

## The Process of Luke's Research

Luke's gospel was written upon the basis of investigation. His research was complete, thorough, and comprehensive, in order to record the truth. He describes himself as "having traced the course..." He followed a trail of evidence bit by bit. He utilized a process "whereby one arrives at a knowledge of the matter" (Rienecker, p. 137). Luke used the perfect tense when he wrote "having traced," indicating that the investigation was over and his findings were preserved in his document.

Luke reveals that his research was *thorough*. He said that he investigated the course of "all things." Concerning the relevant facts, he made thorough inquiries. His research no doubt involved a number of investigative techniques. He may have made use of other narratives, which represented the account of eyewitnesses. He had the opportunity to talk to people like James (Acts 21:17-18), son of Mary and Joseph, and a half-brother of Jesus. What might Luke have learned from James, the son of Mary, about the things she wondered and pondered in her heart (Lk. 1:29; 2:29,33,51)?

Did Luke interview Mary herself, if she still lived? What could Mark have told the physician and companion of Paul when they were together in Rome (Col. 4:10,14)? While in Jerusalem, Luke met people like Mnason, "an early disciple," in whose house Luke stayed (Acts 21:15-16). Might Luke have interviewed some of the 500 brethren to whom the resurrected Christ appeared (1 Cor. 15:6)?

Not only was Luke's research thorough in every detail, it was *comprehensive* as well. He wrote that he traced the course of all things "from the first." He researched and recorded more than any other writer concerning the foundational events of Christianity. He reported the amazing circumstances of John's birth, the angel Gabriel's appearance to Mary, Mary's visit with Elizabeth, the shepherds' worship of Christ, the visit to the temple and the testimony of Simeon and Anna, and the twelve-year-old Jesus talking with the elders in the temple.

A.T. Robertson says, "The idea of Luke seems to be that, having decided to write another and a fuller narrative than those in existence, he first made an investigation of all the available material that he could lay his hands upon" (p. 51). This comprehensive

investigation led him back to a day when an angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias in the temple (Lk. 1:5ff).

Luke also indicates that his *aim* was to verify the events. He was concerned with the truth, not just a good story. He traced the course of all things “accurately.” Consider Luke’s precise care with the facts. He relates the beginning of John’s preaching with no less than six political figures and their respective jurisdictions (Lk. 3:1-3). His accurate reporting is also illustrated in the book of Acts where he mentions thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities, and nine Mediterranean islands.

When he spoke of the ancient world, he was accurate. When he used political terminology, he was precise. When medical insights were appropriate, his skill enabled him to paint a more vivid picture. It is not without reason that the former critic of Luke would write, having traced the course of Luke himself, “The present writer takes the view that Luke’s history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness” (William Ramsay, **The Bearing of Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament**, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979, p. 81).