

Luke 1:1-4



Theme Sentence

Luke writes his gospel so that Christians are certain about Jesus.

Context

The main context for Luke 1 is the 450 years of silence that have preceded it. Faithful Jews were 'waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem' (2:38). But Luke tells us that this waiting-time is over (cf 4:21). He brings together ...

- John and Jesus: both are about the fulfilment of God's promises;
- promise and fulfilment: both are about God's salvation.

See **Saviour, Judge and King** p11-13 (*More about ... Old Testament Promises*).

At the end of his gospel, Luke will introduce two disciples who 'had hoped that he (Jesus) was the one to redeem Israel', but who are disappointed because he had not lived up to their hopes. The point? How tragic, how 'foolish' and 'unbelieving' (24:25) to miss the redemption/salvation that Jesus now brings.

Verse-by-verse

See **Saviour, Judge and King** p18-20 (*More about ... Luke the historian*)

- 1 Luke is writing a book for the second-generation church, acknowledging 'many' share his concern. The 'us' of verse 1 is not 'us' today, and we can only know 'all that Jesus began to do and teach' (cf Acts 1:1) if we're told by those among whom these things were accomplished.
- 2 Lots of study of the gospels is concerned with the issue of sources: where did the gospel writers get their material from? Luke is clear that it comes from two-sources: (i) 'eyewitnesses', and (ii) 'ministers of the word'... for we need to know both what happened, and also what those events mean. The Holy Spirit would both remind the apostles of what Jesus had said (John 14:26) and teach the apostles whatever Jesus didn't (John 16:12-13). And all that body of truth (ie the 'things' of verse 4) has been 'delivered' (ie passed on; cf 1 Cor 15:1-8) to us in the pages of the Bible.
- 3 Whatever our doctrine of Scripture, it mustn't override the work of each human Bible writer who sifts, selects, edits, orders, etc. Theophilus (lit *lover of God*) could be a particular individual, or any 'lover of God'/disciple.
- 4 Luke's purpose is Christian certainty ... that we not only have been informed about, but also are sure and convinced about the gospel.

Application

- It is possible to have certainty about Jesus. Luke writes his gospel for that reason, so that second-generation Christians (like us) have access to the apostolic-eyewitnessed events, and the apostolic interpretation of them. We should continue to read Luke for exactly that reason!
- The Gospels are 'teaching' (not merely 'reported events'), and even the order in which the stories are recorded is significant in teaching us. Learn!

Group Study Outline

Luke 1:1-4

Theme Sentence

Luke writes his gospel so that Christians are certain about Jesus.

Launching Question

Should Christians be 100% certain about the things we believe? do you doubt it all, sometimes/often?

READ Luke 1:1-4

Questions

List all the steps that Luke has taken in coming to write his gospel.

What kind of book does Luke say that he is writing?

How should that influence the way we read the gospel of Luke?

Why is Luke writing?

Describe the reader that Luke has in mind. What will be the effect of reading the gospel on such a person?

Thinking it through

How did this bit of the Bible come to be written and what implication do these verses have for our doctrine of Scripture?

Why does Luke's thoroughness matter?

Why do Christians (who may know these stories) still need to read this gospel?

What do you imagine a 'certain Christian' will be like?

Do you 'have certainty'? do you have doubts? what then do you need to do?

Application

What do these verses suggest our desire and attitude should be as we read ...

(i) any bit of the Bible?

(ii) Luke's gospel, in particular?

If we take Luke's reason for writing seriously, as we now read through other passages of his gospel, what question(s) should we keep asking?

What should we pray as we begin every study in Luke's gospel?

What are the 'things' of v4 where Luke wants us certain? (cf *Optional Extra*)

What should I do with my doubts? what will I do with my doubts?!

Optional Extra:

READ Luke 1:67-79

Why is Zechariah praising God? what has God come to do?

Why has God come to do it?

Why does it matter that this is all to fulfil God's promises (cf 70, 72-73)?

What are we told here about John the Baptist's ministry?

What are we told here about Jesus' ministry?

Why do you think that this called a prophecy' (67)?

So what will this 'prophecy' help us to be more certain about as we read on?