

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 12/8/91

Luke 1:1-4 "Is Christmas More Than a Sentimental Story?"

**Intro: (of service)** New Series: "Whatever Happened to the Christ of Christmas?"

**Intro: (of message)** Suppose you had a friend who came up to you with a question, "What can you tell me about the life of Jesus? I've heard a lot about Him. Most people say He was a great person. Some people say they live for Him and love Him. But others hate Him. Who was He really? What makes Jesus so unique? I want to know about Jesus."

What would you say? Has anyone here ever seen Jesus? Did anyone here have the privilege of watching Jesus heal a leper, or raise a corpse from the tomb? Did anyone here listen firsthand to the Master Teacher proclaim divine truth on the hillsides of Galilee? No.

In fact, none of us have ever seen or heard Jesus. The reason is obvious. Nearly 2000 years ago, from a hill outside the city of Jerusalem, He vanished from human eyes, and ascended to His Father's right hand in heaven.

So what will you tell your friend?

That was the very situation which faced another man many years ago. This man had never personally seen Jesus. He had a friend who likewise had never seen or heard Jesus. Apparently this friend had heard about Jesus. But it was merely hearsay. How could he know that the stories he heard about Jesus were true? How could He be sure he could commit his life to this Jesus?

What man am I describing? His name was Luke. Who was Luke?

1. By birth, Luke was a Gentile, not a Jew. He had a Greek name (lit. "Loukios")
2. By occupation, Luke was a Physician (Col 4:14).
3. By second birth, Luke was a Christian.
4. By divine commission, Luke was a ministry associate of Paul.

Phm 24 "Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, saluteth thee; and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke my fellow-workers."

II Tim 4:9-11 "Give diligence to come to me. Demas forsook me. . . Only Luke is with me."

5. By association, Luke had a friend named Theophilus.

Luke wrote two books to Theophilus. The second book is what we call the Acts of the Apostles (see Acts 1:1). What was the first book?

The Gospel according to Luke.

See: Luke 1:1-4

Q: Who was Theophilus? 1:3 "Most Excellent Theophilus"

The phrase could be translated, "Your Excellency Theophilus." Some feel that Luke at one time was a slave. His patron was none other than Theophilus. Theophilus became his lifelong friend when he graciously granted Luke his freedom.

Luke wrote a treatise to Theophilus. You have it open before you. Luke penned a portrait of Jesus 24 chapters long. This gospel record is significant. It's distinct. Luke is unlike the other gospel writers. Matthew, Mark, and John were all Jews. Luke was a Gentile. They had all seen and heard Jesus (Mark?). Luke, as a second generation Christian, had not. They viewed life from the Hebrew way of thinking. But Luke viewed life through analytical Greek glasses. Most of us have a lot in common with Luke. We can relate to Luke. Like Luke, we believe in a Messiah we have never seen.

Illust:

Q: What's the point of talking about Luke, and studying Luke's gospel? What does this have to do with Christmas?

Fact: For many, many people, Christmas is little more than a sentimental story.

The Christchild of Christmas makes us feel warm and cuddly. Yet if we're honest, that's about it for some. Christmas is just a story, a sentimental story. Or is it??

Luke would say, "No!"

Goal of our Study in Luke 1-2:

I want you to know right up front what Luke is going to do for us. Luke wants to show us something. Luke is going to help us to get to know the Christ of Christmas in such a way that we'll gladly place our complete confidence and trust in Him.

Illust:

Present Series: "Whatever Happened to the Christ of Christmas?" Luke 1-2

December 8 (AM) "Is Christmas More Than a Sentimental Story?" 1:1-4

December 8 (PM) "Getting Ready for the Baby" Luke 1:5-80

December 15 "The Humble Birth of the Sovereign King" 2:1-7

December 22 "The Correct Response to the Christ of Christmas" 2:15-20

Q: How do you know that Christmas is more than a sentimental story? How can you be sure that the Christ of Christmas is worthy of your confidence?

