

# The Gospel of Luke

*Luke*

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**Bible Text:** Luke 1:1-4

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Well, if you would, please turn to the gospel of Luke chapter one.

Last Sunday we finished our study of the book of Hosea and this morning we begin a study of the gospel of Luke. I don't have any idea how long it is going to take us to get through this book, but it should be a joyful journey as we set our focus on our Lord and Savior, our King, the Lord Jesus Christ and just study his life.

You can't do any better than that, can you? Just study the life of our Savior and that is what we are going to be doing on Sundays.

Luke chapter one. I want us to read beginning with verse one down to verse four.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.<sup>1</sup>

Let's ask the Lord's blessing on our time in his Word this morning.

*Lord, I thank you for the privilege that I have to preach and teach your Word to your people. And I acknowledge, Lord, before them and I acknowledge to you from my heart that I know that in myself I am not equal to such a task. But I thank you for your calling upon our lives and I thank you, Lord, for the ability that you give by your spirit and I ask for your blessing this morning. Help me to deliver the things that you have taught me and be at work in our hearts and minds as we listen that we would receive in such a way because of your working, Lord, that we would be edified. Our life would be changed as a result of what we think about and look at in your Word today. We will thank you for what you will accomplish in Jesus' name. Amen.'*

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 1:1-4.

Well, forgive me this morning if at times I sound more like I am just giving you information. But when you begin a study like this it is important that you lay a foundation, that you have some kind of ground work from which you are working. And these first four verses even though they are somewhat more informational than what would seem to us to be inspirational, there is a very good reason why they are here, right? I mean this book is inspired of God. This is the Word of God. so the Holy Spirit wanted us to have this prologue. He wants us to think about it. He wants us to study it. And that is where we are going to spend our time this morning, the first four verses as Luke introduces us to this gospel and gives us some insight as to how it came into being, and what was motivating him as he gave it to us.

The gospel of Luke is one of the gospels you will hear to referred to as the synoptics. And when you hear that word “synoptic” in this context with reference to Matthew, Mark and Luke it simply means that these three writers, Matthew, Mark and Luke are giving us the story of Jesus basically from the same vantage point. They are coming at it from the same angle. They have much material in common.

In fact, the gospel of Luke follows the same basic outline as Mark. He begins with the preparation for the ministry of Jesus. Then he tells us about Christ’s ministry in Galilee. Then he takes us along with Jesus as Christ makes his way to Jerusalem and then he tells us of his passion, his sacrificial death and then of the resurrection.

So if you hear the term “synoptic,” what it is referring to is Matthew, Mark and Luke cover basically the same material from the same point of view.

And yet for all the similarities between those three accounts the gospel of Luke has many features that are absolutely unique to this account. The gospel of Luke is the longest book in the New Testament. And when you recognize that it is really volume one of a two volume work, because he also wrote the book of Acts, then we see that Luke was one of the greatest contributors we have to the New Testament. In fact, he covers the story of Jesus and he covers the message of Christianity and he covers the story of the Church in the largest way possible. He takes us from the ministry of John the Baptist. And if you think about the book of Acts, he takes us all the way to the ... from the birth of the Church forward to Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome. And so that is a very broad and large piece of real estate that he covers.

In terms of unique material, think about the things you know that are only found in the book of Luke. The parable of the good Samaritan, that is unique to Luke’s gospel, Luke chapter 10 verses 25 through 37. We wouldn’t know the parable of the good Samaritan if not for Luke. The prodigal son found only in Luke’s gospel chapter 15 verses 11 through 32. The shrewd manager, Luke chapter 16 verses one through nine. Christ’s encounter with Zacchaeus found only in Luke, Luke chapter 19 verses one through 10. The raising of the widow’s son in Nain, Luke chapter seven verses 11 through 17, only in Luke. You are familiar. You remember Jesus saying:

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”<sup>2</sup>

Right? That is only in Luke, Christ asking for forgiveness for his executioners, Luke chapter 23 verse 34.

And Christ saying to the thief dying on the cross:

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”<sup>3</sup>

That is found only in Luke, Luke chapter 23 verse 43.

So even though it is one of the synoptic gospels, there is much unique material in this book.

Where I want us to begin this morning is with the writer, the writer of the gospel. You will notice nowhere does the gospel of Luke tell us that Luke wrote it. And when you go to the book of Acts we are not told anywhere that Luke wrote the book of Acts.

