

# 1

## God Has Spoken

### Part One: Good News!<sup>1</sup>

#### Luke 1: 1-4

If God spoke to you, would you listen? Good news! God has spoken; he has given us his Word, the Bible. Christians believe God chose the people who wrote the books in the Bible, and they wrote what he wanted.<sup>2</sup>

There are four ancient biographies of Jesus in the Bible. They are called “gospels” which means “good news.” Four different authors use eyewitness accounts.<sup>3</sup> We will be studying *The Gospel According to Luke*. Each gospel tells the good news about Jesus of Nazareth. Who was Jesus? Share what you have heard or read.

Luke worked very carefully to write an “orderly account.”<sup>4</sup> We can learn more about the author, Luke, from other books in the Bible. He was a respected Greek doctor and historian. He traveled with a leader in the church named Paul.<sup>5</sup> Luke will give additional background information in his introduction.

Look for *The Gospel According to Luke* in the Bible. How many chapters are in this book?

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<sup>1</sup> If you are working in a group, stand up and introduce yourself to each person, one at a time. Tell them something interesting about yourself. Do it quickly so you can meet everyone.

<sup>2</sup> See the prologue, “Getting to Know the Bible.”

<sup>3</sup> Matthew and John were disciples of Jesus, Mark and Luke were close friends of his disciples. They recorded what people actually saw and heard as they followed Jesus.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 1:3

<sup>5</sup> For example, you can read about a trip to a Roman colony in Acts 16:12-15. Paul talks about Luke in some of his letters, as well. See Colossians 4:14.

### LOOK OVER the Text

1. The introduction is written in a more formal style than the rest of Luke. Since this is a formal introduction, the sentences are more complex. Read the sentences aloud, and think about how to divide them as you see in 1:1.
2. Read Luke 1:1-4

1:1 Dear Theophilus:<sup>6</sup>

Many people have done their best / to write a report<sup>7</sup> / of the things that have taken place among us. 1:2 They wrote what we have been told by those who saw these things<sup>8</sup> from the beginning and who proclaimed the message. 1:3 And so, Your Excellency, because I have carefully studied all these matters from their beginning, I thought it would be good to write an orderly account<sup>9</sup> for you. 1:4 I do this so that you will know the full truth<sup>10</sup> about everything which you have been taught. GNB

### LABEL the Text

3. Divide each sentence into parts, or phrases. See 1:1. There are different ways to do this, so divide it any way that helps with understanding.
4. **TO WHOM** is the book addressed? Look for a name and a title. Underline the words.
5. **WHAT** is the book about? Circle the words that tell you.

<sup>6</sup>Theophilus is a Greek name. The first Christians were Jewish, but the Greeks became Christians, too. Since Greeks did not have the same background, Luke explains Jewish history and customs in this book.

<sup>7</sup> ESV: "a narrative"

<sup>8</sup> ESV: "eyewitnesses"

<sup>9</sup> An orderly account is a carefully-written report.

<sup>10</sup> ESV: "the certainty"

## **LINK to Other Literary Introductions**

Introductions tell basic information, such as who, what, and to whom it is written. They also give background information and a statement of purpose. Answer the following questions about Luke 1:1-4.

### Background Information

Where did Luke get his information?

### Purpose Statement

Why did Luke write this?

Luke wrote to Greek Christians. Many of them did not know the land and customs of the Jews or the Jewish scriptures (the Old Testament). Luke wanted to “write an orderly account” of what God had done, so he quoted these texts. He linked the Old Testament to Jesus and showed how the prophets’ words had come true.<sup>11</sup>

## **LEARN from the Text**

6. We read in the introduction that Luke researched the stories about Jesus carefully. He talked to a lot of people. Whom *do you think* Luke wanted to interview? What kind of questions *do you think* Luke asked? Discuss your ideas.

7. How *do you think* Luke decided whether a person had true information?

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<sup>11</sup> had been fulfilled

## Part Two: The Beginning of Everything

### Genesis 1:1-31

Before we can understand the good news about Jesus, we need to go back to the beginning to learn more about God.

“Genesis” means beginning. It is the name of the first book of the Bible. The book of Genesis describes the beginning of everything in a simple and beautiful way. It is the beginning of the good news.

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning, God created<sup>12</sup> the heavens and the earth.

How did God do it?

Genesis 1:3

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

God spoke, and His Word made it happen. God created the world, the oceans, the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the animals. Then God created the first humans.

#### **LOOK OVER** the Text

1. This is an ancient text. The words “man” and “him” often refer to both males and females. Before you read, find and underline the words, “man,” “him,” “male,” and “female.”
2. Read Genesis 1: 26-27 and 31.

1:26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image,<sup>13</sup> in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock,<sup>14</sup> over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” 1:27 So God created

<sup>12</sup> God started with nothing and made everything, such as time, space, and the universe.

<sup>13</sup> An image is something that is “like” the real thing. God does not have a body, but he made us like him in some ways.

<sup>14</sup> Livestock are animals used for work or food.

man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them....1:31a God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. NIV

**LABEL the Text**

3. Who is who? Look back in the text and write the noun for each pronoun.<sup>15</sup>

1:26 “Let us make man in our own image.”	us =
1: 27 “God created man in his own image.”	his =
1: 27 “In the image of God he created him.”	him =
1:27 “...male and female he created them.”	them =

Note on the pronoun “us” in Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man...”: The Bible describes God as the One True God, yet in this text, God speaks to himself! This is difficult for us to understand.<sup>16</sup> However, the Bible speaks of God as “the Father,” “the Son,” and “the Holy Spirit.”<sup>17</sup> God’s character is so rich that he is three persons, yet one God -- from the beginning.

