

# The Gospel According to Luke

## Chapter 1:1-4

### Introduction

There's been a lot of talk about Jesus this year:

1. There was the controversy surrounding, and then the box office success of, the film, *The Passion of the Christ*.
2. Peter Jennings hosted an ABC News special, *Jesus and Paul: The Word and the Witness*.
3. The Fox News Channel broadcast a special, *Who Is Jesus?*
4. The History Channel broadcast multiple programs relating in one way or another to Jesus.

All this talk is nothing new. There was a lot of talk about Jesus two thousand years ago! Luke said, in verse one,

Luke 1:1 ...many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us,

People were talking then just as they are now. Whether it's Mel Gibson, Peter Jennings, or one of the other correspondents, they are simply the most recent individuals who have "taken in hand to set in order a narrative" about Jesus.

In the first century the many "narratives" about Jesus were inaccurate. It seemed good to Luke to correct them by writing an accurate account with "perfect understanding."

Whether through ignorance or by design, the modern "narratives" are also filled with inaccuracies. They need to be corrected. Luke's Gospel is just what we need to get the true and "perfect understanding" about Jesus.

I think you agree that, of all historical figures, Jesus was and is the most important. All the more reason to portray Him carefully. Stray

but a little from the Bible and you've no assurance Jesus saves you; you've no reassurance that He sustains you.

Assurance and reassurance were on Luke's heart as he wrote his Gospel with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We'll organize his introductory remarks around two points: #1 You Can Look With Assurance On The Things You Believe About Jesus, and #2 You Can Live With Reassurance Because Of The Things You Believe About Jesus.

#1 You Can Look With Assurance  
On The Things You Believe About Jesus  
(v1-2)

Luke might be the one New Testament writer we can most identify with. He was either a Gentile or a non-Jewish Semite, making him the only non-Jewish author of the New Testament. He had a non-Jewish perspective – like most of us - and wrote about issues that were important to Gentiles – like most of us.

His writings have a broad view and scope of all mankind as he tells us there is no boundary the Gospel cannot cross: Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, free and slave, Greek and barbarian, male and female - **all** are recipients of the Good News about Jesus. The Gospel is God's universal solution to the universal problem of sin.

Luke doesn't say everyone will be saved; but he does say anyone can be saved! A little later in the Gospel Luke will tell you his theme. Quoting Jesus, he wrote,

Luke 19:10 "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Whoever you are... Jesus is seeking you to save you.

Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, which means he wrote the most of anyone in the New Testament – over 25%. His Gospel records over twenty miracles, seven of which are unique to Luke; twenty-three parables, seventeen of which are unique to Luke.

Luke was what we would call a lay person – not a professional minister or missionary. You learn in Colossians 4:14 that he was a physician in “real life,” but dedicated himself to serving the Lord.

His writing is peppered with medical observations and terminology. For example: His Gospel begins with detailed accounts of the births of two important babies – John the Baptist and Jesus. He used more medical terms than Hippocrates, the father of medicine. Luke wrote more about healing than Matthew and Mark combined. One of his favorite words is the Greek word *sozo* which I’m told means both *to save* and *to heal*. The context decides which meaning is meant; but it is insightful that true healing is ultimately spiritual.

As a physician, Luke was himself a healer. He presented Jesus as a healer, but at a spiritual level previously untouched by medicine. Jesus was and is the Great Physician, able to heal the soul and the body.

[I wanted to help and heal people... But needed my own healing!]

Luke was one of those smart people who seemed as though they could do just about anything. In addition to being a physician:

1. He was a musician; or at least we speculate he had an interest in music based on the four magnificent hymns his Gospel records.
2. He was certainly a theologian, as we will see going through his writings.
3. He was a historian, and a very good one.

Luke never names himself in either the Gospel or the Book of Acts. He is only named three times in the New Testament. He was a traveling companion of the apostle Paul on his missionary journeys. There is some speculation that Luke and Paul may have known each other before either was saved. They may have been students together at the University of Tarsus.

In the opening verses of the Book of Acts Luke addresses himself to a man named Theophilus. It is believed that Theophilus was a wealthy believer who sponsored the writing of both manuscripts. The two books, Luke and Acts, may have in fact been commissioned by

Theophilus to assist the apostle Paul in his trial before Caesar Nero. Under Roman Law a written defense always preceded the trial; there could be no more amazing written defense than these two inspired books!

Whether his Gospel and Acts were for Paul's defense or not, they were also to *assure* and *reassure* Theophilus in his faith. He was a Gentile who had accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. There was a lot of talk about Jesus, a lot of "narratives," but filled with inaccuracies. Theophilus needed to "know the certainty" of his belief in Jesus.

So do you and I. Speculation about Jesus, whether in print or on film, must be corrected by the truth from God's Word. A little error goes a long way! Consider the Jews themselves: They were expecting their Messiah to come as a conquering hero to throw-off the yoke of Rome and free them politically. Their expectation hindered their perception of Scripture and it undermined their appreciation for the true mission of Jesus – to first conquer sin and death.

What they misbelieved about their Messiah led them seriously astray. So, too, with us – **Any** misbelief about Jesus can lead us seriously astray.

In Luke's Gospel we are looking on Jesus with assurance.