So why do we say that Luke is the writer of this gospel and of the book of Acts? How do we identify the writer?

Well, there are two lines of evidence. You have evidence that is external to the Bible, tradition. And when compared to the other books in the New Testament the tradition when it comes to the gospel of Luke and Acts it is unanimous and that is not always... you are not always able to say that about other books in the New Testament. It is without question, when you look back at Church history, as early as the second century that everyone attributed this letter to Luke. Even the heretic Marcion referred to this book as the a letter from Luke.

So in terms of external evidence it is unanimous that Luke was the writer of this book and of the book of Acts. But then one of the reasons why it is so certain is the internal evidence.

And I am not going to go into it in great detail, because you can do it. You can get it for yourself. You look at a Bible dictionary or a New Testament introduction, you can look at all of this for yourself. But I do want to at least briefly familiarize you with it this morning.

One of the things we consider is we know that Luke and Acts are written by the same man.

You say, “Well, how?”

Well, if you look down at verse three notice it says in Luke one:

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 23:34.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 23:43.

“...it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus.”<sup>4</sup>

So this book is intended for this man named Theophilus.

Well, if you go to Acts chapter one, look over there, if you would, please, Acts chapter one. Notice how the book of Acts begins.

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.<sup>5</sup>

So he begins the book of Acts and he says, “This is volume two. In the first book I told you about everything that Jesus began to do and teach.” Now in this book he is going to pick up from Christ’s ascension into heaven and he is going to take us forward telling us the story of the Church, its birth and establishment in the world.

So the man who wrote Luke also wrote the book of Acts. It is written to the same man, a guy named Theophilus.

Well, by the time you get to Acts chapter 16 the writer of the book of Acts begins to put himself into the account as a fellow eyewitness of what is going on, not before chapter 16. But when you get to Acts chapter 16 the writer of Acts says basically to us, “I am there. I am present.”

For example, Acts 16:11.

“So, setting sail from Troas...”<sup>6</sup>

And here is how we know he was there. Now you begin to see this word “we.”

So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.<sup>7</sup>

Beginning with chapter 16 of Acts the writer is there. So we know that whoever wrote the book of Acts was a companion of the apostle Paul. He was traveling with Paul on these later missionary journeys.

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<sup>4</sup> Luke 1:3.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 1:1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 16:11.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 16:11-13.

When you remember that the writer of Luke doesn't name himself and the writer of Acts doesn't name himself, then you can eliminate everyone in Luke and Acts who is named. So when you think about everyone who traveled with Paul on his missionary journeys, everyone in the New Testament in these other New Testament books who is named as having been with Paul, when you take that list of names, people who were with Paul, then you eliminate every one in Luke or in the case of Paul the book of Acts, everyone in Acts who is named there as having being with Paul. You can rule them out. They didn't write the letter.

That takes us down to about three people. And then when you ask who was with Paul in his later missionary journeys, those three are reduced to one and that guy's name is Luke. So that is internally, that is how you arrive at the knowledge that Luke was the one who wrote this letter. In fact, we know that Luke was with Paul to the very end. Not only was he with Paul in terms of his first Roman imprisonment, but you get to 2 Timothy chapter four verse nine and you read this.

Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.<sup>8</sup>

So there is Luke with Paul to the very end.

So when you recognize the writer of Acts is the writer of Luke and then you eliminate all the people who traveled with Paul in the book of Acts who are named, you arrive at this man Luke.

There is a second piece of evidence internally that identifies Luke as the author of both the gospel and the book of Acts. This piece of evidence wouldn't be so powerful, it wouldn't settle anything unless we already had in mind what I have just shared with you. But when you do keep that in mind, then this piece of evidence gets stronger and that is in Luke and in Acts you find language used that seems to reflect a medical perspective. And one of the brief bits of information we have about Luke from the New Testament is that he was a physician.

Colossians 4:14 says this:

“Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.”<sup>9</sup>

Let me give you just a couple of small examples. There is more than just this, but just a couple of examples. When Peter's mother-in-law was sick, and we are told about this in Matthew and in Mark as well, Matthew and Mark simply tell us that she had a fever.

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<sup>8</sup> 2 Timothy 4:9-11.

<sup>9</sup> Colossians 4:14.

Matthew 8:14.

“And when Jesus entered Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever.”<sup>10</sup>

Mark gives it to us this way.

