

What about Gap in the Gospels?
Luke 2:39-40

ETS: Luke left out events in Jesus' life

ESS: Luke leaves out events in Jesus' life that does mean his Gospel is not accurate or valid

OSS: I want to equip people to stand firm in Scripture

PQ: Do you trust the Scriptures?

UW: Trust

ME

Power of DOUBT!

Can you trust the Bible?

I typed in this question and on Quora I found this answer:

"No. The Bible says that Pi is 3. It says that the sky is a roof over the flat Earth. It says that people used to live to be 900 years old. It says that two of each animal fit on a wooden boat that was too big to float but far too small to hold even a fraction of those animals. Oh, and the boat was built by a dude hundreds of years old.

Did I mention the talking snake?

Any book that contains that many inaccuracies (and I've only just scratched the surface) is easy to see for what it

is: a collection of children's stories designed to teach morality, or perhaps scare those children into behaving."

Another contributor on Quora, a man who is an adjunct professor of Humanities and Religion at Florida State University wrote: *"[the bible] is mostly made-up stories by humans who attempted to understand their place in the world. So, if taken as myths, you can trust their intentions to describe what they could not possibly understand. If taken literally, you will be terribly misguided in your understanding of the world.*

It is reasonable to trust the content in SOME matters of philosophies of life once you eliminate the truly awful morals of a tribal society. I think Jesus is a good guide for doing that.

It is unreasonable to trust the content on almost anything concerning history and science.

WE

Can you trust the Bible?

- What about **alleged contradictions**?
- What about **variations in the accounts**?

Series: **Dr. Luke Investigates**

- Reason for Title: **Luke 1:3** "I have carefully investigated everything from the very first, to write to you in an orderly sequence..."

But, There is a **problem!**

Issue: How to I answer this problem with Dr. Luke's record?

Importance: WE Need to understand **how to address** these types of issues to a **skeptical** world.

- YOU need to personally be at **PEACE** about what you believe about the Bible.
 - Can you trust the Bible?
 - Does the Bible give us what WE NEED to know?

Turn to **Luke 2** and let's look at the **PROBLEM**

GOD

Luke 2:39-40 "When they had completed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40 The boy grew up and became strong, filled with wisdom, and God's grace was on him."

As we go through Luke, we are going to encounter occasional rabbit trails and this is one of them that I think we need to take.

- Where is the rabbit hole?
 - Luke does not include a big chunk of data that Matthew includes!

Missing:

- The visit by the **Magi**
- The slaughter of the **boys 2 years** and younger by Herod
- Mary and Joseph taking Jesus and **fleeing** to **Egypt**
- Mary and Joseph **returning** to Egypt

I thought Luke was “**Carefully investigating**” everything!?

- WHY did Luke leave these stories out?
 - Did Luke not know about these stories?
 - If he didn't know about them, then did he really conduct a thorough investigation?
 - What else is being left out of Jesus' life?
 - Why did Luke not include these stories?
 - Does this make Luke and Matthew contradict each other?

These are **important questions** because they hit at a CORE belief about the Bible!

- Can you trust the Scriptures to be accurate?

First things first: Our faith is **NOT built** on the BIBLE; it is built on the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ!

- The Bible **informs** us about God and His working in humanity
- The Bible is our **text**—we preach only from the Bible

But our faith is not built on this collection of books; *it is built on the resurrection of Christ!*

- Does the Bible give us information about the resurrection of Christ? YES, but is not the only source that validates the resurrection.
 - There are **extra-biblical** sources that refer to Christ being risen (CITE SOURCES)
 - There are the **actions** of the **apostles** and those who claim Jesus has risen
 - These actions are recorded in the Bible, but they are also recorded in extra-biblical writings by those friendly to Christianity and those hostile to Christianity! CITE SOURCES
 - There is the **rapid growth** of the church in a **hostile environment**
 - There are the countless stories of **changed lives**
 - There are millions of people who **gather** each **Sunday** around the world to celebrate Christ's resurrection

I want to make it clear: I believe the Bible is the **inspired, inerrant** Word of God.

- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”
 - “All Scripture” = **Old and New Testament**
 - Inspired = “**God breathed**”
 - **2 Peter 1:20-21** “Above all, you know this: No prophecy of Scripture comes from the prophet’s own interpretation, 21 because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”
 - Inerrant: There are no errors that have to be corrected.

BF & M Section I. The Scriptures: *“The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and*

therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation."

WHY did Luke **leave out** the stories of the **magi's** visit, the **slaughter** of the babies, the **flight** to Egypt out?

- If you read Luke's account and *DID NOT KNOW Matthew's account*, you wouldn't have known these other events that happened in Jesus' life!

Let's start with that issue: Would it change ANYTHING about WHO Jesus is, if you DID NOT know those extra stories that Matthew records?

- No! We still know from Luke's account that Jesus is:
 - Virgin born
 - "Conceived by the Holy Spirit"
 - Called the "son of the Most High"
 - Will be great
 - God will "give him the throne of his father David".
 - He will reign over the house of Jacob forever"
 - His kingdom will have no end.
 - He is for "all people"
 - He is a "light to the Gentiles"

- He is **glory to the Jews**

Would it change ANYTHING about WHO Jesus is, if you DID NOT know those extra stories that Matthew records?

