

# What does *καθεξῆς* in Luke 1:3 mean? Discovering the writing order of the Gospel of Luke



## Authors:

Benjamin W.W. Fung<sup>1</sup>  
Aida B. Spencer<sup>1,2</sup>  
Francois P. Viljoen<sup>1</sup>

## Affiliations:

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Theology,  
North-West University,  
Potchefstroom Campus,  
South Africa

<sup>2</sup>Department of New  
Testament Studies,  
Gordon-Conwell Theological  
Seminary, United States

## Corresponding author:

Benjamin Fung,  
scarletandben@gmail.com

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In the preface of his Gospel Luke says that he is going to write 'in an orderly account' (*καθεξῆς*). However, scholars have no consensus about the kind of order Luke is seeking. This article aims to ascertain the meaning of *καθεξῆς* through a detailed study of this word, which includes a study of its usages in the Bible, its etymology, related words, and its meaning in contemporary Greek usages. This article proposes that *καθεξῆς* most likely refers to *chronological order*.

## Introduction

Luke<sup>1</sup> states in the preface of his Gospel that he writes it 'in an orderly account' (*καθεξῆς* – 1:3b), but he does not explain what an orderly account means. If *καθεξῆς* means chronological order, a study of the chronology therein may be important to understand the sequence of events in the Gospel in totality. To study a narrative account, attention may have to be paid to the previous narrative accounts since these accounts may provide additional background information, particularly on the timing of the events. But if *καθεξῆς* means a logical order, a study of the logic Luke uses may be the key to understand the Gospel. To study a narrative account, we may have to study the reason why Luke places that account in that particular position in the Gospel and what relevance that account has to Luke's overall logic. Since different beliefs in the writing order may result in different study approaches which may in turn affect the overall understanding of the Gospel and the individual narrative accounts, a study of the writing order Luke uses for his Gospel seems important. This article includes the following sections: Firstly, after summarising the different scholarly views, the article will study all the usages of *καθεξῆς* in the Bible and ascertain its probable meaning in each occurrence, and will categorise them compared to the categories of meaning shown in BDAG (2000). After that, this article will discuss its etymology to ascertain whether the meaning of its root words impacts *καθεξῆς*. Thirdly, this article will study the related words (e.g. synonyms and antonyms) and phrases which share *καθεξῆς*' root words to see whether their meanings shed light on the meaning of *καθεξῆς*. Fourthly, the meanings of *καθεξῆς* will be discussed in contemporary ancient Greek usages and then be categorised as in section one. The article will end with a conclusion.

## Views of different scholars

Scholars have different opinions about Luke's writing order. There are at least six different opinion categories among scholars:

- Chronological: Easton (1926:2) and Lockwood (1995:101–104);
- literary order appropriate to the Gospel: Alexander (1993:136); Bovon (2002:2); Cadbury (1999:345–346); Ellis (1974:66); Geldenhuys (1975:53); Green (1997:44); Moessner (1999:84–123); Nolland (1989:9); Talbert (2002:9) and Thompson (1972:45);
- broadly chronological: Bock (2004:62); Bovon<sup>2</sup> (2002:22); Creed (1960:5); Felix (1997:61–82); Hendriksen (1978:57); Marshall (1978:43); Plummer (1953:5); and Robertson (1920:53);
- salvation-historical: Bock<sup>3</sup> (2004:61); Bovon (2002:22); Sneed (1971:40–43); and Tannehill (1986:10);
- logical: Morris (1995:73–74); and Stein (2001:65);
- no order: Brown (1978:107); and Du Plessis (1974:259–271).

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1.These authors affirm Luke, Paul's companion, as the writer of the Gospel. See Bock (2004, 1:4–7) and Marshall (1978:33–35) for evidence supporting Luke as the author.

2.This scholar supports more than one view.

3.This scholar also supports more than one view.

## The usages of καθεξῆς in the Bible<sup>4</sup>

In *Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (Montanari 2015:1002) καθεξῆς indicates 'in succession, one after another, in order'. According to BDAG (2000:490) καθεξῆς has a similar but more elaborative meaning, namely 'pertinent to being in sequence in (1) time, (2) space, or (3) logic'. In the Bible καθεξῆς usually refers to sequence of *time*, and when Luke uses καθεξῆς to describe time, he describes chronological order, as will be demonstrated.

Καθεξῆς appears only five times in the New Testament and does not appear in the Septuagint. All five occurrences are by Luke in his Gospel and in Acts. Luke 8:1 describes the beginning of a new episode where Jesus travels with the 12 apostles to towns and villages to preach the gospel, after he has forgiven the sins of a woman in the Pharisee Simon's house (Lk 7:36–50): 'and it happened in the *following* (days; ἐν τῷ καθεξῆς)<sup>5</sup> also He himself went about through city and village while preaching and bringing good news (about) the kingdom of God and the twelve (were) with Him'. Καθεξῆς describes a sequence of days in which Jesus' traveling and preaching happens; it also relates the current event in Luke 8:1 to the previous event of 7:36–50 in the sense that the current event happens right after the previous event. It therefore may be categorised as *time*.

Acts 3:24 is a statement Peter made in his second sermon in Acts: 'and also all the prophets from Samuel and *the ones that follow* (τῶν καθεξῆς)<sup>6</sup> as many as spoke and proclaimed these days'. Καθεξῆς here means *that follow* or *following*. It describes the prophets who come after Samuel in the order of their appearances in history, which probably refers to chronological order, and therefore fits the category of *time*. Acts 11:4 describes Peter when he tries to explain to the circumcised believers in Jerusalem the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles at Cornelius' house: 'But after starting Peter explained to them *in chronological order* saying' (ἐξετίθετο αὐτοῖς καθεξῆς λέγων).<sup>7</sup> Καθεξῆς refers to *in chronological order* here because according to the biblical content that follows, Peter describes events in the order in which they happened: he first sees a vision (Ac 11:5–10), then the Holy Spirit tells him to follow the messengers sent by Cornelius (11:11–12), Cornelius tells him that he is instructed by an angel to send for him (11:13–14), and finally he begins to preach and the Holy Spirit falls on those who listen (11:15). Therefore, this article categorises it as *time*.

