



The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

^{1:1}Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us^a, ²just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word^b, ³it seemed fitting for me as well^c, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order^d, most

^a **1:1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us.** While few extra-biblical accounts of the earthly ministry of Christ have survived to this day, the author says there were a large number of written records available when this gospel was written. He says many have, literally “taken upon hand” to record these things, a word used only by Luke in the Bible, but by Hippocrates and Galen in medical works (A.T. Robertson).

The authorship of this gospel is overwhelmingly attributed to Luke, whom Paul called “the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14). I will make that assumption, as did the early church attested as far back as the second century. Without seeking to offer “proof” of Luke’s authorship, here is some New Testament evidence:

- Paul had a traveling companion, Luke, who was a physician (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24).
- The writer of Acts traveled with Paul—ultimately to Paul’s Roman imprisonment—as shown by several first person pronouns (we, us, our) in Acts (16:10-13, 16; 20:6-8, 13-15; 21:1-18; 27; 28).
- Acts was addressed to a man named Theophilus (Acts 1:1).
- The author of Acts had earlier written a book “about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when He was taken up to heaven” (Acts 1:1-2)
- The gospel of Luke was also addressed to a man named Theophilus (1:3).

I see no reason to reject the common practice of dating of this letter at around A.D. 60, possibly during the imprisonment of Paul at Caesarea.

^b **1:2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.** This shows that the human author of this account was not personally an eyewitness to the earthly ministry of Messiah. His source of information was from among the apostles and other firsthand accounts. This does not make his record errant, but does demonstrate the human element of biblical authorship. Notice the title for those other historians: he calls them “servants of the word.” This tells us two things:

- God made use of human records and human memories in compiling the Scriptures
- Luke considered his account part of the “word”

Luke understood that he was doing more than simply recording interesting events.

^c **1:3 it seemed fitting for me as well.** Luke’s appetite for truth had been fine-tuned, so this seemed to him the right thing to do. Having devoured all the information he could about the Master, he decided to take up the pen himself. Luke actually wrote more of the New Testament in two books than Paul did in 13. He wrote this account in the first person (1:1, “accomplished among us”), as he did the book of Acts (Acts 1:1; 16:10-13, 16; 20:6-8, 13-15; 21:1-18; 27; 28).

^d **1:3 having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order.** This statement does not necessarily mean that this gospel is a chronology. As the NIV suggests, Luke may be saying that he was presenting “an orderly account” of this holy material. It is one more example of Luke’s careful attention to detail (Acts).

Luke may have written this while Paul was in jail in Caesarea. He would have found living sources not far from that place whom he could interview.

The Gospel of Luke
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

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excellent Theophilus^a; ⁴so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught^b.

Luke was a historian of the first order. He had a very good academic work ethic (see the language behind “investigated carefully,” cf. Matthew 2:8). He shows his eye for detail in the book of Acts and in this gospel. Several events recorded only by Luke help us see clear images of our Lord’s work. D.A. Carson and Douglas Moo’s *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2005) list those accounts only covered in Luke’s gospel:

- the miraculous catch of fish and of its effect on Peter (5:1-11)
- the anointing of Jesus by a sinful woman (7:36-50)
- the women who helped Jesus (8:1-3)
- Jesus’ rejection by some Samaritans (9:51-56)
- the mission of the seventy (10:1-12, 17-20)
- Jesus’ visit with Martha and Mary (10:38-42)
- teaching on repentance (13:1-5)
- healing the crippled woman (13:10-17)
- Jesus’ teaching about Herod (13:31-33)
- the man with dropsy (14:1-6)
- the invitation to a banquet (14:7-14)
- the account of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31)
- Jesus’ teaching about unprofitable servants (17:7-10)
- the healing of ten lepers (17:11-19)
- Zaccheus (19:1-10)
- the lament over Jerusalem (19:41-44)
- the words about two swords (22:35-38)
- Jesus before Herod (23:6-12)
- the words to the daughters of Jerusalem (23:27-31)
- three of the “words” from the cross (23:34, 43, 46)
- the whole section on the resurrection after the women at the tomb (24:12-53)
- the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37)
- the parable of the the friend at midnight (11:5-8),
- the parable of the the barren fig tree (13:6-9)
- the parables of the the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (15:1-32)
- the parable of the unjust manager (16:1-9)
- the parable of the unjust judge (18:1-8)
- the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (18:9-14)

^a 1:3 **most excellent Theophilus.** This name could be a generic address to any “lover of God” or “friend of God” (literal meaning), but the title “most excellent” hints at an individual. “Most excellent” is the same way Paul addressed Governor Festus (Acts 26:25) and the way Claudius Lysias addressed Governor Felix (Acts 23:26). Theophilus is also listed as the recipient of the book of Acts.

^b 1:4 **so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.** The word “the exact truth” could also be translated “with assurance.” Luke used this word in Acts 5:23 of prison doors being securely locked. Theophilus had evidently been instructed in the Christian faith and Luke wanted him to have a trustworthy written record of the work of the Lord during His earthly ministry and after His ascension.

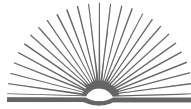
Luke wants us to know that, even though he was not an eyewitness to the earthly ministry of Christ, he considered his record accurate. These were not fables passed on around the campfire. Christian discipleship is more than simple formulas and professions of faith. The Christian faith is

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more than philosophy. It finds its roots in historical events. Ours is to sift through the treasures of revelation left on deposit with us and to examine them with precision so we can respond Godward with ever-increasing delight. Luke has much in common with those of us who read his account:

- He had never seen Jesus.
- He was a student of authoritative records about Jesus' person and work.
- The more he learned, the more he wanted to learn.
- The more he learned, the more he wanted to share.

^a 1:1-4 The study of history is the study of God's providence. There is purpose to the events of our world. God does not waste characters. Luke contends here (and in Acts) that the central event of history around which we find purpose is the cross of Christ. This history is worth studying. Consider some good reasons for you to take pains right now to study the third gospel:

1. Because here is a history intentionally written to bring you to know the Lord Jesus. That was Luke's intent for Theophilus and the rest of us get to go along for the ride. You will know the Lord Jesus better if you carefully study this book.
2. Because here you will learn things about Jesus you can find nowhere else. Luke wrote with an eye for detail like no other human author of Scripture.
3. Because here you will develop an appetite to learn more about Jesus as well as tell more about Jesus. Rather than thinking the subject had been exhausted by other writers, Luke decided to investigate more deeply and further communicate the good news.
4. Because here you will be challenged to consider how God uses ordinary people to declare His glory to the world. Luke shows, as much as any biblical account, the human side of Scripture.

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