

# Luke 1:1-4

## The Certain Gospel: Is Jesus Fake News?

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**Fake news...** What's the difference between news that is **real** and news that is **fake**? And if you were **put to the test** to determine what news **actually happened**, would you get it **right**? Today, I'd like to put you to that test. I want to show you some headlines and for you to guess if they're real or fake.

- "Gatorade banned and fined \$300k for bad-mouthing water." Do you think this is true or fake? This is actually **true news**. Gatorade made an **app** game that portrayed water as bad and got sued.
- "Elderly woman trains 65 cats to steal from her neighbors." You can picture it. Owner trains cats to pick up shiny objects in their mouths in their homes. But is it real? This is **fake news**.
- "Celebrate pancakes with a maple syrup bath at famous Japanese hot springs resort." Don't you like pancakes so much you just want to bathe in syrup? Guess what? You can! This is **true news**.
- "The story of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection is true." Our sermon series is entitled "**The Certain Gospel**" because I believe what Luke's **gospel account** records for us is **true**, it's **certain**, and it's **good news**, which is what **gospel** means. So we could call our series "**true good news**."

But whether Jesus is true news or fake news is the **big question**, isn't it? **Luke** set out to answer this question about 40 years after Jesus' crucifixion—somewhere around **AD 70**.<sup>1</sup> We don't know exactly **when** he wrote this gospel, but he does tell us **why** he wrote it, **how** he wrote it, and **what** he wrote. In our sermon today we're going to answer those three questions:

1. **What** did Luke write? (Lk 1:1)
2. **How** did he write it? (Lk 1:2-3)
3. **Why** did he write? (Lk 1:4)

It's as we answer these three questions that we will begin to **understand** whether or not Jesus is **true news** or **fake news**. Jesus is the **most important person** in all of human history, and he makes some pretty **startling claims** about how we should **live** our lives and what comes next after we **die**. I want to know if Jesus is true or false. So let's get started.

## What did Luke write?

Let's see if we can find the answer in verse one.

**Luke 1:1** Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, (NIV®)

Another way you can say this is, "Many have tried to draft the story of what God promised to do and did among us." Luke is setting out to write **two things**: 1) a **narrative**, a history, a record of what took place

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<sup>1</sup> Zondervan. *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible, eBook: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message* (Kindle Locations 234379-234380). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.

among them; and 2) how it is a fulfillment of **God's promises** in the Old Testament. *Luke is writing Christmas!* Luke writes how God **stepped down** into **human history**, which is what we celebrate.

## The story of God stepping into human history.

As we look at all the **big themes** we're going to see in Luke, we see **over** and **over** again God stepping into human history—that he is becoming apart of our **narrative**. I've **adapted** and **condensed** the **major themes** from **Mike McKinley's** Luke For You series into four themes.

- 1) **The Holy Spirit moves:** The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity (Father, Son, Spirit), one God, three persons. The **book of Acts** is famous for the movement of the Spirit, but Acts is the second book in a **two-part** series. The Spirit shows up first in Luke (Lk 1:35; 2:25-27; 4:14; 10:21).<sup>2</sup>
- 2) **Prayer works:** Prayer is talking with the **one true God**. Skye Jethani illustrates the 4 Stages of Prayer. Prayer is not talking **at** God, but talking **to** him, **listening** to him, and **being with** him. Luke records when Jesus prays and his teachings on prayer (Lk 6:28; 9:18, 28; 11:1-9; 18:1-14).
- 3) **God saves his people:** When the angel announces to the shepherds the arrival of Jesus, the angel says “a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah” (Lk 2:11). The **Messiah** was God's **promised Savior**. Since **Adam** and **Eve** sinned and this world fell into **brokenness**, God has been **unfolding** a plan to save people who put their faith in him, and this plan comes to **completion** in Jesus (Lk 4:21; 19:10; 22:37; 24:44).
- 4) **Jesus flips the norm upside-down:** When Jesus comes, he blesses social outcasts like the **poor** and the **sick** and **prostitutes** and **tax collectors**. And he says the **prideful**, the **religious**, and the **powerful** don't have any part with him (Lk 1:45; 5:27-32; 7:36-50). Jesus brings both **spiritual rescue** and **social justice**—he **lifts up** what the world **discards** and **humbles** what the world **values**. (**Stranger Things**, upside-down?)

