

Announcements: Daniel and Kristen Hickinbotham—will be here in a couple weeks to candidate for our worship pastor position. Daniel is **gifted and caring pastor, wise beyond his years.** Please be praying for our elders and the Hickinbotham's and their visit with us Sunday, July 2nd. Candidate page coming soon.

Introduction: Today, we are enormously blessed to have **4 accounts of the life and ministry** of Jesus: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These are obviously what we call "Gospels." The term gospel just means "good news" or "glad tidings," or "a favorable message."

Why do we have 4 of them? Each Gospel account stresses different themes associated with Jesus' life.

- **Matthew's focus is on Jesus as the King of the Jews**, the promised Messiah, the shepherd who would rule God's people.
- Mark's gospel focuses on **Jesus in power and suffering.**
- John's gospel emphasizes 7 signs that confirm that Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son.
- Luke's gospel stresses Jesus' role as **the glorified savior of the world!**

Who was Luke and why do we believe he wrote this Gospel?

- **First we note that Luke-Acts have the same recipient (Theophilus) and** are written with nearly the exact same structure: Chiastic pattern.
- **Who was Luke?** Col. 4:14: Paul refers to Luke as "our brother the physician" 2 Tim. 4:11: The travelling companion of Paul—the last who wouldn't leave Paul's side.
- **The Acts Connection:** The book Acts repeatedly uses the term "we" referring to himself, Paul, and Paul's travelling companions, but only *after Luke enters the story.*
- **Earliest Complete Copies:** Have Luke's Name in the Header
- **Early Church Fathers:** Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origin, Jerome—all affirm Luke's authorship, the most important of these authors being Clement of Rome who wrote within the first century.
- **A very early heretic—Marcion (AD 135) referred to the book as "Luke's Gospel."** So even the opponents of Christianity held this view.

Let's talk about the Similarities: The gospels are multiple, independent witnesses of Jesus' life, and as **such they are different exactly where you would expect them to be different, and they are similar right where you would expect them to be the same.** They are 4 distinct perspectives on Jesus' life and ministry—all of which illuminate a vital aspect of his person.

*If they were identical in all matters (style, stories and syntax) then 3 of them would be unnecessary. If they were identical in all these respects then we could charge them with collusion—*instead we embrace their differences of perspective on Christ's life.

By all accounts we have a biography/monograph of the life and ministry of Jesus from Nazareth—recorded by a meticulous researcher who interviewed living eyewitnesses, probably over a period of 20-30 years of research.

Transition: Let's jump in and make some observations about Luke's purpose in writing...

Scripture: [Luke 1:1-4](#)

Inasmuch as **many have undertaken** to compile a narrative of the things that have been **accomplished** among us ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Luke gives us the purpose of His Gospel...

There are 9 things I can spot in these four verses that Luke claims through careful and meticulous word choices—9 features of his Gospel.

1. It is a formal account. The word “**Inasmuch**” or “**Forasmuch**” is a classical Greek term that appears only here in the NT. Yet, it is repeatedly used in formal, classical Greek works such as the **historian Thucydides, the Roman historian Josephus, and the Jewish Philosopher Philo**. What this means is that Luke is not merely a collection of haphazard narratives, sayings, and mythical stories. **It was intended to be read for its historical character**, which is why he borrows this formal term “Inasmuch” rather than beginning his Gospel with an informal term “there was once.”

2. It is a cumulative account. “**as many have undertaken**” is a nod to the many attempts by his day to communicate the life and ministry of Jesus in written form. Historians will tell you that having the benefit of cumulative knowledge is very helpful in compiling historical accounts. There may have been attempts to write the story down that, for Luke, were inadequate (**not necessarily inaccurate**) or just good so far as they went, but they were largely incomplete. **Mark for example, has no birth Narrative, little formal teaching content, and no resurrection narrative—only resurrection prophecies**. Matthew has all that but the Greek syntax and grammar aren't quite at the literary level of Luke. Luke's gospel appears to be written for a person or people who are educated and influential Greeks. It would be the only Gospel out of the 4 that would have that particular appeal.

3. It is a historical account. “**to draft an orderly version/narrative.**” As mentioned in point one—the Gospel has a formal beginning you would expect to see in well-produced Greek historiographies in the ancient world—but here **Luke outright says that he is writing a narrative that is historical in nature—not mythical/legendary, not spiritual, not**

merely “**revelation**” from heaven—but an account which purports to interact with historical events. Because it is orderly, or sequential—it is more than a mere biography it is, as noted, a monograph.

