



A quick tour through Luke

Leaders' notes and sample studies

Draft edition

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Biblical and historical context

The author

The book of Luke does not name its author, but the evidence points to the author being Luke, a travelling companion of Paul. He was probably a Gentile (non-Jew) and may have been a doctor (Col 4:14). He was not an eyewitness of the events in Jesus' life, but as a second generation Christian was involved himself in many of the events in Acts (hence the "we" in Acts 16:10-17, etc). Like an historian he has carefully investigated the events of Jesus' life, interviewing eyewitnesses and drawing on the best sources he had available.

We don't know who the recipient of the book (Theophilus: see Luke 1:1-4) was.

Biblical context

The Gospel of Luke is part one of a two part volume work by the same author (part two is the Book of Acts, which picks up where Luke leaves off). It tells the story of Jesus' birth, his ministry, his journey to Jerusalem, and his death and resurrection.

Luke's goal is to set out the history of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. But more than that, he also presents Jesus' life and teaching as something that will change our lives, bringing us into a new community (one which you don't have to be of any particular race to belong to). Life as a disciple of Jesus will be hard, but it's worth it: Jesus can be trusted to bring God's promises to reality.

Structure of Luke

Luke divides nicely into five sections:¹

- Meet John and Jesus (1:1-2:52)
- Jesus prepared for ministry (3:1-4:13)
- Jesus' work in Galilee (4:14-9:50)
- The turn towards Jerusalem (9:51-19:44)
- Death and resurrection (19:45-24:53)

Date

Luke was probably written in AD 60-70.

Historians base this range on a number of factors. For example: Luke does not seem to know about significant later events (the destruction of the Temple in AD69, the death of Paul, etc) and the issues he targets are related to that period of the church's history (e.g. whether to include non-Jews in the church is a hot issue for Luke, but it isn't a big deal later on). Certainly the book is in circulation by AD 170 when it is quoted in another famous work.

¹ This structure adopted from Darrell Bock's excellent commentary on Luke in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series.

We do not have the original manuscript of Luke, but we do have reliable copies from the early AD 200s onwards. Even though these copies come from very different places in the world, they almost always agree (except for some minor errors).

How these sample studies work

- Each study has an observation/interpretation section, and an implications section. Try to leave a good amount of time for the implications.
- I have given you some alternative questions in grey in case you have extra time, a super speedy group, or you don't like the other questions.
- Along the way I have put comments for you in grey boxes – mostly explaining what we're trying to do in the group, or giving extra theological or pastoral notes.

Sample studies overview

- Study 1 This strange man Jesus (Luke 1-5)
- Study 2 Did he just say that? (Luke 7:36-50)
- Study 3 A surprising turn (Luke 9:18-27)
- Study 4 The impossible person (Luke 10)
- Study 5 Sub-prime investments (Luke 12:13-21)
- Study 6 Two lost sons (Luke 15:11-31)
- Study 7 Arrival at Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-48)
- Study 8 An innocent man sentenced to death (Luke 22:47-23:4)
- Study 9 Deathbed conversions (Luke 23:32-49)
- Study 10 Something unexpected (Luke 24:1-12, 36-53)

This series is designed to work as an 8-10 week series. Include or drop out the studies in grey to make it longer or shorter.

1. This strange man Jesus

Luke 1-5

Icebreaking question:

Go around the group and share your most glorious injury or illness.

This is a “maintenance” question. It doesn’t advance the study very much, but it does get everyone speaking early, on a topic which is personal but not too confronting to share (hopefully!).

If this is a new group, or has recently had new members added, it can be helpful to do a “name amnesty” – where everyone has to say their name and something about themselves before answering the question.

Where are we headed?

Each study you may want to set the scene a little by recapping where we’re up to (helpful if people have been away), and giving the big take home message of today’s study. You could say something like this:

Today we begin a series through Luke. Unlike other Biblical authors, Luke was not an eyewitness but a second generation Christian who collected sources and probably interviewed eyewitnesses, much like a modern historian or investigative journalist. He gives us a fascinating picture of Jesus.

Invite the group to pray with you as we open the scriptures together.

Perspectives

Everyone has their own picture of who Jesus is. Some see him as a good moral advisor. Others see him as a delusional revolutionary. Others see him as a misunderstood prophet. What do you think?

Observation and interpretation

Read Luke 1:1-4

- No writer is neutral, so when writing history it is important to be upfront with your biases. Who is the author of Luke and why is he writing?

