

# The Incarnation Part 12 - 'Introducing the Gospel to Theophilus'

by Charles Alexander

---

*Luke's gospel is written to convince the reader of the certainty of the things they have been instructed in and to provide a clear understanding of God's plan of redemption.*

**Scripture:** Daniel 4:35

**Topics:** "Biblical Certainty", "Gospel Truth"

---

## Description

Charles Alexander preaches on the importance of knowing the certainty of our faith, just as Luke aimed to convince his readers of the truth they believed in. In a world filled with uncertainties and challenges, it is crucial to be firmly rooted in the unchanging truths of God's Word, especially in times of oppression and moral decline. Luke, a competent historian, wrote his Gospel and Acts with a divine purpose, ensuring that believers like Theophilus understand the eternal significance of the events surrounding Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection.

---

## Transcript

Luke 1:4 : That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

The object of Luke's writing of this great Gospel lies just there; that he had in mind the need, which so many have, of being thoroughly convinced and persuaded that what they have believed is true; that what they rest in will not let them down in the end; that they are building not upon the sand but upon the Rock.

This, I suppose, is as important in our day as it was in the days when Luke wrote his gospel in the first days of the Christian church. There must have been many who were alive then who felt as though all the world was against them. They were a tiny fragment of humanity submerged in all the might, pomp and power of the great Roman Empire, which had endured for centuries and was going to endure for centuries more, becoming a principal oppressor of the people of God. On their side was might; on the side of the Lord's people was weakness, and this is bound to disturb the minds of many who will wonder whether what we have believed and trusted in is the truth.

We could suppose that, in these days, instead of the great Roman Empire to oppress us we have to endure the international state of affairs in which we see, beyond all question of doubt, our western world civilization, education and tradition going down into the abyss of darkness, ignorance and unbelief; where

law and order is dissipated, where such sins and delusions which have not hitherto possessed the mind of man, so far as we know, in all our long human history, are now besetting us on every hand. It looks as though what we believe to be the Word of God is powerless to effect any difference in this appalling situation, and that at this time we face rather different problems from those faced by the earliest readers of Luke's gospel.

We are still in equal need of the word which he spoke: "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." Luke is unique amongst the writers of the Bible, in that he adopts a device which one would suppose really belongs to these modern times in which we live. He anticipated by two thousand years a form of address, which in recent historic times has been considered a useful device for claiming the attention. That is, he addresses an imaginary individual as though he were divulging all the wonderful things he is about to write to one person of his own personal acquaintance to whom he gives a name.

Luke writes (1:3-4), "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou has been instructed." Luke also addresses the Acts of the Apostles, in which he laid down the foundations of Church history, to "Theophilus". In the first verse of the first chapter he writes, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." Apart from these two brief references, Theophilus is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible, and it is quite evident that no such person as Theophilus ever existed. If he had existed, he would have been so important as the man to whom Luke addressed both his gospel and the Acts of the Apostles that we should find some reference to him elsewhere in the New Testament, where there are so many names mentioned of characters and personalities who were noted among the first believers in the first generation of the Christian church; but not Theophilus!

Furthermore we do notice that his name has a very wonderful significance because it means something. It is so chosen that nobody in his day would have had any difficulty in knowing what the word meant. Indeed many of us, despite the fact that we know neither Latin nor Greek, know that "philo" is a constituent of our common word "philosophy", which really means "the love of wisdom", and that "Theo" means "God". We speak about "theology", which means "the Word of God" or "the doctrine of God". So Theophilus can only mean, and obviously does mean "a lover of God" or "a worshipper of God"; one who loves God, who has a desire to know God and to know all about Him, and to know the certainty of the Word of God.

Who else is a Theophilus? The author would like to think that all of us are represented in this wonderful name, and that this gospel therefore comes to each one of us personally. Are you a Theophilus too? Are you a lover of God and of His Word? Have you a love for the truth and an earnest desire to know God and His mercy? Do you long to know what He has done and what He is doing, and to know the certainty of those things which we have heard about and been instructed in from our youth?

