

Little Words

Rick Railston

Recorded on February 23, 2019

Let's begin by turning over to 2 Timothy 3:16, a very familiar scripture to everybody. We want to start there and then develop what we're talking about from that point of origin. It's something I think we all know by heart. A statement is made:

2 Timothy 3:16 *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, [that comes from Paul, who ought to know, who was instructed by Jesus Christ directly; then he goes on to say] and is profitable for doctrine [meaning teaching], for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (KJV)*

The term *inspiration of God* occurs only this time in scripture—the only time it's there. It's one word and it's Strong's #2315, if you want to look it up. It's the Greek word *theópneustos* and it means *divinely breathed in*. It's a combination of two Greek words, *theo*, meaning God, and *pneu*, meaning either wind, to breathe hard, or to blow; that's why the NIV translates this as “all scripture is God-breathed”, meaning it comes directly from God, right out of His mouth. I think all of us understand this. The entire Bible is true; the entire Bible is divinely inspired but how often do we consider that every word in scripture is God-breathed?

As we've learned here recently, there are so many little words that we can easily read right over and have read over for decades, and I'm ashamed to say I have done it; you just blow right past them—words that on initial view might seem unnecessary. Why did God put these words in the Bible, we might ask. Yet God inspired these little words and they are there for a reason.

Today we are going to look at some of these little words in the book of Acts and see that each one of them is proof that God divinely inspired their use, and when we look at these words, we can only conclude from our study that God is magnified and glorified by the existence of these very words in the Bible—words that seem irrelevant on first look. By these little words, we can have absolute certainty, in every case that we are going to look at today (and by extension the entire New Testament and the entire Bible), they were recorded intentionally and are 100 percent accurate. I'm not talking about variances in translations or things like that, I'm talking about the words that God originally inspired, and sometimes we search to find what those words really are as they're passed down to us over the millennia.

The fact is what God originally inspired, down to the very words, is from Him, and such words are God-breathed. So today what we are going to do is look at two totally different viewpoints of the book of Acts. There are those who want to diminish God's word and deconstruct it, and we are at the other end of the spectrum and believe that every word is God-breathed. We're going to look at that in the first part of the sermon

and then in the second we are going to look at twelve scriptures in Acts where these little words reveal to us the fact that God has inspired every one. There's proof of that and we are going to cover the proof today. The title of the sermon may be a bit misleading when you first consider it:

Little Words

We're going to look at these little words, and we're going to spend the majority of our time in the book of Acts. Let's first look at two viewpoints of the history of the book of Acts. We believe, and the church has traditionally taught, that it was written by Luke, most likely in the mid-60's A.D., but certainly before the death of Apostle Paul, when he was killed in what we believe were the late 60's A.D., and we believe that Luke was the traveling companion of Paul, at least for the second half of the book of Acts. Therefore Luke was an eyewitness. He saw the events with his own eyes and God inspired him to write them down. That is what the church believes, that is what I believe, that is what I'm sure all of you believe. But given that this is Satan's world, not everyone thinks that way, so let's look at the other viewpoint, so to speak.

There's a book authored by James Tabor titled Paul and Jesus: How the Apostle Transformed Christianity, and this is one of the many books today that states a view different from ours. In the introduction to his book, let me quote: *Scholars have usually dated Luke and Acts to the 90's A.D.* That's a blanket statement with not a lot of proof but that's what he says in the introduction. A number of scholars have convincingly argued most recently for a date well into the second century A.D., meaning they believe that Acts and Luke were written one hundred years after we believe they were written—way down the road considering all the changes that occurred in nominal Christianity at that time, through the first couple hundred years. The author goes on to cite a book, which he quotes, and let me quote it too, where it states, *“which convincingly demonstrates that the author of Acts is writing in the early second century. The anonymous work [meaning the author of Acts is anonymous] is not written by Paul's otherwise obscure traveling companion [referring to Luke].*

Well, I shake my head because Luke wrote the gospel of Luke and he's not very obscure, but this is what they say: *[Acts] is not written by Paul's otherwise obscure traveling companion but shows every evidence of being a pseudonymous literary production typical of the times.* Pseudonymous, meaning it was written under a pseudonym—a fake name—and that Luke really didn't write it, somebody else did; don't know who it is and they wrote it one hundred years after the events that occurred. They are basically saying that Acts is a fraud—it's a made-up story. What they're saying is that they are actually diminishing the Bible, diminishing the record of the apostles, and in Luke's case, the record of Jesus Christ.

