

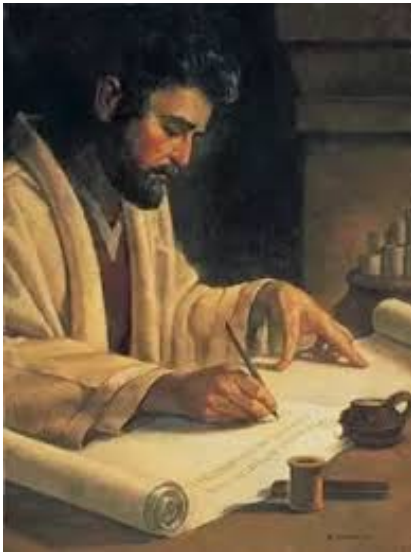
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The Purpose of Luke's Gospel

Luke 1: 1-4

The Purpose of Luke's Gospel DIG: What do you learn from these verses about Luke? What do you learn about why he wrote this gospel? What do you learn about where he got his sources?

REFLECT: How much assurance do you have? Do you *know* that you are saved through faith in Jesus Christ? Do you *know* that the Bible is the Word of God? If you *really* knew the Word of God, would you believe it?



Luke was a Hellenistic Jew. **He** displays detailed understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as expressing an understanding of the **God**-fearers (Gentiles who attended synagogues and lived lives informed by Judaism, but did not convert). Moreover, **he** addresses both **his** Gospel and **Acts** to a Hebrew high priest, **Theophilus**, who held that office between 37 and 41 AD. **He** begins **his** gospel with a formal prologue similar in style to other writers of the first century, most notably Josephus in his book *Contra Apionem*, a work written in two parts with a preface to the whole work at the beginning of the first book and a brief review at the beginning of his second book.¹⁴ **He** is the only one of the four gospel writers that stated **his** purpose at the beginning of **his** book. Being familiar with other

writings about **the life of Christ** and the message of the Good News, these verses contain some of the finest literary Greek in the first century. **Dear Theophilos: Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.** Obviously, an educated and skilled writer, **Luke** stressed the historical reliability of his book, claiming to have received information from **eyewitnesses**.¹⁵

It is almost certain that in the process of writing **his** gospel, **Luke** sought details about **Jesus'** birth and life from Mary. Since **Luke** included several details that only Mary could have known, we can be fairly sure that Miryam herself was one of **Luke's** primary sources. **Luke's** inclusion of several facts from **Yeshua's** early life (**Luke 2:19, 48, 51**), suggests that this was the case. Mary's own **eyewitness** testimony must also have been **Luke's** source for the account of Simeon's prophecy (**Luke 2:29-32**), for who but she could have known and recalled that incident? Apparently, the old man's prophecy never left her mind.¹⁶

Two words are important in this passage that we should not overlook. The first is the word **eyewitness**. It comes from the Greek word *autoptai* - *auto* meaning *that which is of itself*, and *opsomai* meaning *to see*. *To see for yourself*, would be an **eyewitness**. It is a medical term that means *to make an autopsy*. So, it is as if Doctor **Luke** is saying, "We are eyewitnesses who made an autopsy, and I am writing to you about what we found." The second important word is **servants**, which is the Greek word *huperati*, meaning *an under-rower on a boat*. In a hospital the *under-rower* is an intern. What **Luke** is saying is that all of them were just interns under **the Great Physician**. As a physician and a scholar, **Luke** said that **he** made an autopsy of the records of those who had been eyewitnesses.¹⁷

Ancient writers customarily gave some statement concerning their qualifications for writing. So here **Luke** states his credentials. **He** said: **With this in mind, I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning. Luke carefully investigated** all accounts to ensure their truthfulness, and produced an **orderly account of the Messiah's** earthly ministry. We do not know all the resources **Luke** had at **his** command. It is clear, however, that aside from **the Holy Spirit**, the inspired gospel of **Mark** was **his** main source. **He** does not criticize his predecessors, but, wanted to write **Luke** and **Acts** to provide sound biblical teaching on the part of those who had already been taught, but perhaps imperfectly or incompletely, in **the life of Christ**. **Luke** wanted **his** audience to be able to sift out what was reliable from what was uncertain.

It seemed good also to me and to the Rauch Ha'Kodesh (Acts 15:28), to write an orderly historical account for you. The Greek word for **an orderly account** means a

chronological **account**; therefore, **Luke is the only gospel writer that claims to write his book in a chronological manner.**

The purpose of **Luke's** gospel is to confirm for **Theophilus**, whose name means *lover of God*, the truth of the Good News, and to reassure **him** of the things **he** had learned. **Luke** shows **him** that all along, **ADONAI** had a plan to include Gentiles. This was a polite form of address used for lofty persons, and found only here in the gospels, and in **Acts 23:26, 24:3** and **26:25**.¹⁸ **Luke** wanted **Theophilus** to know that the faith that **he** had embraced had a secure historical foundation. **So that you may know the certainty**, the exact truth, **of the things you have been taught**. It is the same for us today. Doctor **Luke** wrote **his** gospel to guarantee us of **the certainty** and assurance about **Christ**. Although the gospel of **Luke** was originally written to an individual (or at least dedicated to **him**), in time it was circulated to others as a presentation of **Yeshua** and **His** ministry.