



## Lecture # 8 Part 3

# INTRODUCTION TO LUKE

## VI. PURPOSE(S) OF LUKE'S WRITINGS

A. All of the Gospels were written to target specific groups of people for the purpose of evangelism (cf. [John 20:30–31](#))

1. Matthew to Jews
2. Mark to Romans
3. Luke to Gentiles
4. John to Gentiles

Luke uniquely mentions the mission of the Seventy (cf. [Luke 10:1–24](#)). For the rabbis, 70 was the number denoting the language of the world (cf. [Genesis 10](#)). By Jesus sending out 70 preachers of the good news, this would communicate that the gospel was for all people.

B. Other possible purposes

1. to explain the delayed Second Coming
  - a. [Luke 21](#) is different especially from [Matthew 24](#), [Mark 13](#), about the imminent return of Christ or end of the world
  - b. Luke speaks of world evangelization which takes time (cf. [Luke 24:47](#))
  - c. Luke emphasizes that the Kingdom of God is here now (cf. [Luke 10:9, 11](#); [Luke 11:20](#); [Luke 17:21](#))
2. to explain Christianity to governmental officials
  - a. title “most excellent” in introduction
  - b. [Luke 23](#) has Pilate saying three times, “I find no fault in this man” (cf. [Luke 23:4, 14–15, 22](#))
  - c. the government officials in Acts are presented in a good light and Paul’s addresses to Roman officials show respect and they respond positively in return (ex. [Acts 26:31–32](#))
  - d. the Roman centurion also gives a positive witness to Jesus (cf. [Luke 23:47](#))

C. There are some unique theological themes that play a role in the purpose

1. Luke shows special care to certain groups of people
  - a. The poor vs. the rich (ex. Luke’s Beatitudes, [Luke 6:20–23](#))
  - b. The outcasts
    - (1) immoral women (cf. [Luke 7:36–50](#))
    - (2) Samaritans (cf. [Luke 9:51–56](#); [Luke 10:29–37](#))
    - (3) rebellious runaways (cf. [Luke 15:11–32](#))
    - (4) tax collectors (cf. [Luke 19:1–10](#))
    - (5) lepers (cf. [Luke 17:11–19](#))



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(6) criminals (cf. [Luke 23:39–43](#))

2. Luke emphasizes the Temple in Jerusalem. The Gospel begins with the Jews and their Scriptures (i.e. Jesus fulfills OT prophesy) but they reject Him (cf. [Luke 11:14–36](#)) and He becomes the Savior of the entire world (cf. [Luke 10:1–24](#))

### Luke 1:1-4 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup>“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,  
<sup>2</sup>just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,  
<sup>3</sup>it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent **Theophilus**;  
<sup>4</sup>so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.”

### Luke 1:1 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup>“**Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile** an account of the things accomplished among us.”

“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile”

## *Luke’s Preface*

These four verses are a preface, and a very valuable preface, because they are a declaration from the author himself of the manner in which we are to regard his work.

**I.** Luke gives us to understand that **HE HIMSELF WAS NOT AN EYEWITNESS OF THE EVENTS HE IS ABOUT TO RECORD**, but that he had taken pains to inquire, and had a perfect understanding of all the history of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**II.** Luke tells us that he had undertaken to write his Gospel **BECAUSE MANY HAD UNDERTAKEN TO DO THE SAME THING BEFORE**. The question arises whether he means us to understand that he is adding one more to authentic and trustworthy histories already existing, or whether he intended rather to supersede and correct unauthorized and imperfect histories. Possibly neither the one view nor the other is entirely and exclusively true. It may be that Luke was aware that authentic histories were already in existence, but he may have known also that other and spurious accounts had been composed, and therefore have been desirous of helping Theophilus to choose the true and reject the false by setting down for his use such an orderly account of the life of Jesus Christ as he himself had been able to collect.



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III. Again, **WHO WAS THEOPHILUS?** Some have thought that the name, signifying as it does “**one who is dear to God,**” does not refer to any one particular person; it is probable, however, that Theophilus was a real person, perhaps an important man at Antioch, Luke’s city, for whose confirmation in the faith Luke was induced to write. Quite in keeping with the general scheme of God’s government that this should have been so. Works which are instinct with the Spirit of God often go far beyond their immediate aim. The Epistles, which are the precious inheritance of the universal Church, were addressed originally to particular portions of the Church, some of them only to individuals, and the greater numbers of them were called forth by circumstances which have long passed away. And so we need not be surprised to find that a Gospel addressed to Theophilus has become the possession of all throughout the world who follow his good example.

### Luke 1:4 (NASB)

<sup>4</sup>“**So that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.**”

IV. Lastly, let it be noticed that Luke did not write to Theophilus with the purpose of giving him his first notions of Christian truth, **BUT ONLY OF ESTABLISHING HIM IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THOSE THINGS IN WHICH HE HAD BEEN ALREADY INSTRUCTED OR CATECHIZED.** This was almost of necessity the course which would be followed in the time of the apostles; but it is also the course which is generally followed by ourselves now: we do not gain our first notions of Christian truth from Scripture or indeed from any written book; we are instructed and catechized by our fathers and mothers and teachers, and when we come to years of discretion, and are able to think for ourselves, we find from careful study of God’s Holy Word that those things which we have learnt as children are indeed the truth of God which is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

## *The Purpose of the Gospel*

**I. THE INTRODUCTION TO THIS GOSPEL IS THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY FOR THE ACCOUNT OF THE PURPOSE OF ITS COMPOSITION.** Theophilus, whoever he was, was already a disciple, and had been instructed in the things which were most surely believed in the Church. He desired to know the certainty of those things. Luke believed that it was his vocation to give him what he wanted. If Theophilus was an individual, he represented the need of the Church generally. That which was good for him might, if God pleased, be good for ages to come.

### Luke 1:1 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup>“**Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us.**”



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**II. MANY, LUKE SAYS, HAD ATTEMPTED THIS TASK BEFORE HIM.** They had taken in hand to set forth A DECLARATION of the things, etc. The declaration had been made already—contained in the preaching of the apostles and their helpers. What was wanted was a continuous narrative of the things which made the substance of the declaration, for it was a declaration of things, not of opinions.