Acts 18:23 describes what Paul does after he has visited Antioch (18:22) on one of his missionary trips: 'And after

4. Refer to Appendix 1 for the meanings of καθεξῆς.

5. All translations of the Greek are the author B.W.W. Fung's own literal version. ESV and NRS translate this phrase as 'soon afterwards', NET as 'some time afterwards', and REB and NIV as 'after this'.

6. NRS translates τῶν καθεξῆς as 'those after him', ESV as 'those who came after him', NET as 'those who followed him', NIV as '(from Samuel) on', and REB as 'From Samuel onwards'.

7. ESV translates καθεξῆς as 'in order', NRSV as 'step by step', NET as 'point by point', NIV as 'everything ... precisely as it had happened', and REB as 'the facts as they had happened'.

spending some time he went out while passing through *in order* the Galatian country and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples' (διερχόμενος καθεξῆς). Later in his journey Paul reaches Ephesus (19:1). According to the geographic locations of Antioch, Galatia, Phrygia and Ephesus, Antioch is east of Galatia, Galatia east of Phrygia, and Phrygia east of Ephesus. It seems that Paul is gradually traveling west away from Antioch and towards Ephesus. If this is true, καθεξῆς here means 'in the order from the cities which are closer in distance west of Antioch (i.e. those cities in the Galatian country) to the ones further away west of it (i.e. those in Phrygia)', which appears to be an order of increasing geographical distance. Therefore, this article categorises it as *spatial*.

The meaning of καθεξῆς in Luke's four uses, viz. in Luke 8:1, Acts 3:24, 11:4 and 18:23 seems to fall into two categories. In Luke 8:1, Acts 3:24 and 11:4 it refers to *time*, and in Acts 18:23 it refers to *spatial*. The unit of measure is time or distance. Καθεξῆς in Luke 1:3 most likely falls under the time category, as Luke uses this word to describe a particular order for presenting the events about Jesus. Since this order is the same as that in Luke 8:1, Acts 3:24 and 11:4, they all refer to chronological order.

## The etymology of καθεξῆς

In this section, a study of the etymology of καθεξῆς will be conducted to understand the meanings of its root words and the impact on the meaning of καθεξῆς when the root words come together. 'Etymology' in *Collins cobuild advanced learner's English dictionary* (CCD; 2003) means 'the study of the origins ... of words'. Silva (1994:43–51) believes that the root words of a specific word may not necessarily indicate the real meaning of that word unless the biblical writer intends to use the word according to the meanings of its root words; and such an intention can be demonstrated through the notion of transparency. Silva (*ibid*:48) further explains that 'the notion of transparency is applied rather broadly to all those words that are motivated, that is, words that have some natural relation to their meaning'. One of the examples Silva gives is the word *leader*, 'for someone who knows what to lead means and what the suffix -er stands for can easily arrive at the meaning of the word' (*ibid*:48). Silva (*ibid*:50) also stresses the ultimate importance of the biblical context: only when the meaning of a word derived from etymology can nicely fit into the biblical context, that the meaning would be meaningful in that specific context. Καθεξῆς seems to be transparent because on the surface it is a compound consisting of two components (or root words): καθ (the short form of κατά) and ἐξῆς. Since ἐξῆς means *sequence* in its biblical usages (see my discussion on ἐξῆς below – BWWF), it seems to imply that καθεξῆς is related to some kind of sequence. The meaning of *sequence* also seems to fit perfectly in the biblical context of Luke 1:3, and it also agrees with the meanings of καθεξῆς in its four other usages in Luke 8:1, Acts 3:24, 11:4 and 18:23, which also indicate *sequence*. Accordingly, the study of etymology of καθεξῆς seems important. This section shows that καθεξῆς

likely means *next down to the end*, and when Luke writes his Gospel in this manner, he probably writes in chronological order.

There are at least two different opinions about the root words (i.e., the origins) of *καθεξῆς*. According to Thayer, (1930:313) *κατά* and *ἐξῆς* (adverb) are the two root words that form *καθεξῆς*, while Kohlenberger III et al. (1995:486) opine that *κατά* and *ἔχω* (verb) are the two root words of *καθεξῆς*. Thayer (1930:223) believes that *ἐξῆς* and *ἔχω* are related and *ἐξῆς* comes from the future form of *ἔχω* (*ἔξω*). This article will cover all three words: *κατά*, *ἐξῆς* and *ἔχω*.

*Κατά* is a preposition used extensively in the Greek Bible. There are 488 usages in the NT and 1 871 usages in the Septuagint.<sup>8</sup> According to BDAG (2000:511–513), *κατά* has quite a number of meanings. When it is put together with a genitive, it can mean *down from*, *down upon*, *down against*, *throughout* or *into*. With an accusative, it can mean *in*, *through*, *during*, *according to*, or *for*. Meanings above such as '*down from*, *down upon*, *down against*, *into* and *in* all indicate a downward motion. According to LSJ (1996:882–884), when *κατά* is put together with a genitive it can mean *down from*, *down upon* or *over*, *toward*, or *against*, while with an accusative, it can mean *of motion downwards*, *throughout*, *opposite*, *in accordance with*, *concerning*, or *nearly*, *about*. The meanings given by LSJ are similar to that of BDAG in the sense that many possible meanings indicate a downward motion. LSJ specifically mentions that this preposition can indicate a *downward motion* when put together with either a genitive or an accusative. Moreover, regarding *κατά*, Robertson (1934:605–606) also agrees that 'the root-meaning of the preposition is not perfectly clear, though "down" seems to be the idea ... we sometimes find ... the genitive (means) *down upon*, and the accusative (means) *down along*.' Robertson also mentions that when *κατά* is combined with other words, 'often *κατά* occurs with "perfective" force'. Based on the above observations it is likely that *κατά*, when combined with *ἐξῆς* to form *καθεξῆς*, gives a meaning of *down* (or indicates a *downward motion*) and at the same time gives a *perfective* force to the word, which means *down to the end*.

