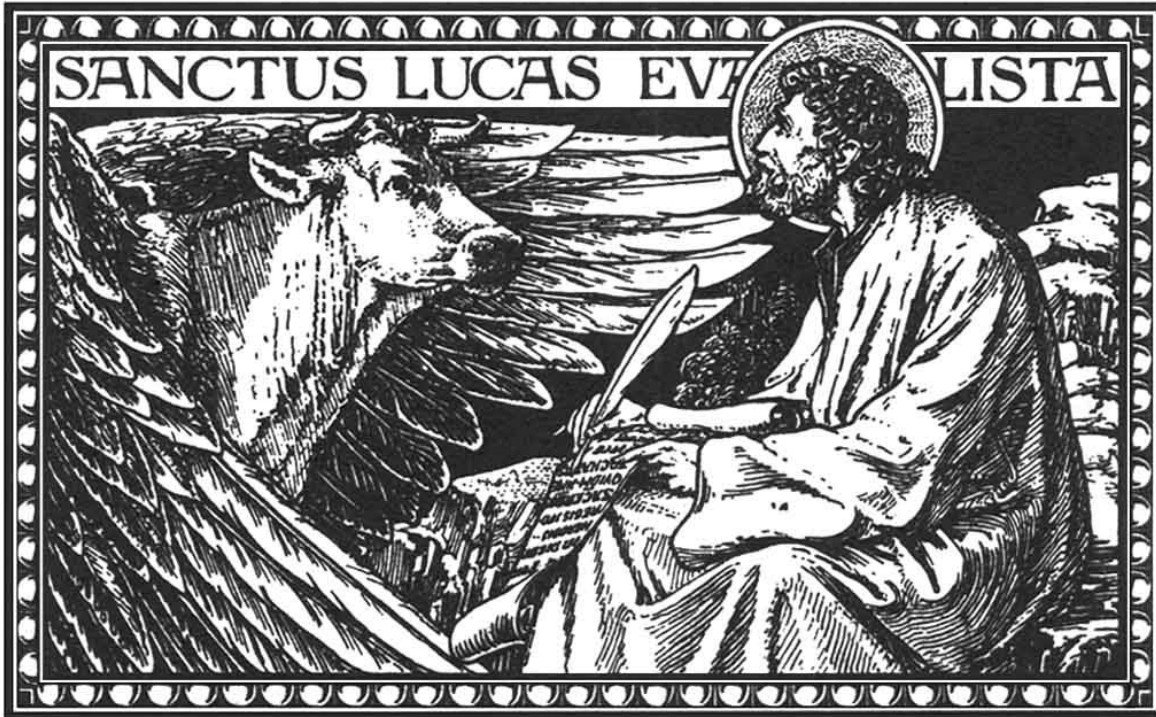


Exegesis of Luke 1:1-4 presented by Mark Jacobson
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In his first life Luke was a doctor (Col 4:14). This occupation leads me to believe Luke was a highly intelligent, well-educated man. As Luke went about this work he would have grown accustomed to being around people, hearing their ailments, asking following up questions, listening for symptoms and thinking about a diagnosis. While the denarii is always a factor in selecting an occupation, Luke's natural abilities and desire to help others played the larger roles in choosing this vocation. It's easy to see how the Lord could utilize this background in the writings of Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

In his second life Luke was a companion and coworker of the Apostle Paul. When I think of a companion and coworker of Paul my first thoughts are drawn to Barnabas, Silas or Timothy, but Luke may have been the closest companion and coworker to Paul. Based on the "we" sections in Acts¹ Luke was with Paul on portions of his second and third missionary journeys. Later, Luke made the voyage from Caesarea to Rome with Paul (Acts 27:1-28:16). Luke was with Paul during this first and then second captivity. During his second captivity Paul writes in 2 Timothy 4:11, "Only Luke is with me." The two had a close connection. Luke was

¹ In the book of Acts Luke utilizes the subtle pronoun "we" when he is a companion to Paul on his missionary journeys. On Paul's second journey Luke joins Paul in Troas and accompanied him to Philippi (Acts 16:10-17). On the third journey Luke went with Paul from Philippi to Jerusalem (Acts 20:5-21:18).

likely a Gentile convert (Col 4:10-14) though probably not a convert of Paul². Luke understood from experience what it was like to be on the receiving end of mission work as an adult. It's easy to see how the Lord could utilize this background in the writings of Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