As we look at these themes, **what** do we **see**? We see God stepping down from **eternity** and into our human story and this **changes everything**. This is **what** Luke is writing about in his gospel.

Do you know the story Alice in Wonderland? **Lewis Carroll** first told this story to his friend Henry Liddell's three daughters, **Lorina**, **Alice**, and **Edith**. In fact, in the prefatory verse (aka. opening poem) to *Alice in Wonderland* he names them **Prima**, **Secunda**, and **Tertia**. And then of course, he names the main character **Alice** after the second daughter. Carroll writes Alice into the story. He **draws out** these girls **imaginings** by drawing them **into** the book. That's kind of **like** what God does. God the **Father** wrote his **Son** Christ Jesus into our story.

And if God has entered our story, that **changes everything**, how I live my life, why I'm here, what I should be doing. It gives me both **hope** that I have an **ultimate purpose** but challenges me to stop living life just for **myself**. *When we hear that God has entered our story, it can seem a little fantastical, but although it is supernatural, it's not fantasy.* How do we know it's not pure **make-believe**? By **how** Luke wrote his book.

## How did Luke write it?

Let's look at the next couple verses. Luke drafted this story of **things fulfilled**...

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<sup>2</sup> McKinley, Mike. *Luke 1-12 For You: For reading, for feeding, for leading* (God's Word for You) (Kindle Locations 76-83). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition. \*Scripture references for 1-3 adapted from McKinley's themes.

**Luke 1:2-3** just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, (NIV®)

So **how** did he write it?

## Carefully, based on eyewitness accounts.

Like **Sherlock Holmes** and **Dr. Watson**, Luke carefully investigated Jesus' life and death to find the truth. As we read Luke, you'll notice he's a **combination** of Sherlock, who notices the **small things**, the **little details** that tell us this is a true story, and the **trained** mind of **Dr. Watson**. In fact, Luke is a Doctor.

**Colossians 4:14** Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. (NIV®)

This doesn't mean that Luke was wealthy or had status, but he did have **medical knowledge** and training. So we can safely **assume** that he would go about investigating the story of Jesus just as **carefully** as he might **operate** on a patient or care for the sick. Like **Sherlock** and **Watson** talk to different **witnesses**, so did he.

- a. He could have spoken to **Men who knew Jesus**. When the 11 apostles (disciples) chose someone to replace **Judas**, they chose from among men who had been there from **Jesus' birth to the resurrection** (Acts 1:21-22). Luke probably spoke to these men. In Corinthians Paul tells us that over **500 people** saw Jesus alive; and Luke probably talked to some of them (1 Cor 15:6). He's writing around **40 years** after Jesus' ministry, when many of them were still alive. In their **oral society**, people worked hard to **remember** and truthfully **retell significant events** because they didn't have easy access to **reading** and **writing**. So their testimony is reliable.
- b. Luke also likely talked to **Women who saw it happen**. One of Luke's primary sources was probably **Mary** herself (Luke 2:19), who knew Jesus his whole life. He also likely spoke to **Mary Magdalene** and **Joanna** since he records them being among the first to discover Jesus risen from the grave (Luke 24:9-11), but the men **didn't believe** them. Both **Jewish** and **Roman** law didn't think much of a woman's testimony, but Luke **trusted** them. Now he is asking us, do **you** trust them?<sup>3</sup>

But maybe some of you are thinking. Why are there **four different** gospel accounts? Don't they **contradict** each other? Have you ever been to the Newseum in Washington DC? Out front of the museum on the street they have a row of cases displaying the **front pages** of a bunch of different **newspapers** from all around the **world**. When something big happens, many of them may cover the same event, but with different **headlines** and different **reporters** writing to different **audiences**. *Same event. Different reporters. Different audiences.* That's what the **four gospels** are. Same event (*the life of Jesus*). Different reporters (*with different perspectives*). Different audiences:

- I. **Matthew** - *Original disciple writing to Jewish Christians.*
- II. **Mark** - *Peter's account written to church in Rome.*
- III. **Luke** - *Early believer writing to Hellenized Jewish Christians.*

Luke writes for the **social outcasts**, those not accepted by the **majority** of Jewish people. We see this in the name **Theophilus**. That's a **Greek name** that means "**friend of God**." Theophilus was the wealthy benefactor who paid for the account but the intended **audience** was always larger than him. Luke probably referred to **Mark** as one of his eyewitnesses.