Another root of *καθεξῆς* is the verb *ἔχω*. The word is frequently used in the Greek Bible and in the NT alone it is used 708 times.<sup>9</sup> According to Liddell, Scott & Jones (1996:749–751) *ἔχω* commonly means *to have* or *to hold*. It can also mean 'cling to', 'come next to', 'follow closely', 'neighboring' or 'next'. BDAG (2000:420–422) agrees with LSJ that if *ἔχω* is used with a spatial aspect it can mean to be next to something' or 'neighboring', and if used with a temporal aspect it can mean 'to be next' or 'immediately following'. These meanings are very similar to the meaning of the adverb *ἐξῆς* discussed below.

8. Numbers are indicated by the search engine of Bibleworks, v. 7. As the usages are numerous, this article will resort to two reputable lexicons, BDAG and LSJ, for the meaning of the word.

9. See Kohlenberger III et al. (1995:n.2398). As the usages are numerous, this article will again resort to BDAG and LSJ for guidance.

Contrary to *κατά*, the adverb *ἐξῆς* is not common in the Greek Bible. According to BDAG (2000:349), it means 'next in a series' or 'in the next place', and according to LSJ (1996:594) the more important meanings of the word are 'next', if used to indicate time; 'next to' or 'next in order to', if used to indicate logical connection; and 'next place', if used to indicate place. It is used only five times in the NT, solely by Luke (Lk 7:11; 9:37; Ac 21:1; 25:17; 27:18), and appears six times in the Septuagint (Ex 10:1; Dt 2:34; 3:6; Jdg 20:48; 2 Macc 7:8; 3 Macc 1:9). This article studies the meaning of *ἐξῆς* in each of the above 11 occurrences and categorises them according to LSJ's three major categories mentioned above.<sup>10</sup>

Luke 7:11 describes Jesus and his apostles going to a town called Nain. In the context *ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἐξῆς* means literally: 'it happened in the *next*'. As no noun comes after *ἐξῆς*, it is not clear whether Luke wants to imply *χρόνος* (time – i.e. next time or soon afterwards) or *ἡμέρα* (day – i.e. next day) as the noun in this phrase, and Luke mentions neither *χρόνος* nor *ἡμέρα* earlier. BDAG (2000:349) concludes that it should be time and reads 'soon afterwards', while LSJ (1996:594) suggests that it should be 'day' and reads 'in the next day'. Since *τῷ* is in the masculine or neuter form which matches the masculine form of *χρόνος*, and *ἡμέρα* is in the feminine form, Fung (2017) prefers *χρόνος* to *ἡμέρα*. Therefore, this article translates this verse as 'And it happened *soon afterwards* He went into a city called Nain and his disciples and a great crowd went with Him.' Based on the context, here the word *ἐξῆς* means *next* and is related to time.

At the beginning of Luke 9:37 Luke uses *ἐξῆς* in a phrase which is very similar to the phrase in 7:11. Luke 9:37 says that the next day, when Jesus and the apostles come down from the mountain, a great crowd meets Him. *Ἐγένετο δὲ τῆ ἐξῆς ἡμέρα* may be translated as 'and it happened in the *next day*'. Again *ἐξῆς* (*next*) is related to time. The meaning is similar to the phrase *ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἐξῆς* ('it happened in the next time' or 'soon afterwards') used in 7:11 which shares the same construction. In Acts 21:1b Luke is describing one of Paul's missionary trips: *τῆ δὲ ἐξῆς εἰς τὴν Ῥόδον κάκειθεν εἰς Πάταρα*. Again Luke does not supply the noun for *τῆ* ... *ἐξῆς*. Similar to the logic mentioned above, this article translates the phrase as 'in the *next* (day) into Rhodes and into Patara' as an implied *ἡμέρα* in the feminine matches the feminine *τῆ*. The phrase is similar to *τῆ ἐξῆς ἡμέρα* used in Luke 9:37 and therefore the meaning of *ἐξῆς*, *next*, is likely related to time. In Acts 25:17 Governor Festus tells King Agrippa that he has dealt promptly with Paul's case after becoming governor: 'Then after they (the Jewish leaders who were against Paul) came together here, after making no delay, in the *next* (day) (*τῆ ἐξῆς*), after sitting on the judgment seat, I ordered the man to be brought in.' Here *τῆ ἐξῆς* is the same as in Luke 9:37 and Acts 21:1, and the context seems to support *ἐξῆς* being related to time and means 'next'. Acts 27:18 describes the ship Paul is on, facing a big storm: 'and while we were being violently tossed in

10. Refer to Appendix 2 for the meanings of *ἐξῆς*.



the *next* (day) (τῆ ἐξῆς) we were throwing cargo overboard'. Again, Luke appears to use the feminine τῆ ἐξῆς to describe time and to imply the 'next' day. In summary, in all five usages of ἐξῆς, Luke does not use the word separately but always with a dative article (either τῷ or τῇ). He uses ἐξῆς to describe time sequence which means either 'the next time' or 'the next day'. Luke seems to understand ἐξῆς, when used to describe time sequence, as meaning *next*. This agrees with LSJ's observation that if ἐξῆς is used to indicate time, it means 'next'.

In the Septuagint ἐξῆς is used six times. In Exodus 10:1 God tells Moses to approach Pharaoh after the seventh plague and God will harden the hearts of Pharaoh and his servants so that he can perform signs amongst the Egyptians. According to the context of 10:1b, ἐξῆς ἐπέλθῃ τὰ σημεῖα represents the remaining three plagues: those that will still come, but not those already been experienced. God has decided to send the remaining plagues on Egypt and this is the reason God asks Moses to approach Pharaoh. Therefore 10:1b may be translated as: 'for I have hardened his heart and (the heart) of his servants so that these *successive* signs may come upon them'. Εξῆς refers to successive signs which will happen in a time sequence.

