

**Are the Gospels Myth or History?**  
**Luke 1:1-25**  
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*"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*

*In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah." - Luke 1:1-5, ESV*

Many people have asserted that the Gospels of Jesus Christ are religious myths and not historical accounts. But this assertion is a reflection of a pure bias against the truth claims of Christianity and against the supernatural. To dismiss something as mythological because it contains supernatural activity is to reveal the nature of your own bias more than the nature of the text itself.

Myths generally deal with things that either happened a long time ago, "*A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away . . .*" begins George Lucas' space myth. At other times, myths can have a certain timeless quality, not rooted in any specific time. A myth does not claim to be "an orderly account" of things handed down by "eyewitnesses." They do not open with reference to a specific time period and a specific person within the past 50-60 years.

The fact is that any fair reading of the Gospels will reveal plainly that they are relentlessly historical. Time and again, the Gospel writers anchor the events of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth in a real place at a real time. Jesus was born under Herod the Great in Bethlehem and died under Pontius Pilate about 30 years later.

Cross-checking historical references with other contemporary historians further reveals that all the historical details - the political parties, the customs and language, the names of key government officials, etc. - all make sense and stand up under verification. In other words, the Gospels claim to be historically accurate and, upon further research, they check out as being historically accurate.

What is the significance of this? Most importantly, it means that the truth claims made by the Gospel writers regarding Jesus must be weighed as historical claims and not dismissed as mythological. Luke's opening paragraph, in particular, sets his Gospels as a document claiming to give greater certainty. Now such a claim itself does not make Luke's document certain, accurate or reliable. Many documents claim to be reliable when they are not. But it gives us a frame of reference, a starting point, once we know what Luke claims to have written.

Luke is careful in how he expresses himself. He wants Theophilus to know that he has been careful in his investigation. He sets his Gospel within the context of eyewitness accounts and reliable testimony. While we are 2,000 years removed from the writing of this account, we need to know that many of the claims made in Luke - and in Matthew, Mark and John - were easily verifiable or falsifiable to the original recipients of these Gospels.

We, like Theophilus, can use the evidence and testimonies and details compiled by Luke to gain a more certain understanding of the truth concerning Jesus. Through his writing, we can know that God has indeed spoken, acted and redeemed His people through His Son, Jesus Christ.