In his third life Luke wrote his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Some conclude Paul wrote his Gospel in Caesarea around 58-60 A.D. while Paul was in custody there. This conclusion is based solely on Luke's omission of the outcome of Paul's trial in Rome at the end of Acts. I would favor a date after Paul's death (ca 66 A.D.). Luke is not writing to honor Paul. Luke is writing to save and strengthen Theophilus³. His primary interest is on mission work, not a missionary. While much of the gathering of his data, whether on papyrus/parchment or in his memory banks, was done before Paul's death, I believe his writing was after Paul's death. While a debate may be held for an earlier date of Luke's writing, a date after 70 A.D. is less debatable. Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. Luke includes the prophecy of this destruction in his Gospel (Luke 21:20-24). It's too difficult to imagine Luke writing this prophecy without its fulfillment had Luke written this Gospel after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Introduction (NIV2011)

1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled^[a] among us, ²just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Footnotes:

1. [Luke 1:1](#) Or *been surely believed*

Ἐπειδήπερ πολλοὶ ἐπεχείρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν περὶ τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν πραγμάτων,

Translation: Since many have undertaken to arrange a narrative about the events having been completed among us,

Verses 1-4 is one sentence in the Greek. The first word is Ἐπειδήπερ. Ἐπειδήπερ is a conjunction used in the causal, not concessive sense. Ἐπειδήπερ is not used elsewhere in Scripture. This triple compound word is used to describe a widely known fact. That fact is how many others have taken up the task to write an account of Jesus Christ. How many others have taken up this task is unknown. Another unknown is whether Luke includes the Gospels of Matthew and Mark in this group of many. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark are widely believed to have been written before the Gospel of Luke. Luke's need to write another narrative of Jesus might be viewed as an effort to improve on the work of others. While there is an element of truth to that conclusion a more charitable reason would be Luke's desire to add his own findings and flavor concerning the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. This reason will gain support as Luke soon addresses the person to whom he writes this narrative. There are certainly less prominent people than Jesus to have received many written accounts about them. Luke was

² Paul called Timothy, "a son", a title designating Timothy as his convert. Paul does not use this title for Luke.

³ More on Theophilus in verse 3.

not insulting anyone by writing this gospel. Luke is positively using the work of previous writers to justify his own writing.

ἀνατάξασθαι is an aorist infinitive meaning "to arrange in a row." Other meanings include: organize, compile, put together. This infinitive further explains the narrative Luke will write. Luke wants his narrative to show the sequence of events related to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. τῶν πεπληροφορημένων is a perfect passive participle. This participle is used to describe πραγμάτων, translated by me as "events". The thought of the perfect is that of events brought to completion. The passive form suggests that these are divine acts God himself accomplished. The NIV 2011 has a footnote on this participle offering the possible translation of "been surely believed." This meaning is offered in connection with the usage of πεπληροφορημένων in verses such as:

Romans 4:20-21, ²⁰Yet he (Abraham) did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."

Romans 14:5, "One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind."

However, it's preferable to attach the participle in Luke 1:1 to the ministry of Jesus and not to Luke and his contemporaries' believing. Consider the usage of this word in

2 Timothy 4:5, ¹⁷ "But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry." ... ¹⁷ "But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

ἐν ἡμῖν refers to the non-eyewitness Christian population. This would include Luke. This interpretation becomes clearer in the next verse. Luke is distinguishing himself and his contemporaries from the eyewitnesses and assistants of the Word (verse 2). Though Luke and others were alive at the time of Jesus, they were not eyewitnesses or assistants of Jesus during his life and ministry. As Luke and others write these narratives the number of Christ's apostles and the number of witnesses to the resurrection were shrinking. In a way these Gospels were a race against the clock when this group (Apostles and witnesses) and the next group (Luke and others in contact with the Apostles and witnesses) would be called heavenward.⁴

Martin Luther's catechism was not an insult to Luke and the other writers of the Bible. Martin Luther's catechism filled a need to further instruct the people of his time. In the same way no one thinks of WLS Professor emeritus David Kuske's revision of Luther's catechism as an insult to Martin Luther⁵. There are many curricula to explain the gospel of Jesus Christ. In spite of these many curricula you may feel the need to write your own curriculum for personal reasons or for reasons related to your class. This writing is a difficult undertaking and not all of us ought to feel the need to take on this project. Yet, whether we utilize the curriculum of another

⁴ I am regularly visiting two members of Grace, Glendale who are World War II veterans. If I were to write about World War II it would be good for me to talk to these individuals and others like them soon.

