

LUKE 1

Luke 1:1–4

1:1 *Many have attempted to write about what had taken place among us.*

Unlike the writers of the other three Gospels, Luke began his work with an introductory preface, describing the reason for his effort. He opened the first chapter by acknowledging that others among the Christian community had already recorded the events that took place during the same period. Although he wrote about things many people already knew and believed, Luke undertook the task of preserving a historian's account of the reports and oral traditions of the events surrounding the life of Jesus Christ. His efforts were designed to aid the understanding of an audience that was unfamiliar with the oral tradition of the Jewish community that was so closely associated with the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

1:2 *They received their information from those who had been eyewitnesses and servants of God's word from the beginning, and they passed it on to us.*

Luke did not spend any time in validating the works of other writers who wrote about the same subject matter as his own treatise. He confirmed that those who wrote about it received their information from eyewitnesses and servants of the Word who were so appointed by God. These would certainly include the disciples that Jesus called to follow Him, men who had actually witnessed Jesus' entire three-year ministry. It also would include those directly inspired by the Holy Spirit to record God's Word. Like the other Gospel writers, Luke wanted to record and substantiate the history of Jesus' life. Luke wrote for the same reasons as the apostle John: "But these miracles have been written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and so that you will have life by believing in him" (John 20:31).

Luke noted that these stewards of God's message "passed on to us" what they had personally witnessed and experienced in a confirmed historical setting; therefore, we can safely surmise that Luke's account was not a work criticizing other writers. Rather, his acknowledgment suggests that he sought to preserve the history of the revelation of God's redemption in a manner that could be understood by others who were unfamiliar with Jewish background and culture.

1:3–4 *³I, too, have followed everything closely from the beginning. So I thought it would be a good idea to write an orderly account for Your Excellency, ⁴Theophilus. In this way you will know that what you've been told is true.*

Luke, having thoroughly investigated the reports and the testimonies of others concerning the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, felt compelled to give an orderly account of what he had learned and confirmed. All these events could be substantiated as genuine since they were verified by eyewitnesses. Luke said he would do this for the benefit of a prominent dignitary, His Excellency, Theophilus.

Some scholars encourage a cautious approach to understanding this Gospel as a public message rather than a private communication. Since the name *Theophilus* means “lover of God,” they propose that Theophilus is actually an inclusive designation embracing all “who love the Lord.”¹ Such scholars assume that the meaning of the name of the addressee encompasses the substance of the message. However, such positions stand in contrast to similar literary practices exercised by Paul who wrote epistles to individuals like Timothy and Titus as well as to congregations such as the Romans and the Corinthians. Furthermore, the title “Your Excellency” and the proper name *Theophilus* more convincingly suggest that Luke did indeed address his account to a distinguished Gentile individual by that name.

It is more important to recognize that Luke wrote the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a historian to validate and confirm what Theophilus had already heard and understood. Anyone else reading Luke’s account would also be enlightened by the same affirmation that validated the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Notes/Applications

All Scripture is inspired by God. Like all the other inspired writers of the different books of the Bible, Luke also was inspired to investigate and affirm the truth of the Gospel and record his findings as a careful historian. God equipped Luke with a specific expertise that enabled him to discern and record the valid historical facts that eyewitnesses had reported to him.

Thus, Luke set a powerful example for believers of all ages. He faithfully obeyed what God had entrusted to his stewardship. He heard, investigated, and confirmed the truth. Finally, he recorded the truth that he had confirmed. He did not just verify what he had heard merely for his own intellectual satisfaction. He faithfully passed on to others what God had revealed to him. No one can deny that Luke was a lover of the truth. What is more, the truth Luke confirmed was important to the ongoing fight against unsubstantiated errors.

In Luke's time, Gnostics, Sophists, and many more fallacious schools of thought distorted the truth and misled many with false doctrine.

Each generation, including our own, faces similar purveyors of falsehood. As believers in the truth of the Gospel narrative, drawing on the resources of the Holy Spirit Who lives within us, we too must examine the evidence of these same eyewitnesses of which Luke spoke. Thus, enlightened by the One Jesus promised to us as the Teacher of His truth, we too should find that the life and ministry of Jesus Christ clearly imprints not just the pages of Scripture but also the pages of our hearts. Then, like Luke, we will be equipped to write down or tell others about the Person of Jesus Christ, Who has filled our hearts with joy. We do this so that others too, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, can discover in Jesus their Savior, Redeemer, and King.