

LUKE'S GOSPEL ACCOUNT: THE TRUTH OF THE WORD

LUKE 01: 01 – 04

Introduction

The Gospel of Luke is a written proclamation of the truth about Jesus Christ. This is the thrust of this first passage in Luke's gospel. Luke is writing to declare the glorious news that the Son of Man, God's Son, has come to earth to seek and to save all who are lost. Luke's gospel is an accurate, orderly account of the truth about Jesus Christ. Note: this introduction of Luke is the very form used by the historians of his day. This points strongly to the fact that Luke intended it to be circulated among churches and believers.

- I. The gospel is a record of historical events (v. 1).
- II. The gospel is a record of eyewitnesses and servants of the Word (v. 2).
- III. The gospel is a record of a man who was led to write (v. 3).
- IV. The gospel is a record to establish the truth (v. 4).

I. *Luke 01: 01 Scripture, Gospel is a Historical Record*

Luke's gospel is a record of historical events. Note several facts.

1. "Many...have undertaken to draw up" the events of Christ's life. Many had written about the life and work of Christ, but they were not as *complete* nor as *orderly* as Luke wished to record (see v. 3). A quick comparison of the first two chapters of Luke with Mark and Mathew will show this. Luke includes many more events than the other two Synoptic Gospels, and the Gospel of John had not yet been written. The fact that *many* had written a record on the life of Christ is strong evidence that the events are true.

2. The events or things of Christ's life were "things that have been fulfilled." The words for "things that have been fulfilled" (*plerophoreo*, *peplero phorememon*) also mean things that were believed. The things were actually performed or had run their full course (see 2 Tim. 4:5). Luke is saying that the *things of Christ* were not only believed, but they were also accomplished or fulfilled among the believers of that day. The *things* (events, matters) of Christ actually took place; they were purposeful; they were destined to be accomplished and fulfilled.

The point is this: the things of Christ are a record of historical events, things that actually happened and that actually fulfilled the purpose of God. Therefore, the things "have been fulfilled among us [believers]." What are the *things* accomplished and believed? Both the things of the New Testament and of the Old Testament. The whole Bible is a record of "the things."

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Luke 19:10 *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."*

Heb 2:14-18 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

Phil 2:6-11 [Christ Jesus] who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Col 1:13-20 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Col 2.9-10 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Thought 1. The early believers had no difficulty whatsoever believing the *things* of Christ.

- 1) The *things* were fulfilled among us.
- 2) Many were writing an account of the events.

Thought 2. The “many” who wrote about the life of Jesus are not known by name. They are the silent and humble heroes of God, never known by the world, but well-known by God. Some of their writings served as a *source* for Luke (v. 3). Note two things.

- 1) Their ministry of writing was used greatly by God. Some of what they wrote was either included in the Gospel of Luke or at least stirred thoughts in Luke's mind to record an event.
- 2) God's silent, quiet, and humble servants are always used by Him just as much as the ones out in the forefront. Their ministry is just as important, if not more so. Some that are last will most definitely be first.

Luke 13:30 “Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.” (see Mat 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31)

II. **Luke 01: 02 Servants of The Word, Eyewitnesses**

Luke's gospel is both a record of *eyewitnesses* and a record of *servants of the Word*. Luke himself was not an eyewitness of the day-to-day life of Christ. If he ever saw Christ personally, there is no mention of it. However, Luke was a constant and very dear companion of Paul (see Acts 16:10). He also had contact with other apostles. What Luke says is that the sources of his writing were eyewitnesses of Christ and servants of the Word of

Christ. The apostles, of course, would be his prime sources. In addition, there were other disciples who followed Jesus either continuously or occasionally. Note these simple facts.

1. The servants of the Word were eyewitnesses of both *The Word* (Christ Himself) and of the Word of Christ (His teaching, doctrine, and instructions).
2. The servants of the Word were eyewitnesses “from the first,” eyewitnesses of every event and word of Christ, eyewitnesses of His life day by day.
3. The servants of the Word heard as well as saw Christ; some heard and saw Him day by day. Therefore, Luke's gospel is a true record of both the acts and words of Christ.
4. The servants of the gospel set out immediately to *minister* the Word to others. The word was of critical importance to them. They gave their lives to the ministry of the Word.
5. The servants of the gospel did not create the Word (message) themselves. They were not ministering their own ideas and thoughts; they were ministering “*The Word of God.*”
6. The servants of the Word have given us a written gospel that is an eyewitness account. It agrees exactly with what was seen, heard, and proclaimed by Christ and preached to the people of His day and to the world since then.

1 John 1:1-4 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has

appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

III. Luke 01: 03 A Man Led to Write the Gospel

Luke's gospel is the record of a man who was led to write. Four facts point out just how strongly Luke felt led to record the life of Christ.

