



“Know the Truth”
Luke 1:1-4

Idea: The Bible’s teachings about Jesus are certain and true.

Intro: As we enter the Christmas season, the people of the world are once again confronted with a great question: “Who is Jesus?” As you know, Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, but what makes Him so special that He would be celebrated for two millennia? These are age-old questions, and today, there is much speculation, just as there has always been, regarding His fame and historical importance. Some downplay His significance by questioning the historicity of what is known of His life and accomplishments. Others reject Him altogether. Still others hold Jesus up as a true historical figure who was and is the Savior of the World.

At the beginning of the first century A.D., there was a similar debate taking place. Many Jews in Palestine anticipated the coming of the long-awaited Messiah. Others rejected it as fable and myth. Still others heard the news of a potential Messiah being born and worked to kill Him. What took place back then and what takes place today are both grounded in one’s understanding of who Jesus is.

Who is Jesus? It is amazing that this question is still being asked, yet it is. Last week, I listened to an interview with Kathie Lee Gifford about her new book, *“The Jesus I Know: Honest Conversations and Diverse Opinions about Who He Is.”* Kathie Lee shared that her foundational question in each conversation recorded in the book was “What does Jesus look like to you right now?” Full disclosure, I have not read the book, so I cannot nor am I offering a review of it. I did, however, listen to the interview, and I have looked at the table of contents and read through the introduction. So, I can only speak to that limited information. What I heard or better yet did not hear, however, was troublesome. There was a very subjective stressing of people’s “experience” with Jesus. Gifford even makes the statement in the book’s introduction saying, “Jesus is always the same, but He doesn’t show up the same way to everyone.” Now, on the surface, the statement is understandable. The circumstances leading up to a person’s encounter with Jesus are different for everyone. However, nowhere in the interview or in the introduction does Gifford ground a person’s experience with Jesus in the written Word of God. Instead, the emphasis seems to fall on dreams, emotions, and the like.

As Christians, all that we can know and understand about Jesus is exclusively contained in the Bible. With that said, many people’s view of who Jesus was and is today is very much different than the way He is revealed in the Bible. They have formed opinions from other outside sources (extra-biblical sources, assumptions, hopes, etc.). From their point of view there are many answers to the question of who Jesus is. During the days of the early church, the same debate was taking place. There had been a man named Jesus who lived and taught in Palestine. He had many followers, but the Romans had put Him to death. For that reason, there was a lot of confusion as to the veracity of His claims. Many heralded Him as Israel’s Messiah...their Saving King. Others

rejected Jesus as a liar and a lunatic, yet Jesus' followers in the Church continued to preach and teach about His death, burial, and resurrection. They recorded on paper the history and made the case for faith.

Inquiry: This case for faith is what we find in Luke's Gospel. The kingdom of God that Jesus had claimed to usher in (Luke 10:9) did not resemble what the Jews anticipated. They expected a conquering king who would overthrow Rome and free them from tyranny. Jesus, however, came as a suffering servant who was killed at the hands of the Romans. He was born in a manger rather than a palace and carried a staff instead of a sword. Jesus said in Luke 17:20, "*The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed...*" He explained to the Pharisees who were questioning Him about the Kingdom that they were looking at it through the wrong lens. In essence the Kingdom He ushered in was an upside-down kingdom from their perspective.

Today, we begin a new series through the Gospel of Luke. As we get started in Luke, it is important we know a few things about the author and his work. This Gospel was written by Luke. By A.D. 200, the early church had firmly established the understanding that Luke was the author of both Luke and Acts. Luke was a well-educated and cultured Gentile believer who served alongside Paul on his missionary journeys and imprisonment. He was a physician and likely a strong preacher (2 Cor 8:18). He wrote his two-volume set to provide Theophilus with a thorough record of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and how it brought to fruition the Kingdom of God.

The Gospel of Luke belongs to what we call the "Synoptic Gospels." They are Matthew, Mark, and Luke. They "see (optic) "together" (syn). Luke's Gospel is unique in two ways. First, it is the longest Gospel. Second, it is the only Gospel with a sequel. Acts illustrates how the life and ministry of Jesus was lived out through the believers in the church. Together, the two books explain how Jew and Gentile could end up as equals in a community planted by God, even though that community's roots were originally grounded in a promise to Israel. Luke describes the upside-down kingdom. He begins by explaining his purpose in writing out the events surrounding the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. He wrote so that Theophilus and the others who read his account would know the truth.

Read Luke 1:1-4.

Over the past few years, the term *misinformation* has become more and more prominent. Misinformation is "false or inaccurate information, especially that which is deliberately intended to deceive." This term is used often in news reports that make the claim a person or another entity is attempting to change the narrative on an issue. Misinformation is not a new concept; it has been around since Eden (Gen 3:1). The person spreading misinformation is working to influence what and how a person believes, which in turn influences how he or she behaves. The constant in the equation is belief. No one can live without belief of some sort. Consequently, there are no unbelievers in the world, just people who believe in different things. In such a world, certainty becomes a rare and precious gift. After all, truth by definition is exclusive. You cannot have your truth and I have mine about an issue. There is only one truth. It is to this end that we find Luke dispelling any and all misinformation and bringing clarity to the truth. He wanted Theophilus to be certain, to know the truth, as he added his Gospel account to the record. From these first four verses we discover four things about our Christian faith. It is...

1. An Accomplished Faith

Read verse 1.

