

Luke 1–2 notes

Hallel Fellowship (<http://hallel.info>)

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All passages from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

Luke wrote his account of the “good news” to Theophilus to put this in order. Possibly, Theophilus was one of the high priests at the time or part of the family, based on a confluence of linguistic and historical streams. Regardless, the first two chapters in language and in content reflect a continual unfolding and implementation of the plan of God from the beginning of His revelation at the Creation through the ultimate revelation in the foretold special Anointed One, Yeshua.

Notes about the text

- Who was the recipient of the book, Theophilus?
 - It seems to be the same person that Acts of the Apostles was addressed to (Acts 1:1).
 - The name literally means “God’s friend,” or “one who loves God as a friend.”
 - It’s been long claimed that this name is a euphemism for all believers, all “friends of God.”
 - Early 19th century commentator Adam Clarke asked of this notion, “if all the followers of Christ are addressed, why is the singular number used?”
 - The verb form used with the name, ἐπιγνώσῃς *epignos*, is singular aorist active subjunctive and means “you may know/recognize/witness/decide.”
 - He also noted that the descriptive term for this person — κράτιστος *kratistos*, or “most excellent” (Strong’s Greek lexicon No. 2903) — was used for important people.
 - Paul used the term when addressing Felix and Festus (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25).
 - However, he and Thayer’s lexicon note that the term is not used for Theophilus in Acts 1:1 and that it was a common term
 - Daniel Lancaster notes that first-century writings of Flavius Josephus and recent archaeology point to this Theophilus as being a high priest at the time.² That man served in that role from A.D. 37–41.
 - Josephus wrote about a Theophilus, who was son of high priest Annas (*Antiq.* 19:297) and father of Mattias, the second-to-last high priest before the Temple fell (*Antiq.* 20:223).
 - Annas was the father-in-law of Kaiaphas (John 18:13). Yokhanan the Immerser was preaching “in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas” (Luke 3:2).
 - Some say that what was meant by Theophilus was Mattias ben Theophilus, because high priest Yosef ben Kaiaphas was called just Kaiaphas.
 - An ossuary was found in 1983 in Yerushalayim and had the inscription, “Yehochanah daughter of Yehochanan son of Theophilus the high priest.”³
 - Peter and the apostle Yehokhanan were brought before the Sanhedrin and “all who were of high-priestly descent” (Acts 4:5–6), namely, “Annas the high priest ... and Kaiaphas and Ioannes [Greek transliteration of *Yehokhanan*] and Alexandros.”
 - The Greek transliteration of Yehokhanah is *Ioanna* (Joanna).⁴
 - She was a key disciple of Yeshua, a witness of His resurrection and described as the wife of Chuza, Herod’s administrator (Luke 8:3; 24:10).
 - Theophilus was close to Herod Agrippa until he replaced him (*Antiq.* 19:297).
 - One commentator noted that a chiasmus⁵ in Luke 24:8–11 focuses on Yehokhanah as a key witness of Yeshua’s resurrection⁶:
 - “They remembered his words [*rhematon*].
 - Having returned from the tomb, they reported all these things [*tauta panta*]
 - to the Eleven
 - and to all the rest/others [*loipois*].
 - Now there were Mary Magdalene
 - and Johanna

1 Adam Clarke. *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*.

2 D.T. Lancaster. “Noach.” *Chronicles of Messiah*. 1st ed. Torah Club, Vol. 4. Marshfield, Mo.: First Fruits of Zion, 2010. p. 45.

3 *Ibid.*, citing Craig A. Evans. *Jesus and the Ossuaries: What Jewish Burial Practices Reveal About the Beginning of Christianity*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2003. p. 109.

4 Lancaster, p. 45.

5 See previous studies on this literary structure in the Bible <hallel.info/tag/chiastic-structure/>.

6 L.T. Dahn. “Identifying Theophilus.” *The Gospel of St. Luke*. Nov. 11, 2006. Accessed Dec. 18, 2010. <ltdahn-stluke.blogspot.com/2006/11/identifying-theophilus.html>.

and Mary the mother of James
and the others [*loipai*] with them.

They were telling the Apostles
these things [*tauta*].

But these words [*rhemata tauta*] seemed nonsense to them, and they did not believe them.”

