

What is the evidence for The Historical Accuracy of Luke?



There are several types of literature in the Bible: love poetry (Song of Songs), instruction (Proverbs), prophecy, praise songs (Psalms), and historical accounts. The evidence for the historical accuracy of the Bible is necessarily indirect because nobody alive today was there when it was written. Current understanding is based on a set of facts that are hard to explain otherwise. There are independent lines of evidence that point to similar conclusions. One of them is presented here, for the gospel of *Luke* (part of a two-volume work that includes the book of *Acts*).

1. The author indicates that it is a historical description

Luke 1: “Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were **eyewitnesses** and servants of the word. 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, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”

2. It is not in the form of legend

C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, “Now, as a literary historian, I am perfectly convinced that whatever else the Gospels are **they are not legends**. They are not artistic enough to be legends... Apart from the Platonic dialogues, there are no conversations that I know of in ancient literature like the Fourth Gospel. **There is nothing, even in modern literature**, until about a hundred years ago when the realistic novel came into existence.” (pp 158-159)

3. Other books support Luke

The other Biblical gospels (*Matthew*, *Mark*, and *John*) each describe many of the events found in Luke, agreeing on the essential facts and many details.

Flavius Josephus’ historical ***Antiquities of the Jews***, published in 93 A.D., also documents Jesus’ miracles, death, and resurrection.

4. Luke was written while eyewitnesses were still alive

Luke traveled with Paul, whose earliest letters were written AD 53-61. Because it does not mention the event, *Luke* was probably written before the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70). It is referred to by Justin, Polycarp, Papias and others early in the second century, and probably by Clement in 95 AD.

5. Luke was faithfully copied

The text of **recently-discovered papyrus copies** dating from 175-225 matches vellum versions dating from 300-450. Modern translations incorporate all known copies of the text, with **footnotes indicating discrepancies**. Most involve word order and spelling variation. None touches on a principle of faith.