

The Gospel according to Luke

1:1-4

The Word (part 2)

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I. Intro

This Sunday we continue our examination of Luke's preface to his gospel in the first four verses of chapter 1. As mentioned last week Luke's introduction is unique in the first three gospels as it is the only gospel in which the instrument the Holy Spirit utilized steps out of the pages and on to the stage by the use of the pronouns "*us and me*". This places the instrument, Luke, into the very pages he was used in writing. To the Greek scholar they would also be impressed with the writing style as the instrument uses. The style of writing Luke uses is the same as all the great Greek historians used. It seemed as if Luke knew the style of his fellow Greek historians and decided that if their style was good for the Greek history then Luke could do no less for the greatest story ever told. Furthermore it is interesting that as noted last week Luke mentions that there were other narratives that had been written of Jesus prior to his gospel and yet he still chooses to write another gospel. What this suggests to the reader **isn't** that the previous narratives were in any way inadequate but instead it suggests that Luke didn't want to just rely on another copy of one of those; instead he wanted to offer to Theophilus his own investigation and study not just a copied manuscript. Luke wanted and invited a new and fresh rediscovery of Jesus for himself and that is what he delivered in this gospel to Theophilus. This morning we will finish the preface as we take a look at Luke as he affirms the product of this gospel as he indicates that he engaged in the most careful historical research and investigation.

II. Vs. 3a A little bit about the author

In all credible investigations of this gospel all agree in the instruments authorship as being that of Luke, so it's not something that I will spend any time on and instead will focus my attention upon just who is this man known as Luke. As far as direct biblical references on his name it only appears three times:

1. Col. 4:14 "**Luke the beloved physician** and Demas greet you".
2. 2 Timothy 4:1 "**Only Luke is with me.**"
3. Philemon 24 "*As do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, **Luke, my fellow laborers.***"

Beyond those brief references we can piece together that along with this gospel account that

when you compare Acts:1:1 where he writes "**The former account I Made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.**" it becomes clear that Luke was also the instrument

used in writing the sequel to this gospel the book of Acts. It is also easy to see that Luke traveled with Paul while he traveled through the pages of the book of Acts as we can see that Luke again writes himself into the pages when he uses the first-person pronoun "**WE**" in chapters 16:10-17, 20:4-15, 21:1-18, and 27:1 – 28:16. As brief as those references are they are non-the-less

informative. His name is suggestive as **it is an abbreviated Greek name that would be used as a pet name.** When reading Paul's closing in Colossians he mentions greetings to those fellow

Jews that he calls "*are of the circumcision*" and then he mentions greetings to those that were NOT of Jewish ancestry and Luke is mentioned among those. So **that would make Luke a**

gentile and not a Hellenistic or Greek speaking cultured Jew. He mentions himself in both of

his books as a friend of Theophilus whose name appears to also a nickname as it means "***Lover of God***". Luke's method of addressing Theophilus as "***most excellent***" or "***Your Excellency***" and

this is very revealing for both the writer Luke as well as the recipient Theophilus. Those terms in ancient Greek history were reserved for a freed man addressing his former owner. This makes it quite possible that Luke was a freed man, who had at one time been a slave and that most likely

Theophilus had been his master. And it appears that Theophilus had freed him and the two had remained very close friends as well as followers of Christ. It is clear that Luke wrote this two-volume narrative to a person whom he regarded as his friend as benefactor. There are evidences that Luke was an educated Greek as he wrote in a manner that only educated Greeks would write. There are church history accounts that mentions Luke

S education as being educated in the schools of Tarsus where we was a fellow student alongside Saul (Paul) as well as Apollos though one can't know for certain. From the Col. 4:14 we note that according to Paul that Luke was a physician, and this is easily verified by Luke's many references medical terms. Another interesting indicator is found in Acts chapter 27 as Luke places himself on the shipwreck voyage and while referring to the even uses both nautical terms as well as medical terms and that causes some to think that it was possible that he may have been a ship's doctor at one point. The point of all this speculation and examination is to show the uniqueness of the instrument that the Holy Spirit has chosen to write this narrative. ***The Divine inspiration of this book is further enhanced when we consider the human instrument that the Spirit of God chose to write with!*** God wrote through the personality that was selected by the Holy Spirit and perfected for that purpose. God selected a man with the gifts, education, and experience that when controlled by the Holy Spirit was fitted for the work! Luke was a man that came not from Judaism but paganism to Jesus Christ. He was trained in a Greek school and his outlook on life was Greek and that is entirely different that a Hebrew outlook. He would have had an entirely Greek philosophy on life, and we know what that looked like by other Greek writers in history. The master passion of Greek philosophy was the perfection of the personality of man. In the 300 years of Greek history and development was the perfecting of human personality. If you compare ancient Greece with ancient China you see that China's history

stretches for 1000's of years while Greece was only lasting for 300 years but in those 300 years Greece had amazing philosophers and educators where you don't see that in China. China focused upon the worship of their ancestors and solidarity of their people. Greece wasn't concerned with this and instead focused upon the perfecting of the individual and this is visible in their arts seen in the multiple marble statues depicting the individual ideal, as well as the writings of all their philosophers and educators. Luke was a man, who in spite of all of his Greek education, philosophy and experience found in Jesus the One Person who was Perfect Man, Jesus was Perfection of Personality. Jesus fulfilled all that the Greek philosophers had imagined and beyond as Jesus broke the ideal by His greatness. As such Luke's account draws from his Greek background as he examines our Lord from that standpoint, Jesus alone fulfilled the ideal of complete and absolute perfection. Luke discovered in Jesus the One person who was by His very nature that which all the other Greek gods could never be seen as achieving as they were always shown with human frailties. Oh, they many had superhuman speed, or strength but their personalities were always enveloped in sin and the Greek philosophers always showed them that way. Matthew could have never shown Jesus this way, nor could Mark or John. Each of these gospel writers had the same basic material and the same subject but as different men chosen by the Holy Spirit saw different views of the same truth and person. Luke, saw in Jesus the One person that not only was the ideal perfect Human but also destroy the myths and all that was false in the Greek ideal.