- **Ancient Biography/Monograph:** Tacitus, Plutarch, Nepos, Philostratus, Appolianus of Tyana—allocation of space in the biography is weighted towards the final days or end of life stories, and very little of the biography is devoted to early-formative years.
- **Narrative prose:** Like these ancient Greek and Roman biographies, the NT Gospels are written in one continuous prose narrative not in the language of Greek fiction.

Accuracy: Luke demonstrates his accuracy in writing in multiple ways.

- Accurate about minute details—the names of **ports, cities, towns,** and peculiar **titles** of officials.
- His has **intimate and accurate knowledge of the** deities associated with cities...
- Geography: where towns and cities are located. Sir William Ramsey and more recently Collin Hemer were able to reconstruct a map of ancient asia based on his descriptions.
- In Acts 27 for example, he has first hand knowledge that the rocky, craggy shoals of Kora are able to wreck a ship run aground in the shallow flats there.
- In Luke ch. 8—Luke knows the name of **Herod’s household manager, Chuza.** Moreover, Luke knows Chuza’s wife’s name, Joanna, who was a supporter of Jesus along with several prominent women.

What this shows is that God has acted decisively in human history to fulfill his plan of salvation.

4. It is a prophetic account. “of the things that have been accomplished.” The word accomplished here is the **same word Jesus uses as recorded in Matthew’s gospel for “fulfilled” or to bring to completion.** Luke’s Gospel is punctuated by fulfillment observations. Jesus fulfills the Old Testament, and that fulfillment is for the salvation of all men.

Hebrews says: In the past, God spoke through our forefathers and the prophets—But now He has spoken in finality in the person of Jesus the Messiah. **All prophecy is summed up in him.**

And so, it is more than mere history. Josephus—claims to write ancient history. But not prophecy—or a historical fulfillment of ancient prophecy. So Luke’s aims are not less than other ancient historians—but they are more. He aims to show, through selective citations and stories, how Jesus fulfills the plan of the ages. How he brings the entirety of God’s plan to its intended and full completion.

5. It is a personal account. “among us.” Now, this phrase can only mean one thing—That Luke considers himself to be a member of the original Church community of Pentecost or

thereafter. Fulfilled among us is a personal designation to show us, the readers, that Luke has the credentials to report on all that has transpired. These narratives were fulfilled in our midst—in our time—within his life. The story of Jesus from Nazareth who preached salvation to the hillsides in Galilee and the synagogues of Judea—the teacher from Galilee who turned the world upside down and was crucified between two thieves and whose followers saw him bodily risen and alive again—and watched him ascend into heaven to be seated at the Father’s right hand of power—those events set into motion the Gospel traditions that have been commemorated to the church—and Luke says, it all happened among us. We are the people, we are the generation who encountered the powerful effects of Jesus fulfilling OT prophecy about the coming of the Messiah! Yay.

6. It is a second-hand account. “those eyewitnesses and ministers from the beginning (the apostles et. al.) who have faithfully served us by delivering the Word to us.” The phrase “delivered the Word” is term that means “delivered the tradition”—again, it is a technical term for passing tradition on in a community. The passing of that tradition was a controlled process—not an uncontrolled one.

This, Luke tells us—is the source of his direct reporting. For some time now, Luke has had access to original witnesses of Jesus’ life, death, resurrection and his glorious ascension. He considers himself a reporter on their experiences. We have on good evidence that Paul doesn’t die until about AD 68, other disciples are still living at his trial—and of the original 120 people who followed Jesus—undoubtedly Luke has had access to them for quite some time.

7. It is a well-researched account. “I thought it was a good idea, having followed astutely all things from the first...” Here, Luke clearly claims that he has been intently engaged in sapiential research. A scholar of the events he says, “since the first (*anōthen*) of all of them (*pasin*).” **Luke is a total fanboy of Jesus and has diligently collected his sayings, eyewitness stories, miracle reports, and interviewed those saved and healed by Jesus of Nazareth.** We don’t really know how far back Luke goes. But it’s clear that Luke claims to have been studying these events for decades. Short of being an eye-witness account, Luke’s Gospel is about as well researched as it comes.

8. It is a methodical account. He stated that it seemed like a good idea to me “to write a precise, methodical, sequential account.” Luke is the only Gospel author who claims to be writing a Monograph. It’s sequential in nature—the chronology is a chief concern—not because thematic biographies are less accurate materially—but because sequential issues are a secondary concern. For Luke they are not. He wanted to provide his reader with a systematic, yet selective historical account. The Greek here literally reads, “carefully, *with method*, to you...” This emphasizes the meticulous nature of the Gospel, and this claim becomes evident once we take into account the many fastidious historical details of this Gospel.

