

The Word of the Apostles as the Foundation of the Movement (Acts 1:12–26)

Ballpark Recap and Baptism Encore

1. Our staff and volunteers did an amazing job.

- **1,300 volunteers showed up early**, stayed late, prayed and cried through the whole thing. Thank you.

2. We should never take this for granted.

- What's happening here is **not normal**, Summit.
- **That many people...?**
- I didn't present **4 ways to be happier**. We preached the gospel—confrontationally. The one that got the apostles jailed.
- We **baptized**, which is still a culturally bizarre thing for people.
- That many people responding is **a work of God** and an answer to prayer.
- What God is doing in our city bears all the marks of a **genuine awakening**, and we should never take that for granted.
- *(I woke up on Monday with a renewed sense of confidence in the gospel and excitement about our mission.)*

3. This puts a lot of work in front of us.

- It may be tempting for us to see the **Ballpark service as a "win,"** and put it behind us, but **God hasn't called us to gather a crowd** of 11,500 or to baptize a big group of people and then clap for ourselves. He's called us to make disciples.

- And most of these people that were baptized are just **beginning the process of discipleship**, and that's where the real work lies.
 - *Why **PERSONAL** to me.*
- This **starts with you** that invited people.
 - Get them into your small group.
 - Get **into their lives** and guide them. Offer to **start reading the Bible together** with them and getting together once a week. Go through a book together.

Lastly, I know there are a lot of you that didn't get baptized last week, but regretted it... or maybe you just weren't here.

4. Good news. We're doing an encore baptism this week.

- Same deal as last week—we've got all the stuff you'll need. Today can be the day you make that decision.
- More on that toward the end.

Introduction

Whenever we baptize someone we ask them two questions in the pool.

1. Do you believe Jesus has done everything necessary to save you, and are you trusting in what he did as your salvation?
2. Are you surrendered to Jesus as Lord, willing to go wherever he tells you to go, and do whatever he tells you to do?

This is their "confession of faith," but what does it mean for Jesus to be Lord?

- I mean, how do you apply that day by day?
- (Does that mean if he shows up in a dream with an instruction you obey him?)

The way they applied that in Acts was by "*being devoted to the apostles' teaching.*"

- (If you were here a couple of weeks ago we talked about the phrase in Acts 2).
- (The apostles' teaching = the Bible).

So I want to deal with a really basic question this weekend: *Why believe the Bible?* Why trust what the apostles wrote as an authority from God?

- I will admit that **I am bewildered** sometimes when I hear Christians try to defend why they use the Bible as their authority.
- *I can almost understand why skeptics won't take us seriously.*
- You ask a lot of Christians **why they believe the Bible** and they say something like,
- "Well, **because it is the Word of God.**"
- **How do you know** it's the word of God? "Because it says so."
- Well how do you know **what it says is true?** "Because it is the word of God."
- It appears to the outside world like we really have no reason to believe other than this is what our parents taught us.

Let me read the end of Acts 1 to you, in its entirety:

Acts 1:12–26

[12] Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet... [13] And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and *(the rest of the 12 disciples minus Judas)* Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.

[14] All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. (If you ever wonder why we don't believe

Mary was perpetually a virgin... because he had a bunch of brothers, duh).

[15] In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said,

[16] "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. [17] For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry."

[18] (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. (Mmm... meditate on that edifying verse for a minute... **whenever I sign a book**, I sometimes will Acts 1:18 as my verse, just so when they look it up later they are confused... "and falling headlong...")

[19] And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) [20] "For it is written in the Book of Psalms, *"May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it"; and "Let another take his office."*

[21] So (Peter said) one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, [22] beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."

[23] And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus (guy has some name identity issues), and Matthias. [24] And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen [25] to take the place in this ministry and apostleship

from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”
[26] And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias,
and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. And the other
guy said, “It was an honor just to be nominated.”

Why is this story in there?

- Is it to teach us how to choose a successor? Or a new girlfriend? Roll the dice?
 - Wouldn't suggest that. Some things in Acts were descriptive, not prescriptive.
- It's in there because it happened... but one of the things I think you can glean from it is how the apostles viewed Scripture, and how they saw themselves.

