

A Historical Study On The Book Of Luke
Teaching #2: The Reason Luke Wrote, His Research and Reliability – PART ONE
(Questions 1-9)
Luke 1:1-4

What kind of book is the Bible?

- The Bible is a **spiritual** book that reveals God to us and reveals how we can know God through Jesus.
- The Bible is a **prophetical** book that foretells the coming of Jesus through the nation of Israel, the seed of Abraham, and the line of David to be the world's Savior-King (Christ/Messiah) who would be born in Bethlehem.
- The Bible is a **historical** book that documents how God worked among people and the nation of Israel to bring Jesus into the world and to ultimately save people and the world.

The spiritual, prophetical, and historical truths of the Bible transcend time and transform lives. And it is from these three perspectives that we will examine the book of Luke so we, too, experience transformed lives.

The book of Luke captures the spiritual truths of how we can know God, the prophetical truths of Jesus coming into the world, and the historical truths of Jesus interacting with people, the places he went, and his death, burial, and resurrection.

So, with this in mind, let's get started examining the book of Luke from these three perspectives.

We are going to look at:

- The **reason** Luke wrote.
- The **research** for what he wrote.
- The **reliability** of what he wrote.

Luke writes in **Luke 1:1-4**,

*Many have undertaken to draw up an account [historical document] of the things that have been fulfilled among us [concerning the prophecies of the Christ in the Jewish Scriptures fulfilled by Jesus], **2**just as they [the documented accounts of Jesus] were handed down to us by those who from the first [the life of Jesus] were eyewitnesses [of Jesus] and servants of the word [the message about Jesus]. **3**With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything [written by others about Jesus] from the beginning [of the life of Jesus], I too decided to write an orderly account [documented account of Jesus] for you, most excellent Theophilus, **4**so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught [about Jesus]. (Luke 1:1-4).*

Let's breakdown Luke 1:1-4 by asking 14 questions. In this study, we will answer questions 1-9.

Question #1: What do we know from Luke 1:1-4 about the accounts or the written documentation of the life of Jesus?

A. There were many writings that existed during the time of AD 60, around the time Luke was written, that historically documented the credibility of the life of Jesus, which included his death, resurrection, and ascension. (Luke 1:1-2).

- It is highly probably two of these writings were Mark and Matthew. Both Matthew and Mark were written around the time of AD 60. Many Bible scholars believe Mark and Matthew existed before Luke was written, and they believe that Mark was the first to be written. Luke would have read the accounts of both Mark and Matthew.
- Other writings were compiled by eyewitness to the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, Also, people documented what they were told by the eyewitnesses. Luke would have read some, if not many, of these accounts.

B. Luke wrote during the time of the AD 60's to further historically document for Theophilus the credibility of the life of Jesus, including his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension (Luke 1:3-4). Luke verifies the reason he wrote in **Acts 1:1-3**.

Luke writes in the opening verses of Acts,

In my former book [Luke], Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach [life of Jesus] 2until the day he was taken up to heaven [ascension of Jesus], after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3After his suffering [crucifixion of Jesus], he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive [resurrection of Jesus]. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:1-3)

In the Book of Luke, Luke historically covers the birth, life, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.

In the Book of Acts, he transitions from the ascension of Jesus, to the historical accounts of the message about Jesus being taken to the world, starting in Jerusalem.

Both Luke and Acts were based upon his personal investigation (Luke 1:3) of the people and events contained in the writings of Mark, Matthew, and the other writings and people (eyewitnesses) mentioned in Luke 1:1-2.

Question #2: Who is Luke writing to in Luke 1:1-4?

Luke is writing to Theophilus (Luke 1:3).

Question #3: Who is Theophilus?

Luke refers to Theophilus as **most excellent Theophilus**. The title *most excellent* possibly refers to a position Theophilus held and possibly refers to Luke's respect for Theophilus.

The title **most excellent** is used by Paul in **Acts 24:3** and **26:25**, as written about by Luke.

Everywhere and in every way, **most excellent Felix**, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. (Acts 24:3)

"I am not insane, **most excellent Festus**," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. (Acts 26:25)

Question #4: How does Luke know Theophilus?

The Bible doesn't tell us. But it is possible they met one another while Luke was traveling with Paul on his missionary journeys. Maybe Theophilus was from Caesarea or Rome, two cities where Paul was imprisoned.

It was in Caesarea where Paul addressed Felix as **most excellent Felix** and Festus as **most excellent Festus**. Felix and Festus both heard Paul's testimony about Jesus. Maybe Theophilus heard Paul's testimony during Paul and Luke's missionary journeys. Then again, Luke and Theophilus may have known one other before Luke met Paul.

Question #5: Why does Luke write to Theophilus? (Luke 1:4)

- Luke wants Theophilus to be confident about the things he had been taught about Jesus.
- Luke wants Theophilus to trust the truthfulness of what he had been taught about Jesus.
- Luke wanted Theophilus to be assured of the accuracy of what he had been taught about Jesus.

Question #6: What was Theophilus taught about Jesus?