“Now Simon’s mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her.”<sup>11</sup>

But when Luke gives us the account it reads this way, Luke 4:38.

“And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon’s house. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf.”<sup>12</sup>

So Luke gives us just that little bit of additional information. Not only did she have a fever, but it was a high fever. This is why it is even mentionable. This is why it was a concern because she had a high fever.

In Acts 28 verse eight it say this:

“It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him.”<sup>13</sup>

Not only does he tell us that this man had fever, but he also tells us the additional illness that he had. So that sort of small detail, focusing not just on a fever, but a high fever; not just sick, but here is exactly what this person had. That kind of language shows up again and again in Luke and in the book of Act and gives us sort of a medical point of view and we know that Luke was a physician.

There is a third piece of internal evidence when we think about identifying the author. And that is the gospel of Luke in these four verses we have just read evidences a high level of education on the part of the writer.

I want you to read this again with me. Look again at verse one.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 8:14.

<sup>11</sup> Mark 1:30.

<sup>12</sup> Luke 4:38.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 28:8.

Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.<sup>14</sup>

That prologue is unlike Matthew and Mark. It is one sentence in the Greek text and it is not the kind of Greek, experts would tell us, it is not the kind of Greek that you would expect. This is more of a classical Greek. And then as he actually launches into what he is going to teach us beginning with verse five the language changes and we are back to a koine or the kind of Greek that the common man of the day would have spoken and written in so that these first four verses have a very official, formal flavor to them. In fact, this is the kind of prologue that you would have found in classical, Hellenistic Greek literature. This is the kind of prologue you would have found that would have introduced some sort of public writing, a history, a piece of research that you would be presenting to the public, something that would have gone into a library.

Well, Luke having been a physician would have had that kind of training.

Now we do want to be careful here, though. In our day and age we recognize physicians for the most part as being very noble professionals. We think highly of physicians and we understand the value of their training and the value of their craft. But that wasn't always the case in the first century. So if we take our view of physicians and read them back on to Luke, we are not going to get the total picture. Even though Luke would have been a well educated man, physicians were not always highly thought of in the first century.

In fact, in many cases they were thought of quacks. They were thought of as men who engaged more in experimentation than in the practice of science.

I think one little brief picture sort of into the life of physician in the first century is given to us in Mark's gospel chapter five verse 25 where we read:

And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.<sup>15</sup>

And so if you just think back to even our own knowledge of medicine and how it has advanced and you think about blood letting and all that sort of thing, it wasn't just a given that Luke was highly thought of because he was a doctor.

Nonetheless, though, he was educated. And those first four verses speak to a man who was well educated.

So if you ask how do we know that Luke wrote this gospel, when his name is not given to us as the writer, that is sort of how it works out. You have external evidence, tradition is unified. It is unanimous that he was the writer even men like Marcion bore testimony to it, early second century, not long after the events.

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<sup>14</sup> Luke 1:1-4.

<sup>15</sup> Mark 5:25-26.

But then there is this internal evidence as well. By the process of elimination those who traveled with Paul on his missionary journeys, Luke is the only man who could have written it that we know about. And then the medical perspective that you see in the letters and the high level of education that is evidenced in the first four verses. All of this points us to Luke as the author.

Now once we recognize that and we take other statements made about Luke from the New Testament a picture emerges about the man. If before today I would have asked you, tell me something about Luke, what would have come to mind? Probably the things we have already mentioned, right? You would have said, "Well, Luke traveled with Paul and Luke was a physician."

Well, as you begin to take note of these writings, what emerges about this man's personality? What do we see about him?

I just want to mention a few things to us. First of all I think we can say safely that Luke was a humble man. Think about writing this entire gospel which is the longest that we have, think about then writing the book of Acts which is, you know, a very long book and not one time mentioning yourself by name. I mean, you are not there in terms of knowing who you are. You are not on the pages of these books. That says to us that Luke was more than content to be out of the picture. What he wanted to magnify in this gospel is the one whom we will magnify as we study it. He wanted to magnify his Lord. He wanted to magnify his Savior. And that should be the heart of all the disciples of Jesus, that we must decrease, he must increase, as John the Baptist said. We want to magnify Jesus. And that is what Luke did.

But not just in the gospel. You go to the book of Acts and even when it comes to the things that he was personally involved in, the things that he was an eye witness to, the most we get from him about himself is this little word "we." We were there. That is all.

