

WRITTEN FOR GOD'S FRIENDS

LUKE 1:1-4

What does it take for a person to be considered a *friend*?

Desire to spend time together.

"A friend is one who knows all about you and likes you anyway!"

Implies confidence in one another, and in what the other one says.

What does it take for a person to be considered *God's friend*?

Abraham is called God's friend (2 Chr. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; Jas. 2:23)

Our Lord calls all His followers His friends in Jn. 15

Another is specifically called a "friend of God". => Luke 1:1-4, in fact that's his name.

Luke wrote to the one called: "*God's friend*."

We, God's friends, are going to spend some time listening to the stories of Jesus, so that we can become better acquainted with Him and with His Son.

THE AUTHOR

We usually think of Paul as the major writer of the New Testament.

Main writer of N.T., responsible for a fourth, is Luke.

From Luke we learn about our roots, where we have come from and why.

We learn how God wants us to live today, and where we are headed tomorrow.

This promises to be a fascinating study,

of history, as we look at our Lord's life and the foundation of the church,

of theology, as we seek to learn more about who Jesus is, and who we are, as the people of God.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Paul has completed his missionary journeys (48-57 a.d.).

The gospel has spread throughout the Roman world.

Those who trust Christ have been persecuted by Jews and Romans.

PURPOSE AND THEME

Those suffering for their faith need to understand the basis for their faith to be able to stand firm in the midst of affliction.

Luke is interested in events leading to the foundation of the church.

The purpose of this gospel is *TO CONFIRM* what Theophilus, and later readers, have been taught.

He writes *TO DOCUMENT* what they have been told.

Acts is called a transitional book.

– the transition from God's program for Israel to the formation of a new people the church.

That transition does not begin in Acts.

No reason is given in Acts to explain *why* God began a new program.

Luke wrote *the gospel* to describe this initial phase of the transition.

As he describes the transition from the arrival of Messiah through His rejection, death and resurrection, **Luke demonstrates *why* a new program was necessary.**

Luke writes the members of this new body, whom God has drawn from all the nations *TO EXPLAIN THEIR ROOTS*.

**The gospel of *Luke* explains WHY the church was established.
Acts explains HOW the church was established.**

Distinctive characteristics of Luke's gospel correspond to his distinct purpose:

1. Evidence that Jesus is the "Son of man", that is, Messiah. Dan. 7:13

- Doesn't emphasize His humanity– it's Messianic.
- It emphasizes His right to rule.
 - * It takes us back to the creation.
 - * Man was given dominion.
 Christ was the ideal man. He fulfills God's purpose for humanity.
- Luke presents the story of the coming of the Messiah ("Son of man")
 - * He came
 - * His coming was authenticated by prophecy and by signs'
 - * He was rejected and crucified
 - * Therefore, this generation is under God's judgment.

2. Hearing is the primary distinctive of those who believe.

Biblical concept of "hearing": HEARING produces DOING.

3. The religious leaders don't want to hear the truth.

They're not seeking truth.

They're not seeking the good of the people.

They're seeking to protect their privileges.

They dedicate themselves to the pursuit of more power, more money, more possessions, and more prestige for themselves (Mic. 3:1-5)

The religious leaders don't want to *hear* the truth.

Acts 7:57 – Visual illustration of their attitude.

4. People who are less than full citizens of society hear Him with enthusiasm.

Those interested in hearing truth are **the outcasts of society–2nd class citizens:**

Tax collectors, *WOMEN*, *PUBLICANS*, *SAMARITANS*, children, sick, demon possessed, *GENTILES* = *PAGANS*, lepers, blind, paralitics, the poor, the masses, etc.

People that should have been waiting anxiously for Messiah, the preferred ones God has blessed, aren't interested in following Him.

The gospel is for all– not just the religious and powerful. mankind.

Nevertheless, not all *will* be saved– all *can* be saved.

Only those who "hear" God's Son, those who believe in Him, will be saved.

Luke makes clear that some– even those you expect to want Him– have no interest in hearing the truth concerning Jesus.

Christianity is not *man's* faith;

it's not a *rich person's* faith;

it's not a *religious* person's faith.

It's for those who *hear God's Word and trust Him*.

5. Rejection of Messiah by the masses.

The "people of God" officially rejected Him.

6. The cost of following Him tempts many to abandon Him.

WHY DID GOD FORM A NEW "CALLED OUT" GROUP?

Church—*ekklesia* a "called out" people.

Israel's leaders don't *want* to hear about the arrival of the Messiah.

They're trying to protect their own interests, not learn the truth.

With a few notable exceptions, the leaders reject Jesus.

God, therefore, set the leaders aside.

IN ORDER TO FORM A NEW PEOPLE, GOD HAS TO MOVE OUTSIDE THE NATION THOSE LEADERS CONTROLLED.

God starts over, forming a new body, of "outcasts."

God's small band of outcasts will grow into a church no one will destroy.

Luke writes to encourage them in their affliction by reminding them of *WHY and HOW*

God has brought them to this point.

ORGANIZATION [See diagram of the book]

First Luke presents **evidence from Jesus' birth and presentation which demonstrates that He is the Messiah (1:1-4:13).**

Second, **Jesus' ministry is described with special attention given to the distinct responses to it (4:14-9:50).**

Third, **Israel's formal rejection of their Messiah and its implications are presented as Jesus travels toward Jerusalem (9:51-19:27).**

Fourth, **Luke describes Jesus' suffering and death (19:28-23:56).**

The climax is based on **Jesus' triumph at the resurrection (24:1-53).**

The commission Jesus gives His followers is possible because of His victory over His enemies and death.

