

Be Amazed – At God’s Word . . . Luke 1:1-4

Last week we launched our new theme for the year – Be Amazed; Hab 1:5 – Look . . .

We found that God has done an amazing work in history and in Christ

And continues to do an amazing work in our world, our church, and in you

This week, as we begin our study of the book of Luke and the life of Christ, I hope you’ll walk out of here *amazed* at God’s *Word*; **Turn to Luke 1:1-4**

A few facts – Longest gospel in verses; 1:1-4 is called the prologue; Formal introduction Greco-Roman scholars – it ranks among the best in Greek literature of the 1st century Single sentence in ESV because it’s a single sentence in the Greek – ESV preserves that That’s important because it’s God’s Word The closer we can capture exactly what God inspired, the more solid the ground we’re on for life and faith That’s why we use the ESV – one of the most literal yet readable translations

Read Lk 1:1-4

Re-cap of v1-4 – Seeing how others have written about Christ’s life based on the testimony of eyewitnesses, and since I’ve followed it so closely myself, I thought I’d give it a shot as well, hopefully helping you to be more confident in your faith

Luke wanted to reinforce the things that Theophilus had already learned, but didn’t quite understand

Many of you are in the same boat – you know a *little* about Christ’s life

You know *some* of what he taught; And you *want* to live for him

But it would help if you could put it all together

It would help if you could better understand *his* life and teachings, so you could better live *yours*

That’s the aim of this study in Luke, and it starts with an understanding of the *book* itself If you don’t have confidence that the message of *Luke* is the message of *God*, you won’t become certain of anything, let alone your walk with Christ

So it’s important to understand from the start, that the book of Luke is legit . . .

It’s legit

It’s not the figment of someone’s imagination; It wasn’t written in a trance

It’s not made up or manufactured; It doesn’t belong in the fiction section of the library

It’s a legitimate, historical account of the life of Christ written by a real person, at a real time, in a real place, for a real purpose

Let’s take each of those in turn; It was . . .

• **Written by a real person**

The title in your Bible says “The Gospel According To Luke”

It says that because the earliest manuscripts say that, and nothing else says anything to the contrary

Beyond that, it may surprise you that nowhere in the book or the rest of the Bible, does it say explicitly that Luke wrote this book

But it’s nearly 100% certain that he did because it fits all the facts

I want to take you through a little proof to help you appreciate how biblical scholars determine these things, and show you that it’s not out of your reach That you too can determine the same things with a little digging

It’s not so important that you get all these things down that I’m going to say

But that you gain an appreciation for the lengths biblical scholars have gone to substantiate the legitimacy of God’s Word

So here’s how we know Luke wrote this book, just like it says

We know that the author was . . .

1–Second generation Christian – in v2 he distinguishes himself from the eyewitnesses with the pronouns *those* and *us*

Also tells us that the author of Luke was not an apostle; Rules out 12 guys right there

2–Wrote the book of Acts as well – Acts 1:1 – *In the first book O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach*

The reference to *Theophilus* and the *first book* ties the two books together as having a common author

3–Paul’s companion – that’s indicated in several passages in Acts where the author says “we” (ch 16, 20, 27)

If the author of Luke also wrote Acts, and the author of Acts was Paul’s companion, then the author of Luke is also Paul’s companion

That’s important whether we know the name of the author or not, because apostolic authorship or oversight was one of the criteria used by the early church to determine whether or not a writing was legit

4–One of Paul’s companions is a guy named Luke

He names him as part of his group during the same time as the events in Acts (Col, Phil, 2 Tim)

And that he’s a doctor – Col 4:14; And in early church writings (Mur Can 175)

5–Especially interested in healing

The book of Luke includes more healing accounts than any of the other gospels

When you put all this together –

That no writing of the early church refers to anyone but Luke as the author

That no manuscripts title the book differently

That he wasn’t an apostle; That he was Paul’s companion

That Luke was a doctor

That the book of Luke shows a special interest in healings . . .

