

## **All Saints' Bible Study – August 22, 2008**

### **What are we doing here?**

An answer was proposed quoting from Bishop Tom Wright:

*“The Christian Bible we know is a quite astonishingly complete story, from Chaos to Order, from first creation to new creation, from the Garden to the City, from covenant to renewed covenant...”*

*“...the point of reading Old and New Testaments [regularly in small chunks as in the lectionary] is not so much to ‘remind ourselves of that bit of the Bible’, as to use that small selection as a window through which we can see, with the eyes of mind and heart, the entire sweep of the whole Bible, so that our ‘telling of the story’ is not actually aimed primarily at informing or reminding one another but rather at praising God for his mighty acts, and acquiring the habit of living within the story of them as we do so. That, I suggest, is the heart of Anglican Bible study.”*

### **We read Luke 1:1-4**

From the text alone we tried to find clues about

1. Who Luke is?

‘Among us’ – identifies himself as having been there for ‘events’

‘handed down to us by those who from the first were eye witnesses’ – not himself eye witness

Luke identifies himself as a careful investigator, detective, teacher, researcher, who likes putting things in order.

2. Who the intended audience is?

‘your Excellency’ or ‘most excellent’ – distinguished audience;

‘Theophilus’ – Greek for God Lover, may be pseudonym. Has been suggested might be not be an individual; a Gentile – not a Jew

‘the things you have been taught’ – so Theophilus knows something about this already.

3. About his intention?

Tradition passed on; deliberate intention to write record; ‘From the beginning’ – historical discourse

orderly – not necessarily chronological, but ordered to fulfil his aim.

‘well-founded’ – eye-witnesses; Based on evidence; Scholarly

‘so that you may know the certainty’ – truth – he is clarifying

Writing his own version – Luke is part of the audience

Not just facts but significance too – he calls them not just eye-witnesses, but servants of the word – there is an engagement with the facts that is fundamental to his purpose - Story and significance.

So what sort of literature might this be?

Facts - Documentary, Story - Narrative, Teaching – Textbook

journalism? historical discourse? apologetics? biography? poetry? scripture?

### **We read Luke 1:26-56**

Great echoes around Jesus’s birth – humble ordinary people but of great importance.

Mary – ‘let it be to me’. Gave her reputation to God – in that epoch, this was equivalent to giving her life.

'virgin' – Septuagint translation of Is. 7:14. Is a virgin birth fundamental to Christian doctrine? Paul doesn't mention it in his writings. The only person who would have known is Mary who was still alive after Jesus' death and as these traditions were being established. She could have refuted it. There are virgin births in other religions.

Theme of barren women: Elisabeth, Hannah, Sarah. But Mary not barren – life from nothing. Spirit come upon and power of most high overshadow – Genesis 1:2, Exodus 40:34

Mary's song. Is this really Mary's song or was it invented by early church? Compare with Hannah's song - 1 Samuel 2 – Mary would have sung this song and similarities between 2 songs are striking. Maybe Mary sang her song many times through her pregnancy. She was Jesus' earliest teacher. Theme of the poor in song – 'political manifesto'. Theme of poor prominent in Luke's gospel.

The story of Jesus opens with the Spirit and with a woman – look out for both themes in Luke's work.

Three great songs from the beginning of Luke's Gospel are preserved in the liturgy of the church: *Magnificat*, *Benedictus* and *Nunc Dimittis* found in the opening of Luke's gospel.