

THE STORY OF THE SON OF MAN
LUKE 1:1-4

Everyone likes a good story:

- ✓ Perhaps this evening you will turn to the guide on your TV and scroll for a good movie to watch.
- ✓ Maybe this week you will finish that blockbuster novel you've been reading; it's not really great literature, but it's a fun and entertaining story.
- ✓ If you have small children in your home, you will hear multiple times this week: "read me a story...tell me a story...tell me the story about when I was born..."
- ✓ If you visit an elderly friend or parent you will likely ask them, "can you tell me about the time...?"

We like stories. It's engrained in us by our creator: "Story is a great gift from a great storytelling God." [Mike Cosper] Of all the stories that God has told, the greatest story is the story of Christ. You know the story; you have heard it every Christmas and Easter, and perhaps you have read the Bible enough times that you feel familiar with Jesus' biography. Over the next months (years), we are going to look at His story again, told by the historian, Luke. No matter how familiar we are with the story, we need this story.

We need this story because the world is opposed to us. Our flesh is opposed to us. And Satan is opposed to us. George Whitefield observed the fundamental way Satan works against us: "...this is the policy of the tempter, to make you have low and dishonorable thoughts of the blessed Jesus; and so by degrees he works upon your minds so that you are careless and indifferent about Christ." Satan wants us to forget Christ; God wants us to be preoccupied with Christ, because He is our only hope in this world. So today we begin a series on the Gospel of Luke — the Story of the Son of Man; as we look at the opening verses, we will find...

LUKE TELLS THE STORY OF CHRIST SO THAT WE WILL BE CONFIDENT IN CHRIST AT ALL TIMES.

Luke painstakingly researched Christ's life to supplement what was already known about Christ, so that his readers would not only know the story of Christ, but that they would be assured of its validity and confident in the person of Christ and His work for them — particularly His work as the Son of Man. This morning, as we examine the prologue of the book, let's observe **four aspects** of the unique telling of Christ's life by Luke:

1. The **SOURCES** of the Story (vv. 1-2)
2. The **AUTHOR** of the Story (v. 3a)
3. The **CONTENT** of the Story (v. 3b)
 - ✓ The unique emphasis on Christ in the story (Son of Man)
 - ✓ The unique emphases of the story
 - ✓ The reader(s) of the story
4. The **PURPOSE(S)** of the Story (v. 4)
 - ✓ To know the story
 - ✓ To be confident in the story

1. The SOURCES of the Story (vv. 1-2)

- In telling the story of Jesus, the first thing that Luke does is to acknowledge that he is not the first one to tell the story — *many have undertaken to compile an account...*
 - ✓ The word **account** refers to a “narrative” — a story — but not a “short story,” or a brief account; it generally refers to a lengthy and detail recounting of a full story (“biography,” not blog length).
 - ✓ Certainly, he is referring to at least the gospel of Matthew, which was likely written around 50 AD.
 - ✓ He may also have had access to Mark’s gospel which may have been written prior to Luke’s, or around the same time. There may have also been some accounts that were written by secular historians that he was able to research.
 - ✓ The word **account** was also used at times for oral stories (which were common in the day); that might also be inferred by the phrase **handed down** (v. 2) — prior to printed texts, stories were primarily taught orally. Given the details that he provides in sections like chs. 1-2, it seems very likely that he also used those oral accounts and even personal interviews in his research.
 - ✓ And while Luke is writing a new account, he is not diminishing the previous authors; he is going to add a unique perspective to the life of Christ — that’s why he is writing (vv. 3-4).
- Notice also the objective of the previous writings (v. 1b) —
 - ✓ The accounts were about **the things accomplished among us**. The word **accomplished** is a compound from the word that is often translated “fulfilled” and that seems to be the sense here: God has accomplished His plan through the person of Christ — e.g., 9:31; 21:24; 22:16.
 - ✓ God made a promise to Abraham to make a nation (Israel) through Him; this is that story.
 - ✓ In that sense, this gospel is the story of Jesus — AND it is the story of God as He fulfilled His will...
 - ✓ But the fulfillment is also **among us** — referring to a group of people who were not present at the time of Christ; they were not the eyewitnesses (v. 2), but some who came later (including us).
 - ✓ Luke also observes that these first writers were not only **eyewitnesses** of Christ, but they were also **servants** of the **word** — they were attendants to the word (Christ’s story & the gospel, 8:11-13, 15). They had a responsibility to continue to tell the story of Jesus.
 - ✓ That responsibility is also indicated in the phrase **handed down to us** — it is a giving of a gift that carries a responsibility with it — if a parent brings a child into the family business and gives him a title, he is also giving him a responsibility — “take care of this.” That is what Luke was doing...
 - ✓ Those who know the gospel story and Christ have a responsibility to continue to tell it (which is an evangelistic admonition to us as well — to know the story and continue to teach it).
- This responsibility to tell Jesus’ story is what also compels Luke to write his account: **inasmuch** (v. 1)... **it seemed fitting** (v. 3)...He is not attempting to supplant the previous writers, but he is carrying out the responsibility to perpetuate the story of Christ. Just who is this Luke who is writing?

