

## Luke part 2

So where did Luke come from? We have already reviewed the three scriptures the Apostle Paul wrote concerning Luke, the beloved physician, who was with Paul at Rome when Paul wrote his last epistle. And we also read in ACTS 16 where Luke first joined Paul on Paul's so called second missionary journey. We must realize that Luke knew Paul before he joined up with him in ACTS 16, but where did Luke know Paul from? In answering where did Luke know Paul from will also answer where Luke came from.

Our best clues to the origins of Luke come from Luke himself in his introductions that he wrote in his two books that are left us in New Testament scripture. Again Luke was guided of the Holy Ghost to write The Gospel According to LUKE, and The ACTS of the Apostles, which Brother Hill often noted should have really been entitled The ACTS of the Holy Ghost. The book of ACTS really never ends, for the acts of the Holy Ghost continues on today, and most of us could write a chronicle of the acts of the Holy Ghost in our own lives of what we have experienced ourselves, or witnessed with our own eyes, just like Luke did. Let's now look at the introduction Luke wrote in The Gospel According to LUKE. LUKE 1:1-4 *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; 3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.* LUKE 1:1-4 is one sentence; one very important sentence that reveals some interesting facts.

Note in verse 3 that Luke was writing his letter to a man he addressed as *...most excellent Theophilus*. The term "most excellent" is what I am going to call a Luke-ism if you will. By that I mean to note that Luke is the only writer in scripture to use the Greek word *kratistos* {krat'-is-tos}, number 2903 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, and he used it four times. *Kratistos* was a word used in addressing men of prominent rank or office, and was used as a title of honour and respect. In ACTS 23 the chief Roman Captain in Jerusalem when Paul was arrested there was named Claudius Lysias. In ACTS 23:26 Luke records a greeting from Claudius Lysias unto the governor at Caesarea, which reads: *Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent (kratistos) governor Felix sendeth greeting.* A few days later a smooth talking orator named Tertullus, a Roman lawyer hired by Ananias the high priest, was addressing governor Felix as accusation was made against Paul. In smooth talking the governor, Tertullus said this starting in ACTS 24:2 *And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, 3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble (kratistos) Felix, with all thankfulness.* Here *kratistos* was translated "most noble." One more time we find the Greek word *kratistos* used, and that is in ACTS 26. In ACTS 26 there is a new governor, who succeeded governor Felix, and his name was Festus. In ACTS 26 Paul is brought before King Agrippa at governor Festus request. Paul was allowed to speak in his own defense, and Paul addresses King Agrippa as king Agrippa in ACTS 26:2, 7, 19, & 27. Paul also addressed governor Festus in this chapter, and we see this in the following verses. ACTS 26:24 *And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. 25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble (kratistos) Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.* If you read further it seems Luke was present at this hearing, and that he heard the Apostle Paul address Festus with this word of honour and respect "kratistos." So we find the terms "most noble," and "most excellent" used by both Luke and Paul. Back in LUKE 1:3 Luke is writing *...most excellent Theophilus...* and as we just learned this kind of address was used to men of prominent rank or office as a title of honour and respect. Thus we must note that Theophilus held a position worthy of honour and respect like that of a governor, or some other magistrate.

So then who was Theophilus? We only find his name twice in scripture, here in LUKE 1:3, and in ACTS 1:1 as Luke continues writing about early church history in chronological order.

Theophilus' name means "friend of God." Let that sink in for a moment, that Theophilus' name means "friend of God." For those of you who like to look up the Greek, Theophilus is number 2321 in The Strong's Greek Concordance. Theophilus is derived from two Greek words; *theos* {teh'-os} number 2316 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, usually translated "God;" and *philos* {fee'-los} number 5384 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, with one meaning being a "dear friend." Thus we find Theophilus a "friend of God," and a dear friend of Luke, who wrote him two Holy Ghost inspired "treatise" (*logos*, number 3056 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), which we know to have the meaning of *...a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us...* LUKE 1:1. The Gospel According to LUKE that pictures Christ as "the Son of Man" was written to a man named Theophilus, and it, along with ACTS, was written for all men. We could say that Luke's two treasured letters were written to all that are friends of God. And to truly be a "friend of God," one would have to believe God, and believe on the Son of God, who is Christ Jesus. JAMES 2:23 tells us that: *...Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.* All who are born again are a "friend of God." Jesus explained it like this in JOHN 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Let's go one-step further, Theophilus was not only a "friend of God," but he was a most excellent, a most noble "friend of God." That was Theophilus' testimony in life, that he was a most excellent, a most noble "friend of God." And we must note that this high-ranking official certainly treasured Luke's letters, and had the means, and influence to have these treatises preserved so that we too could read, and learn from Luke's Holy Ghost inspired epistles. If Theophilus were some kind of ruler, like a governor, he certainly had learned how to reign well, meaning he placed a high value on the things of eternal benefit. Theophilus received Luke's two documents as priceless eternal treasures rich in content, and he made sure they were preserved, and shared. Truly Theophilus was "most excellent" because of his love of God.