4. What does God do? Circle the verbs in the text that tell you.
5. What is God’s opinion about all that he has made? Put a box around the words that tell you.

**LEARN from the Text**

6. Discuss the word “man.” How can the word be singular and plural? How can man be male and female?

<sup>15</sup> A noun is a person, place, or thing. A pronoun takes the place of a noun.

<sup>16</sup> If we could understand God completely, he would not be God.

<sup>17</sup> These are from Jesus’ words in Matthew 28:19.

7. What do we learn about God from this text?

8. What, *do you think* it means to be made in the image of God?

Note: We were created in God's image, and we were created good. However, something went wrong. Read the background paper, "The First Humans," for more of the story.

### **LIVE What you Learn**

#### **Discuss one of these questions:**

1. If we are created in the image of God, how (in what way) should we rule over the earth? How should we treat each other?
2. What *do you think* is the best way to research the truth about God?

#### **Consider this:**

God spoke, and the world was created. The Bible tells us that God continues to speak. He wants us to know Him. Listen carefully because God will also speak to you through his Word.

**The Final Word**

“ Lord, you have examined me and you know me.  
You know everything that I do;  
from far away you understand all my thoughts....  
You created every part of me;  
you put me together in my mother’s womb. “<sup>18</sup>

Psalms 139: 1,13 GNB

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<sup>18</sup> “Womb” is a word for “uterus.” It is the female organ in which the young develop before birth.

# The First Humans

## Genesis 1-3

### Part One: The Garden

God created humans in his image so they could know Him personally.<sup>19</sup> (Genesis 1:27). He put the first man and woman in a garden, and gave them everything they needed (Genesis 2:8). God gave them one rule:

Genesis 2:16-17 NIV<sup>20</sup>

... “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 2:17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,<sup>21</sup> for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

The first man and his wife, named Adam and Eve, lived in the garden. They walked with God. They were naked,<sup>22</sup> but they were not ashamed. They had nothing to hide from God.

### Part Two: Satan

Before we talk more about Adam and Eve, we will introduce Satan. At one point, Satan was an angel of God. God created Satan and the other angels before he created humans. Angels live in the invisible spirit world, but they can appear to humans in different forms. Satan led a rebellion<sup>23</sup> against God. The angels that followed him are called “demons.” We do not read about them very much in the Old Testament, but they were very busy during Jesus’ lifetime. They knew who Jesus was, and they wanted to stop him.

Satan is powerful, but he is not as powerful as God. He knows a lot, but he does not know as much as God. He tries to stop God’s plan, but he does not understand God. He wants humans to follow him instead of God, but all he can do is tempt us. He gives us ideas and suggestions. He tells us lies. He wants us to question God’s character. He helps us think about things we should not have, and tempts us to go against God to get them. He hates us because he hates God.

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<sup>19</sup> They were created in His image or likeness.

<sup>20</sup> All texts in this paper are from the NIV.

<sup>21</sup> GNB: “the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad”

<sup>22</sup> “To be naked” means to not wear clothes.

<sup>23</sup> A rebellion is a violent act against someone in power.

### Part Three: The Temptation

Satan came to Adam and Eve in the form of a serpent.<sup>24</sup> He used clever words to trick them:

Genesis 3:1

“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

The woman told the serpent what God really said. However, she added an extra rule. Compare God’s words in Genesis 2:16-17 (above) with Eve’s words here:

Genesis 3:3

“But God did say, ‘ You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

Genesis 3:4-5

“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”<sup>25</sup>

### Part Four: The Fall

The serpent tempted Eve to question God’s character. It worked:

Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom,<sup>26</sup> she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Notice that her husband was with her. They were close to God, but they wanted to be equal to God, as wise as God. The Bible calls this “The Fall.” It is the first sin. The Bible tells us what happened to them when they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

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<sup>24</sup> A serpent is a snake, but this snake can talk.

<sup>25</sup> GNB: “what is good and what is bad”

<sup>26</sup> GNB: “how wonderful it would be to be wise”

## Part Five: The Curse<sup>27</sup>

Genesis 3:7-10

Then the eyes of both of them were opened,<sup>28</sup> and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig<sup>29</sup> leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

When their eyes were opened, they saw...that they were naked. Instead of wisdom, they brought evil inside them for the first time. Instead of walking with God, they hid from Him. Adam and Eve did not die that day, but their bodies began moving toward death.<sup>30</sup>

God cursed the serpent. He told Satan that the woman’s offspring is going to crush his head.<sup>31</sup> Adam and Eve had to leave the garden. They lost their friendship with God. God cursed the ground, too. Adam and Eve had to work hard every day. God gave Adam and Eve a choice, but we all have to live with the consequences of their choice. God did not curse Adam and Eve, but “The Fall” affected every human and all the earth.

## Part Six: The End of the Curse

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”<sup>32</sup> Romans 3:23 We will never be good enough to return to God and end the curse. This is the bad news. The good news is that God has made a way for us to return to Him through Jesus. This is the gospel you are about to read.

<sup>27</sup> God is the Judge. When he curses, he is calling out a judgment. It is a statement of what will happen as a result of sin - to Satan first, but also to people and to all of nature.

<sup>28</sup> GNB: “They were given understanding.”

<sup>29</sup> This fruit tree has big leaves.

<sup>30</sup> Death is a result of “the fall.” God created us to live forever. Now only our spirits live forever.

<sup>31</sup> Offspring are descendants. “To crush his head” is to destroy him. Eve is the mother of all humans, so the one who destroys Satan will be in the human family. Christians believe Genesis 3:15, is speaking of Jesus.

<sup>32</sup> We fall short of God’s standard, his perfection.