I think all of us have heard over the years of the Jesus Seminar. That's a group of “scholars” who have gotten together to deconstruct the New Testament and basically teach that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, He was a well-meaning human being who had some good ideas and because of them, started a movement, and that

movement was in the tradition of Greek mythology, and on and on it goes. There is an Acts Seminar in existence that has the same objective as the Jesus Seminar, but their job is to deconstruct Acts. Let me summarize their conclusions from a meeting—they had a meeting in 2013 (this will blow your mind) but this is what Satan is injecting into modern religious studies.

Their summary is that Acts was written in the early decades of the second century. The author of Acts used the letters of Paul as sources to create a believable itinerary for Paul's journeys throughout the Mediterranean. The author concocted a journey by Paul that's believable, meaning it's not true but it's believable. Going on, they say, *except for the letters of Paul, no other historically reliable source can be identified for Acts*. That's an amazing statement. Going on, *Acts can no longer be considered an independent source for the life and mission of Paul*. In other words, you just have to throw it out because it's a fraud. They continue, *contrary to Acts 1:7* [it's pretty plain in Acts 1:7], *Jerusalem was not the birthplace of Christianity*. Oh really? Where do they get that? Going on: *Acts constructs its story on the model of epic literature* [meaning Greek mythology]. Lastly, *the author of Acts created names for characters as storytelling devices and constructed its story to fit ideological goals*.

So you have ideological goals and then you fabricate a story to make them appear believable, is what this seminar concluded. One of the authors, Joseph B. Tyson, said that *Acts succeeded in creating a charter myth for the young Jesus movement*. The other author, Dennis E. Smith, said that *the narrative is so powerful, so effective, that Luke* [meaning the gospel of Luke] *benefits from following this model*. *It is good storytelling*. In other words, it appeals but it's a story, so it's not true.

We have to ask ourselves today, which is it? Good storytelling or God-breathed? All of us have to come to a decision regarding this question. We are faced with these two options as to the author of the book of Acts. If it was written by Luke, he was an eyewitness to everything that happened, whom God divinely inspired to put what He wanted in writing, including the account of the resurrected Christ, promising His disciples that the Holy Spirit would come and then ascending into the sky—including that; and the two angels telling the disciples that Christ is going to return in the same manner that they just saw Him leave—including that; and the account of Pentecost where the flames of fire were over the heads of all those there, and the coming of the Holy Spirit—including that; the incredible growth in the church in those early days; the miraculous healing of Saul, the church's biggest persecutor, and his conversion and spiritual healing; and the fact that salvation was offered to the Gentiles, not exclusive to the Jews—all of these events we believe happened and the written record of them was divinely inspired. Every word.

That's one of the choices. The other choice is that some "church father" down the road, one hundred years after the fact, who possibly had access to some of Paul's letters, fabricated a firsthand account. He fabricated a firsthand account, purported it to be true, and wrote it down one hundred years after the fact. And he did so hoping to win converts to Christianity by concocting a believable story and making Paul the hero.

Okay, we have two choices here. So which is correct? Can it be proved? How can we know? Should we just blindly believe that scripture is God-breathed, just because that's what we were taught when we came into the church, or is it provable and does God give us clues in the form of some of these unnecessary, little words that are included in these scriptures? These little words have nothing to do with the overall story but they are inserted there for a reason, and that reason is to prove that His word is true.

Now what we're going to do is evaluate twelve scriptures in Acts to see what these little words—these supposedly unnecessary words—are, and what they reveal to us. We know from the Bible that Luke was a doctor. He was called *the beloved physician* in Colossians 4:14. I don't know how gifted a doctor he was but he is an absolute ace as a historian and as a writer because God was behind his efforts. We're going to see Luke's incredible attention to detail that is not necessary if you're writing a story one hundred years after the fact—it's not germane to the message but God inspired those details to be put in so we can check them to see if they are indeed true.