Divide the group into three or four and take one passage each:

1. Luke 4:38-44
2. Luke 5:12-16
3. Luke 5:17-26
4. Luke 5:27-32

Once you’ve read through your passage report back to the group:

- What’s the “headline” of this story? (i.e. if it were reported in a newspaper what would your one sentence summary be?)

- Why has Luke chosen to include this story; what does it contribute to our portrait of Jesus?

Implications

Do you agree or disagree with these statements? Why?

- Jesus is a strange character who somehow still seems trustworthy
- Miracles are incompatible with a scientific, rational mind.
- To recover the core teaching of Jesus we need to strip away the miracles.
- The healings were a distraction and irrelevant to Jesus' message.

If you were the paralytic in 5:17-26 and you had to choose between forgiveness of sins and being able to walk again, what would you choose?

Prayer ideas

- That we can get to know this strange man Jesus better
- For illnesses in the group or church
- Break into smaller pairs or trios to share and pray specifically for each other

2. Did he just say that?

Luke 7:36-50

Icebreaking question:

Are you big into Christmas presents? What's the best Christmas present you've ever been given and why?

Where are we headed?

So far we have seen Jesus healing all sorts of incredible illnesses. But today's encounter with an infamous person helps us understand Jesus' heart for forgiving sinners.

Invite the group to pray as we open the scriptures together.

Observation and interpretation

At this point it may be helpful to explain who the Pharisees are (we want everyone to be able to engage with the passage in front of them without too much assumed knowledge). Rather than embarrassing people by asking if anyone knows, I prefer to give essential information up front: "Pharisees were a powerful and respected religious group within Judaism in Jesus' time. They stressed high moral standards as a big part of their religion. Throughout the gospel they are more and more threatened by Jesus' radical new teaching, and ultimately conspire to kill him."

Read Luke 7:36-39.

- What is the Pharisee's problem with the woman?
- What is the Pharisee's problem with the Jesus?
- Why do you think the Pharisee invited Jesus to eat with him?
- What do you think the woman saw in Jesus, which prompted her to act in this way?

The "woman who had lived a sinful life" could be code for a prostitute. An alabaster jar was used for storing expensive perfumes or ointments. This might also be a good opportunity to define "sin" for those who are not familiar with the term.

Read Luke 7:40-47.

Jesus seems to know what Simon is thinking, and tells him this story as a rebuke.

- What is Jesus trying to help Simon to understand?
- Do you think this woman has met Jesus before?

Simon is the name of the Pharisee who is hosting the dinner. One denarius is about a day's wage for an agricultural labourer.

Read Luke 7:48-50.

- Why are the people so amazed that Jesus forgave her sins?

- How does Jesus have authority to forgive sins?
- What does faith in Jesus (v50) mean?

Implications

What does this passage have to offer someone who is struggling to forgive themselves?

Jesus is no longer on earth so we can't wash his feet. In what ways can forgiven people express their joy and love today?

Is there anything which is beyond Jesus' forgiveness?

If forgiveness is so available, what incentive is there to live a good life?

Prayer ideas

- Thank God for his forgiveness
- Break into smaller pairs or trios to share and pray specifically for each other

3. A surprising turn

Luke 9:18-27

If your group is up to it, you could start by reading the whole of chapter 9. This would pick up the beginning of the disciples' mission (9:1), the question from Herod about who Jesus is (9:7), Jesus' feeding of the masses as God provided for Israel in the desert, and God's final word on his Son's authority (9:35). If you go this way, try to bring out the connection between the different sections, and their contribution to answering the question "who is this man?".

Icebreaking question:

What kind of books do you prefer: a mystery novel with a twist or a romance with a predictable ending?

Who is the most famous person you've ever met? What were they like?

Where are we headed?

So far we've seen Jesus' ministry begin in Galilee, healing and forgiving sins. But now, Jesus reveals his true mission: he is heading to Jerusalem to die and be raised to life. Being a follower of Jesus will never be the same again.

Invite the group to pray as we open the scriptures together.

Observation and interpretation

Read 9:18-22

"Christ" is the greek word for the Hebrew "Messiah", which means "anointed one". People had oil put on their head when they were set apart for a special job (like King or Priest). By this stage in history, though, people were looking to "THE Messiah", who would bring about God's kingdom, deal with injustice, and put the world back the right way up.

- Thinking back over previous weeks, what things might have given Peter the idea that Jesus is the Messiah?
- What do you think Peter is expecting from Jesus when he finally declares that Jesus is the Messiah?
- What does Jesus say *being* the Messiah will involve, and how might this be different from what Peter was expecting?