There’s little doubt that Luke, *a real person*, wrote this book

Again, I didn’t take you through that because there is any doubt about it

Rather, I want you to see/appreciate the process that scholars use (and that you can use), to confirm the *legitimacy* of the text in front of you

It was written by a real person (Dr. Luke) . . .

• **At a real time**

What I want you to see here is that Luke is a legitimate account because it was written within one generation of Christ’s life while many of the eyewitnesses were still alive, and their accounts could be substantiated

Having said that, the exact dating of Luke is a little harder to pin down than the authorship I tend to agree with scholars who place it about 60 AD

That’s *after* Mark and then Mt which I assume were among the narratives Luke referred to in v1

And before Acts was completed – which was probably finished c. 62 AD, coinciding with the final event recorded in Acts

All of that points to Luke being written within one generation of Christ’s life, c. 60 AD

- **In a real place**

Map of Palestine

Jesus spent all of his life in the area of this map

Most in Galilee and Judea; Some in Perea (orange) and the Decapolis (yellow)

Little in Traconitis (hot pink) and Iturea (green)

At time of Christ's birth (which we will skip over until Dec) – Herod the Great ruled all

But during the 3 years of Christ's ministry . . .

Judea and Samaria – Pilate; Galilee and Perea – Herod Antipas

Iturea and Traconitis – Herod Philip II

Made for interesting situations as we'll see in trials Jesus went through prior to death

Point is, Luke naturally refers to much of this because he wrote about a real place at a real time in history – it makes his account legit

God's Word in Luke is legit because it was written by a real person, at a real time, in a real place . . .

- **For a real purpose**

Luke wanted Theophilus to be certain of the things he had been taught about Jesus (v4)

Most likely, Theophilus was a recent Gentile convert and had heard/learned many things about Jesus

But he hadn't quite put it all together, and he probably hadn't heard it all

Who *isn't* in that boat?

All of us lack biblical knowledge, and most of us are a bit fuzzy about some things

We need the same clarity as Theo.

So Luke writes for the real purpose of increasing our confidence in who Jesus is, what he did; And to solidify the convictions of our faith – real purposes

Be amazed at God's Word as recorded in Luke; Feel it, experience it, get into it – it's legit

It's reliable

- **Because Luke was responsible**

3 Quick reasons . . .

1. Based his account on actual events (*things that have been accomplished among us* – 1)

Just as others had compiled a narrative or story line of the actual events in Christ's life, so Luke sets about to do the same

There's no hint of embellishing the story or inventing details in order to make it more appealing or attractive

Neither is there any sanitizing of the account so the apostles don't look bad

You've got them rebuking children coming to Jesus; Peter denying Christ; Argument over who will be greatest in the kingdom

God's word stands alone, and Luke was responsible to record it as is, based on actual events

2. Based his account on eyewitnesses

On those who, from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word (2)

Most likely this refers to the apostles – those who were with Christ, and then spread the word after his death (one group in Gr due to article)

3. Built on the work of others

Others have undertaken [word refers to writing in Gr] *to compile a narrative* (1)

Often this word (have undertaken) is used to diminish another author's work

But with the statement, *it seemed good to me also* (3), he seems to *identify* his work

with theirs, not *distance* himself from them

It seems that if Luke had any quarrel with these previous accounts, it wasn't because they were faulty, but perhaps because they were incomplete or not well written

The word of God, Luke included, is reliable because Luke was responsible, and . . .