PROLOGUE 1:1-4

Luke introduces his account with an explanation of his method and purpose.

LUKE'S RESOURCES 1:1-3b

- **He took advantage of all the available resources. 1:1-2**

Many have already undertaken to write about Jesus.

They were eyewitnesses who handed them down to *us* who were not.

The sources have been reliable, but they are many, and diverse.

By this time some were becoming a bit exaggerated.

The source of the traditions are eyewitnesses and "servants" of the Word.

They aren't just theoreticians.

They have given their lives for the ministry of the Word.

But, they're getting older. Some are dying.

It's time to get their stories down, while there is still time to do so.

Notice what story it is that Luke wants to tell:

It isn't just the story of Jesus.

It's the story of "the things accomplished among us".

He wants them to know the whole story—from the beginning, even before the birth of Messiah, right up to the present.

This is a two volume work—not just one volume.

The story doesn't end at Christ's death.

That's just the beginning of "all that Jesus did and taught" (Acts 1:1-2). Through the Spirit He continues to do and to teach.

- **He personally investigates, as far as possible, all of the facts. 1:3a**

Based on available texts, no wonder Luke decides to write a definitive work!

Some of the storybook accounts of the life of Christ that have survived show the need for a reliable account.

He wants to do a careful and credible job of presenting the facts.

He wants to investigate the whole story, from the beginning and put it down in logical, perhaps chronological, order.

His orderly investigation and presentation inspire confidence.

This is a believable, though sometimes surprising, account of the life of Jesus.

- **He writes an orderly account of Christ's life. 1:3b**

It could mean a chronological account.

His is the closest thing to a chronologically designed account of the life of Christ.

His approach is theological.

He doesn't just state facts.

He writes the facts in order to make a point.

This is interpretative, or theological, history.

What he tells is accurate.

He tells it in an orderly (logical), if not always precisely chronological, account.

LUKE'S RECIPIENT 1:3c

Theophilus is unknown to church history; his common name attracts attention.

He was apparently important, as the address: "Most excellent" indicates.

His name means "friend of God."

Contrast to those who love other things: money, pleasure, or self (Pharisees)

This name refers to one who loves God.

Imagine the effect of spending your whole life being called "God's friend."

Helen's statement: "If I've got the name, I'll play the game!"

While the descriptive phrases indicate the book was sent to an individual named Theophilus (a common name at that time), the significance of the name and the content of the book demonstrate that it is directed to all those who love God.

It is personal, written to one individual, as if to say, I am writing to you, "friend of God."

So let's take it personally. This is for YOU, "friend of God!"

[Am I a "friend" of God?]

LUKE'S PURPOSE 1:4

He takes information from all sources, investigates the facts, and writes an orderly account of the life of Christ, for all God's friends.

He does this to document the facts which Theophilus, and other readers, have already been taught.

Faced with doubts, and second thoughts, motivated by their suffering:

"What if all this is just a myth somebody made up? Is it worth dying for?"

Luke investigates personally and wants to give them assurance, *certainty*, that there's a valid basis for their faith, worth whatever it may cost them.

Luke is convinced of its certainty, based upon the testimonies of those who have committed their lives to serving the Master and His message!

He wants to confirm, to document, to make clear and convincing in the eyes of the friend of God. the truth concerning Jesus Christ.

As we continue this study in coming weeks, we hope that *your* faith will be strengthened by the *certainty* of the things Luke discovered.

"*Certainty*" < from root = to totter, to fall + neg.

=> not to totter, be moved, or fall => to be sure or certain.

Luke is a careful scholar and he wants to be sure we've got the facts.

- **that we will become convinced that this is a Person and message worthy of our trust**
- **that we will become convinced that it is worth dying for.**

Luke: **"UNBELIEF HAS NEVER BEEN BASED ON LACK OF EVIDENCE!"**

The evidence is there, and it is sure. We can count on it.

Jesus said, "If any man *wants* to do God's will, he shall know of the teaching whether it is from God, or whether, I speak from Myself."

Israel's religious leaders didn't want to know the truth.

Twenty-first century intellectuals often don't want to know the truth.

Sir Isaac Newton set out as an unbeliever; on examination of the evidence for Christianity, he found sufficient evidence to change his mind.

When Dr. Edmund Halley was talking to him about unbelief, Newton responded: "Dr. Halley, I am always glad to hear you when you speak about astronomy or mathematics because that is a subject you have studied and understand; but you should not talk about Christianity, for you have never studied it.

I have; and am certain that you know nothing about it."

That was Luke's resolve, to pore over the evidence until he was sure of what he was talking about, and then pass that certainty on to us.

How about you? Do you desire to know the truth? It's the truth that sets men free.

Are you interested in learning more?

We are going to take a look at the Man who fulfilled God's purpose for creation.

We will trust Him or reject Him based on our desire to know the truth.

Whether the days are dark and filled with many trials, or bright and filled with blessing, Jesus is still the same and we can rest on that truth and rely on Him.

Thus the introduction to the gospel serves to reenforce for every true friend of God that this is in fact a great certainty: the Son of Man has come, to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

We, God's friends, are going to spend some time listening to the stories of Jesus, so that we can become better acquainted with His Son, and have greater assurance of the things we have been taught.