

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 1:1-4

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. I thank the Lord that once again we have come to our time of reading the Scriptures. First, I want to take this opportunity to wish all the brothers and sisters a happy New Year. In the new year, God is leading us to read the Gospel of Luke during the first half of the year, and I truly hope that the brothers and sisters will be willing to set aside a little time each day to walk with me through this half-year journey of fellowship in the Gospel of Luke. The word of God is living and powerful; as long as we are willing to place ourselves into it, God is able, through the words of Scripture, to speak once again to our hearts, so that in our daily living we may be filled with motivation and strength that come from above. I bless the brothers and sisters, and I also ask God to bless our daily lives through His word. This week we are reading Luke chapter 1, and today we will read verses 1 through 4.

Verse 1-4: “Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.”

Luke wrote two books, the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, and both of these books were written to the one whom he calls most excellent Theophilus. Who this person was, we are actually not very certain, but since Luke addresses him as most excellent, it is clear that at that time he held a very high social position, and his name also tells us that he was a Gentile.

Different Bible interpreters hold different views, and there are several explanations that have been proposed. One Bible expositor I greatly appreciate, G. Campbell Morgan, cites the research of Robertson and holds the view that Luke was a slave and that Theophilus was his master; this is one possible explanation.

There is another view that says Theophilus was Paul's defense attorney, because at the end of Acts Paul was to appeal to Caesar, and Luke therefore labored on his behalf, writing down what he knew and handing it to Theophilus so that he could help defend Paul. There is yet another view, that he was simply a high-ranking Gentile with social standing whom Luke had led to salvation, and that Luke, according to what he knew, was very willing to care for and nurture this saint.

Today we do not know which view is more accurate, but we are deeply thankful to the Lord for such a person, because it was for him that Luke was willing to spend the time to write the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Taken together, these two books contain more words and verses than the thirteen books written by Paul, and they have brought countless riches from God to the saints of later generations, for which we are grateful for this person. As for his name, Theophilus, "Theo" means God, and "philos" means friend or beloved, so his name translated means one loved by God, or a friend of God.

In other words, every saved saint today is one who is loved by God, and each one is also a friend of God. We can also understand it in this way: that Luke was writing to every Christian who believes in the Lord. And in these brief four verses, Luke clearly tells us the theme of his writing of the Gospel of Luke, where his material came from, his method of writing, and his purpose in writing; these four verses are like the preface to the entire Gospel of Luke.

I do not know whether the brothers and sisters have ever written academic papers, but generally when writing a paper, the introduction is usually the hardest part to write. As a result, most people first finish writing the main body and then, based on that, go back and write the opening preface. I have some reason to believe that Luke did the same: after completing this Gospel, he then went back and wrote these first four verses. And in this four-verse preface, he tells us what the theme of

the entire book is, where his material came from, what his method of writing was like, and what his purpose was. We will look at these four points one by one.

First, the theme. Luke uses a word, “the Word”; the Greek for “word” is logos, which is actually very similar to the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John begins, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John refers to the Lord Jesus as the Word, but in a sense Luke is the first to do so. In verse 4 of this chapter, the term Luke uses refers to those who “minister the word,” in English, ministers of the Word, that is, those who supply the Word to others. According to our understanding from the Gospel of John, the Word speaks of the One who in the beginning was with God, the second person of the Divine Trinity, Jesus Christ, who is called the Word. He is the definition of God, the expression of God, the revelation of God; when God is manifested so that people can know Him, this is called the Word.

And these ministers of the Word—the term “minister” can also be translated as servant or slave. Its original meaning comes from the Greco-Roman era, when on warships there were men below deck who rowed the oars; these “under-rowers” were usually slaves, chained, rowing in rhythm to the beat of the drum, enabling the ship to move forward.

It also reveals that every person willing to minister the Word is actually a captive of God; they are like those under the deck of the ship, rowing according to God’s appointment, supplying God’s Word to others. Therefore, the theme of the entire Gospel of Luke is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is the Word, logos, the definition of God, the expression of God, the manifestation of God.

After we understand the theme of the Gospel of Luke, we can next look at where Luke’s material came from. He says, “Many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us.” At that time, the Gospel of Mark had probably already been written, and perhaps Luke had already read it; the Gospel of Matthew may also have been completed. So by then, some people had already begun to take up the pen to write, narrating the great events that had taken place among the early Christians.

Luke then says, “It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you in order, most excellent Theophilus, concerning those things which you have been taught.” He acknowledges that he himself did not personally follow Jesus Christ, so his source of information was to interview those who had followed Jesus Christ, people who had seen with their own eyes and personally handed down these accounts to them.

Luke was a physician, and being a physician is a very precise and rigorous profession. Here, Luke uses two specific words: the term translated “having seen with his own eyes” in the original language is autopsy, and the word translated “handed down to us” is also a medical term, referring to a physician’s assistant, or what we might call an intern doctor. To ensure the reliability of his information, Luke deliberately used these two medical terms. The first term: when a doctor examines a deceased person, in order to determine the cause of death, he must observe carefully and prepare a meticulous autopsy report; every detail is organized, and the sequence of events is clear and precise. How is it transmitted? Like an intern doctor working alongside the physician, learning everything firsthand, taught personally, and learning directly by observing.

So, Luke tells us that his source of information—although he did not personally follow Jesus Christ—was that he interviewed every person who had followed Jesus Christ and was still alive, relying on their firsthand experiences and what they had personally seen. Luke himself, like an intern doctor, learned each detail alongside them, one by one. This is the source of his information.

And what about his method of writing? In verse 3, he says, “It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you in order, most excellent Theophilus.” We know that the other Gospels were not written in chronological order, but here Luke clearly tells us that he began from the beginning. In the next section, we will understand what “from the beginning” means—namely, from the point of connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Furthermore, Luke not only started from the beginning, but he also “carefully investigated” everything. He did not merely interview the eyewitnesses; he also conducted many comparisons and verifications. He was a

learned man, educated in what was considered the most modern learning of his time, and only after careful investigation did he resolve to write everything down in proper order.

Therefore, among the four Gospels, the Gospel of Luke is probably the one most written according to the chronological order in which the events actually occurred. And what is his ultimate purpose? In verse 4, he says, “That you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.”

Suppose that each one of us is the intended recipient of Luke’s writing, Theophilus—that every person is loved by God and is a friend of God. The purpose of Luke writing the Gospel of Luke is to let us know that everything we read in Luke, everything he wrote, is certain and true. Jesus Christ came to the earth, died on the cross for the sins of humanity, and accomplished the work of redemption. This event, which happened more than two thousand years ago, truly occurred, and this is the purpose for which Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. For the Gospel of Luke, we offer our thanksgiving and worship. Yes, every one of us is loved by You; for us You were willing to die on the cross, and there is no love greater than this. You love us and call us Your friends, and You also allowed Your servant Luke to write this book for us. Lord, bless the coming half year as we read the Gospel of Luke; may each of our hearts be able to hear You personally speaking to us. May we not only be those who are loved by You, but also be willing to offer ourselves into Your hands in response to Your love. Just as You have loved us, we are also willing, on the basis of Your love, to love You in the same way. Bless my life today, we pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.