Theophilus had been taught about the things **fulfilled** among us (people around during the time of Jesus to see Jesus and people who testified Jesus was the Christ as foretold by the Jewish Scriptures) and handed down (verbally and in written form) to us (people around after the time of Jesus) by eyewitness (of Jesus) and by the servants of the word – those who communicated the message about Jesus to others (Luke 1:1-2).

Question #7: What was fulfilled among us and handed down to us by the eyewitness and servants of the word?

The **fulfillment** was the fulfillment by Jesus of the prophecies as foretold by the prophets of Israel, the Psalms, and the Law of Moses concerning the coming of the Messiah/Christ.

Peter writes in **1 Peter 1:10-11**,

*Concerning this salvation [through believing in Jesus], **the prophets**, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you [the coming of the Christ to bring salvation], searched intently [the Jewish Scriptures] and with the greatest care, **11** trying to find out the time and circumstances [when the prophecies would be fulfilled] to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted **the sufferings of the Messiah** [crucifixion] **and the glories that would follow** [resurrection and ascension].*

The prophets of Israel wondered when the Christ would come to fulfill the prophecies made about him that were recorded in the Jewish Scriptures.

Following his resurrection and just before his ascension, Jesus tells his disciples in **Luke 24:44-45**,

*He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: **Everything must be FULFILLED that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**" 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.*

Jesus opened the minds of the disciples so they could understand how he **fulfilled** the prophecies made about the Christ in the Jewish Scriptures (Genesis-Malachi).

It is many of these fulfilled prophecies that Luke carefully investigated and that he writes about.

These prophecies include:

- A male child coming into the world to crush Satan (Genesis 3:15).
- An offspring-seed of Abraham who would bless the world (Genesis 12:1-7; 13:15; 24:7; 26:3-5; Romans 4; Galatians 3:16, 3:26-29)
- A leader like Moses to lead the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 15:18; Acts 3:22; Acts 7:37).
- A Savior-King (Christ) from the family tree of David whose rule would establish justice, righteousness and peace throughout the whole world (Isaiah 9:1-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-16; Zechariah 9:9-10).
- The King would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2-5; Matthew 2:3-6).
- The Spirit of the Lord will upon him to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Isaiah 62:1-2; Luke 4:16-21)
- The Messiah/Christ would be led like a lamb to the slaughter as a sin offering to justify many (Isaiah 53; Acts 8:26-35).
- The Messiah/Christ would rise from the dead (Isaiah 53:11; Psalms 16:8-11; Acts 2:25-36; Acts 13:34-36).

For a fuller understanding of how Jesus **fulfilled** the prophecies in the Jewish Scriptures about the Christ/Messiah, read:

- Jesus' reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 in his hometown synagogue in Luke 4:16-20
- Jesus' conversation with the two men on the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35
- Jesus' conversation with his disciples in Luke 24:36-49
- Peter's message in Acts 2:14-Acts 4. Acts 4 also includes other fulfillments of Jewish Scriptures not in Peter's sermon
- Stephen's message to the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling Assembly in Jerusalem) in Acts 6:8 – Acts 7.
- Philip's teaching to the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-35
- Paul's message in the Jewish Synagogue in Pisidian, Antioch (Acts 13:13-52)
- Read the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts, paying careful attention the writers' or speakers' quotations or references from the Jewish Scriptures concerning Jesus.

Note: The word **fulfilled** concerning Jesus' fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures as the Christ/Messiah is used around **41** times in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts.

As a reminder, we are asking and answering a series of questions from Luke 1:1-4.

Let's move go to Question #8.

Question #8: What was fulfilled among us (those living during the time of Jesus) and handed down to us by the eyewitness and servants of the word? (Luke 1:1-2)

The fulfilment is Jesus fulfilling the prophecies concerning the coming of the Christ/Messiah.

Concerning this fulfillment, Mary says the following after the angel Gabriel told her she would give birth to the Christ, who she was to name Jesus, who would be from family of David and would reign as King.

Mary says in **Luke 1:38**,

I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

By "**May your word to me be fulfilled**," Mary is declaring that the message spoken to her by Gabriel would accomplished – that she would give birth to the Christ, and he would reign as King.

Luke writes to prove that many of these prophecies were fulfilled. The prophecy of Jesus reigning as King will eventually be fulfilled when he returns (Revelation 11:15).

Question #9: Who are the us the prophecies were fulfilled among, and who were the eyewitnesses and servants of the word? (Luke 1:1-2)

Us refers to the many Jewish people, as well as some Gentiles, who saw Jesus fulfill the prophecies of the Jewish Scriptures concerning the Christ/Messiah. They were eyewitnesses of his miracles and healings.

Peter references the Jewish people who saw Jesus fulfill these prophecies (see Acts 2:22).

Peter says in **Acts 2:22 (see also Acts 3:18-24)**,

*Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you [as the Christ/Messiah] by miracles, wonders and signs, **which God did AMONG YOU through him, as you yourselves know.***

In Acts 2:22, Peter is speaking about what Luke is writing about in Luke 1:1-2 when Luke writes **fulfilled among us**.