In recounting the events he saw with his own eyes, Luke includes details that could be observed only by an eyewitness—not somebody one hundred or fifty years later—and he observed these himself. When we read these words we'll come away with the idea that this man was there. Otherwise, why would he say this or say that? We're also going to see that every one of these nuanced details Luke records—seemingly for no reason, they're not necessary, as I said—don't in any way affect the underlying story, but they're details that show us he was there when these events happened and what he wrote is indeed God-breathed. Every one of these little words that we're going to cover has been proved to be 100 percent accurate and true. They prove beyond any shadow of a doubt that Luke was the author and was an eyewitness to what he wrote about—so we can have faith and confidence in that because God placed them to build our faith and confidence. Let's go through these twelve scriptures, and as we go through, in the back of your mind, think—ask yourself—is what I'm reading actually recorded by an eyewitness or is what I'm reading fabricated by somebody one hundred years down the road? Okay, let's start.

First scripture, Acts 14—let's go there. The setting here is Lystra, which is in modern-day Turkey, and Paul and Luke are about eighty miles north of the Mediterranean coast bordering Turkey. Let's go to verse 8, and I'm going to read this out of the New King James.

Acts 14:8 *And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked.*

9) *This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed,*

10) *said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked. (NKJV)*

He had never walked before.

11) *Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"* (NKJV)

These people believed in multiple gods, but the point of this story is Paul performed an incredible miracle, yet the author just throws in there, in the middle of verse 11, that the people spoke in the Lycaonian language. That's not necessary for the scope of what's being conveyed, when he writes that the citizens of Lystra spoke Lycaonian—not Latin, not Greek, not Aramaic. We know archaeology has absolutely proved that despite Lystra being Hellenized (adopting the Greek culture, and being a very cosmopolitan city you would think they would have adopted the Greek language as well, but they did not), there is archaeological evidence and physical evidence to prove they kept their language and spoke in Lycaonian, not the language of the Roman empire. That has been proved independently of the Bible. God inspired Luke to put that detail in so we could check it out today. I have to ask myself the question: How would the author of Acts know a detail like that unless he had physically been there? If somebody were writing one hundred years later, they wouldn't know or even bother in the first place. It's an irrelevant fact.

Now let's go to Acts, chapter 16. Paul and Luke are sailing from Troas to Philippi, and if you wanted to make progress, the sailing ship was the equivalent of the airliner today, and you could make good progress if the winds were favorable in sailing to your destination. Notice verse 11 of Acts 16.

Acts 16:11 *Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;*

12) *And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.* (KJV)

Two facts come from verses 11 and 12. Luke gives the exact sailing route from Troas to Philippi and he mentions Neapolis as Philippi's main port. Neapolis was only a mile or two from Philippi but it was on the coast; Philippi was just a mile or two north of that and it had an ideally suited port, which is why he said they went to Neapolis. Well, okay, why would a guy writing one hundred years later even mention that or even know that? Secondly, Philippi is called, in the last part of verse 12, a colony—a Roman colony. Several first century sources mention the privileges that Philippi enjoyed because it was indeed a Roman colony. This has been verified outside of the Bible, that Philippi was a Roman colony operating under Roman law, and if you were a Roman colony you were exempt from certain taxes and your citizens were the citizens of Rome. So in this little word, *colony*, Luke brings out that fact, and it's been proved by archaeological evidence and by letters written at that time. Why would he include this little word, *colony*, one hundred years after the fact? Why would any writer include such a detail one hundred years after the fact? He wouldn't—it makes no sense to do so. He would gloss over the details because such details would be unknown to him unless he had actually been there. But an eyewitness would include these details, and Luke did so under God's inspiration.

Let's go to the third scripture, found in Acts, chapter 16, and look at verse 14. Paul and Luke are now in Thyatira, which is the setting.

Acts 16:14 *And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple,*

Now that's an unnecessary comment, why would you put that in? What's the point?

