



What's Up Doc? Luke 1:1-4

Since many people have attempted to write an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were passed down to us by those who had been eyewitnesses and servants of the word from the beginning, too, have carefully investigated everything from the beginning and have decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (ISV)

Here we are at the start of a new series where we are going to explore the Gospel of Luke. Why a gospel? Because we can get no closer to the root of our faith than to study the life and sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke is unusual in the annals of scripture writers. What do we know about him? First of all, he wrote two books, The Gospel of Luke and The Acts of the Apostles. We know from what we have read that the majority of his writing was based on eyewitness accounts - people he knew or had met. People whose truthfulness he could attest to. But we also know he was a player as well as a collator of other people's stories. From Acts 20 onwards, his account of Paul's third missionary journey switched from he (Paul) did this or that, to we did it. The man was there at Paul's side - one of his aides that joined him as he travelled through Macedonia towards Troas and stayed with him until he got to Rome.

But who was he? He was Greek or from Greek territories. We know that from the fact he joined Paul at Troas (Troy) and addressed his letter to another Greek Theophilus - which means "Friend of God". Some people think that Theophilus wasn't a person but the author addressing Christians as friends of God. He is aiming his gospel at a gentile audience, possibly under the direction of Paul and certainly from people he met on his journeys with Paul. Perhaps he wrote Luke and Acts whilst he was waiting with Paul for his trial in Rome, because Acts closes with Paul's arrival in Rome. Perhaps he intended to write a third book but we don't have one so we'll never know. The Holy Spirit has left us with these to study and learn from.

You notice that I haven't identified the author as Luke yet. Nowhere in God's word does it say that Luke was the author. That started in the second century. The tradition comes from people trying to identify the mystery traveller in Acts who identifies himself as one of Paul's team. Luke appears in Colossians 4:14 as being someone who was with Paul in Rome as the "beloved physician" and someone the Colossians obviously knew. How did they know, unless he was a high-ranking aide of Paul. All the other evidence is purely allegorical - the writer is a stickler for detail and deals comfortably with medical terminology - all characteristics of a Greek-trained physician.

Actually, until we get to glory, we're never going to know for certain. What we do know that this person is the only Gentile author in the Bible.

But we come to this Gospel. What do we know of it? What was the intention of writing it? *Since many people have attempted to write an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were passed down to us by those who had been eyewitnesses and servants of the word from the beginning, too, have carefully investigated everything from the beginning and have decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*

Luke wanted to write a gospel that was an orderly account of the life of Jesus. Not just for the sake of doing so but that *you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught*. He's gone through eyewitness accounts and has also taken the trouble to make sure it's all true. So when you come to the nativity story, you find it unique to Luke. Where did he get this from? The look at two verses: Luke 2:19 *but Mary continued to treasure in her heart all these things and to ponder them* and Luke 2:51 *Then he went down with them and returned to Nazareth; and he remained in submission to them. His mother continued to treasure all these things in her heart*. These are very personal comments. Mary or someone in the family will know how Mary felt about these things. So where did Luke get them from. Mary if she was still alive or possibly James or another member of the family.

We live in a day when facts are important and where eyewitness accounts are vital. People don't want hearsay but real accounts from real people that were there or who could check the facts. If we want people to trust Christ, then we need to present them with the real story. Luke gives you that because he was there and he could check the eyewitness accounts back. many years ago people started to bring into question the truth of Luke. Was it made up? Some historians doubted that his facts were true. There was a man called Sir William Ramsey and he arranged a number of expeditions to what was then Palestine and to Greece and Turkey to check things out. He came to the conclusion that rather than Luke being untrue, it was a very useful tool in understanding the archaeology and writings of the time. He found Luke meticulous in the way he dealt with detail?

Why was Luke written? That *you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught*. For us today Luke's gospel like the rest of scripture is important because it's there to assure us that what we have believed in is reliable. John's gospel and first letter has a similar purpose. But it's more than just being intellectually satisfied. To be a Christian means not just knowing that the story is true, but understanding that in trusting Jesus, God starts to ask questions of your life, its purpose and direction.

Are you sure about the Saviour you have trusted in? How well do you know Him? This is what Paul said *I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I'm convinced that he is able to protect what he has entrusted to me until that day*. (2 Tim 1:12). Is that true of you too. If not, Luke's Gospel is for you.

But there is another shading to these words *that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught*. This is because it's hard being a Christian. Maybe that's why Christians have assurance problems. As we read of the words of Jesus, we come to hard sayings. It's not just a case of wonder as we read the miracle stories again, but realising that Jesus asks hard things of us. Did he really say "take up your crosses daily and follow me." Ouch that's hard. Does it apply to me? It certainly does. But so often we live and act like it doesn't - like it's an optional extra.

You see the problem. Jesus spoke tough words - and they are tough for us. The word of God was meant for us. All of it. Not just a part. And the words of Jesus have relevance for us today - all of us.

So as we come to explore Luke let's realise that Jesus wants to minister to us as His timeless words again speak out through these pages. Are we listening and waiting to follow Him?

Prayer

*Father as we come to this new series, we thank You for your word. We thank you that it's sharper than a two-edged sword **piercing until it divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow, as it judges the thoughts and purposes of the heart**. By Your Spirit, we pray that your word will penetrate and probe our hearts, that we may see how your word applies to us and how we should therefore live and find in you strength and guidance not to just know Your word, but to live it also.*

We ask this in the mighty name of Jesus

Amen

*Preached by Mark Reid
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