Read 9:23-27

- What does Jesus say *following* the Messiah will involve, and how might this be different from what Peter was expecting?
- What does the metaphor "take up your cross daily" mean?

The comment that some people will "not taste death before they see the kingdom of God" (9:27) is sometimes read out of context and used to suggest that Jesus thought he was coming back within the lifetime of the disciples. This probably isn't what Jesus means. In the context, it is more likely referring to the transfiguration (eight days later: Luke 9:28) or the resurrection (Luke 22:69) in which Jesus' Lordship is previewed or begins.

Implications

Did you ever have to make a conscious decision to become a Christian?

If following Jesus is such a hard road, is it worth it?

Is there anything that you *wouldn't* give up to follow Jesus?

Sometimes it's said that becoming a Christian is like inviting Jesus into your house. Once he's inside, you have to invite him to come in and clean up each and every room of the house. And some of those rooms are harder to let him into than others. Are there any parts of your life that Jesus has yet to be invited into?

Prayer ideas

- Pray for those who haven't yet made the decision to follow Jesus
- Pray for those who are suffering because they are Christians
- Break into smaller pairs or trios to share and pray specifically for each other

4. The impossible person

Luke 10

Icebreaker

When have you had to ask a stranger for help?

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be?

Where are we headed?

Last time we looked at this strange man Jesus – who is able to heal people from terrible diseases effortlessly, and cares deeply about them, yet seems to have some greater mission he is devoted to. Today, a man who thought he was a religious expert got to ask Jesus one question. He wasn't prepared for what happened next: Jesus

Invite the group to pray with you and then read the passage together.

Observation and interpretation

Read Luke 10:25-29

"Law" in this passage refers to the Old Testament contract made between God and his chosen nation Israel. The terms of this contract were given through Moses. A teacher of the law is a religious leader, not a lawyer in our modern day sense. The religious elite in his day did not warm to Jesus.

By the way, there is maybe an interesting double meaning in this passage: "wanting to Justify himself" (Luke 10:29). Compare to Romans 3:20.

- What is the teacher of the law's original question about?
- Why do you think that the teacher of the law is not satisfied by Jesus' answer?

Read Luke 10:30-37

- What is the teacher of the law's second question about?

A Samaritan helping a Jew is striking: they would not normally be friends. While originally part of Israel, after the exile (586-516BC) the Samaritans' ancestors invented their own religion based in Samaria (to the north of Israel).

- What is Jesus saying about the obligations on those who want to earn their way into heaven by obeying to the law?

Implications

The lawyer's original question was about how to reach eternal life. In response, Jesus gives a very high standard: loving God perfectly, and treating every other human being you meet as well as you treat yourself. Do you think that anyone has ever met this standard?

If the standard is so high, is it possible for anyone to be saved? (Hint: Read Romans 10:9)

Imagine (and excuse the morbid hypothetical) you are hit by a bus today and suddenly are standing before your maker (roll with this if you don't believe in God). He asks you "why should I let you into heaven". What do you say?

In effect, the teacher of the law was trying to restrict who he is obliged to care about. What kind of barriers are we guilty of putting in place between us and people in need?

The passage for today is often taken as a challenging moral teaching – telling us to be loving to everyone we meet. This is true as far as it goes, but we need to be careful to pick up on the context. Jesus gives his answer to a hostile audience: a self-righteous man who is trying to trick Jesus up, and who believes himself to be right with God based on his own obedience to the Jewish Law. Jesus' point is that he is kidding himself.

This theme in Jesus' teaching is picked up by his apostle Paul, when he contrasts righteousness by law (Rom 10:5) with righteousness by faith (Rom 10:9).

This is a passage which can be really helpful for us to hear at different stages. Most people default to a kind of moralism which says "if I do the right things, God will accept me". Help them see that an "inheritance" (v25) is not something you work for but receive. But also be aware that Jesus teaching contains a picture of kingdom values: if you have become a Christian and inherited eternal life, we will naturally want to live out this picture of kingdom love (however imperfectly, and without trying to use them to make God love us).

Prayer ideas

- Say sorry for drawing boundaries on who we should care for, and ask for wisdom to know how to love people best
- Break into smaller pairs or trios to share and pray specifically for each other

5. Sub-prime investments

Luke 12:13-21

Icebreaker

What would you do if you won the lotto?

Where are we headed?

