



Luke's Gospel: Son of Man, Seeker of Men.

Part 1: Can you be certain about anything?

#### Luke 1:1-4 (NKJV); Dedication to Theophilus

1 Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, <sup>2</sup> just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, <sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

**Series Theme:** *Luke presents Jesus as the Son of Man who came to seek the sons of men to save them and give them new life in Christ.*

**Background of Luke:** "Sometimes we need to take a step back to gain perspective. It is one thing for three of Jesus' twelve disciples to write about the life of Christ; it is quite another for someone who did not know Him to write about Him. Luke never met Jesus, yet chose to follow Him. An obviously educated man who, as [Colossians 4:14](#) tells us, was a physician, Luke learned all that he could about Jesus and shared his findings with us. Thus his Gospel provides a "step back," a unique perspective on Jesus' birth, ministry, death, and resurrection.

**Author:** Neither Luke nor Acts has a byline, so we are left to deduce the author's identity. The author writes that he was not an eyewitness to the events surrounding Jesus but had gathered the reports of others. On the other hand, the

author was present with Paul at some of the events described in Acts, events that belong to the "we" sections of Acts (see [Acts 16:10-17](#); [20:5-15](#); [21:1-18](#); [27:1-28:16](#)). So the author must have been a lately converted Christian who knew Paul and sometimes traveled with him.

Early Christian writings, from the works of Justin Martyr to Tertullian, identify the author as Luke, an identification that was firmly in place by the third century A.D. Luke was an educated man by ancient standards. He was capable of writing in high Greek style, and [Colossians 4:10-14](#) seems to indicate that Luke was not "of the circumcision," that is, not Jewish. *If so, Luke would be the only Gentile author of a New Testament book.* Tradition says that after accompanying Paul on some of his missionary journeys, Luke settled in Philippi, investing his life in the ministry of the Philippian church.

**Date:** Neither Luke nor Acts indicates when they were written, so this too must be deduced. The last event recorded in the Book of Acts is the first Roman imprisonment of Paul; therefore, the earliest Acts could have been written is A.D. 62. Most scholars choose between two times for the Gospel: early to late sixties, or mid-seventies to late eighties. Two factors determine the choice: the date of the other Gospels and the portrayal of the fall of Jerusalem in Luke.

Almost everyone considers Luke the second or third Gospel to be written, though they debate whether Mark or Matthew was the first. The first Gospel, whether Matthew or Mark, is usually dated in the sixties. Those who place Matthew and Mark in the sixties often date Luke after A.D. 70, to allow time for the circulation of Matthew and Mark. Another reason given for dating Luke after A.D. 70 is the claim that Luke presents Jesus' predictions of the fall of Jerusalem ([19:41-44](#); [21:20-24](#)) in such a way as to indicate that the city had already fallen.

Neither of these arguments is decisive. Given that the major figures of the early church had contact with one another, there is no reason to assume that it took a decade for a major Gospel to get into circulation. The prediction of the fall of Jerusalem in Luke is unique among the Gospel accounts in focusing on the fall of the city and not merely the destruction of the temple. Thus what Jesus describes is a judgment which is the result of covenant unfaithfulness, similar to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 b.c.. The fact that Luke includes Jesus' prediction of a second fall of the city does not mean the city had already been destroyed when the book was written. Since the sequel to Luke, the Book of Acts, does not record either Peter's death, Paul's death, or even the fall of Jerusalem (in the face

of Jesus' clear prediction of it), **it is most likely that Luke was written in the early to mid-sixties. A date in the later sixties is also possible.**

**Characteristics:** The Gospel of Luke is unique in several ways. It is the only Gospel that has a sequel, Acts. Both Luke and Acts include an account of the Ascension, an event that only Luke describes in detail. Second, Luke is the longest of the four Gospels. Third, Luke records a wide variety of miracles, teaching, and parables, making it the fullest portrait of Jesus' ministry. Much of the material in chapters [9-19](#) appears only in Luke; in all, about one-third of the Gospel of Luke is unique. Fourth, Luke is the only Gospel addressed to an individual. Luke writes for Theophilus, who was probably a Gentile believer.

For Luke, Jesus is the promised Messiah ([1:31-35](#)), the Son of God ([9:35](#)), the Servant through whom God works ([4:16-18](#)), and the Lord who is called to sit at God's right hand exerting His authority and giving the Spirit to those who believe (compare [22:69](#) with [Acts 2:30-36](#)). Though aspects of God's plan are fulfilled in Jesus' First Coming, other parts of the plan remain to be fulfilled when Jesus returns ([21:5-36](#); [Acts 3:14-26](#)).