With this background information of Luke and Theophilus, let's read again LUKE 1:1-4 adding some foot notes. LUKE 1:1-4 *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order (to draw up an account) a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, (having been fully born out among us who are called Christians) 2 Even as they delivered (narrated) them unto us, which (who) from the beginning (from the birth of John the Baptist) were eyewitnesses, (had seen these things with their own eyes), and ministers of the word; ("the word" here again is the Greek word *logos*, which points to The Word of God, who is Jesus Christ Himself; and the "ministers of the Word" were the eyewitnesses preachers of the gospel, who had gone forth to proclaim the very same things Luke was now writing about), 3 It seemed good to me (Luke) also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, (having exactly traced accurately everything from the first, that is by diligent and careful investigation followed up everything to the proper source) to write unto thee in order, (in an orderly sequence) most excellent Theophilus, (most noble "friend of God") 4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed. (That you Theophilus may know the certainty of the gospel message, which the preachers of the gospel have instructed you.)*

Thus we find that Theophilus, and Luke had been taught the gospel, and perhaps became acquainted with each other in an assembly somewhere, and this assembly, this church would have been located some distance away from Jerusalem, otherwise Theophilus, and Luke himself would have themselves been eyewitnesses of some of the events Luke wrote about in LUKE. And it seems apparent that both Luke and Theophilus had the same interest in the things of God, and in learning the word of God better, and that they certainly had long discussions with each other about the word of God. And we have already noted that Theophilus certainly respected Luke, and very much treasured the two lengthy letters Luke had sent to him.

A noted historian, and scholar of the Bible named Eusebius, who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, wrote that Antioch in Syria was Luke's native city. The Bible Cyclopeadia by A. R. Fausset notes that "tradition connects Theophilus with Antioch," Syria. As we continue discussing Luke and

Theophilus, two men whom we know very little about, except for what is written about them in scripture, it seems obvious to me that these two, Theophilus and Luke, knew each other from Antioch in Syria, and must have had hours of wonderful fellowship together. Understand that there are two Antioch's mentioned in ACTS, and that is why I have noted Antioch, Syria specifically as being the city where Luke and Theophilus became acquainted. (There is an Antioch in Pisidia also mentioned four times in scripture, and that is where Paul preached a sermon in ACTS 13:14-41.) The name Antioch is found 19 times in scripture. Nineteen is the number of FAITH. Certainly the church at Antioch, Syria was a church of FAITH, and thus it is no wonder that we read in ACTS 11:26 that *...the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.* Of the nineteen times we find "Antioch" in scripture, fifteen of these times reference the church of Antioch, Syria. Fifteen is the number of REST, and those of Antioch, Syria found REST and comfort in the gospel of Paul.

