

EXEGETICAL SUMMARY OF LUKE 1–11

DISCOURSE UNIT: 1:1–2:52 [BECNT]. This unit functions as the preface of the book and the topic is the introduction of John and Jesus.

DISCOURSE UNIT: 1:1–4 [AB, BECNT, NAC, NICNT, NIGTC, Su, TNTC, WBC; CEV, GW, HCSB, NASB, NCV, NET, NIV, NLT, NRSV, REB, TEV]. The topic is the prologue [AB, NAC, NICNT], the preface [BECNT, NIGTC, Su, TNTC; NET], the introduction [NASB, NIV, NLT, TEV], Luke writes to Theophilus [GW], dedication to Theophilus [HCSB, NRSV], dedicatory preface [WBC], Luke writes about Jesus' life [NCV]. There is no heading for this introductory unit [CEV, REB]. This unit is one long sentence in the Greek text. It follows the type of introduction used by Greek writers of that time [AB, Arn, Crd, Gdt, ICC, Lns, NIGTC, NTC, TH].

1:1 Since^a many have-undertaken^b to-compile^c an-account^d about the events^e (which) happened/have-been-fulfilled^f among us,

LEXICON—a. ἐπειδήπερ (LN 89.3) (BAGD p. 284): ‘since’ [AB, Arn, BAGD, LN, Lns, NTC; NRSV], ‘inasmuch as’ [BAGD, BECNT, NIGTC, WBC; NASB], ‘forasmuch as’ [KJV], not explicit [HCSB, NCV, NLT]. Instead of ‘since’ here in 1:1, some have made explicit the reciprocal relationship of *conclusion* at the beginning of 1:3: ‘so’ [CEV, GW, NET, REB, TEV], ‘therefore’ [NIV].

- b. aorist act. indic. of ἐπιχειρέω (LN 68.59) (BAGD p. 305): ‘to undertake’ [AB, Arn, BECNT, LN, NTC; HCSB, NASB, NET, NIV, NRSV, REB], ‘to set one’s hand to’ [BAGD], ‘to take in hand’ [Lns, WBC; KJV], ‘to do one’s best’ [TEV], ‘to try’ [BAGD, LN; CEV, NCV], ‘to attempt’ [BAGD, NIGTC; GW], not explicit [NLT].
- c. aorist mid. (deponent = act.) infin. of ἀνατάσσομαι (LN 62.3) (BAGD p. 61): ‘to compile’ [AB, BAGD, BECNT, LN, NIGTC; HCSB, NASB, NET], ‘to arrange’ [LN, WBC], ‘to put together’ [LN], ‘to draw up’ [Arn, NIGTC, NTC; NIV, REB], ‘to set down’ [NRSV], ‘to set forth in order’ [KJV], ‘to write’ [NLT, TEV], ‘to tell’ [CEV], ‘to recount’ [Lns]. The phrase ‘to compile an account’ is translated ‘to write about’ [GW], ‘to report on’ [NCV].
- d. διήγησις (LN 33.11) (BAGD p. 195): ‘account’ [Arn, BAGD, BECNT, LN; NASB, NET, NIV, NLT, NRSV, REB], ‘orderly account’ [AB; NRSV], ‘report’ [LN; TEV], ‘narrative’ [BAGD, Lns, NTC, WBC; HCSB], ‘story’ [CEV], ‘declaration’ [KJV], not explicit [GW, NCV]. In the context of ‘have undertaken’, which is literally ‘to set one’s hand to’ [BAGD], this refers to a written account [NET].
- e. πρᾶγμα (LN 13.105) (BAGD 1. p. 697): ‘event’ [AB, BAGD, LN, NIGTC; HCSB, NET, NLT, NRSV, REB], ‘thing’ [BECNT, NTC, WBC; KJV, NASB, NIV, NCV, TEV], ‘matter’ [Lns], ‘what’ [CEV, GW]. It refers to historical facts [NIC].

- f. perf. pass. participle of πληροφορέω (LN **13.106**) (BAGD 1.a. p. 670): ‘to happen’ [LN; NCV], ‘to take place’ [LN; GW, NLT, REB, TEV], ‘to be accomplished’ [BAGD, WBC; NASB], ‘to be brought to full measure’ [NIGTC], ‘to be brought to completion’ [Lns], ‘to be fulfilled’ [BECNT, LN, NTC; HCSB, NET, NIV, NRSV], ‘to come to fulfillment’ [AB], ‘(what God) has done’ [CEV], ‘to be surely believed’ [KJV], ‘(the things concerning which) there is full assurance’ [Arn].

QUESTION—What relationship is indicated by ἐπειδήπερ ‘since’?

1. It indicates the grounds for Luke’s decision to write (1:3) [AB, BAGD, BECNT, EGT, Lns, MGC, NIC, NICNT, NIGTC, NTC, TH, WBC; CEV, GW, KJV, NASB, NET, NIV, REB, TEV]: *since* many have undertaken to compile an account..., (v. 3) it seemed good to me also to write about this in an orderly way. Luke is not criticizing the many who had written before, but he perhaps wishes to write a more complete account than others had done [NTC]. This makes the point that his undertaking is quite regular. However, the following statements show that he is doing more than writing a useless repetition of what has already been done [Lns]. The existence of many accounts showed that there was a large demand for information that still wasn’t adequately met and therefore his attempt was not superfluous [EGT]. Not only did others provide an incentive to write, but their writings provided resources for Luke to investigate in producing his own account [NIGTC].
2. This conjunction is omitted by some and instead of this verse being the reason for his decision to write in 1:3, the participial clause of 1:3 is the only explicit grounds [NCV, NLT]: ‘*since* I myself have studied everything carefully from the beginning...it seemed good for me to write it out for you’ [NCV].

QUESTION—Who were the ‘many’ who had compiled accounts?

It refers to the writers Luke researched in 1:3 [TH]. The Gospel of Mark was written previously and probably was one of the sources Luke used [Arn, MGC, NIBC, NIGTC, NTC, Su], and also Matthew [Arn]. The reference to many writers brings out the importance of what Luke will write about [NAC, NICNT, WBC]. The number is unknown, but it was probably quite a few even though their accounts have not been preserved [Arn, Lns], and it was not an exaggeration [EGT]. ‘Many’ is used in a formal manner of beginning a document and it does not have to be taken to literally mean a large number [AB, NAC, NICNT, NIGTC], so that it could be translated ‘others’ [NAC].

QUESTION—What is the sense of ‘have undertaken’, which some translate as ‘have tried’ or ‘have attempted’?

The verb can be used in a formal way to introduce a literary document. It can have a neutral sense, with Luke using it of his own effort (‘it seemed good to me also’ in 1:3), or it could have the sense of attempting to do something but not succeeding, perhaps suggested by Luke referring to his writing in an orderly way after extensive research (1:3), and claiming to offer assurance of its truth (1:4) [AB]. It does not imply that some failed [Arn, BECNT, ICC,