... of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. (KJV)

Okay, he could have simply written, "Lydia lived in Thyatira and she believed God." If you are writing one hundred years later, that's what you would do. But he writes that she was a *seller of purple*, and archaeologists have found at least seven inscriptions in the ruins of the city, noting that it was a center for dying wool, particularly the colors of purple and crimson. These are archaeological findings. The only reason to include these little words is that God wants us to know that Luke's account is accurate and true, and he was an eyewitness.

Now let's go to chapter 17; Paul and Luke are in Thessalonica.

Acts 17:1 *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:*

5) [They preached there] *But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.*

6) *And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; (KJV)*

There's a little word there: **rulers** of the city. It doesn't say ruler of the city, it says rulers—plural—of the city. The Greek word for rulers is Strong's #4173—*politarchas* (from which we get our English word "politics"), and it means *town officers, magistrates, rulers of the city*—it's a plural word. In History of the Christian Church, Philip Schaff writes, *This is a very rare title for magistrates and might easily be confounded with the more usual designation of politarchs, but Luke's accuracy has been confirmed by an inscription still legible on an archway in Thessalonica, giving the names of seven politarchs who governed before the visit of Paul.*

There were seven rulers and that's why here, in the middle of verse 6, he describes them as rulers of the city. If you were writing this account one hundred years down the road, how would you know that? If you were glossing over it and fabricating it, you wouldn't put such details in, you would just blow right past them and say that Paul's teachings turned the city upside down, and leave it at that. But God inspired Luke to make a word plural, a word that has no bearing on the account Luke is sharing with us,

except for the fact that this little word proves the accuracy of Luke's account and tells us he was actually there. He saw what happened with his own eyes and God inspired him not to gloss over this little detail. God inspired him to include it so that today we can look at the archaeological evidence and say, you know, he was right. Somebody fabricating it down the road—how could they know that, why would they put that in? The point is they would not.

Let's go to a fifth scripture, again in Acts 17. Paul and Luke journey to Athens, and we'll begin in verse 16.

Acts 17:16 *Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. (KJV)*

It really bothered him.

17) *Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.*

18) *Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? (KJV)*

That's a direct quote of what people were saying at that moment in time. The fact is that the Greek word *babbler* was an Athenian slang term, originating only in Athens. If you want to look it up in Strong's, the Greek word for babbler is #4691—*spermologos*. It's amazing how words come into being and the story of their origins. The original meaning of that word was *seed picker, as a crow*. We've all seen crows pecking at the ground and picking up seeds—that's how the word began and it can figuratively mean a gossip, or a trifier in talk, somebody who is not accurate and just blows past things. Let me read from The Expositor's Bible Commentary about this word: *A word originally used of birds picking up grain; then of scrap collectors searching for junk; then extended to those who snapped up ideas of others and peddled them as their own without understanding them.*

So the Athenians were using this slang term, saying, Paul picked his ideas up from somebody else; he doesn't know what he's talking about; he's a babbler, a seed picker. The point is, why would the writer use a slang term, one hundred years after the fact, if he was just fabricating a story? He wouldn't, he couldn't. He probably wouldn't even know the term but the point is, only an eyewitness would pick up on such slang and quote it in scripture. It has nothing to do with the story but it's there, so you have to ask the question, why would God do that? It's so the reader can understand that Luke was an eyewitness, that he heard the word and included it in his manuscript under the inspiration of God—amazing.

Now let's jump to Acts 18, the next chapter. I'm just picking twelve examples, but there are many more if you want to do the research. In Acts 18, Paul and Luke are now in Corinth, and we'll begin in verse 12 (out of the New King James).

Acts 18:12 *When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, 13) saying, "This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." (NKJV)*

They're accusing Paul, but it says, *when Gallio was proconsul*. That detail is not necessary to the narrative of the story, but it's there. Why didn't Luke just write, the proconsul of Achaia, or, without naming a name, the Jews took Paul to the proconsul of Achaia—why didn't he write that? The author of the account adds the name. Gallio is documentable in history. In 52 A.D., a letter was found in the temple of Delphi written by the Roman Emperor Claudius, in which he mentions *Gallio, my friend and proconsul*. So here we have a detail that's not necessary but God inspired it to be put into Luke's writings. Thus we can go back, and through archaeology and through letters, we can examine that time and prove not only that Luke was the author but also the approximate time when the event occurred. So once again, these little words add to our belief and faith that every word of God, every word in the Bible, is God-breathed.