**Proposition: Luke gives us 3 things in Luke 1:1-4 which will answer these questions for us.**

- I. The Investigation (1-2)
  - A. Involved Human Resources
  - B. Involved Divine Inspiration
- II. The Instruction (3)
  - A. It is Thorough.
  - B. It is Accurate.
  - C. It is Orderly.
- III. The Intention (4)

## I. The Investigation (1-2)

V 1 "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand. . ."

Luke was living 30 years after Christ had left the earth, 60 years after the God-man was born to peasant parents in the village of Bethlehem. The news of Jesus Christ had spread world-wide through the efforts of His followers.

Luke acknowledged to his friend Theoph that "many" in his day had undertaken a similar project. What was it?

"to set forth in order a declaration" (NIV "to draw up an account")

Of what? That which had been. . .

"surely believed" = fulfilled

It was only natural. The proclamation of Jesus was revolutionizing the Roman world. Verbal proclamation. But things passed on solely by word of mouth can soon be twisted. Some could misrepresent Jesus. So certain ones began to write down biographical sketches of Jesus. God preserved 4 inspired accounts for us to this day-- Matthew's account, Mark's, John's, and Luke's.

Luke himself set out on an investigation. He investigated the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

What sources did Luke use? Two types. . .

### A. Luke's investigation involved Human Resources

V 2 "Even as they delivered them unto us"

Since Luke never saw Jesus, where did he get his information to write about our Lord? He interviewed people. He talked with people. He took notes from people. What people? He describes them with 2 words:

1. "eyewitnesses"--greek word "autoptai", from which we get our word "autopsy." What's an autopsy? A personal, first-hand investigation. Autopsy means seeing for yourself. Today it's a medical term used to describe post-mortem examinations. Here Dr. Luke uses the word to show us that he interviewed people who had first-hand confrontations with Jesus. Luke obtained first-hand stories.

2. "ministers" of the word--also a medical word; lit. it means "underrower". In Luke's day the term was used of the doctors who helped the chief physician in a case. We call them interns today. Luke says he actually interviewed the "underrowers," the "interns" of the "word".

Unfortunately, in our English Bibles the word "word" in v 2 begins with a small letter. The greek word is "logos". It's the same word used in Jn 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word." Who was John describing? See Jn 1:14 "And the Word became flesh." The Word was Jesus.

Luke says he interviewed the "interns" of the "Word", the interns of Jesus! Who were they? The apostles. Perhaps others that served Jesus. Those that lived with Jesus for 3 years, those that watched Him everywhere He went, and heard every word He spoke.

Implication: You can trust your Bible! It's historical. It's accurate.

Luke says his investigation involved human sources. His gospel undoubtedly was the work of years. He collected writings. He talked to anyone who had first-hand stories to tell him. G. Campbell Morgan suggests that Luke quite possibly had met and interviewed the mother of Jesus, Mary, for his gospel reveals information presented in none of the others about our Lord's birth.

Illust: Christianity has a historical foundation

Tran: Luke's investigation involved human resources. But if that was all, Luke's writing would be no more than a great literary masterpiece. A second element is vital. You must look at v 3 to see it.

### B. Luke's investigation involved Divine Inspiration

V 3 "from the very first" = important word translated differently elsewhere. . .

Jn 3:31 "He that cometh from above is above all."

Jm 1:17 "Every good and perfect gift is from above." (3:17 wisdom from above)  
= from above

Key: Listen carefully to Luke's claim. His scientific work was under the guidance of heaven. The Holy Spirit led him as he interviewed, as he collected sources, and then as he wrote. And the product before us, the gospel he wrote, was not only the work of his hand. It was the inspired product of God Himself.

II Tim 3:16 "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God"

II Pt 1:19-20

Tran: How do you know that Christmas is more than a sentimental story? Because Luke gave us his Investigation. What did Luke do with his findings? Look secondly. .

