

# "The World Needs Truth"

*Luke 1:1-4*

We live in an age where truth and reality are what people want it to be. That there are no absolutes. People claim to be a male when they are a biological female and vice versa. People claim they are a specific animal when they are clearly not.

We live in a day when you can take a picture on your phone and the parts you don't like you can just erase and present a desired picture more than an honest picture. We live in a day where people are trying to rewrite history and ignore the parts that are not pleasant even though they are accurate. And now we live with AI – Artificial Intelligence – which while helpful in many ways, is also reducing the brainwork of thinking and writing and exploring. Young people are using this in place of research and homework so that they are producing work with their name on it, which they really did not produce. And so people are questioning what is true because the world is getting further away from truth and reality. The world needs to know what is true because they are not prepared for the real future that God has already told us about in His Word. And the key to truth about the future and the present is found in the past, especially in the records around the life of Jesus Christ.

While the Gospels are the story of Jesus Christ' life, they are not stories; they are accurate records given to us to know what matters more than anything else. The truth about God and His Son Jesus Christ. I want to begin with Luke's gospel because more than anyone Luke states his clear purpose right from the start.

<sup>1</sup> *Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, <sup>2</sup> just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. <sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*

Luke begins his gospel stating that even by the mid-first century AD, "many" had written an account about Jesus. We do know from history that there were numerous false accounts about Jesus' life written not long after He died, rose and ascended. Which reminds us that not much has changed today in that

## **Many People Disagree About Jesus** **(1:1-2)**

The Greek word for "many" doesn't mean a few it means a lot. And the word for "draw up" or "compiled" means made an attempt. Already Luke is telling us many people have tried to put in writing about 'the things' concerning Jesus' life. Implied in Luke's comments here as well as his careful investigation is that just as many people didn't believe who Jesus was when He came, and many still didn't fully understand who He was even a generation later, nothing had changed even today.

***The world has its own versions of Jesus' work (v.1)***

Jesus Himself asked His disciples in Matt. 16:13

<sup>13</sup> When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” <sup>14</sup> They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

People had different opinions about Jesus back then and they still do. He’s a prophet. He was a good religious man. But He wasn’t God, and He didn’t really die on a cross and rise. That was some kind of hoax. And the false theories continue to flourish today. Nothing is new under the sun according to Ecclesiastes.

But Jesus point point-blank asked His own followers about His identity and He asked them at a very strategic location. Caesarea Philippi was at the base of Mount Hermon, 50 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. It is the farthest north Jesus ever travelled. The Jordan begins at Mt Hermon and at the base of Mt. Hermon at Caesarea Philippi was a large cave from which the Jordan trickled out from. In Jesus’ day this was a place of demonic worship. The cave was coined ‘the entrance to Hades’. All around the cave carved in the mountainside were niches for pagan gods. The cave and these niches can still be seen today. And it was here that Jesus stopped His disciples, surrounded by all these false ideas of who the gods are and asked them directly.

<sup>15</sup> “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

And then He said, maybe even pointing at ‘the Gate of Hades’

<sup>17</sup> Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

It was a clear challenge from Jesus. This is what the world thinks about who gods are. They are afraid of this place. Do you believe the world or Me? Do you believe I hold the keys to this place and those who believe in Me don’t have to worry about the underworld.

Luke is suggesting very politely to beware of the false stories about Jesus. There’s plenty of those. How can they know the truth? Luke says even though the world has differing opinions about Jesus there are numerous ways we can know the truth. “We have evidence”, Luke says to his generation and so do we.

### ***The world continually sees the evidence of Jesus’ work in us (v.1b)***

Luke’s Greek is articulate and professional. He was a doctor. He’s writing to the most excellent Theophilus, which is how you address a Roman in a powerful position. The phrase “the things that have been fulfilled among us” is carefully crafted. First, let’s determine what are “the things”. I keep saying they are about Jesus because of Acts 1:1, Luke’s second volume, where he again writes to Theophilus,

*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach <sup>2</sup> until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.*

“The things” here are the things that Jesus began to do and teach. Not just the things about Jesus that were fulfilled – which there were many – but better the things that were accomplished

among us. Even the word 'among' also has the idea of 'in us'. And more powerfully, the verb for accomplished/fulfilled means they happened then and they are still happening now and will continue to happen forever.

So then, "the things that Jesus accomplished then and now among us and in us" – have been handed down to us by those who were there. And the things that Jesus is still doing in us now (Luke) and in you and me today.

One of the greatest proofs of the identity and ministry of Jesus Christ is our ongoing changed life. When people see the fruit of the Holy Spirit [His love, His joy, His peace ...] responding to anger, hate, strife, harshness directed toward us, they see how Jesus is changing us. He's still accomplishing things in us and among us and through us and He isn't done. And that's just verse 1! So, yes, Luke reminds us that there are many opinions about Jesus, so he set out to know the true account.

*they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.<sup>3</sup> 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,*

Luke does the research and talks to eyewitnesses who were there. That makes sense. If we want to know the truth about Jesus we need to ...