A seventh scripture; let's go to Acts 19. Paul and Luke are now in Ephesus and we'll begin in verse 8. Reading out of the King James, it tells us:

Acts 19:8 *And he [referring to Paul] went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.*

9) *But when divers [meaning different people] were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them ...*

They had their minds closed; Paul didn't want to have anything to do with them. He left,

9 continued) *... and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.*

10) *And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. (KJV)*

Here at the end of verse 9 there are four little words that say, *school of one Tyrannus*. Why is that there? Luke could just have easily said, Paul reasoned daily with the people. He didn't have to add the detail about the school of Tyrannus. However, you can go to the ruins in Ephesus and see an inscription on a very large complex, identifying it as the school of Tyrannus, there today for all to see. Here are four little words—if you were writing this one hundred years down the road, why would you bother to put them in? If you were fabricating a story about Paul, you probably wouldn't even know the school existed. Luke, an eyewitness who was there, saw it with his own eyes and was inspired by God to put it into scripture. It proves that he and Paul were there—they saw it with their own eyes, they experienced it.

Now let's continue on in Acts 19. They are still in Ephesus; look at verse 23.

Acts 19:23 *And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. (KJV)*

As an aside, this is another scripture that proves that our belief in God and Christ is a way of life. It's not just something that's fashionable or something you think about part time. It's a way, a path of life.

24) *For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; (KJV)*

This was their job; they made these little statues and shrines, they sold them and that was their livelihood.

25) *Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. (KJV)*

They were getting wealthy from this because the people would come to the temple of Diana, they would worship, and then they'd buy these tokens or trinkets, or whatever they were, and the craftsmen would have their livelihood.

26) *Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: (KJV)*

We see that in scripture. So now Paul is the enemy because he is cutting into their livelihood. They had to stop that, they had to do something about it.

27) *So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. (KJV)*

Pagan religion went throughout all the land and it goes right back to Babylon, right back to Egypt; it was nothing new under the sun, as Solomon says.

28) *And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*

29) *And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre. (KJV)*

This last phrase in verse 29 says something unnecessary: *they rushed with one accord into the theatre*. Why is that there? It could just as easily say they were upset (they didn't have to rush anywhere). But this was written by Luke. Why not just say the whole city was filled with confusion? Somebody writing one hundred years down the road would probably say that. And we see here that they seized Gaius and Aristarchus. How could somebody know one hundred years after the fact that this mob seized these two men? They wouldn't know. But God wanted this phrase included—rushed into the

theater—He wanted it recorded. The Ephesian theater was a meeting place of the city, and as you know, in Greek culture they loved to debate, they loved to talk philosophy, and visiting philosophers would come there and city business was conducted there—this theater was a place of meeting. Its existence is confirmed by inscriptional evidence, dating back to 104 A.D.

Let me read a brief quote from Sir Charles Fellows. He was a British archaeologist who published two journals in 1838 and 1840, both titled [in abbreviated form] Asia Minor, in the earlier of which he described the theater at Ephesus, and wrote: *Of the site of the theatre ... there can be no doubt, its ruins being a wreck of immense grandeur.* This was the same theater Luke described. The little details Luke added tell us he was actually there. Why add them unless you're an eyewitness? Unless God wants us, in these times, 2,000 years down the road, to be able to go back, to confirm in the archaeological record, to look into writings that describe them, and say, he didn't fabricate this or dream it up because he was actually there.

Let's look at a ninth scripture—we'll continue with the same account in Acts 19. I'll read this out of the New King James, verse 35.

35) And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, [this is in the theater] he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana [people flocked from all over the Roman Empire to come to Ephesus to worship the goddess Diana], and of the image which fell down from Zeus?"

This is part of Greek mythology.

36) Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly [such as kill them or torture them].

37) For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.

38) Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone [this city clerk is advising them], the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. (NKJV)

He says there are proconsuls—that is a plural word. We believe every word is God-breathed; how about every letter? Because that one letter makes the word plural, not singular. It is proconsuls (plural), not proconsul (singular). Why did God inspire that to be included? Why did Luke write it down that way? Let me read from the book, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist—((laughs))—that's a good title. If you ever want to read a good book on the subject, this is a good book. The authors are Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek. They say this: *The use of the plural anthypatoi is a remarkable reference to the fact that at that precise time, the fall of 54 A.D., two men were co-jointly exercising the functions of proconsul because their predecessor Silanus had been murdered.* So two proconsuls took his place at that time. So you can see why God inspired Luke to pluralize the word because at that time, there were two.

Before them, there was one. After them, there was again one. So there was a period of rulership of two proconsuls; we can go back in history and confirm that, and this little letter—not word, a little letter—proves that when Acts was written, Luke and Paul were actually indeed there. This is not some mythological story made up to make Paul out a hero. This is not some concocted narrative to make somebody look good but is not true. What we're reading is truth, and God inspired these little words so we can go back in time and investigate, and see that they were put there for a reason.

Let's look at the tenth verse now. Let's go to Acts, chapter 21. Paul and Luke are now in Jerusalem and of course they had much, much opposition. We think we have opposition sometimes, but compared to what the apostles went through and what Paul is going to go through here, we have it pretty good. We are more under mental and spiritual pressure, they were under threat of physical beating and torture. Verse 30 of Acts 21.

Acts 21:30 *And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.* (KJV)

They didn't want this man talking in the temple about what they viewed as heresy, about this Jesus Christ being the Messiah. Verse 31.

31) *And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band ...* (KJV)

Now this is the King James; the New King James says "commander of the garrison". The Greek word is *chiliarchō* and we'll get to that in a minute. The news came to the attention of the chiliarch, the commander of the garrison, the chief captain.

31 continued) *... that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.* [Caesar would not tolerate that and the captain had to do something about it.]

32) *Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and [two little words here; keep them in mind] ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.* (KJV)

Here poor Paul is about to be beaten to death; if the soldiers and centurions hadn't come down the mob probably would have beaten him to death. So they stopped, seeing the Romans coming down, verse 33.

33) *Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, [what's going on, who are you?] and what he had done.* (KJV)

Paul, what have you done to create this uproar?

34) *And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, [they were yelling and screaming, just as they did with Christ] he commanded him to be carried into the castle.*

35) *And when he came upon the stairs [two little words], so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.*

36) *For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him [get rid of him]. (KJV)*

So the chiliarch and his men rescued Paul from the wrath of the Jews. Let me read from Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible. *On the word of the chief captain, literally chiliarch, or captain of a thousand men, they were stationed in the tower known as Antonia. [We've heard that, read of it before. Built by Herod the Great, it was a tower, and the stairs come into play here in Luke's account.] The tower of Antonia, built by Herod the Great, stood on the northwest side of the temple area, on a rock with a turret at each corner, and two flights of stairs, leading to the arcades on the northern and western sides of the temple. The Roman garrison was obviously stationed there to command the crowds of pilgrims and was likely to be on alert at a time like the Pentecost Feast.*

The Romans were not stupid. They built this tower so it had a view of the temple area and the courts because they were worried the Jews at some point were going to start a rebellion. So this tower was built with turrets and lookouts so that they could view the court, and the minute somebody started an uprising, the soldiers were right there; they had access to the temple grounds, the temple courts, and down they went, and they would take no prisoners. They would stop a revolt in its infancy—that's why the tower was there.

Now, let me ask the question: If someone wrote this one hundred years after the fact, how would they know where the soldiers were stationed relative to the temple grounds? Remember the temple had been destroyed for almost a hundred years, so how would they know the fact that the soldiers ran down stairs and Paul was carried up these same stairs? Somebody writing one hundred years later wouldn't include details like that because (A) they wouldn't know them, and (B) such details had nothing to do with the flow of the story, but are included here to give us the understanding that Luke was there and he saw this happen with his own eyes.