So far Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom has called for us to love God and our neighbours in a context of grace: we love because God loved us first. But there are other things which compete for our devotion in this world: money is one of them.

Invite the group to pray with you and then read the passage together.

Observation and interpretation

Read Luke 12:13-15

- What is the request to Jesus all about? Is it such an unfair thing to ask?
- Why do you think Jesus responds so strongly?

Read Luke 12:16-21

- What two ways of finding security are described here?
- Why is one of them a bad investment, and another a good investment?
- What does it mean to be "rich towards God"?

Divide into groups and look up a passage each. Why is money so dangerous? What wisdom do these passages offer those of us who are rich in this world (which is pretty much all of us in this country).

- 1 Timothy 6:10
- Proverbs 30:8-9
- Proverbs 13:11
- Luke 16:13
- 1 Tim 6:17

Implications

Money is a very difficult subject to talk about, but it's vital! Tailor this section to your group, perhaps using one or two of the questions below as conversation starter.

"The wallet is the last part of a person to be converted". Do you agree?

Is it possible to be a rich *and* follow Jesus?

Is there something inherently virtuous about being poor? (I.e. Should we give everything away and become monks?)

How much money is it okay for Christians to have?

How can money be used in a way that is positive? What are some principles to live by in this area?

The negativity towards cash in this passage can be quite a burden, so once we've felt the weight of Jesus' warning, try to steer the conversation to leave people with a positive vision for how we can use our wealth.

Christianity does not embrace a view of money which is inherently evil. The material world is not bad in and of itself – but it does compete for the place in our heart where God belongs. We seek our security in money and this is often described as idolatry (Col 3:5, although this passage may be talking about other types of greed than money).

When speaking about money, guilt is a great and terrible motivator. Remember the goal is cheerful giving (2Cor 9:7).

Prayer ideas

- Thank God for his provision of money, and wisdom to know how to use it
- Break into smaller pairs or trios to share and pray specifically for each other

6. Two lost sons

Luke 15:11-31

Icebreaker

Have you ever lost something valuable? Did you ever get it back?

Where are we headed?

We have seen tension growing between Jesus and the Pharisees as he declares a new kingdom to have arrived, with new kingdom values. The rich and the powerful are not impressed. But Jesus today has a hard word: there are two ways of being lost towards God, one by being an outrageous sinner, the other by being quietly self righteous.

Invite the group to pray with you and then read the passage together.

Observation and interpretation

Read Luke 15:1-2.

- Why do you think the Pharisees are so unhappy about Jesus' dinner companions?

After their complaint, Jesus tells three parables. One about a lost sheep, one about a lost coin, and a third about a lost son. We'll have a look at this parable now.

Read Luke 15:11-24

- What is the sin of the younger son?
- When it comes to their relationship with God, what type of person does this son represent?
- Why does the Father welcome him back?

Read Luke 15:25-32

- Why is the older son so annoyed?
- Do you agree with the older son that the Father has been unfair?

Implications

In this story the banquet feast represents God's kingdom. According to Jesus, what prevents someone from entering the kingdom?

Are you prone to be more like the older brother or the younger brother?

It is very important in this parable to see that there are two ways of being separated from God. The first is through outrageous sin. The second is through "being good" – but in a way that is just as far from the Father's heart. If we have been shown mercy from God, we cannot "look down" on other sinners.

When preaching the gospel we need to be careful to show people the difference between grace and works. If we think that we are "good people" who have earned God's love then we will be angry when he doesn't give us the things we want. But if we know that we are sinners saved by grace, then we will be grateful for everything.

Religious people are often "older brothers", in the sense that they feel their standing before God depends on their good works. This kind of pride is deadly, and resents God showing mercy on others.

Prayer ideas

- That we would avoid being either the younger or older brother
- Break into smaller pairs or trios to share and pray specifically for each other

7. Arrival at Jerusalem

Luke 19:28-48

Icebreaker

If you were to a protest march through the city, what would your cause be?

Where are we headed?

Jesus has been moving towards Jerusalem. Now he arrives as the King, but his verdict on the city is not good.

Invite the group to pray with you and then read the passage together.

Observation and interpretation

Read Zechariah 9:9. Then read Luke 19:28-35.

- Why does Jesus need this strange mode of transport?

Bethany is not far from Jerusalem – it's not as if Jesus needed the donkey to help him complete the long journey.

Read Luke 9:36-40

- By acting in this way, what are the people communicating?
- Why do the Pharisees tell Jesus to rebuke his followers?