He was a man of humility. And we should be people of humility wanting only for Jesus to be magnified and for others to be edified. That should be our heart's desire.

We read it earlier, Colossians 3:14 where he is referred to as the beloved physician. So a second thing we could recognize about Luke is he was a beloved servant. He was appreciated by the apostle Paul. It was Paul who writes it in that way. The beloved physician. My beloved doctor friend. The man was loved and he was appreciated by Paul.

You know, sometimes around here I will be talking about one of you and I will say to someone, you know, I just love that guy. And obviously we love each other just because we are brethren and we should love each other as brethren, but also there are people in your life that you seem to have a special love and affection for. Why do we feel that way about certain ones? Because they are so undeniably selfless, sacrificial, give of themselves, humbly serve the Lord, humbly contribute to the work of the ministry. Those



people are especially appreciated by those who serve in ministry. And Luke was especially appreciated by the apostle Paul.

I think it gives us a glimpse into his life. He was a beloved servant.

And then as we read a moment ago, you get to the book of 2 Timothy which is Paul's last and there is Paul waiting execution in a Roman prison and he tells us that the only one who is still with him there is Luke.

So he is not just a beloved servant, he is a loyal, faithful servant. When many had abandoned the apostle Paul... Some were not there because they were busy in service. It is not that everyone had abandoned him, but when most had abandoned the apostle Paul, Luke was still there.

A humble man, a beloved servant, a loyal servant. Something else we know about Luke is he was a Gentile believer. From all indications, though some would dispute this, but I don't think they have enough evidence to dispute it. By all indications Luke was not a Jew. He was a Gentile.

I want to show you why I say that. Go to the book of Colossians if you would, please. Colossians chapter four and look at verse 10.

Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.<sup>16</sup>

Paul is saying these men are Jews. These are the men among the circumcision who travel with me and work with me.

The next statement, verse 12:

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.<sup>17</sup>

So Luke is with him, right? And Demas is with him. But when Paul identifies those men of the circumcision who are with him, he does not include Luke. So you have Jewish believers who are working with Paul and you have Gentile believers who are working with Paul. And Luke is included among the Gentile believers working with Paul.

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<sup>16</sup> Colossians 4:10-11.

<sup>17</sup> Colossians 4:12.

Something else we know about him. Look back at our text, Luke chapter one. Something else we know about Luke is that he was not an eye witness of the things he is writing about in the gospel of Luke. He was not an eye witness of the ministry of Jesus.

How do we know this? Well, notice what he writes in verse one.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us.<sup>18</sup>

What I am going to write about is what these eye witnesses have passed on to us. That tells us that Luke was a second generation believer, so to speak. You have those men who were eye witnesses of the life and ministry of Jesus, who ministered that message through preaching and teaching and now this message has come to Luke and to others through their ministry. He has been brought to faith in Jesus and now he is undertaking this task whereby he will write down, put into writing what has been passed on to him from the eye witnesses and those who have ministered that message.

So a Gentile believer who was brought the gospel and now he is going to write about things that he has been taught about from eye witnesses of those things.

Humble man, beloved servant, loyal servant, a Gentile believer who was not an eye witness of the gospel event. But the last thing we will say about him is this. He was faithful with what he had been taught. He was faithful to study it.

Look at verse three.

“... it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past.”<sup>19</sup>

I mean, he has been researching this for a long time, detailing these things for a long time. He has been faithful to study these things and he will be faithful and he has been faithful to teach these things.

Notice the precision that characterized his learning and his teaching, verse four.

He wrote to Theophilus:

“... that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”<sup>20</sup>

The New American Standard puts it this way.

“...so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Luke 1:1-2.

<sup>19</sup> Luke 1:3.

<sup>20</sup> Luke 1:4.

I carefully studied it and now I want to carefully teach it so that you will have the exact truth.

This is the writer of the gospel of Luke, the beloved physician Luke.

Now the second thing I want us to think about is who received the gospel, the recipient of this gospel. The man's name is Theophilus.

Verse three.

“...it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus.”<sup>22</sup>

The name means, literally, lover of God or friend of God. So some have wondered if perhaps this is just sort of, I don't know, a code name for a larger audience.

In fact, some have even speculated that the gospel of Luke is really intended for Gentiles who were not yet fully proselytized to the Jewish faith, but they were on their way. God fearers. So they had already been exposed to Jewish culture in the Hebrew Old Testament, but they had not, you know, fully transitioned over but now here they are being presented with the gospel. Maybe he has designed this for God fearers.