It shows you why the Bible became the authoritative, divine guide for Christians. It shows you 4 things:

- I. How the apostles saw Old Testament Scriptures*
- II. The authority the apostles assumed for writing new Scripture*
- III. The resolution of an apparent contradiction*
- IV. A reason for skeptics to consider the apostles' bold claims to authority*

I. How the apostles saw Old Testament Scripture

A. As authenticated prophecies about Jesus

- In Acts 1:16, Peter quotes a Psalm...
- **“Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas...” Acts 1:16**
- They saw the whole Old Testament as a book of prophecies given by the Holy Spirit predicting the coming of Jesus.
- Bible scholars tell us there are **right at 322 direct prophecies** that describe for us the **character and nature** of the coming Messiah, as well as giving us **specific details** about his birth, his life and his death.

- **The fulfillment of these prophecies proved to them that Jesus was from God.**
- I found this interesting example from a **CIA report**:
 - Whenever a **double agent** wants to reveal information to the CIA, the CIA usually gives them **several layers** by which to identify themselves, so that there is no chance that they could get the wrong person. For example: **One particular Soviet double-agent** was given 6 prearranged signs to accomplish: (1) He was to go to Mexico City, and (2) contact a certain guy in the city to let him know he was there and identify himself by the name of “I. Jackson.” (3) After 3 days he was to go to a specific place in the city and (4) stand in front of the statue of Columbus, (5) with his middle finger placed in a guidebook. When he was approached by somebody asking for directions (6) he was to say that the statue of Columbus was a magnificent statue and that he was from Oklahoma. At that point they knew they had their guy.¹
- Jesus had not 6 signs to identify him, but 322.
- I've heard it said before that the mathematical odds of getting that right by coincidence...(silver dollars)

B. As words from the Holy Spirit

- Look again at Acts 1:16. **“Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas...” Acts 1:16**
- Peter quotes from a psalm written by David, but says it was the Holy Spirit's words.

¹ *Seven Reasons Why You Can Trust the Bible*, 102. Erwin Lutzer

- **So, which was it?** *The words of Psalm 69,² are they David's or the Holy Spirit's?*
 - Yes!
 - You say, "How could something be simultaneously the word of God and the word of men?"
 - **Analogy**... kids' walking.
 - So, you say, "How could fallible men produce an infallible document?" That is the answer.
 - People say, "Well, the Holy Spirit was inspiring the apostles, but they were fallible and got a lot of stuff wrong as they were writing it down. So the divine parts of the Bible are inerrant, but the human parts are fallible."
 - **Think about Jesus.** Jesus was fully God and fully man. Did the human flesh part of him make him fallible? No. Even though he had fallible human flesh, his divinity made him perfect so he never sinned.
 - The same is true of the Bible.
- It's not the Bible writers were themselves infallible; it is because they wrote under the influence of the Holy Spirit that the product was fallible.
- **2 Peter 1:21**, "*For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*"
 - Fero = "carried along". Word you would use for how a ship sailed. The wind would "fero" the ship. As men wrote, God was carrying their words to the exact destination of this choosing.
- This doesn't mean that the Bible doesn't sometimes speak with human conventions of speech:

estimations; metaphors, figures of speech, just that...

- the law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
- that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, or correction and for instruction in righteousness.
- *They saw the Bible as divine; as words from God; and they devoted themselves to it.*
- *Do you see the Bible that way? How could you not memorize it, and devour it?*

II. The authority the apostles assumed for writing new Scripture

- Peter says, [21] So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, [22] beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."
- Jesus had declared that his 12 apostles, corresponding to the 12 tribes of Israel, would be his authoritative representatives. So Peter felt like they needed a 12th man (Texas A&M) to be an official witness to the resurrection.
- You say, "Well where did Jesus promise that?"
 - "*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*" John 14:26
 - "*Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*" Matthew 16:19 These apostles had his authority to write authoritatively and declare his judgments.
 - One more: "*...Our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks... There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction,*

² Psalm 69:25; 109:8

as they do the other Scriptures.” (2 Peter 3:15–16
ESV)

- “as they do the *other* Scriptures.”
- Peter thinks Paul is hard to understand?

III. The resolution of an apparent contradiction

- Whenever people say the Bible contradicts itself, and I say, “Well, show me an example.” 9 times out of 10 they can’t, but if they do, this is one of the ones they bring up a lot.
 - **Matthew 27 says that Judas died** by hanging himself;
 - This passage says, however, that he fell down off a cliff and his bowels burst out...
 - **Matthew says that the money Judas earned** for betraying Jesus he threw back into the temple and the Jewish authorities used it to buy a field...³
 - But **when Peter retells the story** here in Acts he says that Judas bought a field with the 30 pieces of silver... Did Judas buy the field or did he throw the money back?
 - Ha, clear contradictions?
 - Well, not necessarily.
 - **When you hang yourself**, if your body stays that way for a long time, the body swells up and eventually the branch broke and he fell down and his abdomen ruptured and his guts spilled out... Or maybe the branch overlooked a small cliff.
 - With the **money situation**, one writer says he threw it back and another says he “bought a field” with it... **what probably happened** is that Judas threw the money back and the Jewish authorities bought the field with it, and when Peter tells the story in Acts he just shortened it to say, “Judas bought the field”

since the money he had earned from selling Jesus was used for that purpose...

