

Who Was Theophilus?

Whereas many have undertaken to write a narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having accurately investigated all things from the very beginning, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you might know the certainty of the things which you have been told (Luke 1:1-4).

Luke's massive investigation that culminated in his Gospel was motivated by his concern for a man named Theophilus and others like him. This friend was possibly not yet a Christian, but wanted to know the truth about Jesus. So, after doing thorough research, Luke wrote the facts about Christ (the Gospel of Luke) and early Christianity (the book of Acts) for his friend so "that you might know the certainty of the things which you have been told" (Luke 1:4).

This makes Luke the most prolific New Testament writer. Altogether, his writing accounts for more of the New Testament than any other author, including Paul and John. Luke is also the longest book in the New Testament, with 1,151 verses (586 are Jesus' very words) whereas Matthew has 1,071 verses, Mark has 678 and John has 869.

The expenses for Luke's travels had to have been immense. Any researcher can attest to the costs involved with a lengthy project that includes travel, housing and possibly support staff for weeks or months or more, possibly years. How did Luke pay for all of these costs? Theophilus was the man who underwrote Luke's investigation and thereby paid for his travel, salary and expenses. He is mentioned at the beginning of both Luke and Acts, which was commonly done in that day to honor those who funded a project, much like the name of a

generous donor often appears on a placard in a building in our day. Theophilus' title "most excellent," was used of nobility and likely indicates that he was a successful business and/or political leader. This title is also used for governors in Acts (for example, Felix and Festus in 23:26, 24:2, 26:25).

The name Theophilus means "lover of God," an appropriate title because the book of Luke is for anyone who loves God. According to A.A. Just's *Luke*, Ambrose, the fourth-century church father, says it this way: "So the Gospel was written to Theophilus, that is, to him whom God loves. If you love God, it was written to you." Luke is for all who love God, and it goes out in an effort to encourage others to be lovers of God.

Are you a generous person? Is there a ministry or person you should be giving toward but you are not? {eoa}

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