- No! We'd still have the **underpinnings** for Jesus being both **FULLY God** and **FULLY Man** (Virgin Birth)
- We'd still have the **basis** for Jesus' being the **Savior for all people**
- We still have the basis for Jesus' **2nd coming** when He will set up His **kingdom on earth** and will sit on the **"Throne of David"**
- We still have the basis for Jesus' **eternality**

The **story of the Magi** shows us the....

- Fulfilment of **prophecy**
- The **callousness** of the **religious** leaders
- The **jealousy** of **Herod**
- Establishes a **timeline** for Jesus' birth (Based on the fact that Herod was alive when Jesus was born)

The account of the **killing of the babies** in Bethlehem shows us....

- Fulfillment of **prophecy**
- God's **protection** of **Jesus** and his family
- The **failure of human leaders** to stop God's plan

The account of **Mary and Joseph** taking Jesus and **fleeing to Egypt**, shows us....

- Fulfillment of **prophecy**
- God's **protection** of Jesus and his family
- The **failure** of human leaders to stop God's plan

However, the **absence** of these accounts **DO NOT affect** any teaching about....

- **WHO** Jesus is
- **WHAT** Jesus was sent to do
- **HOW** God was going to use Jesus
- **WHY** Jesus was qualified to be the Savior of the world

WHY did Luke NOT INCLUDE these accounts?

The Gospels are NOT Biographies

A lot of people read the Gospels as if they are **biographies** of Jesus' life, but they are NOT biographies- at least in the modern sense

- Do they have **biographical** elements? Yes, but that doesn't make them biographies!
 - The Gospels don't try to cover every aspect of Jesus life!

- For example, Luke gives us a **blanket statement** in **vss. 39-40** and the next event he covers is 12 years later!
 - What happened during those 12 years?
Luke doesn't say

Because there are gaps in the Gospel accounts, there were a bunch of “**Gospels**” written in the 200's and 300's that supposedly filled in the gaps.

- These are called the **Gnostic Gospels** (Gnostic = Knowledge)
- Problem: These so-called Gospels contain teachings, supposedly by Jesus and the Apostles, that completely contradict what Jesus and the apostles taught or are just bizarre (Gospel of Thomas)
 - Because the books circulated after the apostles had died and because they were contradictory to what the early church knew the Apostles taught/wrote, they were rejected by the early church.

Luke's goal was **NOT** to include **every detail** in Jesus' life

- **ILL: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Biography**
 - Includes every minute detail possible about his life

WHY did Luke NOT INCLUDE these accounts?

The Gospels are Historical-Theological Documents

Craig Blomberg (Show one of his books) states that the Gospels “...contain historical data that is presented through a theological filter.”

- The writers are **selective** of the material available.
- They **record** the events of Jesus life in such a way to make a **theological point** about him, that he is the **Son of God**, that he is **fully human**, that he **died** as an **atoning sacrifice** for mankind.

Each Gospel writer was **selective** in the material he included in his account.

- **Matthew includes** stories that **Luke does not**.
- **John** and **Mark** say **NOTHING** about Jesus’ birth or the early years.

WHY did Luke choose to leave those stories Matthew included?

- Conversely, why did Mathew NOT INCLUDE the same stories Luke did?

Before we answer that question, let me say that IT IS A **GOOD THING** they don’t **all have** the **same stories!**

- If all 4 Gospels had the same stories, what would be the logical conclusion? *They all copied each other!*
 - *WORSE: They **colluded** with each other to make up a mythological character or to create mythological stories around a historical man named Jesus!*

*The fact that all four gospels **contain different stories** and even have **different accounts** of the **SAME stories** actually attest to their **validity!***

- The **discrepancies** show that they are **not colluding** with each other

“The Gospels differ in some details but are the same on doctrine.”

WHY did Luke choose to leave those stories Matthew included?

- *Up until a few centuries ago, historical and biographical writers **did not preserve** information in their writings unless someone could learn a **valuable lesson** from it!*
 - Remember, things were written on **papyrus** and they didn't have modern writing instruments. In other words, you **didn't tend to have long written** works because writing and, later

copying, would be vary **laborious** and **expensive**. So, you wrote what you considered to be the **most important** and necessary.

WHO is the “**Someone**” that Luke and Matthew were writing to?

- Answer: **Luke 1:3-4** “So it also seemed good to me, since I have carefully investigated everything from the very first, to write to you in an orderly sequence, most honorable Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed.”

Luke was compiling **eyewitness stories** to write an “**orderly sequence**” for the “**most honorable Theophilus**”

- We don’t know WHO **Theophilus** was exactly, but the fact the Luke calls him “**most honorable**” speaks to the fact that this man was likely a **royal, Roman official**.
 - Being he was likely a **royal, Roman official**, meant he was also a **Gentile!**
 - He didn’t have the **history** of a **Jew**
 - He didn’t have the **traditions** of a **Jew**

As a **Gentile**, ...