Luke saw the Roman soldiers coming down those stairs from the tower, he saw them save Paul from a beating, and he saw the mob yelling and screaming. You can imagine this group of Jews slamming the temple door shut and not letting Paul in; they want this man dead because they view him as a threat to the temple, to the priests, and to the high priest, so they want him killed. Luke is watching all this, wide-eyed, watching these soldiers come running down, this mob beating Paul, the soldiers rescuing Paul, and then taking him back up the stairs. Why would an unknown author, one hundred years later, write this? Why would he put in these details? How could he know them, unless he had been there? He couldn't. These little words prove that the Bible is true.

Let's go to the eleventh scripture, in Acts 27. Paul and Luke are setting sail from Lasea, on the coast of Crete, an island in the Mediterranean. We'll begin in verse 13 and I'll be reading out of the New King James. Notice the detail and notice the nautical terms that are not necessary at all.

Acts 27:13 *When the south wind blew softly, [why include that—what's the point?] supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.*

They kept in close to the coastline.

14) *But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, [he then gives its name; when you think about that, why include it?] called Euroclydon.* (NKJV)

In the Greek it means a storm from the northeast. So here Luke calls it by its known name and gives details. The point is, usually in that area, most of the time there is a favorable southerly wind. It is documented in numerous writings of that time. It's also well-documented that a sudden storm from the northeast (known in New England as a nor'easter) would occur in this area and would make sailing nearly impossible. My point is, why include this detail if it was written one hundred years later? How would you know such a fact a century later? Why would you make up something that has nothing to do with the narrative of the story? God wanted this included—the south wind blew softly, they sailed close by Crete, the Euroclydon was known and it came suddenly from the northeast—but why would Luke include all of that? It's because God wants us to know that Luke was there and he witnessed these events with his own eyes. God wanted these details included to prove the authenticity of His word.

Now let's stay here in Acts 27 and go to verse 27; it's the same sailing voyage but now they are on the Adriatic Sea.

Acts 27:27 *But when the fourteenth night was come [this is the fourteenth night after the storm had begun, so it was a nasty storm], as we were driven up and down in Adria [the Adriatic Sea], about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;* (KJV)

In other words, in the middle of this storm, these experienced sailors had the feeling they were getting close to land. They could go on the rocks, they could go aground; it could be very dangerous.

28) *And sounded ...* (KJV)

Let's just stop there. Luke said they sounded. What does that mean? If a seaman sounded today, he would do it by radar. Down-facing radar will give you the depth of the water that you're over before you hit ground—before you hit the seabed. Back then of course they didn't have radar, they had a big rope with a very heavy weight on the bottom, and the rope was marked in fathoms—a fathom is six feet, so it had a marker

every six feet. They would stand on the ship, on the side, lower the rope down and when the rope became slack—meaning the weight had hit the bottom—they would look at the marker and they could tell how deep the water was under the hull of the ship. So in verse 28, here's a detail; they sounded,

28 continued) ... *and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.*

29) *Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day [so they could see where they were].*
(KJV)

Why include this irrelevant occurrence? What's the point of knowing that they sounded? A fathom as I said is six feet, so 20 fathoms are 120 feet. They sounded the first time, it was 120 feet; they sounded a second time (15 fathoms), it was 90 feet. Meaning the seabed was rising and they were getting close to an island or some rocks, so that's why they threw out the anchors. Research has shown (modern surveying being what it is) that the depth of the water near Malta is between 90 and 120 feet. Think about that. Why fabricate that detail or include it if you couldn't confirm it, if you did not need us to know today that it was and is accurate?

Let me read from History of the Christian Church, vol. 1, by Philip Schaff. He's speaking of Luke's writing in chapter 27, which we've covered in the eleventh scripture we cited, as well as the twelfth we're on now. Notice this—if this had been written one hundred years after the events described, then Philip Schaff couldn't write what he's writing. He states, *This chapter contains more information about ancient navigation than any work of Greek or Roman literature, and betrays the minute accuracy of an intelligent eyewitness, who, though not a professional seaman, was very familiar with nautical terms from close observation.* If we can't come away with anything other than the fact that Luke was observant, he looked at the details, he wrote them down under God's inspiration, then, going on: *He uses no less than sixteen technical terms, some of them rare, to describe the motion and management of a ship, and all of them most appropriately, and he is strictly correct in the description of the localities of Crete, Salmone (we haven't covered some of these), Fair Havens, Cauda, Lasea, Phoenix (Lasea and Phoenix weren't discovered until fairly recently), and Malta, as well as the motions and effects of the tempestuous northeast wind in the Mediterranean.*

