

1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, 3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; 4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

We're going to look at just 4 verses this morning in what will be our introduction to the gospel account of Luke.

We have spent about 3 months this summer looking at the idea of faith. What does the bible mean when it uses the word faith. And I hope and have prayed *that* topical study was helpful.

We all suffer from a common sickness. Sin. And that sickness precludes us ever standing in God's presence, because He will not tolerate the filth of rebellion against Him to be in His presence.

Sin is universal and it is deadly. The soul that sinneth, it shall die, said Ezekiel. Actually that statement was the voice of God through His servant, Ezekiel.

We're all born into it, and every one of us will die an eternal seperation from God because of it, unless . . . unless we believe in, have faith in the completed work of Jesus to eradicate and forgive our individual responsibility of sin before God.

We studied faith because without faith, it is impossible to please God. Without faith we can only expect judgement. But by faith, we can stand before God with a righteousness not our own, the very righteousness of the sinless life of Jesus is by faith, imputed to us.

And this book of Luke is about that Jesus. Freedom from the bondage of my sin and acceptance and righteousness and pleasure with God are all tied to one persons' sinless life. Jesus. By faith, I am in Jesus, and He is in me. How did that come about?

Luke wrote that good news down for us in this book. He not only wrote it down, he wrote a second book about what happened as the church was formed around the appointed apostles of this Jesus, and how they spread the message of repentance by faith and forgiveness of sins throughout the then known world. The book of the Acts of the apostles.

We might say, Luke, the gospel of Luke is about the acts of Jesus, and the other book is a compilation of the subsequent acts of the apostles as that same Jesus works through them by His Holy Spirit to begin the church and spread it throughout the world.

The acts of Jesus in the world, His resurrection from the dead and ascension into glory, and then the subsequent acts of the Holy Spirit spreading the message of the good news of Jesus throughout the whole earth.

That's a LOT to write about!

It's interesting to note that there is a faction of people who want to get rid of Paul because his writing is too crystal clear against agenda's that they want to live with. So the claim is made that Paul hi-jacked christianity and changed it with his many writings and took it in a different direction.

It's also interesting to note that of the three authors who actually wrote a full 70% of the words that comprise the new testament; Luke, John, and Paul, Paul is in second place with 23% of the

words of the new testament, and John is third with 20%. Luke wrote a full 27% of all of the words we call the New Testament.

So, if we study all of Luke's writings we will have exposted over one fourth of the New Testament. That's a big goal. We shall see.

In the news this week: A rather despicable character is on trial for the damage and pain he is causing by broadcasting in a program I've never heard of before called **Info Wars** that the slaughter of the children at Sandy Hook Elementary School were not slaughtered along with 7 adults.

He claims publicly that it never happened. It's all a hoax, perpetrated by our government because they want to come and take your guns away. It's all a secret conspiracy, along with about a gajillion other secret conspiracies. Wack-o-phile stuff. The shooter in Las Vegas last October was a government operative. Same conspiracy theory.

Why do I bring that up? Because it illustrates a frightening capacity that human beings have that allows them to declare known reality as non reality, and falsehood as truth.

It's like what Mr Ahmadinejad did in 2005 when he was the president in Iran and declared the murder of 6 million jews a hoax and a conspiracy. That didn't happen either. It's just a myth, he said.

And, sadly, we are hearing story after story, some more true than others, that our sitting president is suffering from this same ailment. Humans have the ability to dismiss massive evidence and believe the opposite.

At some point, there is no black and white truth and falsehood.

Everything is suspect. All truth is degraded. It's all just relative and may or may not actually be the case.

This phenomenon, like others we have spoken of very recently, is a scheme of Satan. Satan works to muddy the black and white clearness of truth so that even God's revealed truth in this book is called into question. Is it really true? Did it really happen?

Satan is at work in this world to make every man state with the derision of Pilate to Jesus: What is truth? Pilate looked at Jesus in derision as one who is knowing on one who is deceived, and says, you poor idiot, haven't you heard, nothing is true. Everything is relative. Nothing can be proven to be crystal clear black and white truth. What is truth?

Good job Satan. Everything's muddy and anyone can interpret anything to mean anything and it all means nothing. Well done. Well done if you want men born in sin to continue on their hellish path to perdition. Wipe out truth.

And our generation is traveling headlong into the muddy pit of non-truth, no truth, as quickly as it can possibly go. Why?

Well, for one thing, a man named Luke witnessed with his eyes and investigated what other reliable men witnessed and wrote it down for all time. It is indeed, as the Charlton Heston 1965 movie title says; The Greatest Story Ever Told.

The words of this book that chronicle the life and work of Jesus are absolutely, black and white, truth. The book is inspired by God. That means that it's author, Luke, was not just writing an account for his friend Theophilus, God was using Luke to write the very word of God to us.

