

The Attackers: “The Many” of Luke 1:2 Include Eyewitnesses of the Lord’s Incarnation & Writers of the Gospels Matthew & Mark; Luke’s Biblically Required Research Techniques Give Content Integrity to His Letter to Theophilus, Luke 1:3; Intent of Effort Is So that Theophilus Will Acquire Epignosis Understanding of the Life of Jesus, Luke 1:4a

Luke 1:2 - just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, (NASB)

1. This verse continues the thought and is introduced by the comparative conjunction **καθώς (kathōs)**: “just as.”
2. The testimony of the group called “the many” in verse 1 is said to have been “handed down”; the culminative aorist of the verb **παραδίδωμι (paradidōmi)**: “to deliver.” Among those who had personal contact with Jesus, some not only wrote down their experiences but their testimony was emphasized by the fact they were eyewitnesses.
3. The knowledge of these individuals was delivered to Luke and others and enabled him to develop a clear knowledge of the Lord’s life.
4. These individuals are placed back in time during the Lord’s public ministry and who wrote and spoke about details that transpired over the entire course of the Incarnation.
5. This is brought out by the phrase “from the beginning,” the translation of the Greek prepositional phrase **ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς (ap’ archē)**: it refers to the fact these people were contemporaries of the Lord.
6. The word for eyewitness is the noun **αὐτόπτης (autóptēs)**: to see with one’s own eyes. The English word autopsy comes from this word and is another hapax legomenon used by Luke who was familiar with the term from medical works he had read.
7. These eyewitnesses are said to have been “servants of the Word” which is probably Luke’s way of emphasizing the inclusion of the Gospel writers among the “many.”
8. Our translation reads this way:

Luke 1:2 - just as the written record was delivered to us by those who from the beginning of the Incarnation were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, (EXT)

Luke 1:3 - 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 \the-of-i-lus\; (NASB)

1. In verse 3, Luke makes the claim that he has personally investigated previous writings by those who were eyewitness of the Lord’s life and teachings and others who did not write but were eyewitnesses.
2. When covering events not witnessed by the writer, the biblical and journalistic procedure requires that at least two credible witnesses be consulted.
3. This principle is incorporated into the legal code of this country and stands as one of many examples of biblical legal standards adopted into our system of jurisprudence.
4. Two or more witnesses are required to establish guilt in Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; Matthew 18:16, and 1 Timothy 5:19.

5. Luke makes the point at the very beginning of his Gospel that he has met this requirement and then some.
6. Confident he has acquired a sufficient knowledge of events pertaining to the Incarnation of our Lord, Luke advises Theophilus that his report is based on these authentic reports and testimonies by multiple credible witnesses.
7. The third verse begins with the aorist active indicative of the verb **δοκέω (dokeō)**: "it seemed good." The constative aorist views his research as a completed act resulting in a decision to write.
8. This is followed by the conjunction **καί (kai)** and the dative of advantage of the pronoun **ἐμοί (emoi)**: "to me also."
9. Luke now inserts the perfect active participle of the verb **παρακολουθέω (parakolouthéō)**: used metaphorically: to investigate, search out or trace so as to attain knowledge from documents and eyewitnesses.
10. The participle's point of reference in time is discerned by its tense which here is in the perfect which indicates action completed prior to the action of the main verb, "to write." It is best translated, "having investigated."
11. Luke is informing Theophilus that his in-depth investigation was completed before he took up pen to write. The active voice informs us that Luke is the one who did this research and has completed it.
12. Luke continues with a prepositional phrase "from the beginning." The object of the preposition is the adverb **ἀνωθεν (ánōthen)**, which can be translated "from the beginning," "from the first," or "thoroughly."
13. In the context the reference has to do with his historical research therefore the correct translation is "thoroughly."
14. He emphasizes the care he took during the process by use of the adverb **ἀκριβῶς (akribōs)**: "accurately."
15. This is accompanied by the dative plural of **πᾶς (pás)**: "everything." Luke states that his research was thorough, it encompassed everything pertaining to the Lord's Incarnation, and the result is complete and accurate.
16. The verse translated so far reads this way:

Luke 1:3a - it seemed advantageous to me also, having investigated everything thoroughly and accurately ...

17. Now comes the main verb, the aorist active infinitive of **γράφω (gráphō)**: "to write."
 Aorist: Ingressive; denotes entrance into a state or condition, in this case, to begin to write.
 Active: Luke produces the action of writing his Gospel.
 Infin. The translation requires the pronoun "to."
18. Up to this point, Luke is giving Theophilus reasons he can be confident about the content integrity of what will be communicated to him in this Gospel.
19. He concludes by stating that what he writes will be presented in an "orderly manner" by use of the adverb **καθεξῆς (kathexēs)**.