So with Luke the Holy Spirit found the person who was a scientist a scientific examination for truth, and he set out with that method in examining the personality of Jesus. But Luke was also a historical philosopher. The early church fathers spoke of Luke as an artist and poet who wrote early church hymns. So in Luke you have a man chosen by the Holy Spirit who

examined the personality of Jesus like a scientist, and once discovered the truth with regards to Jesus was emotionally propelled to worship Him as an artist would. Luke was well traveled a personal friend of the apostle Paul and was certainly influenced by that relationship. As you put all of this together, Luke was the perfect choice to write this gospel as he found in Jesus the Perfect Personality what his Greek ancestry had longed for and in Jesus Luke found more than what the Greeks longed for but what all of humanity needed the head of humanity!

III. Vs. 3b-4 The subject, sources of information, method, and purpose of writing

Vs. 3b-4 Lastly in this preface in the gospel according to Luke, the instrument gives us four things:

1. Vs. 2 ***He names the subject***: Luke writes in that the subject that he was interested in was the same as the other gospel recorders were interested in as Luke writes in verse 2 “*just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of **the word** delivered them to us.*” So then the subject of Luke’s investigation was the WORD but what is interesting is that in many translations the subject matter is relegated to the Bible as being the word. It is only when you examine this “word” that you realize that it is the same title that the Apostle John had used as a title for Jesus, “LOGOS”, and you see that the translators in many cases should have capitalized the “W” in word as the subject for Luke was not the bible but rather the subject of the bible Jesus! Luke’s examination will lead him to realize the “humanity of deity” “God manifest in the flesh of humanity”. It is interesting that as Luke tells the story of Jesus he calls Him the Perfect Man but when he finished his investigation and wrote this preface Luke no longer write of Jesus as Perfect Man he only calls Him what the Apostle John called Him “THE WORD”.
2. Vs. 1-2 ***He gives us the sources of information***: Luke records for us two sets of sources of information in these verses: In verse 1 he describes them as “*Many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of things that have been fulfilled among us.*” Clearly this reference would include the gospel records of Matthew and Mark, but I also believe that verse 2 also gives us a reason to believe that Luke also included many other stories and interviews from those that he describes as “*eyewitnesses and ministers... that delivered them to us.*” It seems that Luke collected the stories and investigated them, and he was looking for two primary sources those that had first-hand information and those that had been in direct contact with Jesus serving with Him in ministry. The word Luke uses for “eyewitnesses” is a medical term and is very interesting as it is the Greek word we get our English word “autopsy” from. Luke wanted information from those who had personally had a first-hand investigation, those who had seen for themselves Jesus. And the word Luke uses for “ministers” is also a medical term as well as a nautical term as it means an “under rower” and it describes a person of the 2nd deck of a slave ship who rowed from under the top rowers. But it also describes a person who was in attendance

during a personal medical examination. What this suggests to me is that this gospel was no short story, was not written in a few months but most likely took many years to complete. Luke first had to gather the information from those that a first-hand experience with Jesus those who were in attendance when Jesus was present. Luke talked to those who had all those stories, people like Jesus' Mother who was there and heard the angel Gabriel and had information that no one else did.

3. Vs. 3 ***He describes the methods of his examination***: First Luke says in verse 3 in the phrase "*it seemed good to me also*" that he traced those in verse two that "*who from the beginning were eyewitness and ministers of the Word (Jesus)*". Luke means that he obtained all the material and then traced the course of all the things recorded accurately. What this describes is the work of true scientific investigation of the whole of the stories that Luke had gathered about Jesus. The word used for "beginning" is a word that means "from above" and I believe that Luke is referring to the fact that this scientific investigation was inspired by the Holy Spirit, under the guidance of God Himself. And that God empowered the thoroughness of the work and that it wasn't dependent upon human power to do the work. What Luke prepared was properly but not apart from the guidance and power from heaven, but Luke also uses the word in verse 3 saying the product of the gospel ended up an "orderly account" and that word in the Greek is a word that is an artistic word as it describes a work of art. This is how Luke describes the methods of the examination.
4. Vs. 4 ***He reveals the purpose of his writing***: Luke finally describes the purpose of this writing of the gospel as "*that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.*" Luke says that this far more than an intellectual conviction, instead that his purpose was to provide safety and security in Theophilus faith. Notice the word "instructed" as it tells us that Luke's gospel was to strength the previous method by which Theophilus had come to faith which is a word where we get our English word for catechism which is instruction by word of mouth. Theophilus had come to faith by word of mouth and Luke wrote that he might have more than word of mouth for his faith. Luke wanted Theophilus to have certainty and security to place with what he had believed by word of mouth. The Bible fixes our faith upon truth and grants us security and causes us to become immoveable in our faith.

So we conclude our examination the preface to Luke's gospel and next week will start up verse

1:5-25 The forerunner, John the Baptist.