I think that is reading way too much into this. If we just take it at face value, he is writing this to an individual named Theophilus. He refers to him in a unique way, you will notice.

“...most excellent,” κρατιστε (krat-is'-teh) is the word, most excellent. And you find that word used in other places in the New Testament and where you find it, it is used of government officials, people occupying some high place in society.

And so it may be that Theophilus was a ruler of some sort. We don't know for sure. Some have even wondered if this man was not the benefactor who had financed Luke as he researched this and wrote it.

I don't know.

What I can tell you is Luke has a spiritual desire for this man. This man Theophilus, verse four has been taught the gospel. He has been taught about Jesus. In all likelihood he is already a believer. But now what Luke wants is for this man to have some assurance, a greater assurance, more knowledge about the things that he has been taught about. He wants to give him more exact detail about the things that he has learned about.

So the writer is Luke. The recipient is Theophilus.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Luke 1:3.

But I don't have any doubt, even though this is aimed at Theophilus, when we remember these first four verses are like a Hellenistic introduction to a public piece of literature, when we remember that then we also see that even though Luke has addressed this to Theophilus he already has in mind a larger audience. So it is addressed to an individual, but he intends with this message to go out to the public, to go out to the world.

The third thing I want you to thin about with me: How this gospel came into being. How it came into being. This is fascinating to me, because I am reminded as I think about this how God uses natural means to accomplish supernatural things. This is a God breathed letter. This is God at work in the author bringing into existence his Word in a written form. And yet it is not dictation, is it? This is not, you know, Luke, let me sit you down and God says, "I am going to give you now... You just sort of go into this passive mode and I am going to give you ever word to write down. You just sort of move your hand and I will put the word on the pages."

No, that is not what this is. No, that is no how God worked as he brought his Word into existence. He used human instruments and he used their minds and he used their thinking and he used their planning and he used their research. But then he led them along in such a way, he oversaw the whole thing in such a way that as they wrote what they wrote were his very words.

And God not only worked through natural means in bringing it into existence, God also worked through natural means, all the copying and all the scribes and all the rest, to preserve it for us so that we have all these manuscripts that scholars can compare one to another and get us back to the original text that was given initially.

No, God uses natural means to accomplish supernatural things.

Notice a few things that Luke tells us here that are fascinating.

First of all, he tells us that there are were already attempts, many attempts going on to write down these things before he attempted his. You see that in verse one.

"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us."<sup>23</sup>

Many, he says, had already taken up this attempt to write down a narrative.

Now, when you remember... Some speculate that Luke used Mark as a resource, but I don't know that we can be sure of that. But when you think about how these gospels are dated, most would say that Luke is only preceded by Mark so Matthew would come later, John would come later. But he says there have been many attempts. That tells us there were attempts to write down this narrative that were not inspired and not preserved. We don't have them anymore.

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<sup>23</sup> Luke 1:1.

So this wasn't the only attempt to give us a narrative of the life of Jesus, one of many.

Second, as we think about how this gospel came into being, we are reminded that what we have here in all of the New Testament, but specifically set forth for us in Luke's gospel is we have a careful, accurate, record of real history. This is not religious myth. This is not these men making up things that are meant to... that don't really have a real basis in history, that are not real history, not real factual facts, not factual, but they are some how meant to just convey a spiritual message to us. That is not what this is.

Now he is talking about things, verse one, that have actually been accomplished in their time.

Verse two, there were eye witnesses to these events. And up to this point there has been an oral record of it. Things, verse three, that he has studied out carefully. He has followed all these things carefully for some time past and now he wants to write it down in an orderly way so that this man, verse four, can know the exact truth about the things he is writing about.

What is it this? This is a record, a careful, accurate record of real history. Jesus really lived. Jesus really did the things the Bible says that he did, says the things that the Bible says he said, accomplished the things the Bible says he accomplished, really died, was really raised from the dead. This is history given to us through inspiration so that what we have is the truth.

If you want to know the truth about Jesus, you don't watch the History channel. If you want to know the truth about Jesus you read the Bible. God has given us the truth about his Son.

Third, when we think about how the gospel came into being it wasn't the only attempt, but it was an inspired attempt. So in that way it was unique, a careful accurate record, a real history. Third, and I already mentioned this, but it is a record formed from eye witness accounts.