The witnesses are perfectly reliable, believable, ordinary people. And what they witnessed and have reliably relayed to all generations is the story of God with us. Of death, and then resurrection from the dead, of one Jesus.

It's a story that puts every son of Adam on notice, that God, through His Son, Jesus, came and died for your sin, my sin, rose from the dead, and lives today at the right hand of His Father, while His Holy Spirit gathers a people for His name out of every nation.

And it is undeniably believable. To read this account and disbelieve is a purposeful act to reject truth and embrace non-truth, and men do that all the time, because they love their sin and don't want to leave the sin they love behind.

At the end of vs. 4, of this prologue, Luke says something remarkable. It puts to rest forever Satan's scheme to muddy the waters of truth. To make truth seem an impossible thing in a world of relativisms.

4. so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught

Luke's claim, though he never names himself is that there is such a thing as exact truth. He's writing this down so that the exact truth about Jesus can be known. This account contains not just truth, but truth with precision.

There has been an endless array of authors in modern times who have read between the lines of the new testament accounts in order to find and reveal the "real" Jesus. Ad nauseum, ad infinitum. The real Jesus. Name one.

That's right, name one of those countless multitude of modern authors who has read between the lines of the gospel accounts and found for us who the real Jesus actually is. Anybody?

Exactly. And yet, after 2,000 years, you have the account of an unnamed (because of his own humility) author who by the inspiration of God makes a very bold claim. This account is not just the truth, it is the exact truth.

This is the black and white crystal clear truth, once for all delivered to the saints.

But there is a problem. If you believe this man's account, you will need to repent of your rebellion against God and embrace Jesus as *despotos*. Lord. If this is the exact truth, you must leave your old slavery to the sin you love behind, and embrace a new slavery to one Jesus of Nazareth, risen from the dead, King of kings and Lord of lord's.

The prologue that we're considering this morning is introducing us to Luke's account and it is written in a way that only the most elevated of greek authors would write. Classical greek introduction equal to the best of the greek philosophers and writers. Classical greek.

But after this prologue, the account is written in common greek. Luke is hinting to us that he can write on a par with the most elevated, educated, sophisticated and learned men of Greek culture. But his story is for everyman, so after the prologue, he writes in the common language.

Like any classicist, Luke tells us in this prologue that he has as his sources, other writings of the account of Jesus, as well as eyewitnesses who were there from the beginning, of everything

that has happened. He has investigated carefully, as any historian would do, both written and oral evidence and accounts.

His sources are impeccable. And he has carefully studied everything. Luke is a historian and theologian of classical greek precision. He is intelligent and articulate enough to speak to the most elevated hearer.

Vs. 1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,

Luke begins his gospel with his intent. Not to re-do or undo what has already been written. 60 % of Mark is found again in Luke. He would have used Matthew and Mark's gospel's as source material.

He intimates that many have written. That was true and those accounts are lost to us. Luke would have had some bizarre material as well as some accurate material that we don't have. He uses only what is eye-witness account.

When Luke wrote sometime in the mid 60's, 30+ years after Jesus death and resurrection, there would have still been first person accounts available of people still living that Jesus had healed.

His accounts of Zacharias and Elizabeth and Mary may have been from interviews of them, still alive.

And Luke is a physician and brings his expertise in healing to bear on accounts of the great physician. He has that unique point of view.

But unlike the other gospel writers, who were direct in their purpose to record the history of Jesus, Luke has a broader scope.

He states that his purpose is to compile an account of *the things accomplished among us*. What does that mean.

We have to ask, who is the us, and then what has been accomplished. I think Luke knew he would not quit writing at the ascension of Jesus, but at the present hour in the church of God. The us is the elect of God, the called out ones.

And the things accomplished is not finished when Jesus ascends into heaven. The Holy Spirit descends and the church is born, and the Spirit is accomplishing things to the very day that Luke puts his pen down at the end of Acts.

It's popular today to name groups Acts 29. And the idea is that the Spirit of God is still writing the books of Acts today. Things are still being miraculously accomplished in the church today, just as they were in the 1st century.

Luke doesn't name himself, but if you're a sleuth, you can add up all of the first person references to himself in Acts. At the second missionary journey of Paul, suddenly the narrative becomes 1st person. We did this. We went here. We, us, 1st person, because Luke is living the adventure with Paul.

In Colossians, we learn by Paul's hand that Luke is the beloved physician. He was skilled at healing, and Paul needed a lot of attention. God provided Luke.

At the very end of Paul's life, he says that everyone has abandoned him, except Luke. Luke is the beloved friend, physician, and fellow worker with Paul, and he doesn't leave when the persecution goes into high gear. He sticks with Paul to the end.

