

So about 15 years ago, I was at home watching a YouTube video of a famous atheist, he's written lots of books. And I've listened to a few podcasts with him, and I was watching on YouTube, and he's in a university setting, and he's going on and on and on about the absurdity of Christianity. And this wasn't like the title of his talk, but basically that was what it was about. And It occurred to me as I listened to him that his entire talk was based on an assumption, a false assumption, but on an assumption that many Christians hold to today. And his whole talk was based on the false assumption that the foundation of our faith, what makes Christianity viable, what makes Christianity sustainable and plausible, that the foundation of the Christian faith is a Bible without any errors, or to use the modern term, an inerrant Bible. That was his assumption.

So his argument went, Hey, look at all these errors in the Bible. And he was pointing out historical errors and scientific errors and just some absurd things that were in the old testament in particular, and then some things in the New Testament as well, and his point was, look, these things aren't true. So if these things aren't true, the Bible isn't true, and if the Bible isn't true, the Bible can't be trusted. If all of it isn't historically, mathematically and scientifically accurate, then why would anybody believe any of it, right? Might as well just dispense with the whole thing, and at the end of the day, we should just dispense with Christianity. And the crowd goes wild.

It was amazing. But according to his misguided assumption, an assumption that many Christians hold on to, the legitimacy of Christianity sits precariously atop a collection of errorless or inerrant ancient text. That was the assumption of his talk, and then he just dismantled the text, and if he dismantles the text, he dismantles the Bible, and he dismantles the bible then he dismantles Christianity. But again, the assumption being if there is an error in the Bible, then, Christianity becomes indefensible. It's a house of cards, you just pull out the creation account, you pull out Leviticus, you pull out some things in the New Testament, the whole thing comes crumbling down. Goodbye Bible, goodbye Christianity. Now, this is not true, which will come as a relief to some of you but might sound like heresy to others of you.

Today, we're wrapping up our series called foundations, subtitled building faith on the essentials. In this series, if you've not been tracking along with us, and I hope you'll go back and watch or listen to this entire series because each part builds on the other. The bottom line for this series is that we're asking the question, what must a person believe, not do, but what must a person believe in order to be a faithful follower of Jesus. That is, what is essential verses what are the things we can agree to disagree with over without breaking fellowship.

So today, as we wrap the series up with number eight, we're going to talk specifically about the Bible. Now, this one's a little different, because Jesus never mentions the Bible, because there was no Bible at that point. The Bible wasn't assembled the way we think about the Bible until the fourth century, so this one is a little different, but we're asking the same question, What must we believe about the Bible, or what must one believe about the Bible to be a follower of Jesus?

Now when the Bible was first presented to me, as a kid, it was presented to me as the Inspired Word of God, the inspired word of god. I believed that before I ever read it, and then as I began to adult more, I learned that different Christian traditions would say well, it's not enough to say it's the inspired word, some traditions the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, inerrant? Really there are no errors?

And then I entered seminary, and I learned from a pretty well-known biblical scholar of his day, a man by the name of Martin Luther. You see, I learned that Professor Luther was a champion of the Word of God, for Luther, he looked around at all the practices of the church of his day, and he insisted that God's Word must be the filter by which all church practices would be measured. Specifically, it was the seven sacraments, when the church taught that there were seven sacraments required to be practiced by all members in order to be in good standing, Luther asked the question, where, where do you see that sacrament

commanded in the Word of God, and more specifically, where do you see Jesus commanding that practice? His point was this, if Jesus, who was the Word of God made flesh, if Jesus didn't command that practice, then neither shall the church. If Jesus didn't talk about it as a ceremony, then neither should the church. Therefore Luther argued against 5 of the seven sacraments, which the church didn't take to very much, but today we have two sacraments, communion and baptism, because when the guy who rose from dead commands you to go and baptize you do it, and when Jesus commanded you and me to do this in remembrance of me at the table of grace, well then, well you do it. So Luther elevated not just the word of God, but rather the words of Christ to be the lens and authority by which we understand the whole of the bible. But it lead Luther to famously describe the relationship between Christ and the rest of the bible in this way, that **“The bible is the cradle that holds the Christ, without him it is nothing more than wood and straw.” - Martin Luther**

So with this background, here is the question; what must you believe about the Bible in order to be a follower of Jesus, and it really boils down to this. Do you and do I believe that Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, that is the Gospels, where we here from Jesus, do you believe that they are reliable accounts of actual events? That's it. That Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John are a reliable account of actual events, because if you've adopted any one of the

four gospels as something that's a reliable account of actual events, then, you're there, because all four of the gospels present Jesus as God's Son and Your king. And everything we've talked about in this series flows from that one simple idea. It means that what Christ said about God is true, what Jesus said about you is true, and what Jesus said about the Hebrew Scriptures is true.

See, It means that Christianity does not rise or fall on our ability to prove that the Bible is without error. Keep in mind, People were following Jesus for 300 plus years before the first Bible was ever assembled. First century Christians. You know this, first century Christians, they didn't follow Jesus because of something they read. They followed Jesus because of something they'd seen; Jesus crucified and raised from the dead. See, our faith does not rise or fall on our ability or your ability to prove that the Bible has no errors, Christianity rises and falls on the identity of Jesus, which is validated by the resurrection of Jesus.