- Lancaster points to a number of converts among the priesthood (Acts 6:7).
- Some challenges with this hypothesis:
 - Josephus in another book mentioned a Theophilus among a list of Greek writers who had messed up accounts on Jews (*Apion* 1:216).
 - Theophilus isn't mentioned by name as part of the high priesthood in Acts 4 between what should have been his father, brother-in-law and son.
 - If this book were written for him, why did Luke not mention some sort of familial connection or say
 - The high priesthood were mainly Hasmoneans and/or Sadducees held low views on the miraculous.
 - However, an apocryphal Pauline epistle often called Third Corinthians was addressed to a Theophilus who was an elder in Corinth.⁷
- Followers of Messiah have long meditated on seven “oracles” in Luke 1–2:
 1. Annunciation to Zakharyah of the coming of Yokhanan (Luke 1:13–17)
 - v. 16–17
 - “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord [יְהוָה *adon*], whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,’ says the LORD of hosts. ... 4:5 ‘Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6 ‘He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.’” (Mal. 3:1; 4:5–6)
 - The messenger would precede the LORD and come to “His temple.”
 - Sages foretold that Eliyahu and Moshe would come at Pesakh a few days before the arrival of the Mashiakh.
 - This is the message of the “second Eliyahu,” quoted in Luke 3 based on Isaiah 40:
 - “‘Comfort, O comfort My people,’ says your God. 2 ‘Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the LORD’S hand Double for all her sins.’ 3 A voice is calling, ‘Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley; 5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.’” (Isa. 40:1–5)
 - 2. Annunciation to Miriam of the coming of Yeshua (Luke 1:30–37)⁸
 - v. 31: Gen. 16:11: The angel of the LORD said to her further, “Behold, you are with child, And you will bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.
 - v. 32
 - 2 Sam. 7:9: “I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth.
 - 2 Sam. 7:14: “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men,
 - Ps. 2:7: “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.
 - 1 Kings 2:12: And Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established.
 - Psa. 132:11 The LORD has sworn to David A truth from which He will not turn back: “Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne.
 - v. 33
 - 2 Sam. 7:13: “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.
 - 2 Sam. 7:16: “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.””
 - Isa. 9:7: There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

⁷ W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, eds. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

⁸ Lancaster, p. 34.

3. Blessings of Elisheva upon Miriam (1:42–45)

- v. 42
 - “Most blessed of women is Ya’el, The wife of Heber the Kenite; Most blessed is she of women in the tent.” (Judges 5:24)
 - This is from the song of Devorah and Barak. Ya’el killed Sisera by pounding a tent peg through his head (Judges 4:21).
 - Indeed, Miriam was blessed of all women as the one who would give birth to that Seed that would crush the head of the chief of the enemies of Israel and of God.
 - “ ‘And I will put enmity Between you [the serpent] and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.’ ” (Gen. 3:15)
 - The blessing for all the world would be the “seed” of Chever and of Abraham.
 - “ ‘In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.’ ” (Gen. 22:18)
 - This promise came to Abraham from Heaven via “the angel of the LORD” (v. 15) “because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son” (v. 16).
 - “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as referring to many, but rather to one, ‘And to your seed,’ that is, Christ.” (Gal. 3:16)
- v. 45
 - Elisheba didn’t want what happened to her husband to happen to Miriam in believing a message from God via Gabri’el.
 - “Zacharias said to the angel, ‘How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years.’ 19 The angel answered and said to him, ‘I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. 20 ‘And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time [καιρός *kairos*].’ ” (Luke 1:18–20)
 - Not believing what God promised about leading Israel into the Land and for not giving God the glory kept Moshe and Aharon from being the ones to lead Israel into the Land.
 - “Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, ‘Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?’ 11 Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. 12 But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.’ 13 Those were the waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel contended with the LORD, and He proved Himself holy among them.” (Num. 20:10–13)

4. Song of Miriam (a.k.a. The Magnificat; Luke 1:46–55)⁹

- v. 46: 1st Sam. 2:1: [Hannah] My heart exults in the LORD
- v. 47: Hab. 3:18: Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.
- v. 48
 - 1 Sam. 1:11: remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head.”
 - Gen. 29:32: Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, “Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me.”
 - Gen. 30:13: Then Leah said, “Happy am I! For women will call me happy.” So she named him Asher.
- v. 49: Ps. 126:3: The LORD has done great things for us; We are glad.
- v. 50: Ps. 103:17: But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children’s children,
- v. 51
 - Ps. 136:12: With a strong hand and an outstretched arm, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
 - Ps. 89:11: The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; The world and all it contains, You have founded them.
- v. 52
 - 1 Sam. 2:7: “The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts.
 - Ps. 113:7: He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the needy from the ash heap,
- v. 53
 - Ps. 107:9: For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.
 - 1 Sam. 2:5: “Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, But those who were hungry cease to hunger. Even the barren gives birth to seven, But she who has many children languishes.
- v. 54
 - Isa. 41:8: “But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend,
 - Isa. 41:14: “Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel; I will help you,” declares the LORD, “and your