Read Luke 9:40-48

- Why is Jesus sad about Jerusalem?
- Why do you think Jesus is so angry about people selling things in the temple?
- Why do the chief priests, teachers of the law and leaders want to kill him?

This is more than spur of the moment angry moment from Jesus. I also think it's more than Jesus being opposed to selling things (although the temple was corrupt). It is a well thought out demonstration – a disruption to the system as a sign of impending judgment (like if you pulled the power plug on the Stock Exchange computers).

The temple was central to God's people: it was the place where God lived amongst them; it was where they came to meet God and make up for their sins; it was the sign of God's protection of the city. Jesus is fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah that God himself would return to his temple.

By Jesus' time, however, it had become so corrupt that Jesus is here signalling God's judgment on the whole temple system. It will be replaced with something new. In AD69 the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, as Jesus prophesied.

As Christians, we do not go to a place to meet with God, but a) we meet God in Jesus, whose body is a temple (Matt 26:61), and b) the members of the church form a living temple as the Spirit dwells amongst us (1Cor 3:16).

Implications

How do you feel about Jesus' hard words against Jerusalem and against the temple? Is judgment hard to swallow?

Jesus claims to be the long awaited King – some accept him and some reject him. Do you find it easy to accept him as King?

When you first heard about Jesus, what was your response? How has your attitude changed?

Prayer ideas

- For those we know who don't yet know Jesus
- Break into smaller pairs or trios to share and pray specifically for each other

8. An innocent man sentenced to death

Luke 22:47-23:4

Icebreaker

What's the most trouble you ever got into at school?

Do you think it is ever right for the innocent to suffer but the guilty gets off? (If not, then is there any place for mercy or forgiveness?)

Where are we headed?

We have seen Jesus and the establishment coming head to head over the last few weeks. Jesus was announcing a new kingdom, with new rules and new authority. The existing authorities weren't too keen on that. In today's passage things come to a head, and it all begins with a betrayal.

Invite the group to pray with you and then read the passage together.

Observation and interpretation

Read Luke 22:47-53

- Judas was a trusted disciple, one of the 12. To what extent is Jesus caught off guard by Judas' betrayal?
- Why doesn't Jesus do more to avoid being arrested? Why no violence?
- What does Jesus mean by "the hour when darkness reigns"?

If possible, try to draw out the drama in this passage: it is really about a conflict of intentions – Judas has an agenda, Peter has an agenda, the authorities have an agenda, but ultimately the agenda which is behind them all is God's.

Read Luke 22:54-62

- Why do you think that Peter doesn't want to be identified with Jesus any more?
- Why does Peter "weep bitterly"? What's going on for him?

Read Luke 22:63-23:4

- What are the accusations against Jesus?
- Pilate declares Jesus innocent. Was he right or wrong in that assessment?
- Jesus seems to be walking straight into his own death. What is he thinking?

Implications

- Is it important that Jesus was an innocent man? Why?
- In various places Jesus has spoken of his trip to Jerusalem and subsequent death as "fulfilling" something. What did Jesus think he was doing by getting killed?

Divide these passages up to complete our picture of what Jesus thought he was doing (*=essential)

- *Isaiah 53:5
 - Luke 18:31 (Jesus)
 - *Luke 22:37 (Jesus)
 - Luke 24:7 (Jesus, post death)
 - *Romans 4:25 (Paul)
 - Romans 5:7-8
 - Romans 3:25
 - Galatians 3:13
 - Eph 1:7
 - Colossians 2:13
 - 1John 4:10
 - John 3:16
- Many people have said that "Jesus died for me". What meaning does Jesus' death have to you?

This study is a great opportunity to consider Jesus' intentions in the cross. The cross is one of the central parts of the Jesus story. It is both simple and hugely rich with meaning. Christians have been reflecting on the meaning of his death ever since. While there are multiple images used in scripture to try to capture what's going on, central to all of them is the idea of Christ as our representative and substitute.

Prayer ideas

- Thank Jesus for his death for us
- Break into smaller pairs or trios to share and pray specifically for each other

9. Deathbed conversions

Luke 23:32-49

Icebreaker

Inmates on death row often get to choose their last meal, and the government will provide anything they request. What would your last request be?

Where are we headed?

We have seen Jesus betrayed, now we see him executed as a failed revolutionary. At least that's how most people see him – one person in today's story has a different perspective on Jesus.

Invite the group to pray with you and then read the passage together.