In both Deuteronomy 2:34 and 3:6 ἐξῆς is used to describe how the Israelites destroy the cities they have conquered in Canaan (ἐξωλεθρεύσαμεν πᾶσαν πόλιν ἐξῆς). This article agrees with Brenton (1998–1999) that ἐξῆς should be translated as *in succession*. Εξῆς seems to indicate a spatial sequence for the cities which are destroyed by the Israelites. Judges 20:48 describes how the Israelites destroy the cities and the people of the Benjaminites. Judges 20:48b may be translated literally as: 'and they smote them with edge of sword from (the) *next* city to the (last) animal, to all things which were found ...' (ἀπὸ πόλεως ἐξῆς ἕως κτήνους ἕως). Again, ἐξῆς is used to describe the spatial sequence of the cities of the Benjaminites which are destroyed one by one.

Εξῆς is used in 2 Maccabees 7:8, which describes the seven brothers killed one by one by King Antiochus as he tries to force them to give up their Jewish beliefs. It may be translated as 'and he, having answered in the language of his father, replied: No! For this very reason also he received the *next* torture as the first (brother)' (οὗτος τὴν ἐξῆς ἔλαβεν βάσανον ὡς ὁ πρῶτος). Εξῆς describes the death of the brothers in a time sequence. In 3 Maccabees 1:9 ἐξῆς describes Ptolemy entering Jerusalem: 'and after (Ptolemy) arriving in Jerusalem and after sacrificing to the great God and after paying gifts and after doing something of the *next* acts in the place' (καὶ τῶν ἐξῆς τι τῷ τόπῳ ποιήσας). Εξῆς describes a sequence of acts done by Ptolemy in chronological order according to their levels of importance in the Jewish custom. Sacrificing to the great God seems to be the most important act; paying gifts apparently is the next most important one, and the next acts likely are the least important ones, so the author does not even describe

them. Therefore this article categorises it as a chronological sequence of events which is related to hierarchy of significance.

From the above, the meanings of ἐξῆς in the Septuagint can be divided into three categories. When it indicates a time sequence (Ex 10:1; 2 Macc 7:8) it means *next*. When it indicates a spatial sequence (Dt 2:34; 3:6; Jdg 20:48) or a sequence which involves hierarchy of significance (3 Macc 1:9) it means *next to* or *next in order to*.

In summary, considering the meanings of its root words, *κατά* and ἐξῆς or ἔχω, *καθεξῆς* probably has the meaning of *next* or *next in order to* (from ἔχω or ἐξῆς) and *down* (from *κατά*). With the perfective force provided by *κατά*, *καθεξῆς* likely means *next down to the end* or *next in order to*, and *down to the end*. Similarly, in Luke 1:3 Luke intends to write one event after another according to their time of happening (*next*, or *next in order to* and *down*) for everything he has investigated (to the end). By using *καθεξῆς*, Luke suggests that he writes his Gospel in chronological order.

## The words related to *καθεξῆς*

In this section the article will explore the meanings of the words related to *καθεξῆς* and also the phrases in the NT and the Septuagint which contain the root words of *καθεξῆς*. To understand whether a word conveys a concept (and in this case whether *καθεξῆς* conveys the concept of *sequence* or *chronological order*), Long (2005:146) suggests that it is problematic only to study the word: 'in reality, a single theme may be represented by several different words or phrases, and the totality of a certain truth/theme may not be represented in one word', and he proposes further that one also has to study the word's cognates (words built from the same Greek root), synonyms (other words having similar meanings), and even antonyms (words with the opposite meaning). Therefore, comparing the meaning of these words and phrases may yield a more accurate understanding of the meaning of *καθεξῆς* in Luke 1:3. For the first part of this exercise, *related* or *cognate* words are defined as follows: firstly, words which have the same roots as *καθεξῆς*, i.e. words formed by *κατά* and ἐξῆς or *κατά* and ἔχω; secondly words in the same word family as classified by GECNT, including antonyms (words opposite in meaning to *καθεξῆς*) and synonyms (words with meaning similar to *καθεξῆς*); and thirdly, words indicated by BDAG or LSJ as having a meaning similar to and used interchangeably with *καθεξῆς*. For the second part, *related phrases* are defined as follows: A related phrase should include either *κατά* or its related form *καθ* and then ἐξῆς in proper sequence, or secondly *κατά* or its related form *καθ* and then ἔχω or its related forms in proper sequence.

Using these guidelines, cognate words are *κατέχω*, *κάθεξις*, *ἀνοχή* and *ἐφεξῆς*. However, a detailed analysis of *κατέχω*,

κάθεξις,<sup>11</sup> ἀνοχή<sup>12</sup> and related phrases<sup>13</sup> do not provide any helpful information as to the meaning of καθέξις. They pick up the meaning of *to have* from ἔχω instead of *next*. LSJ (1996:852) and BDAG (2000:489) do list ἐφεξις, which can be used interchangeably with καθέξις. It means *in order, one after another, in a row, and next to, successively, continuously*. If used to describe time (e.g. τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἐπεξίης meaning three successive days), it means *thereupon and immediately afterwards*.<sup>14</sup> Middle and Liddell in the TLG database also define this word as ‘in succession, without exception, of time’. Its meanings of *successively, continuously and in succession, without exception, of time* seem to support the idea that καθέξις can mean *in chronological order*.

## The meaning of καθέξις in contemporary Greek usage

In this section the article studies καθέξις in contemporary Greek usage to ascertain its possible meaning(s) during the time of Luke: firstly all uses of καθέξις cited by BDAG (2000) and LSJ, and in the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, Josephus and Philo; secondly all uses in the papyri; and thirdly all additional uses from the last century BCE to CE first century in the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG) electronic data bank.<sup>15</sup> This article categorises the meaning of each usage according to the three categories mentioned earlier, i.e. either a sequence related to time, distance or space, or logic or hierarchy of significance.<sup>16</sup> This article discovered that καθέξις does not refer to any logical order, but to a sequence which means ‘next down to the end’ referring to a sequence of time, or space, or a hierarchy of significance.

