

The Context of the Christmas Event

Luke 1:1-

I really appreciate my doctors, don't you? I have my primary care doctor, my cardiologist, my eye doctor, my sleep doctor, my dermatologist, my orthocare/hand doctor, and my neurologist. And six of the seven are very personable and likeable. I won't tell you which one is not, but he does his work very professionally so I'm not complaining. And I would be remiss if I didn't let you know that I super appreciate the nurses who work with these doctors. I see them more than I see the doctors except for my primary care doc and they do such a fantastic job and they're the ones who set the mood for my visits.

I know you have seen movies and tv shows where someone in a restaurant or movie theater had some kind of medical emergency and someone yelled out, "Is there a doctor in the house?" Well, on our last flight from Europe back to the states, we had just reached our flight altitude somewhere out over the Atlantic when the elderly gentleman sitting elbow to elbow with me on my left suddenly slumped over. His wife freaked out. I mean she went into hysterics. She was screaming, "I don't even know if he's alive. Somebody help me." I put my fingers on his carotid and it was still pulsating, so I was at least able to assure her that he was alive. Then the word got out that a doctor or nurse was needed and a nurse came and the whole flight crew got involved and rather than diverting our flight and making the rest of us really, really angry, they put him on a gurney and took him to first class where there was more room and we continued on our flight without missing a beat. No pun intended.

Let's take our Bibles and turn to one of the only two books in the Bible written by a doctor, the gospel of Luke. What was Dr. Luke's other book? That's right. The book of The Acts of the Apostles. Luke chapter one and we'll begin with verse 1. Luke chapter one and verse 1.

I have decided to work my way through this passage of Scripture one verse at a time after reading it over and over again this past week and I was just never comfortable with the way my preparation was going. I was going to begin at v.5 but I realized that I would be skipping

over a couple of matters of context that Luke took the time to include in the first four verses. So lets get started.

Luke 1:1 *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. (Lk. 1:1-4 NAU)*

When Jesus came to town as you know, massive crowds fell in behind Him to watch Him work signs and wonders and miracles, and to watch Him put the Jewish hypocrites in their place. That's what drew great multitudes to Him everywhere He went. It was kinda like a Trump rally, without the miracles, of course. I guess President Trump could use a miracle or two about now.

Luke wasn't around to see any of these mighty works of God, but when the Holy Spirit put it on his heart to write it out, he vetted what he had been hearing by going to the eyewitnesses. Eyewitnesses are what lawyers and theologians call their primary sources. The result was the God-breathed gospel according to Luke and later the book of Acts. And being a doctor who was trained somehow in the field of medicine, he was obviously a thinking man. He "*investigated everything carefully from the beginning.*" ⁴ *so that you may know **the exact truth** about the things you have been taught."*

When I sit down and read any book of the Bible, Luke or Amos, I know that I'm getting the exact truth as it was given to the author of that book. I have every confidence that the 66 books of the Bible are the exact truth.

When the Bible says God created the heavens and the Earth, it's the exact truth.

When the Bible says that God created man and not through evolution, it's the exact truth.

When the Bible says that God flooded the earth, it's the exact truth.

When the Bible says God parted the Red Sea and Israel crossed over on dry ground, it's the exact truth.

When the Bible says that Joshua fit the battle of Jericho and the walls came tumbling down, it's the exact truth.

When the Bible says that the shepherd boy David killed Goliath, it's the exact truth.

And when the Bible says that Jesus was born of a virgin, that He lived a sinless life and that He was crucified and that He died and that He was buried and that He was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, it's the exact truth.

God gave us the written word ⁴ *so that we may know **the exact truth** about the things you have been taught.*”

¹⁶ *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;*

¹⁷ *so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17 NAU)*

Beloved, for 300 years liberal theologians and liberal pastors have been trying to dismiss the Bible as a collection of fairy tales and myths. But during those same 300 years, archaeologists and Biblical scholars and a shepherd boy in Israel working along the shores of the Dead Sea, have discovered hundreds of ancient Hebrew manuscripts and thousands of ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. We now have so many Greek manuscripts that we can easily, well, the scholars can do this, reconstruct the entire New Testament and rest assured that it is as accurate as one would want it to be. *so that you may know **the exact truth** about the things you have been taught.*”

Now notice the first eight words in v.5.

⁵ *In the days of Herod, king of Judea,*

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I want to point out to you that Luke understood the importance of context. Why do I say that? Well, he sets his gospel at the time of “the days of Herod, king of Judea.” That is **historical context**. And he didn’t stop there. Notice this from chapter two, **Luke 2:1** *Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.*

² *This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.* (Lk. 2:1-2 NAU). And chapter three,

Luke 3:1 *Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,* (Lk. 3:1 NAU)

Beloved, the context Luke sets his gospel in can’t be disputed. Everyone he names can be found in secular history books on world history. So, if you have a question about dates and names and places surrounding the birth of the Lord Jesus, Luke has taken care of that for you. And if should want to, you can google every name found in the gospels and find them.

And notice this, Luke gave us the areas where these men ruled. Caesar was in Rome, Quirinius was in Syria, Tiberius was in Rome, Pilate in Judea, Herod was in Galilee, Philip was in Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was in Abilene.

Now, where were Joseph and Mary from? Nazareth.

Where was Jesus born? Bethlehem.

Where did Jesus grow up? In Nazareth.

Beloved, that is **geographical context**. And I haven’t even mentioned the chronological context.

And I close with this.

Our text, by the Holy Spirit, pinpoints details in the lives of Zacharias and Elizabeth and Mary and the unborn child who will be named Jesus and Immanuel. We are provided with specific names and places from history that prove that the births of John the baptizer and

Jesus the Messiah happened in this way. One of the reasons the Holy Spirit had this recorded by Luke was to help us defend the fact that Jesus Christ was and is the Messiah or the Christ, and no one else is.

We have all heard Jesus' warnings about false Christ, have we not? He warned all of us about the coming of many false Christs in Mt. 24. If you should ever run across someone claiming to be the Christ or serves the Christ who lives in South Korea right now, ask him these questions. **"Were you born in Bethlehem of Judea 2,020 years ago?** And he will have to say, "No." He isn't that old. Then point out to him that the Bible says the Messiah, the Christ, was to be born during the reign of Caesar Augustus and therefore you are not the Christ.

And second, **ask him if his mother was a virgin, raised in Nazareth?** No? You are not the Christ.

Next, **ask him if his mother was a Jewish teenager raised in Nazareth named Mary?** No? You are not the Christ.

And **ask him if he had kin folk from the hill country of Judea named Zacharias and Elizabeth?** No? You are not the Christ.

Pretty simple, isn't it?

Christmas is about Jesus. Not so much the baby born in Bethlehem but the Man who died on Calvary. By the grace and revelation of God given to us, we believe and know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And by God's grace and revelation to us beloved, we are His forever.

¹⁶ *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (Jn. 3:16 NAU)*

In Jesus' name, amen.