So Luke in whatever way, whether it was taking advantage of things already written or whether it was personal interaction with these people, Luke formed what he gives to us here through the account, the testimony of people who were actually there, actually heard it, actually saw it, actually were involved with it, eye witness accounts.

Fourth, as we think about how it came into being, we need to remember it is a theological, not only is it history, but it is at the same time a theological interpretation of that history.

What do we mean by that? Well, just it is not just enough to have the facts. We have to know what the facts mean. It is not enough just to say Jesus lived and here is how he lived and here is how he died and was raised. We have to know what it all means.

Who was this Jesus? Where did he come from? What does his life mean? What does his death mean? What does his resurrection mean? So that Luke isn't just giving us facts. He is also along the way setting it forth in a very orderly fashion. He is telling us what it all means.

It is interesting he uses that word "accomplished," verse one. A narrative of the things that had been accomplished, literally that had been filled up or had been fulfilled. And there is something that was being accomplished in the life of Jesus, something accomplished in his ministry, something accomplished in his death, something accomplished in his resurrection. Luke wants to tell us what has been accomplished in his own time.

So this is a spiritual message.

You know, we are going to take note of the historical elements of it just like we are doing this morning, but you will totally miss the mark of the message of Scripture if all you do is look at it as history. It is not just history, beloved. It is a message from God concerning his Son and it is given to us in order that we might believe in his Son, trust in his Son and know his Son who is alive who has been raised from the dead and is among us even this morning though we can't see him. He walks in the midst of his churches. This has been given to us that we may know him.

Also talking about using natural means to accomplish supernatural things, do you notice in verse three that God uses this man's mind to organize things. It is an orderly, organized presentation. God uses organization, doesn't he? Even in the preaching of a sermon there ought to be organization. There ought to be structure. There ought to be some kind of pathway that we are following together. Things need to be set forth in a way that they can be brought in and interpreted and understood in an orderly way.

So we see the author. We see the recipient, we see how it came into being.

Fourth, last thing this morning, what is its purpose? What is the purpose of this narrative?

Well, we don't want to miss this. It is, according to Luke it is meant to be a personal witness. Luke cares about this individual. He cares about this man named Theophilus. Whatever the man's relationship to Luke was, however he knew him, he cares about him. He is writing this orderly account for him, verse three in order that, verse four, he may have certainty, he may have assurance concerning the things he has been taught. He wants to deepen this man's understanding of what he has received. He wants to expand this man's understanding of what he has received. He wants to stabilize this man's understanding of what he has received. He wants this man to have firm assurance about everything that he has received through the ministry of those who have preached this message.

This is a personal witness. But, as I have noted in the very way that it is written, different kind of Greek, different everything, verses one through four. It is also meant to be a public witness. He has the world in mind as he writes this narrative.

A personal witness, a public witness, third, it is meant to be a thoroughly respectable witness.

That is why he introduces it the way that he does. Do you know what Luke is saying by the very way that he introduces, by this prolog? He is saying this letter is on part with any history, any research that you will ever read. I am going to...

Now we know because of inspiration. It is beyond that. But in terms of the approach that he took, he was very... he had determined to be a very, very careful historian, a very, very careful researcher. He was saying by this prolog, "I will not be ashamed of what I have written. Examine it. Study it and you will find it trustworthy."

Of course, we know it goes beyond that because it was God breathed. It is not just trustworthy, it is perfect. It is inerrant.

No what do we do with this prolog this morning as believers sitting here in the year 2011? What do we do with this?

Well, first I just want to ask you this. Do you want to know the Savior? Do you want to know the gospel? Do you want to know with certainty the truth about Jesus? That is why this was given to us. That is why we are going to study it verse by verses, line by line, that we might know Jesus.

Do you want to know him? And I can I say this to you? Listen. This is very important. Do you realize it is possible to know Jesus by just a very simple gospel witness and then go on knowing him for the rest of your life?

I will try to say it to you this way.

If you say to yourself, "I will put my faith in Jesus. I want to put my faith in Jesus. I will put my faith in Jesus, but only after I have received every bit of information I could ever study about him..."

Did you ever talk to someone like that? Well, I just don't have enough information yet. I just want to study this more. I just want to go back and study this more.