- **Because Luke was detailed**

Ever read a **cell phone manual** cover to cover? I did – *once*

Who writes these things? I'll tell you who – people like Luke; People w/ mind for detail

Let's face it – it only seems *good* (3) to someone who is a detailed person, to write an *orderly account* of history

The rest of us would rather walk on hot coals with bare feet

➤ He wrote an *orderly account*

That doesn't necessarily mean *in* order (3b), or chronological; By and large it is

But here this phrase means a *logical ordering* based on *meticulous* research

So there are times when Luke's account is topically arranged rather than chronologically in order to emphasize certain aspects of Christ's life

Example – when he inserts John the Baptist's arrest/imprisonment by Herod *before* the baptism of Jesus (Lk 3:18-22) – that's a topical arrangement of things

Obviously John couldn't have baptized Jesus while in prison

But he puts it there to emphasize the cost he endured for speaking the hard truth

Luke wrote an orderly account because he was a detailed person, and . . .

➤ He had *followed all things closely for some time past* (3)

He was furthest thing from a casual observer or a fair weather follower

I wonder – when it comes to Jesus, does that describe you?

Are you a casual observer? How about a fair weather follower?

Or are you like Luke, closely following *all* things related to him so that you can more closely follow *him*?

- **Because Luke is part of Scripture**

Despite being written by a second generation believer, and not an apostle, Luke was quickly accepted as part of the inspired Scriptures from its earliest mention

Clement of Rome quotes it as Scripture in 95 AD

Polycarp, a disciple of the apostle John, quotes it in 100 AD

Didache, an early church manual on morals and practices, in 110 AD

It's reliable because it was accepted as part of Scripture from the get-go

Beyond that, Luke was put to the same test as all the other books of the Bible

1–Authority; Was it *authoritative*? Did it change people's lives?

2–Authorship; Was it authored by an apostle or with apostolic oversight?

In this case, Luke was under the oversight of the apostle Paul

3–Agreement; Does it agree with sound doctrine?

Doctrine as passed along verbally and in writing, and practiced in the early church

If the content was contrary to apostolic doctrine, it was rejected

Be amazed at the reliability of God's Word as found in Luke, and trust your life to it

God's Word is legit, it's reliable, and . . .

It's compelling

- **Because the story is true**

There's a message CD available at the Resource Table that deals directly with this issue –

7 Reasons the Bible can be trusted as God's Word; All very good

But when you clear everything else away, the most compelling reason that Luke's account of the life of Christ is true, is that the eyewitnesses died to proclaim it
You say, ya but people give up their lives all the time for false causes
True, the world is littered with people who have died for causes they *believed* to be true
But nobody dies for something they *know* to be false
If the life of Christ as recorded in Luke was fabricated, then the apostles and first generation believers *intentionally* gave their lives for something they knew to be *false*
While there are some messed up people in this world, *nobody* does that
They gave their lives for something they knew to be true

True stories are always more compelling than fictional ones
Just knowing that it really happened, and happened to a real person, adds weight to it
That's why I love movies based on true stories, actual events
They pull you in to feel the emotion, sense the struggle, far more than fictional account
This true story is no different

God's Word is compelling because it's true, and . . .

- **Because the text is inspired**

Not only is it a true story, but it's written by the *God* of truth

The Bible says it this way . . .

2 Pet 1:21 – *No prophecy [of Scripture] was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

2 Tim 3:16 – *All Scripture is breathed out [inspired] by God*

The text of the Bible is inspired

While these verses don't prove that it's God's Word just because it says it is . . .

When taken with all the other evidence, it's a no-brainer

To ignore it or disregard it, is to risk your life and seal your fate in the torment of hell, separated from God, forever

Open your heart to the compelling Word of God . . .

- **Because the message is powerful**

Not only is it a true story, written by the one and only true God, but it's *God's* story

It doesn't get any more powerful than that

Sometimes the message is powerful because . . .

It's convicting – showing you your sin like nothing else can

It's consuming – it fires you up and you can't get enough of it

It's freeing – releasing you from the bondage of wrong beliefs or sinful living

It's convincing – like it was for Theo; Truth is that way, especially God's truth

Whatever the effect, live by it . . . and you'll be amazed

Close

Meet Brooks and Nina Buser

Next Week – Luke 1:5-25; 57-80