⁵ unless I just put that thought in your mind

man, modify it or create something completely new the goal is the same. The goal is to explain the sequence of events related to Jesus Christ and its meaning in the best way we can.

In this opening verse one can also see the need to preserve historical information. Imagine what Christmas Eve would be like without Luke chapter 2. We could skim the Gospel of Luke and gasp at what we would miss had he decided what others had written was good enough. While the history of our churches do not have the earthly life and ministry of Jesus Christ in it, might there be a place for another historical account of the ministry done in your congregation? Is something of your church's history included in your instruction for new members? Sounds like a painful task, doesn't it? Thanks be to God that Luke and others participated in this painful task.

² καθὼς παρέδοσαν ἡμῖν οἱ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρέται γενόμενοι τοῦ λόγου,

Translation: just as they were handed to us by the ones becoming eyewitnesses and assistants of the word from the beginning,

καθὼς clearly connects verses 1 and 2 together. Though Luke and his contemporaries were not eyewitnesses or assistants of Jesus, they were recipients of their testimony. Their testimony to the events of Jesus Christ was παρέδοσαν. This aorist, active, indicative is frequently translated "tradition" or "custom" in the New Testament. When spoken of the Pharisees or the Sanhedrin this παρέδοσαν is used in a negative way (Mk 7:13; Acts 6:4). However, all traditions are not negative. Have you not heard the smooth voice of Jim Nantz say, "a tradition unlike any other, the Masters on CBS"? Besides the Masters on CBS our Master in heaven and on earth has also handed down to us the gospel in Word and Sacrament. Paul uses παρέδοσαν in this way as he wrote 2 Co 11:23 and 15:3. Peter likewise says, "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that *was passed on* to them" (2 Peter 2:21).

ἀπ' ἀρχῆς likely refers to the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. The account of Acts 1:21-23 encourages this understanding. Here Peter talks about replacing Judas as an apostle and says, "²¹Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, ²²beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection. ²³So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias." Jesus is also quoted saying to the apostles, "And you also must testify, for you have been with me *from the beginning*" (John 15:27).

οἱ αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρέται is connected by a single article. The single article connects these two different groups of people into one group who helped Luke and his contemporaries write their Gospels. This force of the article is seen in instances with the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 3:7) as well as the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20). Another interesting consideration is the word choices of αὐτόπται and ὑπηρέται. αὐτόπται is only used here in the New Testament. It is a term that has been found in papyri, often used by medical writers. It's a term from which we get our English word *autopsy*. Those performing autopsies get very personal with their eyewitnessing. There are 20 times ὑπηρέται is used as a noun in the New Testament. 14 times this word is translated officials, guards or officers. It is also translated as helper or assistant. 4 times it is translated as servant. The 3 times outside of Luke 1:2 include:

Jn 18:36, "Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my *servants* would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place." "

Acts 26:16 "Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a *servant* and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me."

1 Co 4:1 "This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as *servants* of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed."

Since δοῦλος and διάκονος are the Greek go-to words for servant it seems to me the special emphasis of ὑπηρετάι is service rendered under someone else as opposed to the act of serving. It's debatable who exactly falls into the αὐτόπται group and who falls into ὑπηρετάι group. While Luke and his contemporaries knew for sure, it is my opinion Luke is talking about the apostles and perhaps a select few others as the αὐτόπται and the 70 disciples, perhaps the 500 witnesses of the resurrection (1 Co 15) and others as the ὑπηρετάι. It's a stretch for me to believe only the apostles in contact with Luke were capable of providing useful material for his Gospel.

Applications from this verse could be on the positive aspect of tradition. We live in an age of constant change, out with the old, in with the new. There are blessings and banes to both tradition and change. While there can be a healthy tension between change and tradition in the realm of church customs, there ought never be a change from the tradition of handing the gospel from one group of people to another group of people.

Another application that could be drawn is an appreciation for the body of Christ. Luke does not express resentment about not being one of the eyewitnesses or assistants. Neither is their resentment from disciples toward the apostles. We each have our tiny and a little less tiny role in the kingdom of the gospel. Let's not get proud or pouty about who is a little less puny than the other. It's all in service to our Savior Jesus and his wonderful word. "It takes a village to raise a child." Appreciate the service of LES teachers, SS teachers, parents and others who participate in the work of Christian education.