11. In the study of words related to καθέξις, κατέχω is identified as having the same root words (κατά and ἔχω). An analysis of the meanings of all the 68 appearances (from GECNT and Hatch & Redpath 1998) of κατέχω and its related forms in the NT and the Septuagint finds that the meaning of the word is not relevant to καθέξις. This word seems only to pick up the meaning of *to have* and *to hold* from ἔχω (instead of the meaning *next*) and means *hold, hold back, hold fast, suppress or bound, et cetera*. There is another word, κάθεξις, which according to LSJ (1996:852), is derived from κατέχω and probably shares the same roots. This word does not appear in either the NT or the Septuagint. According to LSJ it has a meaning similar to κατέχω which is also irrelevant to the meaning of καθέξις.

12. In the study of words that belong to the same word family as καθέξις, GECNT does not show any related words for καθέξις. It only indicates that κατά and ἔχω are the two root words for καθέξις (and as mentioned above, Thayer opines that κατά and ἐξίς are the two root words). Therefore, this exercise focused on the root words ἔχω and ἐξίς, which provide the meaning next to καθέξις. While GECNT indicates that the only related word for ἐξίς is ἔχω, there are 48 related words for ἔχω. A detailed study of all these words (which include καθέξις, κατέχω and ἐξίς) shows that the only seemingly relevant word is ἀνοχή, which is formed by the root words ἀνα (meaning: *up*; the opposite of κατά meaning: *down*) and ἔχω. However, a study of ἀνοχή shows that it picks up the meaning of *to hold* and *to have* rather than the meaning of *next* from ἔχω, and means *holding back* or *forbearance*, which is irrelevant to the meaning of καθέξις.

13. Using the search engine of Bibleworks v. 7, searches for the following related phrases were conducted for both the NT and the Septuagint. (1) κατά (or καθ) ἐξ\* phrased together in proper sequence; and (2) κατά (or καθ) ἐξ\* phrased together in proper sequence; and (3) κατά (or καθ) ἐσ\* phrased together in proper sequence; (4) κατά (or καθ) ἐξίς phrased together in proper sequence. Nothing relevant to the meaning of καθέξις is found. Another search was conducted for any of the above four combinations not phrased together, but appearing as close neighbours in the same verse. Again, nothing relevant to the meaning of καθέξις was found.

14. See LSJ (1996:742).

15. No usage of καθέξις is found in several reputable additional references. These references include: Deissmann (1995); Grenfell and Hunt (1898–1994; all 18 volumes, except volume 4 which cannot be located, were checked); Horsely (1981–1989); and Moulton and Milligan (1930: §2517);

16. The categorisations of the meanings of καθέξις in this section and in the study of καθέξις in the Bible are summarised in Appendix 1 for easy reference.

## References cited in BDAG, LSJ and Pseudepigrapha

No usage of καθέξις was found in Josephus, Philo or the Apocrypha, but eight usages of καθέξις appear in BDAG, LSJ and the Pseudepigrapha. These include Plutarch’s *Moralia*, Aelian’s *Historical miscellany*, *Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas Pertinentes*, Oppianus Apamensis Epicus’ *Cynegetica*, *Testament of Judah*, *Apocalypsis Moses*, *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and 1 Clement.<sup>17</sup>

### Plutarch’s *Moralia* (1969, 8:§615b)<sup>18</sup>

This describes a group singing and the use of a myrtle branch in the group:

but others say the myrtle branch is not to proceed *in the order from one to one’s neighbor in the same couch*, but is to pass across according to each (position) from couch to couch.

Paul A. Clement (ed. Lake 1912–1913) translates καθέξις as ‘from each guest to his neighbor in orderly sequence’. The way the myrtle branch proceeds is described later in more detail by Plutarch in the same paragraph. Clement translates it as follows:

that the first man to sing sent it over to the first man on the second couch, and the latter to the first man on the third couch, then the second man to the second on the neighboring couch, and so on; so, they say, it seems that the song was named *scolium* because of the intricate and twisted character of its path.

Plutarch does not treat the way the branch is actually passed along as καθέξις, though it is also a logical order. Καθέξις, in Plutarch’s understanding, seems to mean a spatial sequence which features the characteristic ‘next down to the end’ (meaning of καθέξις found in its etymology); while *next* refers to the neighbour closest to its predecessor in the unit of measure explicitly mentioned or implied, and shares the same subject under discussion<sup>19</sup> with its predecessor. (In a time sequence, unit of measure refers to *time*; in a spatial sequence, unit of measure refers to *distance*; in a sequence of hierarchy of importance, unit of measure refers to *level of importance*.) In this case, *next* refers to the next person sitting on the same couch – the one who is the closest in distance (unit of measure) to the predecessor and they share the same couch (subject under discussion). The branch is passed from the first person on a couch to the second (next) person on the same couch and then to the third (again: *next*) and all the way (*down*) until it reaches the last person on the couch (to the end). Therefore, καθέξις does not refer to logical order; it refers to a spatial sequence which has the characteristic ‘next down to the end’.

17. For those who have an English translation: this article quotes the paragraph where καθέξις is used to understand the context, and if necessary, this article provides the author’s (Fung’s) translation of the sentence to understand more specifically what the word means. For usages without an English translation: the author (Fung) conducts his own translation to ascertain the correct meaning of καθέξις in context.

18. The Greek of Plutarch’s *Moralia* is translated by Paul A. Clement (1969).

19. ‘Same subject under discussion’ refers to the same background shared by the two, for example ‘acts by the same person’ where *person* is the common background shared by the acts.

