

Now that I have finished my unusually deep (for this blog) set of harder-hitting posts on the text of Luke 3:22 I want to move on to other things - very soon to get back to the question of the problems of using Patristic evidence. But I want to pause first and given the scholarship a rest, and ask a question for those of you who are paying your hard-earned money to belong to and support this blog (but let me stress yet again: the money all goes to charity - so you should feel good about how it is being spent!).

So here's the deal. As a result of this set of posts, I have had a number of people ask me - either in the comment section or via email - if I thought that Luke 1-2 was in fact NOT part of the original version of the Gospel of Luke, but was added on after a version of Luke had originally been published, a version that \*began\* with what is now chapter 3 (since Jesus becomes the son of God at his baptism, it seems, given what the voice says in 3:22 - so why have a virgin birth narrative?). I'm going to answer that question below, briefly, in the rest of this post. But here's my question to all of you. As it turns out, I have posted on that question before, in December (Dec. 22 and 23). But a lot of members were not members then. And, frankly, until I looked, I hadn't (clearly) remembered that I had posted on it. But I had.

And so, in cases like this, what is best for me to do for the greatest number of readers? Should I simply not post on it again and let the matter go, assuming that people can look up the old post if they want to? Should I refer readers to the old post as soon as I find it? Should I assume that many readers will not have read the post and post on virtually (not exactly) the same topic in different words, and possibly a different approach, from the first one? Or something else? Let me know what you think.

But for now, let me say a few words (again, it looks like) on what I take to be the original version of Luke. The first thing I want to stress is that the \*reason\* we need hard-hitting scholarship such as the previous set of posts (and lots more like it on similar topics), is because it is only by dealing with the difficult issues at a deep level is it possible to draw historical and literary conclusions that are intellectually satisfying and ultimately persuasive (I'm not saying I'll be providing a lot of posts like that. I won't be - just on rare occasions). If I simply indicated that scholars have good reasons to think that the voice at Jesus' baptism in Luke originally said "You are my son, today I have begotten you," there would be very little indeed to make someone convinced. It is only by doing the hard work of scholarship that a convincing cumulative argument can be made, and only then can conclusions be drawn. This is another way of saying that scholars aren't just guessing when they draw their historical and literary conclusions.

The question of how an original version of Luke began hinges on lots of little pieces of scholarship of that sort (scholarship that I will \*not\* be providing here on the blog! So don't worry!). It includes a careful analysis of the language of Luke 1-2, which shows that the writing style seems to differ from the rest of the Gospel; an assessment of the relationship of that portion of Luke to the Septuagint (the Greek OT) in comparison with the rest of the Gospel of Luke (these two chapters appear much more Septuagintal in character); and especially an assessment of a range of literary features of chs. 1-2 in relationship to ch. 3. Here there are several important points that scholars have made:

- The beginning of ch. 3 reads like the \*beginning\* of a narrative, not the continuation of a narrative.

- The beginning of ch. 3 is the same, in substance, as the beginning of the source of Luke's Gospel, Mark (they both begin with Jesus being baptized).
- Some of the central themes of chs. 1-2 are never referred to elsewhere in either the rest of the Gospel or the book of Acts (e.g., Jesus having come from Bethlehem; his mother being a virgin), even though lots of other themes from early chapters (e.g., the baptism by John) \*are\* referred to later.
- The voice at the baptism ("today I have begotten you" as "my son") does not seem to make sense given the narrative of chs. 1-2 (where, according to 1:35, Jesus is the son of God because God made his mother pregnant)
- The genealogy that is given in ch. 3 doesn't make sense if the Gospel already had chs. 1-2. The genealogy is given \*after\* the baptism. But the natural place for a genealogy is at the point in which a person is \*born\* (since the genealogy traces the bloodline up to the time of birth), not at the point of baptism (as a 30 year old!). Without chs. 1-2, however, the genealogy makes sense at the baptism, since it is at the baptism that Jesus is made the son of God according to the voice from heaven, and so immediately afterward the genealogy is given, in which Jesus' family line is traced not only to Adam (so that he is the son of Adam) but from Adam to God (so that he is the son of God).

All of these factors contribute to a scholarly view (I don't know if it's a majority view; I somewhat doubt it. But I think it \*should\* be, since the evidence strikes me as being so significantly in favor of it) that there was a first edition of Luke that began with what is now chapter 3. If that is right, then what is now 1:1-4 would still have begun the Gospel, but the narrative would then have moved directly from 1:4 to what is now 3:1.

That would make sense of one other historical datum: one of our earliest witnesses to the Gospel of Luke is the "arch-heretic" Marcion, who notoriously "edited" his Gospel of Luke so that it did not have chs. 1-2 (since Marcion did not think that Jesus was born of a virgin, or born at all, but that he appeared as an adult at the beginning of his ministry). But what if Marcion didn't "edit" the two chapters by getting rid of them? What if he knew a version of Luke that simply did not yet have them? That would change how we evaluate Marcion's "editorial" approach to the Gospel.

Now that I've written up these various lines of thought, I return to my initial set of questions to readers of the blog, and say that in my opinion, the best option is for me not to worry if I posted on this topic eight months ago, or a year ago, or a year and a half ago, but simply to do so again if there is something worth talking about. But I'm open to all your opinions on the matter.



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