## **Trust the Eyewitnesses of Jesus' Life** **(1:2-3)**

I think Luke is referring to the earliest disciples themselves when he refers to the first eyewitnesses and servants of the Word. Luke of course knew Paul well because he travelled with him as Acts records. He would have met Mark because he worked with them for a while, and if he hadn't met Peter, he would have gotten Peter's account from Mark, which is where he got a lot of his material from.

Mark would have written by this time and possibly Matthew as well. John's gospel came later. Luke and the first eyewitnesses of Jesus

### ***Recorded things carefully (vv.2-3a)***

"Handed down" means from an authority; the idea of one who has the original version and is entrusted it with care to someone reliable. "Servants" of the Word is a fitting way to describe the first disciples. The word chosen for servant means under someone else's authority. Luke is so specific in his choosing here to make sure his readers have an accurate and trustworthy account of the life of Jesus. So he recorded things carefully so that

### ***We can chronicle His life (v.3b)***

*it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you,*

The NASB puts it as 'consecutive order,' which may be a little too narrow. While Luke takes great care to give us the events fairly chronologically, 'orderly' has the idea of it being organized well, systematic, and easy to follow. Luke's gospel contains 7 miracles not mentioned elsewhere, 19 parables not mentioned in the other gospels and 30 events known only to us because Luke heard them firsthand from eyewitnesses. So it was well written, orderly and most important, true. How true?

True enough that he records the negative and the positive. Most people like to leave out the negative parts when writing about someone's life, OR that's all they write about. Luke does not spare us about Jesus' ...

### ***Being misunderstood and rejected***

He records the incident in Ch. 7 at Simon the Pharisees' house when a woman known to be have "lived a sinful life", washes Jesus' feet with her hair. We're so used to the story that it's lost its weirdness to us. It was a culturally inappropriate thing for her to do, yet Jesus allowed it to teach Simon a lesson in forgiveness.

In Ch. 10 Jesus tries to go through Samaria but He is rejected by a bunch of Samaritans. In Ch. 11 Luke records how Jesus was accused of being demon-possessed. And any more situations like these. And of course Luke does not skip the crucifixion. He tells his readers that

### ***Jesus' life ended horribly***

Lots of details about the crucifixion. Robbers to his left and right, hurling insults at Him (although one has a change of heart later). Who wants to portray the hero of the story and share these horrible details? Luke does, mostly so we can also hear about ...

### ***Jesus' victorious resurrection***

Luke records the resurrection, and the humorous account with the two disciples on the Emmaus' road. Although Luke's audience is primarily Gentile, he makes many comments that spoke to the Jews, especially Jesus' statement to His disciples after the resurrection in 24:44,

*<sup>44</sup> He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high*

So Luke gives the reason for writing his gospel in the first 4 verses. Since he knew even in his day many people disagreed about who Jesus was, Luke did his own research and talked to eyewitnesses (the apostles, probably Mary, maybe a shepherd or two, people who heard Jesus teach or saw a miracle, maybe even some of the women who were at the tomb resurrection morning, maybe even the two on the road to Emmaus) and ordered these accounts in a unified and understandable format

*<sup>4</sup> so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*

Who was Theophilus? Was he a Roman official that knew Luke and was open to spiritual things? Some think he was a key official who might get Paul freed from his death sentence. Or was he fictitious person, whose name which was fairly common in that day means lover of God and was Luke writing to those who want to learn about loving God? The "most excellent" honour seems to indicate a real person and I think v.4 would indicate he's heard about Jesus but unsure of what to make of him yet. Clearly he has been taught some things about Jesus but he doesn't know the "exact truth" [NASB] about Jesus.

But Luke's main purpose is that Theophilus believe the exact truth about Jesus because if he does and when we do

## **We Know the Truth About Life** **(1:4)**

If Jesus is God's Son who came in the flesh, then everything Jesus says about God is true. If that's true then we now understand how the world came into existence; God made it along with Jesus (according to John 1 and Col. 1). Luke traces Jesus' genealogy through Mary and he stops at Adam. Because Adam was the first person created by God, which makes Genesis true. God intended for man to dwell with Him but he rejected Him and death came into the world because of sin. So, now we know why there's death. If the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10), that means we're all lost and need to be saved.

If everything about Jesus has been fulfilled and is being fulfilled and will be fulfilled, then He's coming back like He said. And he will rule on David's throne like Gabriel said. And He will have a kingdom like He promised the thief on the cross. Which means we have to believe in Jesus if we want to enter into His kingdom.

We should not be surprised then that there continues to be a lot of confusion and disagreement about Jesus because Jesus has an enemy named Satan who wants people to be confused about Jesus. And that makes sense that all the things that Jesus and God say are true in the Word of God are now questioned or doubted.

In John 8:31 we read,

*<sup>31</sup> So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

Luke's gospel is part of the Word of God. Knowing the truth about Jesus frees people from the enslavement of deception and lies. The truth cuts away all this and helps us understand life; where we came from, where we're going and why we're here. Once we know the truth we are now responsible to share that with others. The world desperately needs the truth and we have it. Who will we share it with this week?

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