

Episode: Luke Series No. 1

Narrator: Theophilus and Luke

Primary Scriptures: Luke 1

Story Summary: Background of the book of Luke, birth of Jesus

Location: Kingdom of Judea

Time: Circa 5-1 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 1:38, 1:50

Any reader of the Bible quickly notices that it gives few details about most of its characters or events. The Eyewitness Bible series of stories are true to scripture, while adding illustrative personalities and personal details to the people who lived these events. These stories also provide historical and geographic context not detailed in *Luke*.

In the *Gospel of Luke*, Luke said he made a careful investigation of everything before writing. His three primary sources of information were: his own experiences, written sources, and listening to the stories of those who were personally involved.

Luke had to be very careful writing his book because he was writing it to Theophilus in order to convince him of the truth of the life of Jesus. Theophilus was very likely a patron or influential person.

Luke's target audience was also anybody else who would read his account, which would likely include people who believed in—and probably worshipped—Roman or Greek gods. Luke was trying to convince everyone that all other gods are false, worthless, and harmful, so he was extremely detailed about the births of John and Jesus. Although miraculous, the births of both John and Jesus really did happen, as opposed to the made-up origins and existence of the gods of Rome and Greece.

Luke spends a lot of time on the birth and life of John the Baptist. He might have done that to prove to his Jewish audience that John had priestly lineage, which would have helped qualify him for a special place as a forerunner of Jesus. It is likely that, at the time of the writing of Luke, the Jews still held John the Baptist to be a prophet. Supporting John's authority would have the benefit of enhancing Jesus' public reputation.

Luke is an account of the life of Jesus. This episode explains how Luke felt about the birth story of Jesus. Can you imagine how a doctor like Luke would deal with a virgin giving birth? Luke's account of Mary's conception of Jesus is so detailed that at least part of the Bible story surely came straight from Mary. As a doctor, Luke would have asked the most obvious question to Mary, "How can we all be assured that you were a virgin?" Apparently, he resolved that question to his satisfaction.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where did Luke get his information to write *Luke*?
 2. Who did Luke write *Luke* to, and how might that have affected his writing?
 3. During the life of Jesus, was Israel an important country? Because the Bible is mostly written about the country of Israel, have you gotten an outsized impression of its importance in world affairs during Jesus' lifetime?
 4. How might Luke's style differ from a modern writing?
 5. What are some factors that might have convinced Luke of the truthfulness of Mary's story about her giving birth to Jesus while a virgin?
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1. Luke 1:1-4 Luke was a witness, he interviewed witnesses, and he used written materials that were available. 2. Theophilus, who was possibly a patron or influential person. Luke had to take extra care to write a truthful account so as not to offend Theophilus. Luke probably meant for many others to read his letter. 3. No, it was a tiny, obscure part of the huge Roman Empire. 4. He does not follow a strict chronological order, he is more interested in imparting a truthful story than factual details, he used other sources without crediting them. 5. The facts Mary gave him when she told her story, leading of the Holy Spirit, Isaiah's prophecy.

Application Questions:

1. Mary knew that she had not had sex, and she knew there was no possible way for her to be pregnant. How did she gain the trust in God to know that she was actually going to have a baby? What can you do to cultivate your trust in God to such a high level? [Mary described herself as a servant]
2. Luke was able to be convinced of the miracle of Jesus being born of a virgin. What do you need to be convinced of to love Jesus more and follow him better?
3. The Bible was written and compiled by humans in a variety of ways. How does this knowledge change the way you interact with the scriptures? How can you use this to internalize the Bible in your own life?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. What sorts of behaviors and attitudes have you exhibited to your parent(s) that causes them to trust you? To distrust you? If you were them, would you trust you? What could you do to get them to trust you more?
2. Luke had to be very careful with his facts and style to get the appreciation and trust of Theophilus. Are you always careful to get your facts straight?
3. Mary must have had an impeccable reputation in order for God to choose her to be the mother of Jesus. What qualities should you improve in order for God to choose you to do something special for him?