### **Aelian's *Historical miscellany* (1997, 8:§7)**

This describes a large wedding conducted during the time of Alexander the Great. N.G. Wilson has rightly translated the passage as follows: 'When Alexander captured Darius he celebrated his own marriage and that of his friends. The number of people marrying was ninety ... For five days *in succession* he celebrated the weddings (πέντε δὲ ἡμέρας καθεξῆς τοὺς γάμους ἔθυσεν) ...' Aelian used καθεξῆς to describe how these five days are organised: it is five days in a row from the first day of the wedding to the second (next) day and all the way (down) to the fifth day (to the end). Καθεξῆς here also features the characteristic of 'next down to the end', with *next* referring to the next day, the one closest in time (the unit of measure) to the previous day in the same wedding (subject under discussion). Καθεξῆς refers to a sequence which describes time.

### ***Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas Pertinentes* ('Greek inscriptions relating to Roman affairs' IGR IV [1927,1432:§9])**

The phrase describes the names of contest winners engraved in an inscription. The Greek may be translated as 'the contests after having written under an inscription: Smyrna, Olympia in the sixth and tenth, Hadrian Rome second, Puteoli second, Neapolis third, Actia second, the body of men-at arms from Argos, Nemea third, *all* (winners) *in their winning order* (πάντας καθεξῆς). Καθεξῆς here refers to the order of winning contestants (viz. champion, first runner up, etc.). Καθεξῆς describes a hierarchy of significance of the success of the performance of the cities in the contests, beginning with the cities which won first prize, then the cities which won second prize (*next*), and so on (*down*) until all the winners are described (*to the end*). *Next* here refers to the next award of importance (unit of measure) in the same contest (subject under discussion).

### **Oppianus Apamensis Epicus' *Cynegetica* 3.59<sup>20</sup>**

It describes the several pregnancies of a lioness. A.W. Mair (Oppianus 1928) translates the passage as follows:

Five times doth the lioness loose her zone in birth, and idle truly is the report that she bears but one. Five she bears the first time, but next she travails with four cubs; then *next in order* (κατά θ' ἐξείης) from her third labor spring three; from her fourth spring twin young; and last from her womb of noble progeny the mother brings forth the glorious Lion King.

Κατά θ' ἐξείης, which includes the two root words κατά and ἐξείης, may be translated as *down next* or *next down*.<sup>21</sup> Similar to καθεξῆς, this phrase describes a sequence meaning 'next down to the end'. It describes the number of cubs born each time – the first time five are born, then the second (next) time four, and so on (down) until the fifth time (to the end) only one is born. *Next* here refers to pregnancy of next time (unit of measure) by the same lioness (subject under discussion). This phrase refers to a time sequence.

20. See Oppianus (1928:116–117).

21. θ' is not translated, following the practice as in Psalm 119:65, where the alphabet θ' is also not translated.

### **Testament of Judah 25:1<sup>22</sup>**

Judah describes what will happen after all twelve sons of Jacob have been resurrected. R.H. Charles (1913, 2:324) translates this verse as follows:

And after these things shall Abraham and Isaac and Jacob arise unto life, and I and my brethren shall be chief of the tribes of Israel: Levi first, I the second, Joseph third, Benjamin fourth, Simeon fifth, Issachar sixth, and so *all in order* (πάντες καθεξῆς).

The order here is not time because it does not follow the birth order of the patriarchs in the Bible. It seems that καθεξῆς here describes the order of the twelve patriarchs according to how blessed (by God) they are. The most blessed one is described first, and then the second in order (next) is described, and so on until the least blessed is described (down to the end). *Next* here refers to the patriarch who is next most important (unit of measure) in the view of God (subject of discussion). The order is a sequence of hierarchy of significance indicating the priority of importance of the patriarchs.

### ***Apocalypse Moses* 8:2<sup>23</sup>**

Here God tells Adam, after he has eaten from the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden, that God will bring 72 strokes upon his body. The author then describes the first (about the eye) and the second (about the ear) strokes and then writes 'and likewise *in turn* (καθεξῆς) all the strokes shall befall thee'. This article translates καθεξῆς as *successively*. The context seems to indicate that God will impose the strokes one by one upon Adam's body, and if so, καθεξῆς indicates time sequence or chronological order.

### **The martyrdom of Polycarp 22:4<sup>24</sup>**

Included is a final comment by the author, which Roberts and Donaldson (1885–1896:n.p.) translate as follows: 'And I again, Pionius, wrote them from the previously written copy, having carefully searched into them ... even as I shall show in *what follows* ...' (ἐν τῷ καθεξῆς). Holmes (1999:245) translates the Greek phrase as, 'as I will explain in the sequel'. Καθεξῆς here is used as a noun to describe another book, probably the sequel to the current book. *Next* here likely refers to the next book (unit of measure) in a spatial sequence written by the same writer (subject under discussion). Καθεξῆς refers to a spatial sequence concerning the next book the author will write.

### **1 Clement 37:3**

Clement (ed. Lake 1912–1913:n.p.) encourages fellow Christians to follow the command of the Lord. Roberts and Donaldson (1885–1896:n.p.) translate it as follows:

Let us then, men and brethren, with all energy act the part of soldiers, in accordance with His holy commandments. Let us consider those who serve under our generals, with what order, obedience, and submissiveness they perform the things which

22. For the Greek sentence with καθεξῆς, see Charles (1966:103).

23. For the Greek sentence with καθεξῆς, see Tischendorf (1866:4); for the English translation of the passage, see Charles (1913, 2:n.p.).

24. The Greek text is from Lake (ed. 1912–1913:n.p.).



are commanded them. All are not prefects, nor commanders of a thousand, nor of a hundred, nor of fifty, nor *the like* (τὸ καθεξῆς), but each one in his own rank performs the things commanded by the king and the generals.