20. Luke then identifies the recipient of his Gospel by first using an honorific: **κράτιστος (krátistos)**: “Most Excellent,” “Most Noble.”
21. This title indicates that Theophilus, whose name, **Θεόφιλος (Theóphilos)** means “friend of God,” is a person who holds high civic office. He is a person whom Luke affords great honor.
22. This title is used elsewhere in the New Testament’s Book of Acts, also written by Luke: Claudius Lysias \lís'-ĩ-äs\ to Felix in Acts 23:26, Tertullus \ter-tül'-ūs\ to Felix in Acts 24:3, and Paul to Festus in Acts 26:25.
23. The corrected and expanded translation of our passage reads this way through verse 3:

Luke 1:1 - In view of the fact that many [a group of writers] have undertaken to organize a written record of things in their proper sequence [including the Gospels of Matthew and Mark] and carried to completion among us,

v. 2 - just as the written record was delivered to us by those who from the beginning of the Incarnation were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,

v. 3 - it seemed advantageous to me also, having investigated everything thoroughly and accurately, to write to you in an orderly manner, Most Excellent Theophilus; (EXT)

v. 4 - so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. (NASB)

1. The fourth verse begins with the conjunction **ἵνα (hína)** which introduces a purpose clause: “so that.”
2. It is followed by the aorist active subjunctive of the verb **ἐπιγινώσκω (epiginōskō)**: “you may come to have a full and authentic knowledge in your *kardia*.”
3. The intent of Luke’s Gospel is to communicate the life of Christ in such a way that what Theophilus has learned to this point will be confirmed and provide him confidence.
4. The aorist subjunctive indicates a purpose clause: The focus is on the *intention* of the action of the main verb, to write, whether accomplished or not. It answers the question *Why?* rather than *What?*
5. The purpose of Luke’s Gospel to Theophilus is to give him certainty about what he has already been taught about Jesus with a complete and accurate account verified by historical research and eyewitness testimonies.
6. *Epiginōskō* is the knowledge one acquires through the agency of the Holy Spirit, whereas *ginōskō* is knowledge gained from empiricism or rationalism:

Ἐπιγινώσκω: A compound from **ἐπί (epí)** and **γινώσκω (ginōskō)**. Hence to know above (ἐπί). To know thoroughly. To know with positive assurance. A stronger word than γινώσκω. Ἐπιγινώσκω is more often used with reference to the higher knowledge of Christian faith, while γινώσκω means those things which we “know” by science (experience) and philosophy (reason).¹

¹ Randolph O. Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament* (Bowling Green, KY: Renaissance Press, 1976), 1:540.

7. It is argued among theologians that Theophilus and Luke had access to the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.
8. Each of the four Gospels emphasizes a different characteristic of the Lord. Matthew stresses Christ as King, Mark as Servant, and John as Deity.
9. Luke's approach is of Christ as Man which obviously highlights the Lord's true humanity through a historically accurate perspective
10. Luke was a Gentile, possibly Greek. He was highly educated, probably a graduate of the University of Tarsus. He was a physician and this becomes evident especially in his writings about the Lord's miracles and the crucifixion. Luke and Paul were close associates, each with the high intellect to comprehend "hard to understand"² concepts.
11. Luke's introduction to his Gospel is structured in highest traditions of classical Greek literature.
12. Were Luke's Gospel not in the canon of Scripture, it would stand as a masterpiece of extrabiblical history on the life and ministry of Jesus.
13. Verse four emphasizes Luke's intent for writing to Theophilus: "you may come to have a full and authentic knowledge in your *kardia*."
14. Luke wants Theophilus to come to a full knowledge of "the exact truth"; the singular noun **ἀσφάλεια** (*aspháleia*) which refers to "certainty" plus the plural of **λόγος** (*lógos*), which is translated "words."
15. The emphasis that Luke places on his meticulous research and investigation is intended to assure Theophilus of the veracity of the message.
16. The word *logos* can therefore be properly translated "truth" as it relates to the incarnation of Jesus Christ and His true humanity in hypostatic union.
17. This excerpt helps us in our translation so that we can understand precisely why Luke wrote his Gospel:

ἀσφάλεια. Luke 1:4: **λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν** [*lógon tēn aspháleian*] = "the reliability of the words or teachings," reminds us of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 6, 15: **ἀσφάλεια λόγου** [*aspháleia lógon*: certain word]. To this there corresponds Acts 25:26: **ἀσφαλές τι γράψαι** [*asphalés ti grápsai*: nothing definite to write], and again Acts 21:34 [*γνῶναι τὸ ἀσφαλές* (*gnōnai tó asphalés*: to find out the truth)]; Acts 22:30 [*γνῶναι τὸ ἀσφαλές* (*gnōnai tó asphalés*: to know the true reason)]³ = "to know the truth."⁴

² See 2 Peter 3:15–16.

³ Bracketed Greek references are quoted from the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001) and accompanying bracketed English translations are quoted from: Michael H. Bauer, W. Hall Harris III, and Daniel B. Wallace, *New English Translation/Novum Testamentum Graece: New Testament* (Dallas: Net Bible Press, 2003), 399; 388; 391.

⁴ Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "ἀσφάλεια," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 1:506.