**Luke wrote his Gospel to reassure Theophilus, a Gentile and a new believer, that God was still at work in the Christian community founded by Jesus.** Luke presents God's grace as revealed in Jesus' ministry on earth. He emphasizes that this grace is available to Gentiles, even though the promises relating to Jesus' ministry stretch back into Israel's history ([1:1-4](#)). For this reason Luke also concentrates on Jesus' relationship to the nation and leaders of Israel. The rejection of Israel does not mean the failure of God's plan. On the contrary, although they did not know it, their rejection was part of God's plan from the beginning ([Acts 2:22-39](#)). In fact, persecution of the Christian community would be the means by which the church would spread the Good News throughout the world. Jesus Himself had predicted that this would happen ([24:45-48](#)).

### **Christ in the Scriptures**

Just like we'd expect from a family doctor, Dr. Luke sensitively describes Jesus as One who reaches out personally and heals those who are mercilessly caged by devastating illnesses. As a person, He is concerned with people. Whereas Matthew likes to refer to Jesus as the Son of David and Mark refers to Him as the Son of God, **Luke's favorite expression is "the Son of Man."**

**Jesus' humanity and compassion are repeatedly stressed by the author.** This, coupled with Luke's portrayal of Jesus' sinless perfection, set up his logical conclusion. Because Jesus is the only perfect person born of a woman and because He identifies compassionately with the plight of suffering sinful people, He alone is qualified to carry our sorrows, bear our sin, and offer us the priceless gift of salvation."<sup>1</sup>

Let's jump into the message:

*Can you be sure about anything? **Through faith**, here are some things we can have certainty about:*

## 1. Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Old Testament prophecies about the \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 1).

- Why were many people writing about Jesus? They were writing about Jesus because His life, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension forever changed the course of human history!
- Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah:
  - 1) All of the \_\_\_\_\_ points towards Jesus-the Old Testament looks forward to His coming and the New Testament looks back at His coming while also telling us about His future 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me. . . . If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me." ([John 5:39, 46](#))

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. ([Luke 24:27](#))

### 2) Jesus was the fulfillment of the \_\_\_\_\_ and the prophets:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished." ([Matthew 5:17-18](#))

### 3) All the \_\_\_\_\_ of God find their yes and amen in Jesus:

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Nelson Study Bible, *Luke Background*.

I Cor. 1:20-For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

## 2. Jesus was a \_\_\_\_\_ person who actually lived, died, and rose again (v. 2).

- There were many eyewitnesses of Jesus' life, ministry, and resurrection.
- Ministers of the word—are you a minister of the Good News about Jesus? Are you delivering hope to a hopeless culture?

## 3. Luke gives us an \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ account of the life and ministry of Jesus (v. 3).

- Luke wrote with a mission: To present an accurate and orderly account to his friend Theophilus concerning the truths about Jesus.
- Who was Theophilus? Mostly likely he was a prominent Gentile who was probably a new believer in Jesus Christ.

**Scripture Insight:** [1:4](#) **certainty:** “The purpose of this term was to give assurance to Theophilus, a young believer. It is likely that Theophilus was a Gentile, since so much of Luke and Acts is concerned with Jewish-Gentile relationships ([Acts 10](#); [11](#); [15](#)). He not only needed to know the truth and accuracy of what the church taught, but also needed to be reassured. He might well have been wondering what he as a Gentile was doing in a movement which was originally Jewish, especially when so many Israelites were rejecting the message. Luke assured Theophilus and his other readers that Jesus is the Messiah. He is worthy of everyone’s worship because He is the Son of the living God.”<sup>2</sup>

**most excellent.** “This was a title used to address governors ([Acts 23:26](#); [24:3](#); [26:25](#)). This sort of language was reserved for the highest dignitaries, suggesting that ‘Theophilus’ was a such a person” (John MacArthur).

- Orderly account-Luke was a doctor and as such knew a lot about research and order. He gives us such a beautiful portrait of the life of Christ.

## 4. Jesus came on a \_\_\_\_\_ mission for you and you can rest assured of this (v. 3b-4).

- Jesus cares for the one. Luke wrote the longest book in the New Testament to one individual that he was trying to build up in the faith.

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Nelson Study Bible.

- That you may know... Can you know anything for certain? Though human understanding, it's easy to say no...but through faith it is easy to say yes!

**Hebrews 11:1**-Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

**Philips Translation**-Now faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see.

**I John 5:13**; These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to* believe in the name of the Son of God.

### Practical and Personal Applications:

- I can have confident hope in the certainty that Jesus is indeed the Savior of the World.
- Reached people reach people. Just like Luke was seeking to minister to his friend Theophilus, we should seek to reach out to those God has placed in our lives.
- **My action step:** Begin to pray for the person that is placed in your path who needs to be saved. Plan to have coffee/lunch to begin sharing your faith with him/her.

**Take Home Truth:** Faith gives us eyes to see the unseen and hands to grasp the invisible.

**Action Step:** Share your faith story with someone this week!

**Preview for next Sunday:** The Childhood of Jesus. Luke 2:21-40.

**Wednesday night:** Come this Wednesday for our Winter Studies. You get to pick between 3 different Life Group options!