1. Luke carefully investigated everything. The word “investigated” means to study, to follow up, to search out diligently, to investigate, to trace accurately, to become acquainted with. Luke says that having been acquainted with and having investigated everything, he was determined to record the facts himself.
2. Luke says he had carefully investigated everything “from the beginning.” The word “beginning” (anōthen) can and often does mean *from above*. Some understand Luke to be saying that he had investigated the things *from above*. Several things point to this translation.
 - a. If Luke meant *from the first or beginning*, why did he not use the same word (arches) which he used in verse 2? It seems to be much more accurate to say he chooses a different word, (anōthen), because he is saying something different, *from above*.
 - b. The prophets are said to have proclaimed things *from above*. They are said to “Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that

- they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things” (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Scripture also says, “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21).
- c. Luke is certainly recording *all things from above*, investigating and searching diligently to write what “the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing” (1 Pet. 1:11). He is certainly speaking as a holy man of God “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). He is certainly proclaiming the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the good news of Him who came from above.
3. Luke says he is writing things in “an orderly account” (*kathexes*). Luke is the only writer in the New Testament to use this word. He uses it in the gospel only once and in Acts twice (Acts 11:4; 18:23). The question is, what does Luke mean by *orderly*! Consecutive or chronological arrangement? Logical arrangement? Subject arrangement? Inspired or Spirit-led arrangement? The meaning is not clear. Perhaps he is saying that he is writing a full account of the life of Christ and that his account is a *better arrangement*, that is, it has more order and is better arranged than those in existence.
4. Luke is writing to a man named “Theophilus.” Who was he? We are not told. But note two facts.
- a. He was called “most excellent Theophilus.” *Most excellent* (*kratistos*) is a title of rank and honour. The same title is used of Felix and Festus (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25).

- b. He was a person who desired or needed to know about Jesus Christ. He was probably a convert for whom Luke deeply cared. Some feel he was a man investigating the validity of Christianity. Theophilus is the immediate reason Luke *felt led* to write. (Note, *Theophilus*, Acts 1:1.)

Thought 1. Note two critical points.

- 1) A person must be *prepared* to serve Christ. A person must study, investigate, search out, become acquainted with the truth of Christ.

2 Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

- 2) A person must be led to serve Christ, no matter the task. He must be led by the Spirit of Christ.

Rom 8:14 *Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

John 15:16 *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”*

Thought 2. We can have great confidence in the truth and accuracy of the written record of Christ.

2 Tim 3:16 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

Thought 3. Note a tremendous challenge to us. Luke cared so much for one man that he dedicated himself to writing not a long letter, but a whole book in order to instruct the man. Imagine the dedication and the days and months required! All for one person (initially)!

Luke 15:4 “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?”

IV. Luke 01: 04 The Gospel Establishes the Truth

Luke's gospel is a record to establish the truth. Luke's purpose is clearly stated: “So that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”

1. The man (Theophilus) *had already heard*.
2. The man *needed to know* the absolute truth of those things.

Thought 1. Luke's account of Christ is the absolute truth. We can “know the certainty of the things.”

Thought 2. Hearing the things of Christ, even being instructed in them is not enough. We are to study and learn, to know the absolute certainty of them.

2 Pet 1:21 *For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (see Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33)*

Acts 17:11 *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. ■*

ACTS 01: 01 THEOPHILUS

Luke wrote to Theophilus, reminding him of the former gospel which he had written, the gospel which covered the life and ministry of Jesus.

Who is Theophilus? We are not told, but note several facts.

1. Theophilus is called “most excellent Theophilus” in the *Gospel of Luke* (Lk. 1:3). The words, “most excellent Theophilus,” are a title of rank and honour. It is the same title used of Felix and Festus, two high ranking Roman officials (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:27). Theophilus must have been a Roman official of high rank.
2. Theophilus was a personal friend of Luke, close enough to correspond with Luke about the Lord Jesus. He was either a man interested in knowing the truth about Christ or else a new convert who needed to be grounded in Christ. Perhaps Luke himself had led Theophilus to Christ. Note: Luke did not address Theophilus as “most excellent” in Acts. The title is dropped. Why? There are three possibilities.
 - a. Luke and Theophilus were close friends, close enough to be on a first name basis.
 - b. Theophilus had either retired or been removed from office between the writing of Luke and Acts.
 - c. Theophilus, having grown in Christ, had grown so loving and humble he did not want his title used among his Christian friends, not in times of personal communication and fellowship.

Thought 1: There is a great lesson in this thought, a lesson on love and humility so needed by the world and among God's people (see Mt. 23:7-12).

3. Theophilus lived outside Palestine, somewhere away from Luke.
4. Theophilus was a man of education and culture. His title and the fact that the Gospel of Luke and Acts are addressed to him point toward his being educated and cultured.
5. The name Theophilus means "loved by God" or "the friend of God."

Thought 1. Theophilus was a man who sought to grow and mature in the Lord. Imagine! Luke and Acts were written to him! Two of the greatest books ever written! And why? Because he had such a deep hunger to know the Lord, to learn all he could about the Lord. What a legacy and testimony - to be known as a man who so hungered to know the Lord that God had two of the greatest books ever written addressed to him! May we all develop a hunger to learn all we can about the Lord and Saviour of the universe. ☐