Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness" (p. 81). He added later: ". . . this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians" (p. 222).

In addition to Luke's scientific devotion to accuracy in reporting, not only of the events of which he was an eyewitness, but also of what he learned from others about the life of Christ, there is one other vital factor. When he claimed to have "*had perfect understanding of all things from the very first*" (Luke 1:3), he may well have been thinking of God's inspiration of his writings. The phrase "*from the very first*" could also be translated "*from above*." It is so translated in John 3:31, for example: "*He that cometh from above is above all.*"

If this phrase is so rendered, it would explain where Luke got his information regarding some events. Of course, all Scripture is divinely inspired (II Timothy 3:16), even when the basic information was acquired by research.

Luke and Apologetics

Luke's writings are of special interest to me, not only because of his scientific accuracy in reporting but also because of his desire to defend the gospel and give evidence for its truth. In fact, most commentators on Luke's Gospel and especially his book of Acts agree that one important purpose was, indeed, that of apologetics. However, their main reason for understanding Acts this way is usually because of Luke's repeated emphasis on the legitimacy of Christianity

as far as Rome was concerned, noting that practically all the initial opposition and persecution had been fomented by the Jewish leaders. The attempted defenses of Christ by Pilate and of Paul by Felix, Festus, Agrippa, etc., are recounted.

However, Luke's interest in apologetics is broader than that. For example, he begins his two-book narrative with the most in-depth account of Christ's incarnation and birth to be found anywhere. Then he begins his book of Acts by noting that there had been "*many infallible proofs*" (Acts 1:3) of Christ's resurrection. This is followed by the supernatural events on the day of Pentecost, and then many miracles performed by the apostles as they began preaching the gospel, continually stressing the great truth of His resurrection. There was also much rehearsing of the evidence of fulfilled Messianic prophecy. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit is also evident through much of Luke's record in Acts. Although the book of Acts ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome, he is still free to preach the gospel to anyone who will listen, especially to the Gentiles.

Finally, the book of Acts closes with the testimony that, despite his nominal status as a Roman prisoner, Paul spent "*two whole years*" free to preach to all who came to hear, "*teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him*" (Acts 28:30–31).

Luke and Creation

In concluding this very brief survey of the writings of Dr. Luke, it is good to remember that he was a creationist and delighted in reporting Paul's references to God as Creator. When the chief priests and elders first commanded the apostles "*not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus*" (Acts 4:18) they simply prayed, beginning their prayers by saying: "*Lord,*

thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is" (Acts 4:24). Then they prayed to God "*that with all boldness they may speak thy word*" (Acts 4:29), and great numbers were won to Christ.

Soon came the conversion of Paul and the beginning of his missionary journeys. As he went to different cities, he normally preached first to the Jews there, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was their Messiah, that He had died for their sins and been raised from the dead.

When he preached to pagan Gentiles, however, they knew nothing of the Scriptures or the promised Messiah, so Luke tells how Paul began with the creation, then proceeded to the resurrection, then to the gospel. At Lystra, for example, he urged the pagans there to turn from their idols "*unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein*" (Acts 14:15).

Eventually Paul came to Athens, the very center of pagan culture, particularly encountering Epicurean and Stoic philosophers there, both systems espousing a form of evolution. Here is the gist of what he preached to them, according to Luke: "*God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth . . . giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. . . . He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead*" (Acts 17:24–26,31).

Doctor Luke was surely a great man specially called of God—a scientist, physician, historian, brilliant writer, inspired writer, Christian apologist, and Biblical creationist! Thank God for his unique ministry.

WHAT GEOLOGIC PROCESSES WERE OPERATING DURING THE FLOOD?

The great Flood of Noah's day was a time of unthinkable geological upheaval, such that "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (II Peter 3:6). No flood in human history has rivaled its destructive magnitude.

Though we are far from a full understanding of the Flood, the Bible does give us a clue when it says, on that "same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights" (Genesis 7:11–12). Geologists note three succinct mechanisms which God used that bear our consideration.

The trigger for the rest was that "all the fountains of the great deep" were ruptured. The fountains may have been underwater volcanos or materials from deep inside spewing out into the ocean basins.

Evidently there were great subterranean chambers of water which belched forth their contents causing volcanism and tectonism on a broad scale. After being emptied some collapsed to become deep sedimentary basins which uplifted later in the Flood to form mountain chains.

Today when a volcano erupts under water, or if there is an underwater earthquake or mud slide, it causes a *tsunami* or tidal wave; a dynamic energy wave which pushes water toward the continents, devastating coastal areas. At the start of the Flood *all* the fountains of the great deep were rent open sending repeated pulses of water toward the continents from every direction bringing sediments and marine fossils to the land. Cyclic ocean currents and tidal actions would have left their imprint on these sediments.

by John D. Morris, Ph.D.

Along the mid-ocean ridges once molten rock and other super hot fluids would have encountered the relatively cold ocean waters, evaporating huge volumes of sea water, ultimately yielding intense rainfall and precipitating their dissolved solids.

Torrential rain poured down. This was a special rain for forty days and forty nights but it continued for a hundred and fifty days, through the first half of the Flood. This continually replenished source of water would have bombarded the earth, eroding and redepositing sediments on a global scale.

For the next six months, the waters "prevailed" (7:18) upon the earth with water driven back and forth on the world oceans. Tides were unchecked by shorelines and until the fountains were stopped and the flood gates closed (8:2–3) any unstable deposit would be susceptible to reworking in a high energy environment.

Finally, six months after the start of the Flood, the waters "returned from off the earth" (8:3). They "decreased continually" for the next several months until the tops of the mountains were seen (v.5) exposing and drying the land, making it fit for life. This implies both continental uplift, ocean basin sinking, and sea floor spreading. This redistribution of the topography implies extensive deformation of soft, freshly deposited sediments. A great wind aided this drainage (8:1).

The Flood was unmatched by any event in our experience, yet both Scripture and science demands it. Any attempt to reconstruct earth history which ignores the Genesis Flood is certain to be in gross error. 



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