³ ἔδοξε κάμοι παρηκολουθηκότι ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς καθεξῆς σοι γράψαι, κράτιστε Θεόφιλε,

Translation: it seemed best to me also to have investigated from the beginning everything carefully in an orderly way to write to you, Most Excellent Theophilus,

ἔδοξε is aorist, active indicative. Dictionary meanings include: think, suppose, seem, appear. NIV2011 translates this word "decided". κάμοι is a dative of advantage. Luke is largely restating what he has said in verses 1 and 2. This restating reinforces the thought that Luke valued the contributions of his contemporaries in retelling the gospel in written form, but saw a need for his own retelling. Παρηκολουθηκότι (to have investigated), ἀκριβῶς (carefully) and καθεξῆς (an orderly account) direct our attention to an extensive effort on Luke's part to learn the details of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and then to communicate those details in a way that could be better appreciated by Theophilus. ἄνωθεν is an adverb modifying the investigation. The word is used 13 times in the New Testament in 9 different ways. The basic definitions are top, again, from above. The word is used of the curtain torn from *top* to bottom and Jesus' seamless, one-piece garment from *top* to bottom. The word is used by Jesus to Nicodemus when

he talked of Nicodemus' need to be born *again*. It is also used by Jesus of Pilate's power coming from *above* and by James speaking of every perfect gift coming from *above*. The translations I have looked at of this verse take ἄνωθεν to refer to the scope of time related to Jesus' life and ministry, *from the beginning* (NIV2011). One commentator⁶ prefers this word to refer to the scope of time related to Luke's research and would translate the word "a long time". This is how this word is translated in Acts 26:5, "They (the Jewish people) have known me (Paul) for a *long time* and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee." I favor the "from the beginning" rendering and believe this beginning to refer to the beginning of the genealogy of Jesus (Luke 3:38).

All that we know about Theophilus is contained in the two words κράτιστε Θεόφιλε. Κράτιστε is used 4 times in Scripture and is translated "most excellent" or "most noble". It is a vocative, a title for Theophilus. Luke uses this same title for Governor Felix (Ac 23:26; 24:3) and Governor Festus (26:25). The title strongly suggests Theophilus was a man with standing. The title also suggests Theophilus was not well known by Luke as of yet and was not what we would consider a confirmed believer. The fact Luke chose not to use this title in the opening verse of Acts strengthens these points. Then, at the time of the writing of Acts, Theophilus is regarded as someone well-known by Luke and a confirmed believer of Jesus. The content of Luke and Acts also support the conclusion Theophilus was a Gentile.

There are differing opinions regarding the person of Theophilus and Luke's purpose of writing to him. Was Theophilus a real person or a symbolic name ("lover of God") for any seeker of truth? Was Luke really doing all this investigation for just one person? Was Luke dedicating this book to Theophilus so that Theophilus would pay for the parchment necessary for copies to be made? The answers to these questions do not change the value of Luke's writing for us. It is my opinion Luke was writing to one, real person named Theophilus. It's also my opinion that Luke was aware of the capability of Theophilus to circulate this writing to a greater readership. This was not a matter of scheming or manipulation by Luke, but a matter of wishing Theophilus to spread the good news like Luke would have for anyone else.

There are several applications that could be further entertained from this passage. One might wonder how Luke's investigation coincides with verbal inspiration. Are they in conflict with one another or do they cooperate with one another? I hope there isn't a follow up question on this point. In other works it is well established how God uses the gifts and experiences of other human writers to shape his word for word communication to his people.

Theophilus was not what we would consider a confirmed believer, but could be described as a seeker of truth. As Luke designs this writing with his audience in mind we also should design our instruction curriculum and Bible classes with our audience in mind. Another application can be made about our aptness for teaching. We are all "apt to teach," but our "aptness" is not just a pass/fail measurement. It's also a measurement in poor, average, good or excellent teaching. Any aptness measurement we have of ourselves or others have of us will certainly be increased by the amount of our preparation for teaching. Luke was not just a talented writer, but a hard worker in his researching and arranging. While we may not be equal to Luke in his talent we can be his equal in our effort.

Theophilus was the original audience for Luke's Gospel. How large does your catechism or BIC class need to be in order to conduct a class? Have you had a 1 person class? While we do have to be mindful about the economy of time so that we don't have 18 single Bible

⁶ Marshall, I. Howard *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* p. 42-43

instruction classes going on, we shouldn't be afraid to take people through a course of instruction one on one.