9 Lancaster, p. 38.

- Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.
 - Ps. 98:3: He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
 - v. 55
 - Ex. 32:13: “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’”
 - Mic. 7:20: You will give truth to Jacob And unchanging love to Abraham, Which You swore to our forefathers From the days of old.
- 5. Song of Zakharyah (a.k.a. Benedictus; Luke 1:68–80)
 - This praise to God answers:
 - “All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, ‘What then will this child turn out to be?’ For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him” (Luke 1:66).
 - v. 68
 - “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel” (Psa. 41:13)
 - “He has sent redemption to His people” (Psa. 111:9)
 - v. 69
 - “ ‘And He will give strength to His king, And will exalt the horn of His anointed.’ ” (1st Sam. 2:10)
 - “ ‘There I will cause the horn of David to spring forth’ ” (Psa. 132:17)
 - v. 70
 - “ ‘Are not these the words which the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets’ ” (Zech. 7:7)
 - v. 71
 - “ ‘He delivered me from my strong enemy, From those who hated me, for they were too strong for me.’ ” (2nd Sam. 22:18)
 - vv. 72-73
 - “ ‘Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel’ ” (Ex. 32:13)
 - “ ‘I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham’ ” (Lev. 26:42)
 - vv. 74-75
 - “ ‘But the LORD your God you shall fear; and He will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies.’ ” (2nd Kings 17:39)
 - v. 76
 - “ ‘I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.’ ” (Deut. 18:18–19; also v. 15)
 - The LORD said this to the priesthood through Moshe.
 - “A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness” (Isa. 40:3)
 - “ ‘Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me.’ ” (Mal. 3:1)
 - v. 77
 - “By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.” (Isa. 53:11)
 - v. 78
 - “Remember, O LORD, Your compassion [רַחֲמֶיךָ *rakhmim*] and Your lovingkindnesses [חֶסֶד *chesed*], For they have been from of old.” (Psa. 25:6)
 - “the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings” (Mal. 4:2)
 - “The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.” (Psa. 119:130)
 - “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.” (Heb 1:1–4)
 - “the LORD will rise upon you And His glory will appear upon you.” (Isa. 60:2)
 - v. 79
 - “The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them.” (Isa. 9:2)
 - “a light to the nations ... And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.” (Isa. 42:6–7)
 - “Her ways are pleasant ways And all her paths are peace.” (Prov. 3:17)
- 6. Song of Shimon (Nunc Dimittis; Luke 2:29–32)
 - The Spirit of God was on this “righteous and devout” man (v. 25), promised him he wouldn’t die until he had seen God’s Anointed One (v. 26) and directed Shimon to go to the temple on the day of Yeshua’s circumcision (v. 27).

- v. 30–31
 - “Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Isa. 40:5)
 - “The LORD has bared His holy arm In the sight of all the nations, That all the ends of the earth may see The salvation of our God [ישועת אלהינו] *Yeshuat 'Eloheinu*.” (Isa. 52:10)
 - v. 32
 - “The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them.” (Isa. 9:2)
 - “‘I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations [דגל *goim*], 7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.’ ” (Isa. 42:6–7)
7. Sword to pierce Miriam’s heart (Luke 2:34–35)

Themes

- Worshipping among “hypocrites”
 - Zakharyah, or *Zacharias* in Greek, served as a priest under a corrupt top priesthood.
 - He was rendered deaf as well as unable to speak (Luke 1:59–64).
- Timing of Yokhanan’s and Yeshua’s births
 -
- God continues His patterns of signs through miraculous births via Elisheva and Miriam
 - Elisheva
 - The names of Zachariah and Elisheva are significant in this account.¹⁰
 - *Zachariah* means, “YH remembers.”
 - *Elisheva* means, “oath of God.”
 - “In the days of Zechariah and Elizabeth, the LORD remembered His oath to bring a redeemer.”¹¹
 - Called barren
 - Miriam
 - Did the prophets foretell of a “young woman” or “virgin” giving birth to the Messiah?
 - Her psalm/prayer parallels Khannah’s for blessing her with Samuel

¹⁰ Lancaster, p. 24.

¹¹ Lancaster, p. 24.