2. The **AUTHOR** of the Story (v. 3a)

- When Luke says, *it seemed fitting to me*, it might not be clear who “me” is, since he isn’t named in book.
 - ✓ We do know that the writer of Luke also wrote the book of Acts (in addition to both mentioning Theophilus, Acts 1:1), the styles and vocabulary of the two books are the same.
 - ✓ While Luke is only named 3x in the NT (Col. 4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Tim. 4:11), he was a traveling companion of Paul on his second and third journeys and even both imprisonments in Rome.
 - ✓ Key: all the other companions of Paul on his journeys are referred to in Acts in the 3rd person (“he/him”) except Titus and no one thinks that Titus wrote this book.
 - ✓ History also affirms Luke’s authorship. The early church attested to Luke’s authorship of the gospel: Justin Martyr (150 A.D.), and Irenaeus (180 A.D.) and two other writings (160 & 195 A.D.) affirm Luke as the writer — and that was never seriously disputed.
 - ✓ “There is never any suggestion of a rival candidate for the honour of writing the Gospel.” [Marshall]
- Who was Luke?
 - ✓ We have almost no details from Scripture about his life, but we do know some from history:
 - Irenaeus tells us Luke was from Antioch in Syria and was with Paul until Paul’s martyrdom (2 Tim. 4:6, 11). Luke was unmarried and childless and died in Boeotia, Greece at age 84 “full of the Holy Spirit.” Jerome suggested that his bones were later moved to Constantinople.
 - It’s possible he was a converted Jew, but more likely that he was a *Gentile* convert:
 - ... His knowledge of the Greek language is particularly skilled, and he suggests that Hebrew is not his primary language (it is “their language,” Acts 1:19).
 - ... Paul refers to several Jewish co-laborers in Col. 4:10-11 and then mentions Luke as an apparent Gentile (non-Jew) in v. 14.
 - ... That he is a Gentile is significant because it affirms that when the gospel of Christ is fulfilled **among us** (v. 1), that also includes Gentiles (which will become a theme in this gospel).
 - We don’t know when or how he came to faith in Christ, though maybe through the ministry in his hometown of Antioch (Acts 11:19-21).
 - His close relationship with Paul tells us two significant things about him:
 - ... He was the “beloved physician” (Col. 4:14; if Paul loved him, he was godly)
 - ... And he was with Paul in his final imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:11) — demonstrating great loyalty in the middle of opposition (and potential persecution).
 - ✓ He was also a medical doctor; though doctors did not have exalted positions, he was well-educated.
 - ✓ Because Luke was with Paul in Jerusalem twice, he also had opportunity to interview many of the participants in the gospel story — the apostles (like Peter and Matthew), Mary, the mother of Jesus, and James, the half-brother of Jesus and pastor of the Jerusalem church, and Mark the gospel writer.

3. The CONTENT of the Story (v. 3b)

- Luke says that as he compiled the story of Christ, he *investigated everything carefully* —
 - ✓ He meticulously (*carefully*) followed the trail of the writings and the oral interviews so that he was able to get all the details correct. He was painstakingly and exactly careful in his work.
 - ✓ And he covers *everything* in Christ's life that was of significance (e.g., Jn. 21:25 tells us that all the books in the world could not contain the account of all Christ did). Luke was thorough in research.
 - ✓ And then he compiled it in *consecutive order* — that suggests a chronological sequencing and in general that's right (the story starts with Christ's prophecy and birth [*from the beginning*] and ends with his death, resurrection, and ascension). But it also means that he arranges it to tell the story in a particular way; he arranges the story with a unique emphasis on GEOGRAPHY:
 - The introduction and preparation of Jesus for ministry (1:1–4:13) — primarily Nazareth
 - The Galilean ministry of Jesus (4:14–9:50)
 - Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (9:51–19:44)
 - Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem as the crucified and resurrected Son of Man (19:45–24:53)
 - ✓ He also arranges the story theologically to demonstrate the progress of salvation, among others.
 - ✓ What are some of the unique emphases of Luke's gospel?