Observation and interpretation

Read 23:32-38

- What did the sign above Jesus "king of the Jews" mean? From the pictures of Jesus we've seen over previous weeks, did Jesus ever claim to be a king?
- Why were people mocking Jesus?

Read 23:39-43

- Two other people were crucified with Jesus. How is his death unique then?
- Everyone else has given up on Jesus. Surely Jesus is in no position to help himself, let alone others. Why do you think the bandit on the cross still thinks Jesus is going to 'enter his kingdom'?

Consider these passages which explain what Jesus thought he was doing on the cross:

- Luke 24:46-48
- Luke 22:19-22
- Romans 5:8

Implications

- Verse 45 "the curtain of the temple was torn in two". This curtain divided off man from God. What significance is Luke trying to draw do you think by putting this here?
- Is it fair for someone to convert on their deathbed and still inherit eternal life?
- Why bother following Jesus now if you can just convert before you die?

We are so used to the idea of a crucified messiah that the utter absurdity of it doesn't strike us. A messiah is someone who is meant to save Israel, bring the world back to order, rebuild the temple, defeat the Romans, unite the world as one reconciled family. If you die, particularly before you've gotten around to doing these things, then you are not the Messiah. That's why people were mocking Jesus!

Yet Jesus knew from scriptures that the messiah actually must suffer for the nation of Israel before his glorification. His death is on behalf of Israel, taking the wrap for their sins, and experiencing their exile and disgrace.

This passage shows the personal impact of the death of Jesus: that even a criminal on death row can be forgiven for their sins because of the sacrificial death of Jesus in their place.

We often resent the idea of grace being shown to the “unworthy”, such as people who convert at the last moment. But this is the error of the “older brother” in the parable of the prodigal son. It is self delusion which thinks that I have merited by salvation by my faithfulness to Jesus. Actually, we are all miserable sinners, saved at the last moment.

That said, it is unwise to leave things that late. We never know when our life will be demanded from us!

Side note: the thief is assured that he will be with Jesus in paradise, i.e. in some kind of continuing safety with him after death. This is a temporary solution – until Jesus returns and all our bodies are resurrected. It’s important to note that Jesus’ resurrection guarantees more than a spiritual resting with God – it promises the renewal of all things.

Prayer ideas

- Thanks for what Jesus achieved on the cross for us
- Break into smaller pairs or trios to share and pray specifically for each other

10. Something unexpected

Luke 24:1-12, 36-53

Icebreaker

Do you like surprises? What's the best (or worst) surprise you've ever had?

Where are we headed?

We have seen Jesus complete his journey to death, walking into a trap laid for him in Jerusalem as possibly the most underprepared revolutionary ever to take on the Roman empire. His followers realised what was about to happen and fled like rats from a sinking ship. A few stuck around to see him executed, and then returned home to restart their lives. They weren't expecting what happened next.

Invite the group to pray with you and then read the passage together.

Observation and interpretation

Read Luke 24:1-3

- What are the women expecting to find? What explanations possibly came to mind for how the tomb was empty?

Read Luke 24:4-12

- Why don't the men believe the women?

Perhaps this quotation from Jewish historian Josephus (reflecting the of his age) sheds some light on it: "15. But let not a single witness be credited, but three, or two at the least, and those such whose testimony is confirmed by their good lives. But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex" (Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.15).

Read this quotation from (now deceased) Cambridge professor CFD Moule.

"If the coming into existence of the Nazarenes ... rips a great hole in history, a hole the size and shape of the Resurrection, what does the secular historian propose to stop it up with? ... The birth and rapid rise of the Christian Church ... *remain an unsolved enigma for any historian who refuses to take seriously the only explanation offered by the Church itself.*" CFD Moule.

What evidence is there for the resurrection of Christ? Do you personally find it a plausible explanation for the evidence?

Implications

Read 24:36-53

- Why is it significant that Jesus offers his hands and feet to them, and eats broiled fish?

What does the resurrection mean for us today?

Theological and pastoral notes for leaders:

Some things to consider as evidence for the resurrection are:

- Empty tomb
- Testimony of the eye witnesses
- Sudden developments of Christian resurrection based theology with no precedent in Judaism
- Changed behaviour of witnesses (disciples, Paul, James, etc)
- Birth and spread of the church

Prayer ideas

- Thank God for raising Christ
- Pray that God would speed on the day when we are raised as well
- Break into smaller pairs or trios to share and pray specifically for each other

Bibliography and further reading

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