Holmes (1999:71) translates the phrase in Greek as ‘Not all are prefects or tribunes or centurions or captains of fifty and so forth.’ My own (Fung’s) translation is: ‘not all are commanders, nor captains over a thousand, nor centurions, nor leaders of a company of fifty, nor those *in (the) order commanding fewer people*’. Here this article treats τὸ as a collective noun and καθεξῆς as an adjective modifying it. The context describes an order beginning from the commander who commands the greatest number of soldiers down to the leaders who command the smallest number. Καθεξῆς is used to describe those who command even fewer soldiers but are not explicitly mentioned by Clement. It seems that if they are mentioned, they appear to be mentioned in the order of decreasing number of soldiers commanded. Καθεξῆς’s meaning ‘next down to the end’ also fits here where *next* refers to the leader who commands the next smaller number of soldiers (unit of measure) in the same army (subject under discussion). Καθεξῆς describes a sequence of hierarchy of significance of decreasing number of people commanded.

## References cited in TLG

A search of TLG lists four usages of καθεξῆς between the last century BCE and CE first century.<sup>25</sup>

### Antiochus Astrol., *Fragmenta* (e cod. Monac. 7, 7:114, lines 4 to 14)

In this document the context seems to describe an ancient chronological system:

And the investigation of the one who acts and who turns about is this: whenever the appointed time of Cronus (Father of Zeus) may become the day, we say; it turns about the whole day and acts the first hour and while it is turning about and acting, it gives the second hour to Zeus and we say the second hour of Cronus ... Likewise we say the fourth hour of the Sun, the fifth of the Aphrodite, the sixth of the Hermes and the seventh of the Moon, we say when Cronus is turning about, after appointed time of the day also becomes the one who acts. Then again the eighth hour turns about and acts, and the sequence of the future is thus *in order*, indeed the sun turns about the first day and acts the first hour, and the moon the second (hour) likewise ...

Καθεξῆς is used here to describe time. Although in the passage the way time proceeds is seemingly described in chronological order, this does not necessarily imply that the sequence of the future is also in chronological order, as the sequence of the future is not clearly explained in the context. But if the sequence of the future is the same sequence as described earlier, καθεξῆς probably refers to chronological order.

### Onasander Tact., *Strategicus* (30:T)

Here the context seems to describe how to choose a commander for an army:

.....  
25. As many usages in the TLG have no English translation, I (Fung) will cite my own translation.

As it is necessary to conclude by way of syllogism the commander before the battle, why ought he to meet during the encounter with the certain one and why with the other and thus *one after the other* to examine closely his own captains towards the ones of the opponents?

In this passage καθεξῆς is used to describe the method of how to interview people (i.e. ‘one after the other’, or ‘one by one’). The passage seems to indicate a kind of logical sequence, though the context does not explain in detail what this sequence is. Καθεξῆς’s meaning, ‘next down to the end’ also fits here – if the interview is done, the eligible ones will be interviewed according to a logical order until the last one is interviewed. It likely implies a sequential hierarchy of significance.

### Vitae Aesopi, *Vita Aesopi Westermanniana* (40, lines 7–8)

Here is a description of a conversation between a master and a subordinate:

You have commanded me to hear everything, and to do those things. You did not say: Throw water into the pot and wash my feet and place the sandals and everything *in their appropriate place*.

Καθεξῆς describes ‘the appropriate locations for the subjects which should be placed’. It indicates some kind of spatial sequence. Καθεξῆς’s meaning ‘next down to the end’ fits here – the items will be placed one by one according to a spatial order until the last one is placed, though the type of spatial order is not specified.

### Heron’s *Geodaisia* [Sp.] (6:2, lines 1-5)

It describes sowing. It is necessary to know that a peck measure fit for sowing contains 40 litra, and every one litra sows a land of 5 fathoms. For width and length of 5 fathoms while doing 1 litre, also *in (the following) order*:

Width and length of 10 fathoms while doing 2 litres

Width and length of 15 fathoms while doing 3 litres

Width and length of 20 fathoms while doing 4 litres...

Καθεξῆς describes the area of land which can be sown with the increasing number of litres used. Καθεξῆς’s meaning ‘next down to the end’ is appropriate here – the description continues through the maximum number of litres that can be used. *Next* here refers to the next additional litre (unit of measure) used for the extra area of land sown (subject of discussion). Καθεξῆς here is categorised as a spatial sequence.

In summary, the study of καθεξῆς in contemporary Greek usages indicates that it does not usually refer to just any logical order. Plutarch’s *Moralia* shows that the way the myrtle branch passes along is not considered as καθεξῆς. Καθεξῆς likely means ‘next down to the end’ with *next* being the neighbour closest to the one before in the unit of measure explicitly mentioned or implied, and it shares the same subject under discussion with the one before. Of the 16

references of *καθεξής* studied,<sup>26</sup> 7 (43.8%) refer to time sequence, 5 (31.2%) spatial sequence, and 4 (25%) hierarchy of significance. Time sequence is the most common meaning of *καθεξής*, and when it refers to time sequence, it always refers to chronological order.

## Conclusion

There are several observations about the potential meaning of *καθεξής* which seem to support the conclusion that *καθεξής* in Luke 1:3 most likely refers to 'chronological order'. They are as follows:

Based on a study of the etymology of *καθεξής*, the word likely has a meaning of 'next down to the end' or 'next in order to, down to the end'. Therefore, if this is applied to Luke 1:3, *καθεξής* probably means that Luke writes one event after another according to their time of happening ('next in order to') for everything he has investigated ('down to the end') – signifying that Luke most likely writes in chronological order.

Based on a study of contemporary Greek usages of *καθεξής*, *καθεξής* does not refer to just any logical order. *Καθεξής* refers to a sequence and the *next* in its 'next down to the end' definition refers to the neighbour closest to the predecessor in the unit of measure explicitly mentioned or implied in the context, and it shares the same subject under discussion with the predecessor. Most references are to time, and secondarily to space. The least frequent references to logic are references to hierarchy of significance.

If Luke's understanding of the potential of meaning of *καθεξής* is the same as that of his contemporaries, *καθεξής* likely refers to a sequence which has the meaning 'next down to the end', with *next* referring to the next act or teaching closest in time (the unit of measure) to the one previously conducted by Jesus (subject under discussion), implying chronological order.