- The visit by the **Magi**

- The **slaughter** of the boys 2 years and younger by Herod
- Mary and Joseph taking Jesus and **fleeing** to **Egypt**
- Mary and Joseph **returning** to Egypt
 - *Was not that important regarding understanding Jesus—in other words, there were other stories that Luke wanted his Gentile readers to know because they had more significance to them.*

What **WAS important** for the **Gentile Theophilus** to know and understand was that Jesus was the Savior for **“ALL PEOPLE!”**

- **Angels** in **Luke 2:10** “But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be *for all the people*”
- **Simeon’s** announcement in **Luke 2:30-32**: “For my eyes have seen your salvation. 31 You have prepared it in the presence of *all peoples*—32 *a light for revelation to the Gentiles* and glory to your people Israel.”

WHY did Luke choose to include detail/ stories Matthew omitted?

- **Matthew** doesn’t tell **WHY** Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but Luke does! (**Lk. 2:1**)

- **Why?** *Because Luke wants to place the birth of Jesus squarely in the **context of events** of world history and **Roman, Gentile rule***
- **Matthew** doesn't tell **WHO** was ruling when Jesus started his ministry, but **Luke** goes into great **detail** about the **Gentiles** who were ruling over the Jews in **Luke 3:1**.

Plus, Luke covers Jesus' ministry almost **entirely in Galilee**

- **Galilee** had been known since Isaiah's time in the eighth century B.C. as "*Galilee of the Gentiles*", because of the **greater Gentile population** in that province of Israel than in either Samaria or in Judea to the south.
- Luke **barely**, and **sometimes omits**, Jesus' ministry **outside of Galilee** until Jesus ultimately goes to Jerusalem

Luke included events from Jesus' ministry that specifically targeted a Gentile, Christian audience!

Luke shares the events from Jesus' life that tend to **promote** the fact that Jesus and the salvation He provides is for the **Gentiles** too.

- For example, in **Luke 3** he takes Jesus' genealogy back to Adam (Pre-Jewish) whereas, Matthew starts with Abraham (The Father of the Jewish race)
- Luke uses the term "**Lawyer**" instead of "**Scribe**"- which is a term use by the Jews
- Luke's **explanation** of **Jewish customs**
- References to Jews in the **third person**
- and more....

The Gospels are Historical-Theological Documents

Luke 2:39 "When they had completed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth"

- Is that a **false** statement? NO!
- Where there things that happened **between** the time when "**they had completed everything according to the law of the Lord,**" and when "**they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth**"?

Yes!

- From Matthew's account, we know that "**they had completed everything according to the law of the Lord,**" they apparently had returned to Bethlehem where the Magi come to visit them.
- From Matthew's account, we know that they had to **flee** in the **middle** of the night to **Egypt** to

escape the **death** Herod was bringing upon the boys 2 years old and younger in the area.

- From Matthew's account, we know that **Mary** and **Joseph returned** after Herod's **death** and **ultimately settled** in "their own town of **Nazareth.**"
- There is **no contradiction** between Matthew and Luke.

Just because one Gospel account **leaves out** a **story** or a **detail** that another account has, does that mean we have a contradiction? NO!

- A contradiction is a statement that is **logically false.**
 - Ex. If Matthew said "**Jesus was born in Bethlehem**" and Luke said "**Jesus was born in Nazareth**" then we'd have a **contradiction.**
 - You can only be born in one place at one time!

Luke then gives us a simple statement about what happened to Jesus: **Luke 2:40** "**The boy grew up and became strong, filled with wisdom, and God's grace was on him.**"

- There is no need to know if Jesus **played sports** or what His **favorite subject** was in school.

- All that we need to know is that God's hand was open Jesus as He grew up.

YOU

What was the point of telling us this?

The Bible has always been under attack and it is more prevalent in America than ever before.

- The Bible is the only book that is “Guilty until proven innocent!”

Are there discrepancies between the Gospel accounts?

Yes!

- Are those discrepancies explainable? Yes!

What was the point of telling us this?

- I want you to have **confidence** in what you hold in your hands.
- Yes, there are **differences** of account **details** in the Gospels
- Yes, there are **differences** in **numbers** used in a couple passages in the **Old Testament**
- Yes, there are **difficult passages**
 - BUT, ***NO TEACHING*** regarding our ***FAITH and PRACTICE*** is in ***DISPUTE***

Often, when you simply study the text, the supposed problem evaporates.

Don't get rattled when someone quotes a **couple of verses** and then **proclaims** they **contradict** each other.

- Look at the **context**—not just one verse
- Look at the **historical/cultural setting**—Remember the NT was written 2,000 years ago in a different cultural context (the OT is even older)!
 - That doesn't mean the message of salvation is NOT Universal—Luke is writing to demonstrate the message of salvation IS for ALL PEOPLE!

Your faith is **BUILT** on a **historical fact**: The Resurrection of Christ!

The Bible is the most **scrutinized, studied** and **documented** book from ancient times.

- Despite attempts to destroy **intellectually**, it still stands
- Despite attempts to destroy **physically**, it is still the best-selling book of all time

Dr. Luke's investigation is targeted at showing Gentile Christians that God sent Christ for us too!

PQ: Are you firm in your faith?