

Answers to Sermon Notes

“Certainty”: The First Sunday of Advent

Luke 1:1-4

11/27/22

- 1) If you could **wish** for one thing for those you **love** this Christmas, what would it be?
 - a) Would it not be for **greater certainty** regarding the things they have been **taught**?
- 2) **Doubt** has become very **fashionable** among Christians in recent years.
 - a) Our detractors keep telling us that we should be **less certain**, but our God keeps telling us that we should be **more certain**.
 - i) For, while **doubt** is fashionable it is not at all **helpful**.
 - ii) **Doubt** has not contributed to the **well-being** of a single Christian in the history of the world.
 - (1) **Caution** and **carefulness** have, but not doubt – not doubt in the **basic** teachings of the faith.
 - (2) Can you think of a single example in **redemptive** history where the key to the people of God **successfully** facing the challenges of their day was their doubt in what God had revealed to them?!
 - (a) Certainty leads to **victory**; doubt leads to **disaster**.
- 3) Believers who have a high **degree** of **certainty** about what they have been taught have:
 - a) **Confidence** rather than shame, **Peace** rather than turmoil, **Purpose** rather than emptiness, **Passion** rather than apathy, **Joy** rather than disillusionment, **Boldness** rather than fear, **Obedience** rather than Disobedience...
- 4) Knowing this well himself, it is certainty that **Luke** most desires for **Theophilus**.
 - a) His **certainty** regarding what he had been taught, is the central purpose for this entire **Gospel**. (vs. 3-4)
 - b) And that which was **intended** by Luke to bring certainty to Theophilus has been intended by **God** to bring **certainty** to us.
 - c) This year we seek an **Advent** that brings us greater **certainty** by use of Luke’s gospel.
- 5) Now, Luke’s introduction is important for more than just **revealing** that certainty is the **purpose** of his gospel.
 - a) It also shows us what this certainty **comes from**.
 - i) **Authenticity, Specificity, Historicity**
- 6) **Authenticity**: The quality of being of established authority for **truth** and **correctness**. (vs. 1-4)
 - a) Luke is not setting out to give Theophilus his **own version** of Jesus.
 - i) Or to somehow, “**correct**,” the common understanding among believers.
 - ii) For, there is **nothing** to correct.
 - b) His account will be **fully** in line with:
 - i) What many who have undertaken to **compile** a **narrative** have written, and
 - ii) What those who were **eyewitnesses** from the **beginning** have said, and
 - iii) What the **ministers** of the **word** have delivered.
 - c) This authenticity helps **create** certainty for two reasons:
 - i) Luke’s sources are **unimpeachable**.
 - ii) There is no **debate**, either between Luke and the sources, or between the sources **themselves**.
 - d) But this, of course, raises a very important **question**:
 - i) “**If** Luke’s gospel will be fully in line with these other sources, **why** is he **writing** it?”
 - (1) Because the Holy Spirit **inspired** him to.
 - (2) Because Theophilus **had need** for him to.
 - (a) A narrative account for the purpose of certainty would be **tailored** to the **intended** audience.
 - (b) Theophilus was a **Greek** and he would need things explained a bit **differently** than a **Jew**.

- (c) This, by the way, accounts for why there are both **similarities** and **differences** between the gospels: Their **intended** audience.
- (i) Luke obviously had **other written** accounts in hand. (vs. 1)
1. Some of that material he would use **as is**. (no **copyright** concerns☺)
 2. Some he would **adjust** for his audience.
 3. and other material he would **add** from his own investigation or other **sources**.
 4. But, all of these things he would be careful to **tailor** to his Gentile audience.
 - a. **Guided** each step of the way by the **Holy Spirit**.
 5. There are many **signs** of this, such as 1:8-10.
 - a. Here Luke adds **more** information for those not familiar with the **priesthood**.

7) **Specificity**

- a) There is **more** information in the gospel of Luke regarding the events surrounding **Jesus' birth** (118 verses) than in the other three gospels **combined** (31 verses)
- i) Neither **Mark** nor **John** have any specific information about the **events** of his birth.
 - ii) Matthew begins with Jesus' **genealogy** (down from Abraham and through David – Jewish audience)
 - (1) Includes the angel visiting **Joseph**, and
 - (2) A **brief** reference to Jesus' birth.
 - iii) Other than the visit of the **Magi** (Matthew), which actually occurred much **later**, the gospel of Luke provides **all** the **specifics** regarding what we know and celebrate regarding Jesus' birth.
 - iv) And this makes **perfect** sense in that he was writing to someone who was **Greek**.
 - (1) To distinguish from **Greek gods**.
 - (2) To link to God's **promises** in the OT.
- b) Luke points to his **intention** in this regard in verse 3, “to write an **orderly account** for you.”
- i) This may also be related to Theophilus' **station**.
 - (1) “**Most excellent** Theophilus,” indicates he was perhaps a **governor** or something similar.
 - (a) A person for whom **specifics** were **important**.
 - (b) Just because all the early sources **agree**, doesn't, by itself, bring certainty.
 - (c) **Specifics** play a critical role too, and if necessary, can be **checked**.

8) **Historicity**

- a) The Greek world was filled with **myths** and **legends**.
- b) Both the **origin** and the **character** of their gods was taught through them.
- i) But, they were myths and legends, without any **concrete historical** connections.
- c) Jesus was **different**.
- i) Everything about him, from his **incarnation** and birth to his ministry, death, resurrection and ascension have taken place in **real time** -- “In **our time**.” (vs. 1)
 - (1) These are: “the things that **have been accomplished** among us.”
 - (2) And he **begins** his account of those things in that very **historical** and specific way in verse 5. (vs. 5-7)
- d) “So, I am not writing to you a myth or a **legend**, or a fairy tale; I am writing to you an orderly account of **real events** that have happened in our own day, events that have **changed** the world.”
- i) “Things about which you can be **certain**.”

9) **How certain** are you regarding the things you have been taught?

- a) How does it show in your **confidence**, peace, **purpose**, passion, joy, **boldness**, obedience, etc.?
- b) Let us **seek after** this certainty that Luke was led to provide for Theophilus and for us.
- i) For today, let us ponder the **authenticity**, the **specificity** and the **historicity** of Luke's work.
 - (1) For each of them **testifies** to us **powerfully** that we can indeed be **certain** of the things we have been taught.