Luke sets out to do this very thing. It is important that to benefit from the preaching and the reading of the Word of God we should be in the right frame of mind and in the right state of heart. No-one will get anything unless they have a yearning after the truth; unless they have at least somewhat in their hearts that cries out for God and Christ; cries out for light and truth. Surely there cannot be anything so important as this, even in this modern age, when many things are happening around us that appear to be so important. Many apparently important questions are asked: "What is going to happen in government? What is going wrong in high places? What are we going to do about the international situation?" All very

important and very interesting, but they pale to insignificance when compared with the eternal truths contained in the gospels. You see there matters that are of surpassing importance, such importance that they never wane in their significance, and nothing that ever happens in history can alter the importance of knowing the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed.

In the wake of adverse economic conditions, people are bothered about their money, and well they might be, wondering how things are going to turn out. And the fact that the people in high places are often more worried than the rest of us is highly disconcerting. These things do not ultimately matter to anyone whose name is Theophilus, because Theophilus believes in God, and wants to know the certainty of those divine and eternal things, which can never pass away. These are the only things that are really substantial; which can never change. The certainty of these higher things is why Theophilus is concerned about them, rather than the mundane matters that are uppermost in the minds of the majority of people who rarely, if ever, give a thought to anything of real substance and consequence. The certainties that he is interested in have to do with eternity, with the Throne of God, with the purposes and designs of God in the world, and these are the only things that matter. Life and death and eternity and Christ and truth, the means of salvation, are what really matter; we are rich indeed if we have a grasp of these things, and have come to know the certainty of that wherein we have been instructed.

We have every reason to believe that Luke, the beloved physician, was also a very competent physician. He accompanied Paul in all his journeys across Asia and across Europe, and he was with him when everybody else had gone. On a certain occasion, Paul said, "Only Luke is with me." All of his companions had left him with the exception of Luke, who kept hard by his distinguished patient, attaching himself to the Apostle Paul for more reasons than one. One of the important reasons was that the Apostle Paul suffered from a painful illness or affliction. It is believed that it was eye trouble, painful eye trouble, which was not uncommon in those days. Paul elsewhere speaks about "a thorn in the flesh"; he does not tell us what it was, but Luke the beloved physician probably knew, and was able to help the Apostle Paul by his presence and by his craft, helping to make life a little easier, less burdensome for God's great and celebrated servant. Luke was not only a competent physician; he was also a very competent historian, one of the few, either before his day or afterwards.

The accuracy of Luke's account in his Gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles used to be questioned by Bible critics, particularly during the past century. There was a man who went out to Asia Minor to do archaeological research. His name was Sir William M. Ramsey, one of the greatest of the modern archaeologists, who went into the region with which the Acts of the Apostles is associated, to study the record of Paul's missionary journeys in the ancient cities upon which he came. Sir William Ramsey at that time accepted the current criticism of the Bible, that the Acts of the Apostles was not written in apostolic times at all, but was a late and very defective production written about the middle of the second century and therefore was not authentic. If this were true, we could discard the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles for being unhistorical, a mere hearsay, a third rate account written a century after the events took place. Sir William Ramsey was not a Christian man; neither was he a believer in the Bible, but rather accepted the criticism of the Bible. But what he found in Asia Minor changed his mind completely, and these are his words: "Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness. Luke is a historian of the first rank; not only are his statements of fact trustworthy, but he is also possessed of the true historic sense. He fixes his mind on the idea and plan that rules in the evolution of history, and proportions the scale of his treatment to the importance of each incident and shows their true nature at greater length, while he touches lightly or omits entirely much that was valueless for his purpose. In short, this author

(Luke) should be placed along with the very greatest of historians." That, coming from one who was once prejudiced against Luke's history, ought to weigh with us considerably. There has been much checking and counter checking in the course of time, and honest men have come to the same conclusion.