Antioch, Syria was at the time of ACTS the third largest city of the Roman Empire with a population at that of 500,000. Two cities had larger populations, Rome and Alexandria, Egypt. Antioch, Syria was a link between the trade routes of the Mediterranean and the routes that lead east unto China. It was a sort of melting pot of cultures, as are most large cities. Antioch had everything that Roman wealth, Greek culture, and Oriental luxury could produce. Antioch was a wealthy city. The citizens of Antioch were somewhat unique in that they were given by the Roman Empire the privilege of worship in their own way without fear of repercussion or persecution. Antioch, Syria was called the "Queen of the East," and "Antioch the Beautiful," and was a fairly modern city at the time of ACTS. In ACTS 11 we find Luke making mention of Antioch six times as he introduces what went on there. Let me summarize what is said in ACTS 11:19-26. Luke writes at after the persecution that arose about Stephen, that the believers scattered, and in time some of them ended up in Antioch, where they preached the word of God. Word got back to the Apostles in Jerusalem that a great number had become believers at Antioch, and had turned to the Lord. They sent Barnabas up to Antioch, Syria, a distance of about 320 miles to see what was going on there. ACTS 11:23 tells us: *Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.* Barnabas quickly realized that Saul of Tarsus, whom he had met at Damascus a few years earlier, and had heard him preach in the name of Jesus, would be a perfect fit to bring to Antioch to preach. Thus we read in ACTS 11:25 *Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.* (Saul of Tarsus is our Apostle Paul, and is first called Paul in ACTS 13:9.) Note two important points here from ACTS 11:26. The first thing to note here is that Paul and Barnabas assembled themselves with the church at Antioch, Syria, and taught much people for a whole year. And realize that our Apostle Paul by this time had been given the gospel message he was to preach unto the Gentiles. Nothing of Paul's gospel message was held back from them attending the church at Antioch, Syria. In other words they were among the first to learn of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus message that Paul taught! At some point in time Theophilus and Luke became part of this church. The second important point to note in ACTS 11:26 is that *...the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.* Obviously the church at Antioch, Syria emphasized Jesus Christ, for the disciples were called Christians for the first time at Antioch. In other words the outside world knew by the lives of those who attended the church in Antioch that they were followers of Christ, because Jesus was whom they talked about, and Jesus was whom they followed.

I don't think we truly appreciate the importance of this church at Antioch, Syria where they were first called Christians at the beginning of this church age. One of the things that seems to get ignored is that the church at Antioch, Syria became Paul's home church. The Apostle Paul began all of his missionary journeys from Antioch, Syria. The church at Antioch, Syria sponsored Paul and Barnabas' missionary journey found in ACTS 13 & 14. At the conclusion of this missionary journey we find Paul and Barnabas back in Antioch, Syria, and we read in ACTS 14:28 *And there they abode long time with the disciples.* Paul and Barnabas had been there a whole year at the beginning, and

now were there again for a long time. Paul's second and third missionary journeys also began at Antioch, Syria, and were also sponsored by this assembly. Remember Antioch was a wealthy city. It was Paul's intention to return to Antioch, Syria after his third missionary journey, but those plans got laid aside when Paul was arrested in Jerusalem in ACTS 21. Paul never made it back to Antioch, Syria. The church who financed Paul's missionary journeys must have wondered what happened to him as the years went on. We know by the time frame of ACTS 21 that Luke was traveling with the Apostle Paul, and was with him most of the rest of Paul's life. Perhaps it was our Apostle Paul who encouraged Luke under the unction of the Holy Ghost to write a couple of letters back to Theophilus, who according to tradition, was a prominent man in the church at Antioch, and he certainly would want to know what ever became of the Apostle Paul. Thus we should see, and appreciate, the importance of the church, and the high quality of the Saints where they were first called Christians in Antioch.

One final thought for this evening. Antioch means "driven against," which by itself doesn't seem to make much sense. After much research I found another interpretation of the word Antioch meaning: "speedy as a chariot." Putting the two meanings together you get the picture of a driven speedy chariot faster than any mode of transportation of that day. Elisha in 2 KINGS 2:11 & 12 witnessed the fastest transportation that anyone has ever witnessed: 2 KINGS 2:11 *And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. 12 And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.* This was the time when Elijah was translated, one of two translated in the Old Testament, Enoch being the other. The "driven speedy chariot" then is a symbol of translation. The Apostle Paul in his gospel teaches us about another soon coming translation in 1 THESSALONIANS 4:16-18: *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.* The Apostle Paul was only with the Thessalonians a short period of time, not a whole year like he was at Antioch. Do you think in a whole year's time the Apostle Paul taught the church where they were first called Christians these very same facts that he taught the Thessalonians? The speed of translation is equated to ...*the twinkling of an eye...* in 1 CORINTHIANS 15:52. The first company of New Testament believers to be translated in ...*the twinkling of an eye...* will be the Bride of Christ. There will be those from the church of Antioch, Syria in this Bridal company, perhaps even ...*most excellent Theophilus...* our now famous "friend of God" will be found to be a joint-heir with Christ!