• The unique emphasis on CHRIST in the story

- ✓ The title *Son of Man* is used 25-26x in this gospel.
 - The emphasis on this term is the humanity of Christ — this really is God, *in the flesh*. In the same way that "Son of David" affirms Christ as the Messianic King, "Son of Man" affirms Christ as a genuine man. He is the culmination of manhood.
 - But He is no ordinary man — He is the One to whom the Ancient of Days entrusts the authority and kingship of the nations (not just Israel, Dan. 7:13-14).
 - "Here, the royal and glorious Son of Man comes in humility and servitude, but he does so also knowing the day will come when his dominion will be exercised over all the earth (Matt. 26:64). So, both as the Son of Man who serves and suffers and as the Son of Man who rules and reigns, Jesus, the Son of Man, must have come to be our Savior as a man." [Ware, 106-7.]
- ✓ As the Son of Man —
 - Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed and promised King of Israel (Dan. 7)
 - Christ is fully man, yet also from Heaven (Jn. 3:13). He is God, incarnate.
 - Christ is identified with dependent humanity (9:58); He understands the difficulties of this earth because He experiences the limitations of this human body.
 - He is also the Redeemer and Savior — on a mission to save (19:10).
 - He is the eternally and universally sovereign Lord (21:27).
 - The Son of Man signifies preeminently the final judgment of Jesus Christ (21:36).
- ✓ Luke's account is not just about "Jesus" but on the pre-eminent God-Man, the Son of Man.

• Other unique emphases of the story

- ✓ Unsurprisingly, *salvation* is a key emphasis in the book
 - Variations of the word “salvation” are used 25x in the book.
 - Like the other gospels, a significant portion of the book is spent on the passion week.
 - There are also foreshadowings of Jesus’ sufferings (2:35; 5:35; 9:22; 13:33). Jesus is clearly moving toward the cross (e.g., 22:19–20).
 - Perhaps the key verse is 19:10 (cf. Mk. 10:45) — “The entire Gospel of Luke pictures Jesus as reaching out to the lost in forgiveness. We see this exemplified in the beautiful story of the sinful woman (7:36–50). In the well-known parables in Luke 15, Jesus, in contrast with the attitude of the Pharisees, identifies himself with the heavenly Father in rejoicing over the return of those who are lost.” [Liefeld]
 - Mankind is lost, and the Son of Man has come as Savior from sin. That’s your hope and mine!
- ✓ Luke has the longest birth narrative of the gospel writers (including the only account John the Baptist’s birth); that also emphasizes the theme of *Christ’s humanity* as the Son of Man. He really is!
- ✓ Luke is *biographical*; he gives attention to people by providing more details than other gospel writers about individuals: Zacharias, the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the repentant tax gatherer, Zaccheus, and the two disciples on the Emmaus road. He also tells the story of numerous women (e.g., Elizabeth, Mary, Anna, Mary & Martha) and children (John B’s and Jesus’ childhoods).
- ✓ Luke exalts Christ as the Son of Man, but also portrays Him as *compassionate* to the neediest people:
 - Christ humbles himself in his interactions with many different people: the disciples (6:20-23), a sinful woman (7:36-50), Mary Magdalene (8:2) the Samaritans (10:25-37), tax collectors and sinners (15:1ff) Lepers (17:11-19), and the thief on the cross (23:39-43).
 - Luke emphasizes the role of women in Christ’s ministry such that some have called it “The Gospel of Womanhood” (Elizabeth and Mary in chs. 1-2; cf. also 7:12-15, 37-50; 8:2-3; 10:38-42; 23:27-31). And remember that women were not well-regarded in first century Israel.
 - Jesus not only was willing to interact with the lowest of humanity, but He was drawn to them *because of their neediness*. He came to uphold and help them (with the gospel supremely).
 - It is a reminder that He doesn’t save us on the basis of our strength, but because we need Him. If you are broken and weary, you are just the kind of person He came to save and help.
- ✓ Luke teaches theology through *songs and hymns* — he has at least five (1:46-55; 1:68-79; 2:14; 2:29-32; 19:36-38). And all these songs also remind us that the story of Christ is a story of joy. When the world beats you up, sing the songs of Christ to remind you of your joy in Him. “There can be no doubt that the Christianity Luke knew was a wonderfully joyful affair.” [Carson & Moo]
- ✓ The Holy Spirit is prominent in Luke — at least 16 references (cf. 1:15, 35; 3:22; 4:1, 18; 10:21). More references than Matthew and Mark combined. The Spirit that guided Christ guides us in the same way (4:1ff). Luke is the biography of Christ — and of the complete triune God.

- ✓ Luke emphasizes prayer both in the parables (11:5-8; 18:1-8; 18:9-14) and in examples (9:28-29; 11:1-4; 22:31-32; 22:39-46). Of the nine prayers of Jesus in this book, seven are unique to Luke.
- ✓ The gospels contain about 35 specific miracles; Luke contains 20 miracles, and seven of those are unique to his account (5:1-11; 7:11-17; 11:14; 13:10-17; 14:1-4; 17:11-19; 22:49-51). He uses miracles to illustrate the divine nature and supremacy of the Son of Man.
- ✓ Luke has about six unique details about the death and resurrection of Christ, including the appearances to Clopas and Peter.