Besides Luke 1:3, *καθεξής* occurs four times only in Luke and Acts in the NT, and the usages in Luke 8:1, Acts 3:24 and 11:4 (i.e. 75%) refer to time sequence. Root components of *καθεξής* are also helpful in understanding the word. The roots *κατά* and *έξής* literally have to do with 'next down to the end' or 'next in order to, and down to the end'. A sequence or order seems to be the basic idea of the root *έξής*. In this research, the author (Fung) finds sequencing that is organised by time, space or hierarchy of importance.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, Luke always uses *έξής* to describe a time sequence, whether referring generally to time or specifically to hour. In the Septuagint *έξής* is used for time, space, and hierarchy of significance. *Καθεξής* does occur outside the Bible in contemporary Greek examples, where it is used to describe sequence of time, space (physical proximity) and hierarchy of significance. Thus, any of these possibilities can occur

26. See Appendix 1.

27. See Appendix 2.

in the Gospel. Nevertheless, Luke himself used *έξής* only with time. In addition, since *καθεξής* is used of a whole gospel, space or physical proximity seems not to be a relevant category. The biblical references would argue more for chronology, while the contemporary Greek references would prefer chronology, as well, though hierarchy of significance is possible. Some scholars have suggested that *καθεξής* has to do with thematic logic. However, in the evidence of this study, thematic sequencing does not appear to be an aspect of *καθεξής*. The study shows that BDAG (2000:490) is correct in referring *καθεξής* first to time; *καθεξής* also refers to space or logic (i.e. hierarchy of significance), but those categories are less frequent.

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The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

## Authors' contributions

B.W.W.F. prepared the article under the supervision of A.B.S. and F.P.V.

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Appendix starts on the next page →

## Appendix 1

**TABLE 1-A1:** Categorisation of the meanings of *καθεξῆς* found in the NT, the Septuagint, and contemporary Greek usages.

Biblical/ other reference	Meaning of <i>καθεξῆς</i>	Category (usage to describe ...)
Luke 8:1	Following (days) – describes the time frame in which the event in 8:1 happened – in the period of time immediately after the event of 7:36–50.	Sequence – time
Acts 3:24	Following (prophets) – describes the prophets who come after Samuel in order of their appearance in history, probably refers to chronological order.	Sequence – time
Acts 11:4	Chronological order – Paul explains the events in the order in which they happened.	Sequence – time
<i>Cynegetica</i> 3.59	Chronological order of the number of cubs born in each pregnancy – describes the number of cubs, which is decreasing from five to four, four to three, three to two and two to one.	Sequence – time
<i>Historical miscellany</i> 8:7	Successive (days) – describes how the five days of a large wedding are organised: they are successive, in a row. It refers to chronological order.	Sequence – time
<i>Fragmenta</i>	The meaning of <i>καθεξῆς</i> is unclear in the text, but if it refers to the sequence the context has described earlier, it probably means chronological order.	Sequence – time
<i>ApcMos</i> 8	The 72 different body parts of Adam upon which God's punishments will fall. Likely in a chronological manner.	Sequence – time
<i>MarPol</i> 22:3	Sequel of a book – describes the next book the author will write.	Sequence – spatial
Acts 18:23	Increasing numerical order of spatial distance – in an order of cities with increasing geographical distance from Antioch.	Sequence – spatial
<i>Moralia</i> 2.615b	Sequential order of the people sitting on the same couch: from the first person on a couch to the second one on the same couch to the third one and so on until the last person on the couch is reached.	Sequence – spatial
<i>Vita Aesopi Westermanniana</i>	The appropriate locations for the subjects to be placed. Some kind of spatial order.	Sequence – spatial
<i>Geodaesia</i>	In sequential order – the size of land which can be sown with respect to the increasing number of litres used.	Sequence – spatial
<i>Testjud</i> 25:1	In sequence order of importance in God's view – the order of the twelve patriarchs according to how blessed (by God) they are; the most blessed comes first, down to the least blessed.	Sequence – hierarchy of significance
1 Clement 37:3	In decreasing number of soldiers commanded – in an order beginning with those who command more soldiers down to those who command fewer.	Sequence – hierarchy of significance
<i>IGR IV</i> 1432,9	In sequential order – the order of winners of contests: champion, first runner-up, second-runner up, et cetera.	Sequence – hierarchy of significance
<i>Strategicus</i>	A logical sequence describing the method of interviewing people. The sequence is likely one of hierarchy of significance.	Sequence – hierarchy of significance

## Appendix 2

**TABLE 1-A2:** Categorisation of the meanings of *ἐξῆς* found in the NT and the Septuagint.

Biblical reference	Meaning of <i>ἐξῆς</i>	Usage to describe ...
Luke 7:11	Next (time) or soon afterwards – describes when the event in 7:11 happened – soon after the event described in 7:1–10 (Jesus healing the servant of a centurion).	Time
Luke 9:37	Next (day) – describes the time when the event in 9:37 happened – on the next day of 9:28–36 (Jesus' transfiguration).	Time
Acts 21:1b	Next (day) – describes the itinerary of one of Paul's missionary trips.	Time
Acts 25:17	Next (day) – Governor Festus says that he has dealt with Paul's case promptly, on the next day after he receives a complaint from the Jewish leaders.	Time
Acts 27:18	Next (day) – the people on the boat begin to throw the cargo overboard on the <i>next day</i> after they encountered a storm.	Time
Exodus 10:1	Next (plagues) – describes the remaining three plagues the Egyptians will face in a time sequence.	Time
2 Maccabees 7:8	Next (death) – describes the death of the seven brothers killed by King Antiochus in a time sequence.	Time
Deuteronomy 2:34	(City) in succession – describes the spatial sequence for the cities which are destroyed by the Israelites.	Spatial
Deuteronomy 3:6	(City) in succession – same as above.	Spatial
Judges 20:48	(City) in succession – same as above.	Spatial
3 Maccabees 1:9	Next (acts) – describes the hierarchy of significance of the acts performed by Ptolemy.	Hierarchy of significance