## **II. The Instruction (3)**

V 3 "It seemed good to me to write. . ."

What kind of document did Luke write to Theophilus? 3 features about Luke's gospel.

### A. It is Thorough.

V 3 "having had understanding of all things from the very first"

Luke did his homework, and it was thorough. He probed "all things" in the life of his Lord. From the "very first." That is, Luke traced Jesus' life to his very birth, and even before.

Q: Where does Luke begin in his gospel?

A: The events surrounding the birth of Christ (1:5-2:52).

Fact: Luke devotes the most material to the events surrounding Jesus' birth. Why was Luke so thorough in recording the details of our Lord's birth? Because if you misunderstand His birth, you'll misunderstand Who He is, and What He came to do.

### B. It is Accurate.

V 3 "having had PERFECT understanding"

The word carries the idea of "exactness." Undoubtedly Luke checked and rechecked his findings. And of course the Holy Spirit superintended so that the finished product was perfect. Accurate.

Key: You can read the gospel of Luke and see Jesus exactly as He was. There is no misrepresentation. It's totally reliable.

### C. It is Orderly.

V 3 "to write unto thee IN ORDER"

Is Luke saying his gospel follows a chronological order? It does that. But Luke seems to be saying that he has arranged the various episodes and events from Jesus' life with a purpose in mind. He wants Theoph to see the parts in relation to the whole.

Problem: Some people celebrate the birth of Christ, yet fail to see His relevance the rest of the year.

Luke's gospel will introduce you to Jesus Christ! His instruction is thorough, accurate, and orderly.

Illust:

Tran: How do you know that Christmas is more than a sentimental story? Because Luke gave us his Investigation. And his Instruction. But why did he write it?

### **III. The Intention (4)**

Key: Luke did not give us this gospel to entertain us. This is not intended to be a good biography to read by the fireplace at night, to put you to sleep! Luke had a specific purpose in mind when he wrote this for Theoph (and us). John had a purpose in mind when he wrote his gospel (Jn 20:30-31).

So did Luke. What was his intention?

V 4 "That thou mightest know the certainty. . ."

What did Luke want his friend to find? Certainty. That involves intellectual conviction. But more than that. It has to do with Security. It's not clear whether Theoph was a believer. Undoubtedly he had heard about Jesus. But apparently he had doubts. Maybe he couldn't buy the part he heard about Jesus being born of a virgin. Or maybe he had questions about Jesus' resurrection. Maybe it all sounded far-fetched to him.

This much we know. Luke was burdened for his friend. He wanted Theoph to come to know personally the security that comes to a person who meets the Historical Jesus.

That had never been Theoph's experience. How do we know? Notice what Luke says of him in v 4b, "wherein thou hast been instructed."

"instructed" = "instructed by word of mouth" (we get the word "catechism" from the greek word Luke used). Theoph had only learned of Jesus thru word of mouth. He didn't possess any written document to tell him of Jesus.

Illust: Angor people still don't possess entire NT

Luke wrote so that his friend might have a certain and secure record of Jesus Christ. Luke didn't want his comrade to flounder any longer. He wanted him to "know." That's a special word which means has to do with a deep, thorough knowledge. He wanted him to come face to face with the record of the Risen Christ!

Illust:

Q: Are you certain today that the Christ-child of Christmas is the Savior and Lord of your life? Are you?

If not, why not? Have you doubted the whole notion that God became man in order to redeem us? Does that not make sense to you?

Luke would say, "Look at the record! I've investigated the facts! I've interviewed the eyewitnesses! The Gospel is true! You can believe it. And you can find security in your life if you will place the confidence of your life in Jesus Christ!"

Some say, "I'd believe in Jesus, but I can't see Him. I can't feel Him."

And Luke would say, "Look at the facts! Read the record I've given you about Jesus. Because faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ."

Quote: "How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in His excellent word! What more can He say than to you He hath said, To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?"

Illust