

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
I. Introduction To The Life Of Christ
A. Trusting The Gospel Records
(Luke 1:1-4)

I. Introduction

- A. In starting to study of a harmony of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we must face the question of the credibility of those Gospel records. After all, Jon Murray, President of American Atheists, claimed, “There was no such person in the history of the world as Jesus Christ. There was no historical, living, breathing, sentient human being by that name. Ever. [The Bible] is a fictional, nonhistorical narrative. The myth is good for business.” (Josh Simon, “Who was Jesus?” Life, December 1994, p. 68)
- B. Luke 1:1-4 gives us a key testimony on this subject, so we view the passage for our insight and edification:

II. Trusting The Gospel Records, Luke 1:1-4.

- A. Typical of the first century A. D. Hebrew practices, since Jesus Christ was a Hebrew according to the flesh, “His life and teaching was preserved after the Jewish method,” which initially was by “oral transmission,” J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 25, citing A. Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 1912, p. 55.
- B. However, though “(o)ral transmission may accurately transmit truth,” it “is not itself authoritative, and “(w)ritten records may accurately record truth but they are not, apart from (divine) inspiration, authoritative.” Thus, Luke intended to give believers an “authoritative record” that might surely be believed, Ibid., Pentecost.
- C. In addition, Luke noted in Luke 1:1a that many believers in the Christian community had seen the need to compose in writing a narrative of Christ’s earthly life, one that focused on the things that “had been accomplished” (*plerophoreo*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 199; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 676) among the Hebrew eyewitnesses of Christ’s earthly life, Luke 1:1b-2.
- D. Luke revealed in Luke 1:2 that he himself had not been an eyewitness of Christ’s life, so Luke had evaluated the Hebrew oral transmission that he had received about Christ’s life by having “carefully, accurately” (*akribos*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 32) “investigated” (*parakoloutho*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 624) all the data of the oral transmission of Christ’s life from the first, that he might write a narrative of Christ’s life “in orderly sequence” (*kathexes*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 389) for Theophilus, Luke 1:2-3.
- E. Consequently, Luke’s Gospel was written and presented to Theophilus in order that he might “know exactly” (*epiginosko*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 290-291) the “certainty” (*asphaleia*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 118) of the things in which he had been “taught, instructed” by the Christian community (*katecheo*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 424-425), Luke 1:4. In other words, Luke’s burden was to go beyond merely providing a narrative of the oral transmission that he and other Gentile believers like him had received from Hebrew eyewitnesses, but to arrange their testimonies in consecutive order with careful scrutiny so that there would be no question to Luke’s readership as to what exactly had happened in Christ’s life. Luke was acting much like a lawyer in a courtroom who cross-examines eyewitnesses on the witness stand so that the truth can be discerned with indisputable clarity! Since this was all done under divine inspiration (cf. 1 Timothy 5:18 that cites Luke 10:7 and calls it Scripture on equal footing with Deuteronomy 25:4 which it also cites), Luke’s Gospel was divinely inspired Scripture.

Lesson: *God led a Gentile believer who was a non-eyewitness of the oral transmission he received from Hebrew eyewitnesses of Christ’s life to cross-examine the information of those who had given him the oral transmission with great care and precision that he might write down in orderly sequence what had clearly occurred that his readers might perceive the certainty of the facts in the eyewitness reports. Such care, precision and desire to ascertain the facts under divine inspiration certifies the accuracy not only of Luke’s Gospel, but the accuracy of the other three Gospels by Hebrew men, for their records can be checked against the record of Luke’s Gospel.*

Application: *(1) May we realize that God used a careful Gentile investigative reporter in Luke to cross-examine the eyewitness testimonies of the Hebrew eyewitnesses of Christ’s life to write a precise historical record that supported the credibility of the eyewitness accounts. (2) May we then believe Luke’s Gospel, and the credibility of the other Gospels, for they harmonize so beautifully with Luke’s Gospel. (3) In application to our efforts today, may we carefully study the Bible in order to teach its clear truths to others that they might not be unsettled, but edified.*