Luke's work is not a novel. His Gospel notes the precedent of others recounting what Jesus did. Many have recorded and described the life and ministry of Jesus. Those other accounts (oral and written) lay the groundwork for why Luke writes. They set the precedent. Their records along with Luke's describe how Jesus fulfilled or accomplished all that the Old Testament had promised concerning the coming

Messiah. There are nearly three hundred references to the coming Messiah in the Old Testament, and Jesus fulfilled every one of them.

The first Messianic prophecy is found in Genesis 3:15, *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”* The fulfillment of this prophecy in Jesus is found in Galatians 4:4, *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law...”* Another great fulfillment of prophecy that magnifies the Christmas season is found in Isaiah 7:14, *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”* We read of its accomplishment in Matthew 1:18, 24-25, *“...she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit ...Joseph... took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.”*

Theophilus could be certain that Christianity, the message of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, was true because it is an accomplished faith. It is built upon as Luke says, *“a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us.”* His gospel is bookended with this description of an accomplished faith (Luke 24:44-48).

2. An Admissible Faith

Read verse 2.

All four Gospels record eyewitness testimony about the life and ministry of Jesus. Matthew and John were part of the twelve disciples who lived and ministered with Jesus during those three years of ministry. They personally saw His miracles like the feeding of the five-thousand, calming the storm, healing the blind, walking on water, and His resurrection. Mark and Luke interviewed and investigated the historical claims regarding Jesus. Therefore, what we find in Luke’s Gospel is eyewitness evidence that is admissible in a court of law. Many scholars believe that Luke and Acts are companion volumes written as a legal brief in defense of the apostle Paul. If this is why Luke wrote the two books, then he would have rooted his account in evidence rather than imagination.

What we find in the Christian gospel delivered to us through the Bible is a historical Jesus. The claims made by Luke and the other biblical authors were not done in secret. They were done in space and time and left a historical footprint. For example, the birth of Jesus is set in space and time (Luke 2:1-7). Therefore, all these claims are admissible evidence for faith. We can and should know the truth because the Christian faith is an admissible faith.

3. An Authenticated Faith

Read verse 3.

The Gospel of Luke is investigative journalism par-excellence. He *“followed all things closely.”* Many had written or taught on the life and ministry of Jesus. Based on Luke’s words, we can believe that he fully investigated all claims, retaining what was true and rejecting what was false.

Luke set out to write an accurate and orderly account. The language used conveys the idea of a step by step cataloguing of things. This journalistic approach coupled with the fact that at the time of his writing many eyewitnesses were still living means we can be sure of its integrity. Luke was a systematic historian whose work was never questioned during the days of the early church. It was fully embraced as being a true accounting of the historical life and ministry of Jesus. Even the heretic Marcion who was famous for cutting the parts of the Bible out that he did not like accepted Luke’s

Gospel as Scripture. We can and should know the truth because the Christian faith is an authenticated faith.

Did you know there are aspects of other religions that cannot be substantiated? For example, the Qur'an claims that Muhammad visited Jerusalem, which is why Muslims claim the Dome of the Rock as a holy site. In spite of this claim, history offers no record of him ever visiting Jerusalem. Joseph Smith claims to have been visited by an angel named Moroni who called him to restore God's church on earth and gave him ancient teachings on plates of gold. Smith supposedly translated those plates into what is now referred to as the Book of Mormon. History offers no record of any of those claims. There is no authentication. This is not so with the Bible. We have an authenticated faith.

4. An Assuring Faith

Read verse 4.

The purpose of Luke's Gospel is to bring certainty to his readers concerning their understanding of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Luke wishes for Theophilus and any others who have questions to be certain of the truth. This verse informs us that Theophilus knew something about Jesus. We cannot be certain about how much he knew or how much he had embraced. I tend to believe that Theophilus was a follower of Jesus, and Luke's Gospel was written to further establish him in the faith. Regardless, Luke's purpose was to bring certainty to him in knowing the truth.

Most, if not all of us, have heard something about Jesus. We have set under the teaching of the Word of God. Some have also set under the teaching of other religious beliefs. You come from a background that has a different understanding of who Jesus was. Each Christmas season, we hear all kinds of reinterpretations of Christ. The truth can easily get lost in the noise about Jesus. Luke centers us once again. He assures us that what we read in the Bible is the truth about Jesus. He is God-Incarnate. He is God with us. He is God the Savior, who through His death, burial, and resurrection has satisfied God the Father's justice against our sin. We can and should know the truth because the Christian faith is an assuring faith.

Conclusion: Who is Jesus? What does He look like to you right now? The answer to these questions can only be found in the pages of Scripture. The Bible presents Jesus to us. He is very God of very God. Perhaps, you come from a background that views Jesus different from the Bible's depiction. You know Jesus to be a son of God. You know Him to be a great teacher, prophet, and miracle worker. You know He claimed to be the Messiah, but you have never believed Him to be the Messiah. God has been bringing people from many different backgrounds to Red Lane in recent months. If that is you, He has you on the search for Truth. You are looking and seeking. You are trying to make sense of everything. Please hear Luke's words again. He writes "*that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*"

Are you ready to accept by faith Jesus as the Messiah...the Savior and forgiver of your sins? Are you ready to accept by faith Jesus as Lord of Lords, believing He is not *a* son of God but *the* one and only Son of God? Are you ready to be in relationship with Jesus rather than going through the motions of religion?

Good news: God loves you. He created you and desires to know you.

Bad news: You are a sinner in rebellion against your Creator.

Best news: God has done everything necessary to justly deal with your sin and bring forgiveness and restoration to your life. Today, He calls you to turn from your sin and self and turn to Him as Savior and Lord. Have you received forgiveness in Christ?

What would keep you from embracing the truth and believing on Jesus today?

Christians what would keep you from leaning into Him and living out what we know in His Word?