- The reader(s) of the story

- ✓ The gospel of Luke and Acts were both written for **Theophilus**. We don't know who he was.
 - Some have suggested that because the name means "beloved of God," that Luke is writing in general to all those who love God. However, the adjective **most excellent** is used in the NT only for governors and men in high political position. So, it is best to see him as a real person.
 - It is possible that Theophilus was Luke's patron, who oversaw the cost of researching and writing the book. While we don't know that he is a believer, it seems most likely he was.
 - Theophilus almost certainly was a Gentile —
 - ... Luke used a Greco-Roman style of writing in his preface (1:1-4).
 - ... He mostly avoids Aramaic words such as "Rabbi" (Mark 9:5) and "Abba" (Mark 14:36); those would not have been clear to non-Jews.
 - ... He writes about prophecy and eschatology, but he minimizes eschatology (e.g., his account of the Olivet Discourse [ch. 21] is significantly shorter than Matthew). He does that because the Gentiles would not have been as interested in the ultimate salvation of Israel.
 - ... He also regularly connects events in Christ's story to historical events in Rome (e.g., 1:5; 2:1; 3:1). He seems to be a Gentile trying to acclimate Gentile readers to the Jewish story.
 - ... Luke repeatedly emphasized salvation of non-Jews; e.g. —
 - The message of the angels is for all men (2:14)
 - Simeon foretells that Jesus will be a light to the Gentiles (2:32)
 - All flesh shall see the salvation of God (3:6 [John the Baptist])
 - The vineyard of God will be given to "others" (incl. Gentiles, 20:16)
 - The prophetic plan will include the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles (21:24)
 - The testimony of Christ's salvation was to be proclaimed to all the nations (24:47)
 - Luke's goal "is to convey these truths to Gentile readers and to awaken and deepen their faith in Jesus as the God-sent Saviour for all mankind." [Hiebert]
 - "...He is the perfect, ideal Man, the true Representative of the whole human race." [Luck]
- ✓ But the book is not just written for this one man — a larger audience is in mind — when the account of Christ was **handed down to us** Luke certainly means more than only he and Theophilus.

- The Gospel of Matthew is written for Jews; that Mark and Luke are written for Gentile audiences (Mark to Rome and Luke to Greece) is hopeful for us — the gospel of Christ includes us, too!
- The way of salvation is narrow (salvation is only by believing in Christ for salvation), but the offer of salvation is broad — it is for all people. And the benefits and joys that come through salvation are also for all people (which is hopeful while we live in this broken world).

4. The **PURPOSE(S)** of the Story (v. 4)

- One writer has identified about a dozen possible purposes for which Luke wrote:

- ✓ Evangelism
- ✓ Confirmation of the factual basis for faith
- ✓ Personal assurance
- ✓ Narration of history
- ✓ An apologetic
- ✓ Solution of a theological problem
- ✓ Conciliation
- ✓ Defense against heresy
- ✓ Instruction
- ✓ Dealing with social problems
- ✓ But Luke is actually quite clear about why he wrote (v. 4). And it is quite simple:

- **To know the story**

- ✓ John wrote “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (Jn. 20:31). Luke’s reason is similar: **so that you may know...**
 - They have **been taught** truths about Christ and the gospel story — Luke wants them to know all that there is to know about what they have been taught.
 - There is a set of facts about the life and ministry of Jesus that is essential. Do you know? Do you comprehend? He has written it **in orderly sequence** [Legacy] — do we know the real story?
 - After the Triumphal entry, some Gentiles approached Philip and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus” (Jn. 12:21). Because of that request, one preacher from a generation put a sign on his pulpit: “Let them see Jesus.”
 - Our task over the coming years is to accurately unfold this story so *you know* Jesus’ story.
 - We want you to see His glory, His compassion, His salvation, His hope.

- **To be confident in the story**

- ✓ There is another related purpose of the story: to know **the exact truth** of Jesus.
 - Luke might mean “the exact details and precise truth about all the accounts of Jesus.”
 - But the word is a legal/financial term that is used for a guarantee or security. So it also has the sense, “to know for certain.” It is a word of confidence: “I want you to know and be confident.”

- Theophilus might have asked Luke, “Is Christ and salvation what I believed it to be? Is it genuine? Is it really from God?” Because of suffering persecution, because promises have not yet been fulfilled, because Israel has not yet been saved, because some have left the faith, how can we be sure that Christ is really the Savior? Why should we believe that He really is worth following? Why should we be confident and sure in Christ?
- This book is the answer. Christ is our sure salvation.
- Even in *this* world, we can be confident in Him.

BENEDICTION: 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17