Luke 1:1 Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us,

"Many" voices were telling the story of Jesus. For our purposes, only a few have survived, and only four are inspired by God. The modern "narratives" make one of two mistakes:

1. They subtract from the story of Jesus by denying the inspiration of the Scripture and attributing the writing to mere men or women.
2. They add to the story of Jesus by inserting other accounts or interpretations.

Your spiritual healing and health is too important to allow material to be added or subtracted from the Holy Spirit's testimony about Jesus!

Luke was interested in “those things which have been fulfilled among us.” Another translation of these same words is, “those things which are most surely believed among us.” The two possible translations bring out a two-fold application of the words:

1. First, Luke’s Gospel will show how Jesus “fulfilled” what the Old Testament Scriptures foretold about the coming Savior of the world.
2. Second, a proper presentation and portrayal of Jesus will assure us that what is “believed among us” is the truth.

Another way of putting this would be to say:

1. First, know **Who** you believe.
2. Second, know **what** you believe.

When you write a paper, your teacher wants to know your sources and resources. Luke named his sources and resources in verse two.

Luke 1:2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us,

“From the beginning” qualifies the “eyewitnesses.” They were the ones who were with Jesus; they saw Him, they heard Him, and gave first-hand accounts of His ministry.

“Ministers of the word” means two things:

1. First, the eyewitnesses were empowered by God to preach about Jesus.
2. Second, since Jesus is Himself called “the Word,” it means that these eyewitnesses who went about preaching were themselves radically changed by the message.

The story of Jesus is a real history; but it is history that is inspired and that causes you to have to make a decision.

“Delivered them to us” is interesting to contemplate. In the first century, the message was delivered primarily through preaching the written Word of God. Today we have more means to deliver the

message... More media... But I think we should be all the more cautious in how we use the media. There is far too much emphasis on entertainment in the Church today; on multi-media to create what is being called a “multi-sensory” experience. Technology can help; but it can also hinder. We want to be contemporary without sacrificing the preaching of the Gospel.

The “**many narratives**” about Jesus can lead to doubt. You hear what the godless theologians and scholars have to say... The unsaved correspondents... And you can begin to wonder if what you’ve believed is accurate. Luke comes to you with scholarship, with history, **and** with the inspiration of God to assure you of the truth.

Sometimes you need further reassurance of the things you are sure of...

## #2 You Can Live With Reassurance Because Of The Things You Believe About Jesus (v3-4)

Luke was writing to reassure Theophilus about Jesus. Put yourself in Theophilus’ place for a moment:

1. He was a Gentile in the midst of what started as a Jewish movement.
2. Jews who were Christian were being persecuted by their countrymen; the Roman government was also beginning to clamp down on Christianity.
3. One of the great heroes of the faith, the apostle Paul, was facing serious charges.

Theophilus needed reassurance about Who and what he believed.

Your situation is different but the same. Maybe it’s an affliction... Or an adversity... External pressures... Or internal struggles. There is always something that comes along seeking to undermine your faith. To know Who you believe, and what you believe, will keep you on a solid footing through turbulent times.

Luke 1:3 it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus,

We know that Luke wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; but he didn't say, "God told me to write," or "God inspired me," or anything like that. He could have; and it would have been accurate. Instead he said "it seemed good to me." Serving God is **good**; it seems good to you. It's not a burden... A bummer... A drudgery. It's good; and it should seem good not only to you, but to those you serve.

Luke said he had "perfect understanding of all things from the very first." The words mean he had carefully researched and investigated "all [the] things" about Jesus he would present and portray. Luke was not himself an eyewitness; he was a researcher, a historian.

You might object and say that his Gospel is deficient since he was not an eyewitness. You'd be wrong! Legal professionals will tell you that evidence is often preferred to eyewitnesses. The evidence doesn't lie! In the case of the Gospel of Luke, you have both eyewitnesses and evidence. It's ironclad.

He said his Gospel would be "an orderly account." His Gospel is very orderly. For example: In chapters one and two there are exactly ten stories regarding birth and infancy. Five of these occur before Jesus was born, and five occur after His birth. Luke's is considered the most complete Gospel.

We've already talked a little about "Theophilus." Some commentators think he might not yet have been saved; that he was only an inquirer into Christianity. If that was the case, then the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts are like a tract written to present the Gospel. Compare them to modern tracts – which are mostly cartoon drawings!

It's more likely Theophilus was a new believer needing reassurance:

Luke 1:4 that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

He had already been “instructed.” It’s the Greek word from which we get the word *catechism*. Catechism class is where you learn more about Who and what you believe. Theophilus needed reassurance, to “know the certainty” of Who and what he believed.

You need reassurance for something. You might be looking for it from a person... Or from your career... Or in a hobby or activity... Or even by serving in the Church.

Reassurance is in a Person – Jesus Christ. It is in knowing Who He is in truth; and what He’s done for you; and what He has promised to do for you.

### Conclusion

The Gospel of Luke will assure and reassure you. In it you will see the coming of your Savior (1:1 - 4:13); the career of your Savior (4:14 – 21:38); and the Cross of your Savior (22 – 24).

There will always be “many” trying to tell the story of Jesus. The Gospel’s can be trusted; and Luke’s in particular can relate to us Gentiles whom Jesus came seeking to save.