Luke is a competent historian; he wrote at the time that these events took place and he knew not only what he was writing, but also why he was writing it. That is the trouble with most ordinary secular histories today; many great historians go researching into facts and delving into ancient records, and tell us what happened at such and such a period of history. It is all very interesting, but it does not mean a thing to the Christian. It has no bearing upon your life for these so called "great historians" lack one important ingredient: the divine key to history that God is behind it all and He is moving in a certain, inevitable direction from which nothing will turn Him aside. All the events of history combine to focus on this one great thing, that God is travelling in the greatness of His strength in one direction only, and that is the direction of His own victory over sin and death and all the powers of hell and of darkness; that He is moving towards the complete and absolute, final and eternal triumph of His own life, and it is important that we know this to be the case.

We may have many facts about history stored away in our heads, something that is very interesting, events that fascinate us but have no meaning whatsoever. What use is it for me to know that the Roman Empire fell? The British Empire has fallen too, but what does it matter? It makes no difference to you and to me, except that they are all footprints of the eternal, the ever-blessed one who reigns and doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, 'What doest Thou?' (see Daniel 4:35) We know through the scripture what God is working to; He is working to redemption; the history of the world is the history of redemption. Luke is a competent historian who knew that he had to write upon that theme and that only.

Whatever he has to say of his own contemporary world, the events of which he was an eye witness from the beginning, and right through the Acts of the Apostles, until he joined the Apostle Paul and went with him on that long and eventful sea voyage from Caesarea until they were wrecked upon the coast of the island of Malta. From there, after three months of hardship, they found means of continuing the journey to Rome, where Paul was handed over to the keeping of a centurion to await his trial before Caesar. Luke was with him all the time. He records, in marvellous detail, the storm in the Adriatic sea, and finally being cast without the loss of a single life upon the shore of the island of Malta. It is like a page from some modern story of shipwreck and deliverance, graphically told by a competent eyewitness; but he only related it because it had to do with the history of redemption.

There was a deep, inner purpose and meaning behind all the facts which he assembled. He could have written a book the size of the Bible about the apostle Paul, and about the birth of Christ and all that went on, but he says in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen." He found it necessary, after he had finished the gospel, to resume his writings, but always it had to do with "the things which are most surely believed among us, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."

He writes the earthly life of our Lord from His birth to His death, not simply to let us know that such a person existed, not simply to fascinate us with the remarkable things which took place, but that we might know the purpose of Christ's coming into the world: why He lived, why He was born, why He died.

Therefore, when we come to his gospel, we find him beginning earlier than either Matthew or Mark begin theirs; he goes back just a little bit further. John's Gospel is a gospel apart, beginning with Creation and before Creation: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He does not tell us about the birth of Christ at all, but he tells us about Christ's origin: as God, in God, for God and to God. Luke goes back to before the birth of Christ: not only before the birth of Christ, but before the birth of Christ's forerunner, John the Baptist. He tells us in fascinating words what went on as a preliminary to the birth of Christ, and the introduction of the One who was to be the world's Redeemer.

He said there was one who went before Christ, whose name was John (the Baptist); and, of course, being the important person that he was, there was something very remarkable about John's introduction into the world. Now this has happened again and again in Holy Scripture. Abraham had this experience too; he and his wife Sarah had grown very old together; he approaching a hundred and she approaching ninety. They had no child and had long since given up any hope of ever having children, when they received a divine visitation at their tent door, of three men who they thought were ordinary men. But two of them were angels and the third was the Son of God, announcing and preparing the way for His own birth. Does anybody believe this sort of thing? Well, if it had been anyone else but Abraham, we might say it was a fairy tale from long ago. It just happens that Jesus Christ was born of the seed of Abraham, and that there are more people today who reverence the name of Abraham than any other man in all history, for Jews, Christians and Moslems all reverence and revere the name, the family, the record of Abraham. Nobody could have thought or guessed, so long before, that this unknown stranger, wanderer and pilgrim upon the face of the earth, should travel through the land of Palestine, go to Egypt and return again, live to a great old age, and pass away leaving only one son behind him (that is one son who was looked upon as his heir, a man named Isaac); that through him a nation would be founded, even a family of nations, and that ultimately in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