Our best recruiters for our next instruction classes are those who have just finished our instruction classes. As you wrap up instruction with an individual or group how aware are you of this possibility? Do you ask them about their circle of contacts and about asking their contacts to join them in the next class? Similarly, while we don't seek out the rich so that they may hear the gospel before others, neither do we avoid them because it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

⁴ ἵνα ἐπιγνῶς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν.

Translation: so that you may know the certainty concerning what you have been informed of the things spoken.

ἐπιγνῶς is a subjunctive with ἵνα expressing purpose. τὴν ἀσφάλειαν is the objective Luke has for Theophilus. τὴν ἀσφάλειαν has 3 occurrences in the New Testament. In its other two uses the word is translated "securely" (Acts 5:23) and "safety" (1 Th 5:3). Dictionary meanings include firmness, stability. The goal of Christian education is not only to impart good information, but to bring truth seekers to Luther's conclusion, "This is most certainly true." It's to change hearts from unbelief to faith, from uncertainty to certainty. Christian education is also about transformation (Ro 12:2). It's to change us from how we used to live to how we live by faith. John's Gospel makes a similar purpose statement, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). This certainty and life is clearly seen in the acts of the Apostles in the Acts of the Apostles. This certainty and life is also what Luke wants for Theophilus.

Κατηχήθης is the primary reason for this paper during a conference focused on instruction. κατηχέω is where we get our English word "Catechism." Its literal meaning is "to sound from above" (e.g., address from a stage). The two basic meanings that have come from this word are "teach, instruct" and "inform, report." This distinction is important because if one understands "teach, instruct" as our catechism instruction then Theophilus must be considered as a confirmed believer when Luke gives Theophilus his Gospel. If the more general understanding of "inform, report" is regarded with κατηχέω then Theophilus can be regarded as one who has heard some things about Jesus. There are 8 times when this verbal form is used in the New Testament. These examples can help shape our understanding of κατηχέω:

Acts 18:25, 26 He (Apollos) *had been instructed* in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

Acts 21:21, 24 They (Believing Jews in Jerusalem) *have been informed* that you (Paul) teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.... Take these men (4 men making a Nazirite vow), join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know

there is no truth in these *reports* about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law.

Romans 2:17-18, 23-24 Now you (Jews believing salvation is by the law), if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; ¹⁸ if you know his will and approve of what is superior because *you are instructed* by the law;... ²³ You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴ As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

1 Corinthians 14:19 But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words *to instruct* others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Galatians 6:6,7 Nevertheless, *the one who receives instruction* in the word should share all good things with their *instructor*. ⁷ Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

The usage of *κατηχέω* as opposed to *διδάσκω* in these passages indicates to me a weakness of *κατηχέω*. The prospective or weak believers did not have certainty, fullness of faith. This certainty or fullness of faith would happen for Theophilus through the *διδάσκω* Gospel of Luke, for Apollo through the *διδάσκω* explaining of Priscilla and Aquila and for many others through the *διδάσκω* teaching of Paul. Jesus' great commission of, "Go and make disciples baptizing...and teaching (*διδάσκω* not *κατηχέω*) seems more significant than simply a choice between two equal words. *διδάσκαλος* (Teacher) is also the chosen word for one of the gifts God gives to his church in 1 Co 12:27 and Eph 4:11.

The *κατηχέω* instruction of the Bible is not equal to the catechism instruction in our churches. I think we should take away the catechisms and replace them with Disdaskisms. I will be bringing the two-inch masking tape for the catechism books when we start Disdaskism in the fall. That Greek Word seems to capture more fully what happened with the Gospel of Luke for Theophilus and for our children and adults in our instruction classes.⁷

The historical development of this term *κατηχέω* and catechism is outside the scope of this exegesis. I'm not sure how this word was carried over to youth instruction. My hunch is the idea of "sounding from above, like from a stage" was emphasized with the selection of this word and the incompleteness of instruction in this word was ignored. Maybe our discussion will shed further light on the development of this term since its inclusion in the Canon. Nevertheless, *διδάσκω* instruction then and our catechism today are about certainty. May we continue to labor diligently and orderly to bring this certainty to the Theophili in our ministries.

Τετέλεσται

⁷ If you are reading this for the first time from the AZ/CA District website you are highly sanctified and awesome. You should also know I am just kidding. We will still call youth instruction, catechism.