- Now, that’s just one resolution of a supposed contradiction, but I’ve looked at these supposed contradictions for years now... Almost always there is a plausible way to resolve it.

IV. A reason for skeptics to consider the apostle’s claims to authority

- If you’re one of those skeptics who say, “Well, I just don’t believe the apostles’ claims to be speaking the word of God. Lots of people have done that over the years. Mohammad. Joseph Smith. David Koresh. I’m not going to believe the Bible just because it claims to be the word of God.”
- If that’s you, that’s fine. Look at what Peter claims the Bible is:

*Acts 1:21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, [22] beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a **witness** to his resurrection.”* The apostles had to be eyewitnesses to the resurrection and the ministry of Jesus.

- In his intro to the book of Acts (Luke and Acts are a 2-volume set), Luke says: **Luke 1:1, Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, [2] just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, [3] it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you... that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.**
- “I’m compiling a list of eyewitness accounts.”

³ Matthew 27:5–8

Before you consider the Bible as the word of God, just consider it a series of eyewitness accounts pointing to something miraculous that happened—namely the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—and evaluate whether these accounts are reliable.

If they are, you have God doing something supernatural in the person of Jesus, and then you can consider whether the Bible is an accurate recording of his message to mankind.

Now, the most popular idea against the Bible today is that the Gospels are a bunch of **myths and legends**.

- The theory goes that the first Christians believed Jesus was a nice guy, a kind of beatific hippie, with some important religious things to say, but over time Christians invented stories about his power and divinity to beef up their claims to authority and these gradually got worked into the Gospels, and eventually they stamped out anyone who disagreed.

Let me give you **4 quick reasons this could not be true; or 4 reasons the Gospels could not be made-up legends:**⁴

1. The timing of the writing is too early for gospels to be a legend

- The books of the Bible were written around 30 years after the death of Jesus, some of the main ones being as early as 20 years; the last one was written about 60 years after Jesus' death. *(There's a little controversy about a few of them but it's agreed that the vast majority have an early date.)*
- That's too early for a myth or legend to spring up.
 - In **1 Cor 15**, which was written in 55 AD, (and that's not really contested), Paul says that there

are 500 people are alive who saw Jesus and he names a few of them and tells you to go and check with them. That's not the kind of thing you write if you're 100 years after the fact.

- Here's a new one I just learned. The **language used and the names** all point to 1st century writings.
 - **Proper names** are 1st century Jewish forms (like Richard or Dick—if latter, you know it was 40 years ago; colour or color—you know it is British).
 - On the contrary, it is all the spurious Gospels that show a later, like the supposed “Gospel of Thomas” or “Gospel of Peter” 2nd or 3rd century writing from other parts of the world.
 - People say, **“Well, the early Christians believed Jesus was like a super-rabbi but the divinity of Jesus and the resurrection were all added in later.”**
 - No: the most spectacular doctrines are in the earliest records of Christianity.
 - Celebrated communion
 - In 1 Cor, which, again, was written between 53–55 a.d. quotes a hymn the early church sang about the death and resurrection of Jesus and in Philippians he quotes a hymn sung by the early church celebrating Christ's divinity!
- ### 2. The content is far too counterproductive to be a legend
- *There is just a lot to stuff in there you **wouldn't make up** if you were writing a legend to beef up your authority.*
 - **For example:**
 - On nearly every page, the **apostles are buffoons**. Reading their stories is like watching an episode of the 3 stooges...
 - There always **getting stuff wrong**: being mean to **little kids**; bragging about **who is the greatest**;
 - if there were **puppies** running around them, they'd probably have kicked them.

⁴ Taken from Tim Keller—*Reason for God*, C. S. Lewis, Blaise Pascal, and then a hodge-podge of NT scholars.

- If you were writing a **legend** to get people to believe is that the kind of thing you'd make up?
- Here's another example: the Gospels record a story in which **Jesus calls Peter**—Peter, who would become the leader of the church—Satan. “Get behind me Satan.” Is that the kind of story you include if you're telling a legend? If you were trying to convince people to come to our church, would you tell them, “Yeah, Jesus and our pastor had a conversation the other day in which he referred to J.D. as Satan?” I wouldn't tweet about that. They wrote it because it was true.
- The Gospels record that **women were the first** ones to see Jesus after his resurrection. A woman's testimony was not accepted in a court during those days, so if you were making up stuff to establish the truthfulness of a claim, you'd never put women 1st. The Gospel writers put women as the first ones to see Jesus because... that's what happened.