The church from the 1st century forward has never questioned the authorship of these 2 accounts. Never once. Even heretics in the 1st century mention Luke as the author.

Luke is not an apostle. But he is the close associate of Paul who was an apostle, like Mark is the close associate of Peter. Two of our gospel accounts were written by men who walked with apostles. The other 2 are written by apostles.

2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,

Luke is not an apostle, but his sources are direct. His information is given to him by eyewitnesses and in some cases recorded for him by eyewitnesses and servants of the Word.

He says his sources are eyewitnesses and servants of who? The Word.

The reference of Jesus as the living Word of God, the very revelation of God, must have already been in common use here, perhaps 30 years before John popularized the use for us in his gospel. servants of the Word. Servants of Jesus. This material is about Jesus. And Jesus was the living walking manifestation of the revelation of God.

Lukes material sources are impeccable. People who were with Jesus and served Jesus from the beginning. Luke and Mark were both in Rome at the same time as the end closed in on both Peter and Paul. They must have known each other.

Luke may have been silent out of humility, but we can imagine him with Paul when Paul says to the Corinthians;

23 Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

30 If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, 33 and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands.

We read that and we marvel at the tenacity and toughness of a man who has lived through all of that. But what about Dr. Luke? Humble, faithful, wonderful friend and companion to Paul. Being a companion with Paul was not for wimps. Not for the faint of heart. We read what Paul wrote and we think, wow, Luke must have been quite the man. Luke was with him through most of that.

They traversed thousands of miles, literally, on foot, in every kind of weather. That was just ordinary and not even mentioned in Paul's account above. Wow. And you write in classical Greek like the intelligencia too? What an amazing person Dr. Luke truly was.

3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; 4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

Consecutive order. Luke's combined accounts cover over 60 years. From before John the Baptist, to Acts 28. A far more comprehensive account than the others had attempted.

When Luke begins his account, Israel is operating just as it had for centuries, the priests in the temple doing their priestly service just as it had been done for centuries. Israel undisturbed. Christianity never once even thought of. Business as usual Israel.

Luke's 2 books are about us. We are in direct historical connection to the word *us* in vs. 1 when he says; *an account of the things accomplished among us,*

Luke brings Theophilus up to date current to mid '60's 1st century AD. But the Spirit of Jesus has never stopped during the span from then to now, accomplishing miracles among us. *things accomplished among us,* has never stopped. He is still at work in His church this morning.

And Luke says what he is writing is precise. This isn't the muddy truth. The leaky truth. The compromised truth. What we have in our very hands this morning, 2000 plus years later, because of the transmission of the word of God from then until today, is exactly what Luke said he was supplying.

4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. It was the precise, exact truth then, and it still is today. And Jesus is still accomplishing miracles among us.

Today. This very morning, we pray.

Luke had a unique perspective. Luke is classic greek. We think he may have lived in Antioch. May have been converted in that first satellite church after Jerusalem that was at Antioch.

There he joins Paul on the 2nd missionary journey. He is a gentile, not a jew like the other gospel authors. And he is writing in classic greek style to someone named Theophilus.

The name Theophilus is made up of greek words that mean loved of God. So a very gentile author writing to another greek person, is remarkable in itself.

What do greeks have to do with Jews and Israel? Great question. And we'll see that Luke's account begins with Jews performing judaism, business as usual, no greeks involved and takes us through the sea-change of Jesus of Nazareth, the messiah of Israel, rejected and crucified by Israel, risen from the dead.

He ascends into heaven and His apostles begin preaching Jesus, Messiah, forgiver of sins. A new religion born right in the midst of dying Israel and judaism.

Then through persecution, the church is dispersed, Peter takes christianity to the gentiles, Paul is set apart for God on the damascus road, and ultimately the church spreads from Israel throughout the entire gentile world until it reaches the capitol of the whole civilized world in Rome.

Luke's purpose is to explain this phenomenon, begun in Israel, unchanged for centuries, Jesus the Messiah, rejected by jews and through the Spirit, his church covers the known world of gentiles. The greatest story ever told. And Luke is a master story teller.

So then we have Luke the educated greek classic writer, Luke the rough and tumble adventurer with Paul, Luke the beloved physician, fellow worker and companion to Paul, Luke the theologian, and one final note.

Luke is an evangelist. He doesn't write these things as a dry historic scholarly account. Luke writes the story of these events in order to persuade you to be a christian.

Luke wants you to believe, and in believing to be saved. He says, here are the historical facts, the evidence supplied by eye witnesses, the facts as seen and lived by reasonable witnesses, thousands of them, that Jesus came and turned the world we live in, upside down.

The evidence is astonishing, the accounts of the eye witnesses are many and reliable, what are you going to do with it?