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<sup>3</sup> NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible. Zondervan. 2016. Footnote Matthew 28:7. Page 1680.

#### IV. **John** - Disciple writing to convince Jews that Jesus is the Messiah.

Luke wrote his gospel carefully based on eyewitness accounts. But why did he write this?

### Why did Luke write?

Luke gives us his **purpose statement** in verse four. He did all this **research** and **investigation**...

**Luke 1:4** so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (NIV®)

Why did Luke write his gospel account?

### So that we can believe with certainty.

The Greek word here for “certainty” means **truth**. In other words, Luke writes so that we can know what the first Christians and what we still believe today is **true**. But this word for **certainty** can also mean **security**. Certainty equals **safety**. *There’s safety in truth, isn’t there?*

Imagine for a moment that you are moving all of your belongings in a big **moving truck**. Your **whole life** is packed into your U-Haul. You pack your **family** in and you begin driving. You’re driving to your new home when you come up to a bridge. It has a **sign** that says “**weight limit 4 tons**.” And as you look ahead, you see a bridge that’s **rusty** but looks **stable**. What do you do? Do you take a **big breath** and **drive** across the bridge or do you use **Waze** to find **another route**? Is the **sign fake** news or is it telling the **truth**? How do you know what decision to make? Do you know how much your table, chairs, and trunk full of **furbies** weighs? Or are you willing to **risk** all of that, your **whole life** on your **best guess**?

You would **never** risk your life on your **best guess**. But are you risking **your eternity** on your **best guess**? One day we’re each going to face a much **greater bridge**—**death**. This is the **scariest** of all bridges. It’s dark and looks like it will **collapse** and we can’t see the other side clearly. But there is a **sign** above it. The sign over the bridge says this.

“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die...”  
- **Jesus Christ** (John 11:25b)

Jesus is not just a best guess, he’s a **certain guarantee**. I want to **challenge you**, whether you’re a Christian or not to stop risking the **next-life** on your **best guess**. Jesus himself said, “I am the **way** and the **truth** and the **life**” (John 14:6) and he backed up that claim from **rising** from the **grave**. He walked **back across the bridge** and offers to walk with you through **this life**, across that bridge, and into the next. He asks you **repent** of your sins, **trust** him, and come and **follow** him.

You can **call yourself** a Christian and never get **serious** about following Jesus. You’ve taken your best guess. Maybe your **parents** were Christians so you are, or all of your **friends** are Christians so you go to church. You’ve said the **prayer** and you call yourself a Christian but your life doesn’t look different than anyone else’s. Jesus isn’t really **Lord** of your life. You’re driving onto a bridge you have not **examined**. **Get real** about your faith. Get real about Jesus. Stop **messing around**.

If you’re **not** a Christian, or haven’t taken the time to see if this Jesus story is true, I want to **invite** you to join us for the **duration** of this sermon series. Come **every week**. This can be your **investigation**. You can also pick up *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel at our Welcome Center. Lee Strobel was an **atheist journalist** who took the time to investigate the truth claims of Christians, and he found the evidence to be good, to be certain. But don’t take my word for it. Read his book. So is Jesus **fake news** or **true news**?

## ***Jesus is a true story.***

Jesus isn't **fake news**. He's **true news**. He's **good news**. Jesus isn't a **myth** or **fantasy** or **made up**. People like you and me saw it happen and Luke wrote it all down really carefully. Jesus is the **certain gospel**. He's the truly good news. *Jesus is a true story, and true stories are the **best stories**. Jesus is a true story.*

*Pastor [Jonathan Romig](#) wrote and preached this message for the people of Cornerstone Congregational Church. [Click here to listen to more sermons](#) or [click here to read our story](#).*