9. It is an apologetic account. Written “to you, most excellent *Theophilus*. That you may have precise and correct knowledge—concerning the things you have been taught.” Theophilus’ name means “Loved by God.” His title, “most excellent” Luke only uses this title for three people in his written correspondences: **(1) Theophilus, (2) Felix, (3) and Festus. Felix and Festus are governors, ranking officials. The title in Greek literature is almost always applied to a Roman official**—can be executive, judicial, or legislative official.

And it’s purpose is to reinforce the teaching he had received verbally by the Church. The written account is there to shore up his faith and substantiate it.

Luke wrote this gospel to be a an accurate historical narrative showing Jesus is the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, in order to help Theophilus shore up his newfound faith.

What’s the Theme, quickly, what is he trying to prove?

19:9-10

And Jesus said to him (Zacchaeus), “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

- **Christology—teaching about Jesus the Messiah.** Christ is the central focus of the book.
 - **Uniquely born Son of God. 3:22** “and a voice from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’” What we’ll see is that the beginning of the account alternates between John the Baptists’ birth and ministry and Jesus’ birth and ministry. Both are referred to by the people as prophets. Luke takes pains to tell us that Jesus isn’t just a prophet, but the uniquely born Son of the living
 - **Miracle-Working Prophet.** But he is a prophet—Jesus functions like an Old Testament end-times prophet. He also functions as a miracle-working prophet. When Jesus asks the Disciples “Who do men say that I am?” The answer: “Some say you are John the Baptist back from the dead. Some say you are Elijah, resurrected and performing miracles. Others say you must be a prophet—if not Elijah...” The crowd unanimously identified Jesus as a miracle-working prophet. Jesus identifies himself in Luke 4 as “a prophet” who is not accepted in his own home town.
 - **Messiah.** Jesus is not only a functioning end-times, miracle working prophet—he is also the long awaited King—the anointed King who has come to save Israel and gather God’s people from the four corners of the earth. Again in Luke 4, Jesus quotes a classic Jubilee passage—the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord has anointed me to preach the good news...” Today this is fulfilled. As Messiah King, Jesus has brought all previous prophetic activity to its intended completion.

- **Suffering Servant.** While we tend to identify this theme with Mark—the entirety of the book of Luke is showing Jesus' movement towards the cross. Everything he does and says is moving him inexorably towards his final and complete atonement for humanity.
- **Glorified Son.** The cross is the price paid for the depths of our sin. But his vindication, his glory is the resurrection. Luke's gospel, like no other, focuses on the subject of Christ's exaltation and glory.
- **Savior.** Luke like no other Gospel, asserts that Jesus is the Savior of the world—not just of the Jews. This is Good News for all mankind.

Which brings us to our second theme...

- **Soteriology—teaching about salvation.** The focus of this book is salvation of men and women who come by faith.
 - **People are lost in their sins.** The opening scenes of this Gospel portray the masses coming to be baptized to be cleansed and purified from their sins. How lost are they? Are we? The sponge on a stick soaked in vinegar. Wicked men crucify God incarnate—and the last visual from humanity—as he dies forgiving us—the last smell in his nostrils—is this filthy, nasty sea sponge soaked in vinegar stuck in his face—to mock him even as he is crying out to the Father for our forgiveness.
 - Jesus didn't come to be our Sunday school teacher, he came to be our savior because we are hopelessly, desperately lost in our wickedness.
 - **Outsiders become insiders through belief.** This is a stunning reversal.
 - The **social outcasts like lepers** and the unclean. Are welcomed in to the community.
 - The **poor and disadvantaged** are the honored guests at the Savior's feast.
 - **The women—who were discriminated against** are elevated in Jesus' teaching, his ministry and his miracles. They are raised to social significance in a way like never before.
 - **The Atonement of the cross.** It is a finished work for all mankind.
 - The power and promise **of the Holy Spirit.**

Which leads us to our final theme...

- **Pneumatology—teaching about the Holy Spirit.** The Spirit alive in us makes all things possible.
 - **He makes it possible for us to encounter the living God** as our personal heavenly father.
 - **He makes it possible for us to experience the Christian faith not merely** as a doctrinal system of belief. A moral code or even a method of salvation. But the Spirit is God's own transforming presence—who makes a difference. Who is our promise and is our inheritance.

Series: The Seeker: A Study Through Luke

Part 1: Relentless Seeker of Souls

Jeff Kennedy / June 18, 2017

In the same way that the Gospel is pushing towards the cross and Jesus' glory, Jesus himself is pushing us, leading us inevitably and inescapably to the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit. The promise of the Father for all who believe—be they Jew, Gentile, rich or poor, slave or free, elitists or dregs of humanity. Jesus pouring out his precious Holy Spirit on the very people who have offended God and whose lives are an affront to his holiness.