



# Luke's Christmas Chronicles

December 2023

## Introduction



### Luke and his Gospel

Luke was a Greek-speaking Gentile doctor (*Colossians 4:14*) who joined Paul on his second missionary journey at Troas (now on the Turkish coast opposite Greece) and crossed with him to Europe (*see how "they" changes to "we" in Acts 16:8-10*). Luke was with Paul when he returned to Jerusalem from his third long missionary journey (*Acts 21:17-18*), when Paul was arrested and kept in prison in Jerusalem and Caesarea for the next two years (*Acts 24:22-23,27; 25:12*). This gave Luke the contacts and the opportunity to meet those who were eyewitnesses of Jesus' life, death and resurrection (*see Luke 1:1-4*). Because Paul appealed to the Roman Emperor, he was sent to Rome for trial; Luke went with him (*Acts 27:1; 28:14, 30; 2 Timothy 4:11*). Luke may have written his gospel and Acts during this time, or after Paul was released around 63AD and before Paul's re-arrest and eventual execution by Nero around 67AD.

### The Beginning of Luke's Gospel

In **Luke 1:1-4** Luke explains how he has done thorough research for his account of *'the things that have been fulfilled among us'* (v.1), meaning Jesus's life, death and resurrection. He is writing to Greek-speaking Gentiles (non-Jews) who have some knowledge of the Old Testament, perhaps by attending a synagogue in the towns where they lived, maybe for the moral teaching, without becoming Jewish converts; *'Theophilus'* in v.3 may be the name of an individual or a representative name for such Greeks (*it means 'lover of God'*). These Greek Gentiles have now heard preaching and teaching about new life in Jesus and Luke is explaining the background to what they have heard. For example, they may have heard some of Jesus's parables but Luke sets them in the context of Jesus's life. They may have heard about Jesus dying for their sins and rising to bring them new life; Luke describes in detail Jesus's death and resurrection. He has *'carefully investigated everything'* (v.3) and is now writing *'an orderly account'* (v.3) based on what he has heard from *'those who from the first were eyewitnesses'* (v.2).

All this introduction is in good classical Greek. But from 1:5 to the end of chapter 1 Luke often writes in a rather old-fashioned style of Greek, more like the Greek translation of the Old Testament that his readers would have heard if they visited Jerusalem. We would get the same effect if we used a modern translation of v.1 to v.4 and then changed to the 1611 Authorised Version for the rest of the chapter:

.....<sup>3</sup> Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,  
<sup>4</sup> so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

<sup>5</sup> There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zecharias, of the course of Abia; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

<sup>6</sup> And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.....

Luke does this to emphasize that Jesus is the fulfilment of the promises of the Old Testament Scriptures.

### Sermon Passages for 5 Sundays in December

Dec 3 Luke 1:1-38 The Tale of Two Angels

Dec 10 Luke 1:39-56 Mary Magnifies

Dec 17 Luke 1:57-80 A Birth and a Blessing

Dec 24 Luke 2:1-21 The Divine Delivery

Dec 31 Luke 2:22-40 The One we're Waiting for