So Christians believe it, not only because it is in the Bible, but because of all the consequences that have flowed from it. And anyone who would read their Bible and try to understand these things will see that this is the real matter of history, a very interesting episode of history around Abraham's time. Great nations, empires and combinations of nations arose, and had wars and tumults, great campaigns, great riches and great losses. Very interesting! The archaeologists and historians would give anything to know more about them. They just pass through the Bible so fleetingly, taking a breath and expiring again. They do not matter; they have no bearing whatsoever upon the lives we live today; but this man Abraham has: he affects all of us and that is why we are here. Therefore we believe the story that God visited him to tell him that a son would be born, and that his name would be Isaac, which means 'laughter'. The same thing happened over the birth of Jacob and Esau, and the birth of Samuel followed a similar happening. Again and again, throughout divine history, the same kind of thing has happened. We see God's divine intervention in the birth of these children and the consequences which followed, and we are not surprised, therefore, that Luke should declare in his gospel that the Lord was virgin born.

However, before His virgin birth had been foretold, another child was conceived in remarkable circumstances. Elizabeth and Zacharias the priest had no children; they were both old and had long given up hope. Zacharias was offering incense on the altar of the temple of God when he became aware of the presence of a glorious individual. He was none other than Gabriel, who came from the presence of God, to proclaim that a child was to be born to Elizabeth. Because Zacharias doubted, Gabriel informed him that he would be dumb until the event had actually taken place, because of his disbelief. It was not a fatal unbelief; it was just that the whole thing was so incredible to him. When he came forth after the interview

with Gabriel and made signs to the people, who had been wondering why he had been such a long time in the temple, they perceived that he had seen a vision.

Are these not part of the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed? If Jesus Christ be the Son of God, was virgin born and died for our sins, then we should consider it inevitable that there should be signs and tokens all the way through; and this is precisely what we find, especially in the gospel of Luke. We find that good men and women are involved there, upon whose word we may rely and who do not just imagine things; men and women who are in touch with God, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, and many others. Luke tells us all about them, more so than any of the other writers. But for Luke, we would not have known anything at all about the shepherds, or the manger in which the Son of God was laid. As we read through and study Luke's Gospel, we find he had a commission from God; that he knew what he was writing about and why he was writing it, because he says in verse three, "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee most excellent Theophilus." When he said that he had perfect understanding "from the very first", he used a very peculiar word. In the Greek it is the same word which we have in the third chapter of John, in our Lord's address to Nicodemus. He said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God", and in the margin of John three you will find that the word "again" is translated "from above": "Except a man be born 'from above'." And that is the word which Luke uses here: "I have had perfect understanding of all things 'from above'." When he says "from the very first", he means "from Him who is the first, who is the beginning, who is the first and the last." Luke is saying, in effect, "I received an understanding from Him who knows all things, and he bade me put it down."

Wherefore read this Gospel, for it comes from the pen of a man who had perfect understanding of all things that matter for your salvation and mine, from above, from the very throne of God, from the all-inspiring spirit. You may well say, regarding these Greek words, that he may never have meant it that way. Perhaps he was just saying that he was there from the very beginning and knew all things. A very valid objection, but if you read verse two you find that Luke knows how to use language very well, because he says, "Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses", and that is a different word "beginning" from the word that he uses in verse three. He purposely uses here a word which was above and beyond the meaning to which it is usually applied. He could have repeated the same word he had used in verse two: "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from 'the beginning'," just like the other eye witnesses. But no! he uses a different word now: "having had perfect understanding of all things 'from above'." Luke is telling us that things were conveyed and revealed to him of the divine history; that he was empowered to put down that which was shown to him in their inward significance and purpose; that what he had written was essential to his purpose. "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed," and therefore the certainty of our faith, of our confidence, of our greater eternal future in glory; that these things happened, these things are true, these things are certain. May God grant that each one of us might know the certainty of these things which have been delivered unto us.

Amen

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**