



Kenneth S. Wuest

### Luke, The Greek Historian

"LUKE WAS a Greek, educated in the Greek schools, prepared for the medical practice which was held in high regard as a profession, and among the Greeks had attained to a place of eminence among the nations of the world. Greek doctors of medicine were in attendance upon many of the royal families of other nations. The Greeks were by nature and training, a race of creative thinkers who pursued their studies in a scientific manner. Their sense of what really constituted scientific accuracy and method in the recording of history was well developed.

The writings of Luke, both his Gospel and The Acts, demonstrates Luke's training as an historian. He writes his Gospel to a Gentile friend, Theophilus. The name means "a god-lover," or "god-beloved," and may have been given him when he became a Christian. The words "most excellent" according to Ramsay, were a title like "Your Excellency," and show that he held office...Luke wrote the Gospel for Theophilus to use as a standard whereby to judge the accuracy of the many inspired accounts of our Lord's life which were written in the first century.

The facts he records were most surely believed by the first century church. Luke arranges the facts of our Lord's life in historical order as they occurred. The other Gospels do not claim to do that. The arrangement of events was dictated by the purpose which each author had in writing his account. The sources of Luke's information were oral and written, from eye-witnesses of the events recorded.

He as a trained historian would carefully check over these accounts, investigating and verifying every fact. And this is what he has reference to when he uses the words "having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first." The words "having had perfect understanding" are literally, "having closely traced." The verb means "to follow along a thing in the mind." The word was used for the investigation of symptoms. Thus it speaks of a careful investigation of all sources, oral and written, which purport to be accounts of our Lord's life.

Luke had the historian's mind, a thing native to the educated Greek. Herodotus, the father of Greek history, exhibited the Greek determination to get at the truth no matter how much work it required, when he travelled to central Africa to verify the account of the annual rise and fall of the Nile River. In those days this was a long and difficult journey. Sir William Ramsey said, "I regard Luke as the greatest historian who has ever lived, save only Thucydides." Thus we have no doubt but that Luke made a personal investigation of all the facts he had recorded. He interviewed every witness, visited every locality. If Mary was still alive, he, a doctor of medicine investigated the story of the virgin birth by hearing it from Mary's own lips. And as Professor John A. Scott, a great Greek scholar has said, "You could not fool Doctor Luke."

But Luke was not dependent alone upon his personal investigations for the accuracy of his record. He says that he closely traced all things from above. The words "from above" are from a Greek word translated "from the very first," in the Authorized Version. The word occurs in John

3:31; 19:11; James 1:17; 3:15, 17, and is in every instance translated "from above." It is used often in contrast to a word which means "from beneath." Paul had doubtless heard the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper from the eleven, but he also had it by revelation from the Lord (I Cor. 11:23). He had received his gospel by direct revelation in Arabia, and this was his check upon the gospel he heard at Jerusalem from the apostles.

So Luke claims to have closely investigated the facts he had received, and to have done so through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which fact guarantees the absolute accuracy of the record (Luke 1:1-4)."

Kenneth S. Wuest, "Word Studies In The Greek New Testament" (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1979) pp. 52-54

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Disclaimer: I may not agree with some of these quotes but I believe in the general statement that "all truth is God's truth."