

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

Luke 1:1

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE Commentary by David Brown

INTRODUCTION

The writer of this Gospel is universally allowed to have been Lucas (an abbreviated form of Lucanus, as Silas of Silvanus), though he is not expressly named either in the Gospel or in the Acts. From Col 4:14 we learn that he was a "physician"; and by comparing that verse with Col 4:10, 11—in which the apostle enumerates all those of the circumcision who were then with him, but does not mention Luke, though he immediately afterwards sends a salutation from him—we gather that Luke was not a born Jew. Some have thought he was a freed-man (libertinus), as the Romans devolved the healing art on persons of this class and on their slaves, as an occupation beneath themselves. His intimate acquaintance with Jewish customs, and his facility in Hebraic Greek, seem to show that he was an early convert to the Jewish faith; and this is curiously confirmed by Ac 21:27-29, where we find the Jews enraged at Paul's supposed introduction of Greeks into the temple, because they had seen "Trophimus the Ephesian" with him; and as we know that Luke was with Paul on that occasion, it would seem that they had taken him for a Jew, as they made no mention of him. On the other hand, his fluency in classical Greek confirms his Gentile origin. The time when he joined Paul's company is clearly indicated in the Acts by his changing (at Ac 16:10) from the third person singular ("he") to the first person plural ("we"). From that time he hardly ever left the apostle till near the period of his martyrdom (2Ti 4:11). Eusebius makes him a native of Antioch. If so, he would have every advantage for cultivating the literature of Greece and such medical knowledge as was then possessed. That he died a natural death is generally agreed among the ancients; Gregory Nazianzen alone affirming that he died a martyr.

The time and place of the publication of his Gospel are alike uncertain. But we can approximate to it. It must at any rate have been issued before the Acts, for there the 'Gospel' is expressly referred to as the same author's "former treatise" (Ac 1:1). Now the Book of the Acts was not published for two whole years after Paul's arrival as a prisoner at Rome, for it concludes with a reference to this period; but probably it was published soon after that, which would appear to have been early in the year 63. Before that time, then, we have reason to believe that the Gospel of Luke was in circulation, though the majority of critics make it later. If we date it somewhere between A.D. 50 and 60, we shall probably be near the truth; but nearer it we cannot with any certainty come. Conjectures as to the place of publication are too uncertain to be mentioned here.