

“An Orderly Account”

. . . it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

(Luke 1:1-4 ESV)

Luke 1:1-4

- ***“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the world, 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; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught”***

- **So why should I trust and believe what is written in the New Testament?**
- **I don't want to believe a lie and build my life upon a foundation that is not true.**

- **Thoreau said, “No face which we can give to a matter will stead us so well at last as the truth. *This alone wears well*” (Walden p. 273).**

They Were Honest Men

- **They include numerous embarrassing details about themselves.**

- **Peter rebuking Jesus (Matthew 16:22).**
- **The disciples fleeing when Jesus was arrested (Matthew 26:56).**
- **Peter denying Jesus three times (Matthew 26:69-75).**

- **Paul's misguided past (1 Timothy 1:13-15), and Peter sinning even after he had been an apostle for some time (Galatians 2:11-13).**

- **Frequently they picture themselves as simply being dense to spiritual truths (Matthew 16:7-9; Luke 9:54; John 9:2; Matthew 19:10).**

Demanding Sayings of Jesus

- **If the New Testament writers were making up a story, they certainly didn't make up a story that made life easier for them.**

- **Lusting upon a woman in our heart is viewed as a form of adultery (Matthew 5:28).**
- **There is only one cause for divorce with the right of remarriage (5:32).**

- **We are expected to turn the other cheek and go the second mile (5:39-42), to love our enemies (5:44-45); be perfect as God is perfect (5:48). These are not the type of commands or rules that people typically just make up and then impose upon themselves.**

- **They include details about the Resurrection that they would not have invented.**

- **All four Gospel writers say that the first witnesses of the empty tomb were women. One of those women, Mary Magdalene, Luke says had been demon-possessed (Luke 8:2).**

- **They would have presented themselves as the heroes, brave men who attempted to defend or rescue Jesus, the first witnesses and witnesses that Jesus commends when He meets them. Yet Jesus is not described in their writings as complimenting them, rather He rebukes them (Mark 16:14).**

- **They do not describe themselves as being brave and fearless, but as being fearful and unbelieving (John 20:19).**

- **When the body of Jesus is removed from the cross, they do not picture themselves as the courageous ones who came forward but rather mention other individuals (Mark 15:43).**

Divergent Details

- **Not contradictory.**
- **But complimentary.**
- **If they were lying then they would have gotten together, concocted a story to make sure that they told each episode in the life of Christ exactly the same.**

- **True eyewitness testimony.**
- **The accounts do not contradict, but each witness sees a few different details in the same event.**

- **For example, when describing the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, Luke says that the fever she was experiencing was a "high" fever (Luke 4:38).**

- **They challenge the reader to check out verifiable facts, even facts about miracles.**

- **Luke 1:1-4**
- **2 Peter 1:16**
- **Acts 26:25**
- **Paul's statement to the Corinthians that some 25 years after the resurrection that most of the 500 witnesses to whom Jesus appeared after He was raised were still alive and could be questioned (1 Corinthians 15:6).**

- **They describe miracles like other historical events: with simple unembellished accounts.**

- **One example of this is that when Jesus died the veil in the Temple was rent from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). Matthew does not pause at this point and inform the reader concerning the meaning of this event.**

Divine Restraint

- **Whatever happened to the rich young ruler?**
- **Lazarus---what was it like to be dead?**

- **They abandoned their long held sacred beliefs and practices, adopted new ones, and did not deny their testimony under persecution or threat of death.**

- **The writers believed in what they had seen so seriously that virtually overnight they abandoned what had been a central focus of their culture for 1500 years and was the essential element of their family and personal lives.**

- **They abandoned the entire Law of Moses, including the sacrificial system and the observance of the Sabbath Day (Colossians 2:14-17), even though such would immediately isolate them from friends and family. Only truth can do something like that.**

Other People Die for What They Believe

- **One main difference, Christian martyrs have more than sincerity, they have evidence for what they believed.**

- **“Consider the difference in the environment in which two of the world’s great religions have initially started. In the early days of the church you could be killed for being a Christian (Acts 14:22). In the early days of Islam’s growth, you might be killed for not becoming a Muslim. Islam spread by use of the sword on others; Christianity spread when others used the sword on it”**

The Amazing Growth

- **“He presented another parable to them, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches’ (Matthew 13:31-32).**

- **“Why does a religion spread when its adherents are persecuted, tortured, and killed during its first 280 years? *Those are not good selling points.*”**

- **Perhaps there's some very reliable testimony about miraculous events that proves the religion is true. How else can you explain why scared, scattered, skeptical cowards suddenly become the most dedicated, determined, self-sacrificing, and *peaceful* missionary force the world had ever known"**

- **The only conclusion I can come to, is that these men risked their lives to spread the message about Jesus and His resurrection because it was all true. It really happened. *Acts 4:20 “For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard”.***

More than Evidence

- **Many have seen the evidence.**
- **Many saw it first hand back then.**
- **Yet have not obeyed.**
- **John 12:42-43**

- **When I hear the truth, will I love it?**
- **Do I love the truth more than my own agenda?**
- **John 18:37**