3. **The literary form of gospels is too detailed to be legend**

- This is one of my favorites. People think that maybe these are written up as fictitious parables that had **true moral meaning** but were **never intended to be taken literally**.
- But here's the problem with that. The Bible has all these **random details** included that don't really have anything to do with any overarching, moral meaning.
 - **Mark 4:36**, Jesus was sitting in a ship and there were a bunch of other little ships. The detail that there were a bunch of other little ships have nothing to do with the plot.
 - **Mark 14**: In the midst of a really serious reflection on the Garden of Gethsemane... Mark records a detail about one guy fled naked. Has nothing to do with the plot... guy remembering what happened, and that's the kind of thing you include when you're writing from

memory. If I were telling my wife about going to the mall to buy a pair of Jeans... and a guy runs through the store naked while I'm there... that probably is going to make it into the story even if it has nothing to do with the plot.

- You say, “Well, maybe they were just making up those details to sound historical.”
 - So, in other words they were lying.
 - Did they have a good motive for that?

4. **The message was itself too costly to be a legend**

- The message that Jesus was Lord and had risen from the dead **didn't gain the Apostles** any power or prestige. In fact, it cost them their lives.
- We know that **from the very beginning** those preaching the gospel were a highly persecuted group; church history tells us all of the Apostles died an unnatural death...
 - **James**, was the half-brother of Jesus... The **secular Jewish historian Josephus** says that James became the leader of the church and was stoned for his belief that Jesus was Lord and died and rose again. (Which is pretty remarkable when you consider that James started out not believing Jesus was God, but ended up believing that... You have a brother. What would it take to convince you that your brother was the Lord from Heaven?)
 - Did you see in **Acts 1:14** it said that **Mary**, Jesus' mom, and his brothers are there in the Upper Room worshipping Jesus as the Messiah risen from the dead and as God. At first his brothers did not believe, but the resurrection convinced them.
 - **And they were willing to die to testify to that.**
 - To say that they just “made up” the stories about Jesus means that they were sitting around one day after Jesus had died fishing and Peter jumps up and says, “I know! Let's tell everyone that he resurrected! And we'll get to be the leaders of this new religion. **Except,**

let's teach everyone that Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world, and so we'll give away all of our money; and when other people try to kill us, we won't fight back.

And maybe, just maybe, if we're lucky, we can all get martyred through painful, humiliating deaths." And all the disciples are like, "That's a GREAT idea. Yeah. ME FIRST!"

- **Peter, the leader here, would eventually be crucified upside down.** This is the same Peter who when Jesus was being killed lost his nerve and denied Jesus 3x. **Would Peter, who denied the living Jesus, really have died for a dead one?**

To the skeptic: those are 4 reasons for you to consider the claims by the apostles to be speaking on God's behalf.

You see, if the resurrection is true, then it makes sense to me that God would empower his apostles to record an accurate version of all that Jesus wanted us to know and to do.

Otherwise, why waste all the time and effort to come and die on a cross if the message would be messed up and obscured because it got recorded wrongly?

- **Illus.** trying to get you to come **visit me in LA...** Without a correct address, you are no closer to me in LA than you were in NC.

I believe the Bible for the reason these first believers did: because I am **convinced the testimony of the apostles** is true—that Jesus really did resurrect from the dead, and that he was on a rescue mission to save us. That he really was God in the flesh.

So, that's why I believe the Bible is the word of God... Now, let me flip it: Why do you not believe it is the word of God?

- *"Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself but because it contradicts them."* Frank Mead

- Maybe you don't like what it claims? A lot of times when I am talking to people who tell me the Bible is wrong: they've never read it all. They don't want to believe its true, so they write it off *a priori* without even taking time to read it.
- William James: The will to believe. What we believe determined by what we want...

- Or maybe you've never read it?

It **claims to be God's message** for you.

- Is it not **worth the time** to read it?
- You **know someone**—you've seen their life changed! Why not read this book with us and see what it's about?

Why we devote ourselves to it: it is the word of God!

Baptism encore: the confession that you believe. Never been baptized? Maybe you're **ready to commit** to follow Christ; ready to show it. Maybe you did that a while back but have never taken the step to show it!