And this is why, this is why Christian apologist, a Christian apologist is somebody who contends for the faith publicly, this is why Christian apologists, for those of you who are a little bit geeky and you love to watch debate between Christians and atheists, what you'll discover is this, that Christian apologists, they always build their case on the resurrection of Jesus, not the inspiration of the Bible, because they know that the foundation of our faith is not

an inspired text. The foundation of our faith is the event of the resurrection of Jesus.

This is how the apostle Paul put it. Paul who's credited with writing about half the New Testament, I mean, if anybody's going to say, Hey the Bible is the foundation of the faith because after all I wrote half the new testament, this is the guy, but here's what he said. He wrote to 1 Corinthians 15, beginning in 14. And **if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching** (now my entire ministry me risking my life going around the Mediterranean rim is well useless, and look, he said all our preaching, Peter's preaching, John's preaching, James the Brother of Jesus preaching and Mathews preaching anybody who's out there preaching about Jesus it is useless. Wait. You're telling us that your entire ministry the integrity of your entire ministry hinges on an event that took place outside the walls of Jerusalem the resurrection of Jesus?

Absolutely, then he doubles down. Not only is my preaching useless so **is your faith** is useless, to which we say, wait a minute, that's unfair. You don't even know me and he's like I don't have to know you. If you're basing anything in your life on the claims of Jesus or the teaching of Jesus, it's useless, it's a waste of time because the only reason we take that Rabbi from Nazareth seriously was the resurrection, because it affirmed what he claimed about himself. But Paul is still not done. A few verses later

he says this, **And if Christ has not been raised from the dead your faith is futile and you're still in your sins.** His point is simply this, that the foundation of our faith is the resurrection that launched a movement, the church of Jesus, and that ultimately assembled the first Bible in the fourth century.

Do you know why understanding this is so important? This is extraordinarily important to you and me, but know who else it's important for, your children and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren. Here's why. When a version of inspiration that is called inerrant is raised to the level of foundational, the Bible becomes an obstacle to faith. Do you know why, when inerrancy becomes an essential, do you know what happens? We eliminate room for questions. We eliminate room for questions.

Wait, you mean to tell me? And that part in the bible in the book of revelation where Jesus has a sword in his mouth and he's going to smite the nations, that's true. Well, I can't explain it, but that's what the Bible said. That's what God's word said, so don't question it. You just accept it and move on. You can't ask questions; you can't be curious. And not only can you not be curious, sometimes you can't be honest 'cause you're reading this and you're like, wait according to parts of the new testament women can't talk in church, well, that's right. Let's just pretend that's not there. See, if it has to be without error, then,

You can't even be honest about your own faith and your own view of the Bible. Let's pretend that's not there, but My kids keep asking me about those parts. We should be the most curious and the most open-minded people in the world because our faith isn't anchored to a perfect text. Our faith is anchored to a solitary event outside the walls of Jerusalem that changed everything, including the people who were there and knew Jesus personally.

But maybe you push back and say, wait, but even the gospels have discrepancies, and inconsistencies, yes, they do. They do, hey think of it this way. Most law officials know this already, but when an event happens, when someone is killed or there is a murder or someone dies through violence, and when the detectives come back later and investigate, do you know how many different versions of what happened they get, one for each witness. Do you know why that is not a problem for detectives, because if everyone had the exact same story, if they interviewed five witnesses and they each had the same story, well then those detectives would know that something is wrong, it would actually suggest the event was some how orchestrated. That there are different versions of the gospel of the same person and the same event, actually gives the event of the resurrection credibility, the words, and the life of Jesus credibility.

Listen, the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and it has context, and it needs to be interpreted in its context, here

is the context. The Bible provides us with the backstory and the main story of redemption. The Bible provides us with the backstory. The Old Testament is a saga of God's people clinging to Yahweh as he prepares the world for his final king. It's ancient history with a divine purpose. It's an over-the-top graphic account of God wading into the mess, created by our sin to see the story of our redemption played out to its bitter and bloody crucifixion, crucifixion, end. The story arc of the entire Bible should cause all of us, all mankind, the entire human race to drop to our knees in gratitude for what God has done on our behalf, for what God has done on behalf of the world.

So I read it every single day, and so should you if for no other reason, and if you're a skeptic, and if for no other reason, here's why you should read the Bible. Because the words of Jesus recorded in the gospels are the very words of God. The words of Jesus are the very words of life. His words shine light on who we are. His words keep us from moving too far to the left or too far to the right in our personal lives. The words of Jesus inform our conscience, they fuel our faith and they direct and inform our behavior. And if just the words of Jesus were elevated to the place where they should be, it would revolutionize the church and perhaps revolutionize our culture and the world.

Here is our final essential: **The Bible documents God's redemptive activities in the world, culminating in the arrival of his final King.**

The Apostle John, who was there for all of it, looking back as an old man said, I grew up as a Jewish boy. I know the whole story. I know the whole story arc, and now I've experienced the coming of the king. And here's what I would tell you, for God so loved that he did what you do when you love someone, he gave. But we didn't see this coming, but he gave his unique son and he gave him to us first as someone we could see and touch and hear, and our hands have handled the word of life. He would write. For God so loved the world that he gave us what was most precious to him. He gave us his Son; he gave us his life. That whoever would lean in, that whoever would believe, that whoever would be open, allow themselves to be convinced, would not be lost to God anymore, but would experience eternal life. This friends and skeptics alike is still good news for you.