Many in the audience to whom Peter spoke saw the miracles Jesus did **among them**, such as turning the water to wine, feeding the 4000 and 5000, raising Lazarus from the dead, healing people who were paralyzed and who were sick or diseased.

They became **eyewitness**. These are the eyewitness of Luke 1:1-2.

Paul also speaks about those who saw Jesus live, die, and rise from the grave. They became witnesses who testified about Jesus. (Acts 13:26-31).

Paul says in **Acts 13:26-31**,

*Fellow children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation [salvation by grace through faith Jesus] has been sent. **27**The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. **28**Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. **29**When they had carried out all that was written about him [in the Jewish Scriptures], they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. **30**But God raised him from the dead, **31**and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.*

Hebrews 2:1-4 also describes the eyewitness of Jesus.

*We [the Jewish people] must pay the most careful attention, therefore, **to what we have heard** [about Jesus from the eyewitnesses], so that we do not drift away. **2**For since the message [about the law of Moses] spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, **3**how shall we escape if we ignore [rejecting Jesus as the Christ] so great a salvation [see John 3:16-Ephesians 2:8-9]? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord [John 3:16], **was confirmed to us** [Jewish people] **by those [the eyewitnesses of Jesus-Acts 13:26-31] who heard him.** **4**God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles [see Acts 2:22], and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will [this took place during the time of Acts].*

Luke and the writer of Hebrews are writing about the same people who were eyewitnesses of Jesus or who heard about Jesus from the eyewitnesses.

Some of these witnesses in Hebrews 2:1-4 and Luke 1:1-2 may have been the ones to see Lazarus raised from the dead by Jesus.

John 12:17 (NKJV)

Therefore the people [Jewish people], who were with Him [Jesus] when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness.

The eyewitness to the miracles and healings by Jesus were not only the Jewish people, but they were also the 11 disciples/apostles of Jesus who communicated the word or message about Jesus.

In **John 15:27**, Jesus said the disciples would be eyewitnesses of him. – **this is before the resurrection.**

“And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning. (NKJV)

In **Luke 24:45-49**, Jesus says his disciples are his witnesses - **this is after the resurrection.**

*Then he [Jesus] opened their [11 disciples] minds so they could understand the Scriptures [Jewish scriptures concerning the prophecies about the Christ and how Jesus fulfilled them]. **46**He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, **47**and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. **48**You are witnesses of these things. **49**I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*

In Acts, the disciples are witnesses of Jesus – **this is following the ascensions of Jesus.**

Peter states in **Acts 2:32** (see also **Acts 1:8; 1:22; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39; 10:41**)

God has raised this Jesus to life, and we [the 12 disciples speaking in the languages (tongues) of those from different nations who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost] are all witnesses of it.

The disciples wrote letters stating they were eyewitness of Jesus.

Peter writes in **2 Peter 1:16-18** (see also 1 Peter 5:1),

*For we [the disciples of Jesus] did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. **17**He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” [Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35] **18**We [Peter, James (not the brother of Jesus but the brother of John), John] ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain [Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-12; Luke 9:28-36].*

John also wrote that the disciples were eyewitness of Jesus.

John writes in **1 John 1:1-3** (NKJV),

*That which was from the beginning [Jesus], which we [the original disciples of Jesus] have heard [they heard Jesus speak], which we have seen with our eyes [they saw Jesus with their eyes], which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled [they touched Jesus, both before and after the resurrection], concerning the Word of life [Jesus]— **2**the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us [the disciples of Jesus]— **3**that which we [the disciples of Jesus] **have seen and heard we declare to you...***

The disciples who were eyewitnesses of Jesus are the eyewitness Luke writes about in Luke 1:1-2.

Other eyewitness would have been:

- Those who saw Jesus before the resurrection.
 - those who saw Jesus perform miracles, such as feeding the 4000 and 5000
 - some who saw Jesus raise Lazarus
 - and others who saw Jesus heal those who were paralyzed, sick, and diseased.

Still Other eyewitness would have been:

- Those who saw Jesus after the resurrection.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 15:1-7** (written around AD 56)

*For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4**that he was buried, that **he was raised** on the third day according to the Scriptures, **5**and that **he appeared** to Cephas [Peter], and then to the Twelve. **6**After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, **most of whom are still living** [In AD 56], though some have fallen asleep. **7**Then **he appeared** to James, then to all the apostles, **8**and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*

According to Paul, most of those who saw the resurrected Jesus were still alive when he wrote 1 Corinthians around AD 56. This would mean they were still alive when Luke wrote Luke and Acts, making it highly probably that Luke personally investigated their claims of seeing the resurrected Jesus and wrote the Book of Luke to confirm their account of having seen the resurrected Jesus were true (Luke 1:3-4).

- The eyewitness would have been the 120 gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem **after the ascension** (Acts 1:15).

We noted above that some of the witnesses of Jesus was his original disciples. It was these disciples who were the servants of the word, which leads us to Question #10.

Question #10: What is the word the eyewitnesses were servants of? (Luke 1:2)

We will begin with Question #10 in Part Two of this study: *The Reason Luke Wrote*.

All verses are NIV unless otherwise noted.

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