Understand something. Theophilus had already trusted in Christ. He had already been given information. Luke is coming along to give him more. What is the gospel? It is the good news that we, sinners, can be forgiven of all of our sins and be reconciled that is brought into a right relationship with this holy God who is our creator and God is the one who has made the way possible for this to be established by sending his own Son from heaven, this triune God, sent the second person of the godhead into the earth who took to

himself a sinless human nature, who lived a sinless life and lived a life that demonstrated clearly who he is from heaven, God in human flesh who then died on a cross as a substitute, a substitutionary atoning sacrifice for all those who will look to him in faith. He paid for all the sins of all those who will trust in him and the good news declares that if today you, sinner, will believe this message and turn from your sins and trust in God's Son, you will be forgiven and you will be made right with God and you not just for a day, but forever.

And the moment you hear that message and you can hear it orally, you can hear it through preaching, just as Theophilus had, as you hear that message and believe it and trust in God's Son, you are saved. And then for the rest of your life you can dig in to this book and get to know your Savior better and better and better and better.

But if you wait for some kind of complete instruction before you trust in Christ, in all likelihood you will go to your grave having never trusted in him. You need to trust in Jesus today. That is what I am saying. Don't wait until we get to the end of the gospel of Luke.

You can laugh.

You need to know him today.

Do you want to know him?

Now to believers I want to ask you this. Do you want to know him better? Do you want to know your Savior better? You know, the best thing we can do is just immerse ourselves in the Word of God and look at our God.

What is the unifying message of the Scriptures? It is God and his glory. And where do we see the glory of God? In the face of his Son.

I had a guy one time come here at the end of a service. He had been waiting all service long and at the end of the service he caught me and, as can happen sometimes, I was trapped. And for what seemed like forever he went on and on. I was preaching through John at the time and he went on and on and on about how wrong I was because I had identified the writer of John as John. That, indeed, the writer was Nicodemus. And he had written a book about it, this theory about Nicodemus as the author and he went on and on and on and on about Nicodemus.

And I thought to myself, you know what? You have read the gospel of John and all you are looking for there is Nicodemus. Why don't we read the gospel of John looking for Jesus? Let's focus on Jesus.

As we study the gospel of Luke we are going to learn all kinds of fascinating things, but above all we are going to set our focus on Christ. Let's get ready to know our Savior better.



Do you want to know him better?

Third, last, I want to ask you this. Are we motivated by what motivated Luke? Seems like sometimes there are these two extremes that exist in the Church. On the one hand there are those people who say that they are concerned about intimate fellowship and they are concerned about ministry to individuals. And yet what is amazing is these people are supposedly so concerned about other people, in many cases don't have any vision for reaching the world with the gospel. We supposedly love men. We love individuals. We care about their souls. But then we act as if there is not a world all around us dying in sin without the Savior.

But on the other end of the spectrum you have people who have supposedly have this great vision for reaching the world with the gospel who will not walk across the street to talk to their neighbor.

So we supposedly care about the world, but we don't care about the world living right next door to us.

And the amazing thing about Luke is it is plain, isn't it, that he had a true concern for this man Theophilus, this individual who needed certainty regarding the gospel, yet he wrote this book in such a way that it was designed for the whole world. He cared both about the individual and he had a vision to understand that the world is full of individuals, individual souls in need of Christ.

Are you motivated in both those ways? Are you... do you have a vision to see the gospel from your own life and from this church and from whatever it is you are involved in in ministry? Do you have a vision and a desire to see the gospel go to the world, to the ends of the earth? But at the very same time do you care enough about souls that you have talked to your next door neighbor about Christ, that you talk to your family members about Jesus, those family members who don't him? Do you talk to the people you work with and the people you go to school with? Do you care about the world that is standing right next to you? That was Luke's vision. That should be ours. What a treasure we have in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Old and New Testaments that have not only been written down, but then preserved by God that we hold this book in our hands.

Let us love it, read it, study it, know it and faithfully teach it that others might know Jesus, too.

And all God's people would say amen.

Let's pray together.

*Lord, thank you for your Word and how you work through natural means to produce what is supernatural. We thank you, Lord, today, but also if your Savior should tarry and if we should live, we thank you in advance for everything we are going to learn about our*

*Savior, for a fresh opportunity to just look at Christ and understand in a more complete fashion what he did to bring us to you. I pray that through this, Lord, many would come to know your Son and I pray that we who have come to know your Son would get to know him better. We ask you of this in Jesus' name. Amen.*