Going on, he writes, *Monumental and scientific evidence outweighs critical conjectures*—critical conjectures, meaning groups such as the Acts Seminar, where they just criticize, criticize, criticize, and try to tear something apart. He continues, *Monumental and scientific evidence outweighs critical conjectures and is an irresistible vindication of the historical accuracy and credibility of Luke to include all of those details.*

I ask again, could this be forged with accuracy a century later? Why would somebody writing one hundred years later even talk about soundings and fathoms and throwing anchors out and have it true? You see, by including these little words, God proves to us His word is indeed true if we just take the time to look at it and investigate it.

Let's summarize. We've looked at twelve scriptures that include provable facts. Colin Hemer, a Classics and Roman history scholar, wrote a book titled The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History, in which he identifies eighty-four facts in the last sixteen chapters of Acts, all of which have been confirmed by history and archaeology—eighty-four facts. We don't have time to touch even a fraction; we've looked at only twelve verses. He says there are eighty-four.

We have to ask the question at the end of the day, what's more likely—some unknown author could recreate these details one hundred years after the fact—really?—down to the most minute detail? Using little words that are unnecessary to the story or to the narrative? Someone fabricating this story wouldn't put these details in because they would know that if they got one detail wrong, their whole story would be discredited. But here God inspires these little details to be added because they are true and they can be proved to be true.

So the answer is obvious; Luke was an eyewitness to all of this, we can be certain of that. He recorded what he saw, he recorded what he heard, he recorded what he experienced, in great and minute detail, and the only viable answer is that Luke is a credible, believable, and accurate historian. If this is so, we have to conclude that all of Acts is true. It's true and accurate—we can stake our lives on it—things like the resurrection of a human being. Let's go to Acts 20, verse 7; I'll read this out of the New International Version. If all of Luke's details were true, and now all of a sudden he writes about a resurrection from the dead, we can believe it.

Acts 20:7 *On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.*

8) *There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting.*

9) *Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. [We've all been there, haven't we?] When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead.*

10) *Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!"*

11) *Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left.*

12) *The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.*
(NIV)

We can know that this was an actual fact; this actually happened—resurrection of the dead—because look at what has been proved thus far about Luke's accuracy. So the book of Acts we can believe, and we can also believe the book of Luke. We can have the same faith regarding the book of Luke. Let's go to Acts 1:1. I'll read this out of the New King James. In the introduction to the book of Acts, notice what Luke says.

Acts 1:1 *The former account [meaning the gospel that Luke wrote about Christ] / made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach ...*

If he was accurate in Acts, he should be just as accurate in his gospel.

2) *until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,*
3) *to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. (NKJV)*

The Greek word for *infallible proofs*, the only time it's used in the Bible, means "criterion of certainty". He says, what I am writing has been proved, it is certain, there is enough proof, a criterion of certainty, with so many witnesses—me being one of them—that you can have no doubt, O Theophilus. He wrote the book of Acts for Theophilus (we'll talk about him a little more in just a moment) so that Theophilus could know exactly what had happened in the early New Testament church, so that there would be a record. Luke was an eyewitness to much of it, not all of it, but much of it. He obviously went to the other apostles to get exact details from them, just as he had cited exact details in his writings about his companionship with Paul, recorded in the latter book of Acts. He went to the apostles to confirm what he did not see in the gospels because he was not there. But it wasn't just the book of Acts that we've been talking about. If we're left to no other option than to conclude that Luke is 100 percent accurate in all that he wrote, then we have to accept the fact that more than just the book of Acts is 100 percent accurate, and we have to accept the fact that the gospel Luke wrote is just as accurate—100 percent. Let's go to Luke 1:1; notice what he says. This is a writer of detail, this is an accurate recorder of history.

Luke 1:1 *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,*
2) *Even as they delivered them unto us, [he recorded all that he was told and with his detailed mind, I'm sure he probed them for details] which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;*
3) *It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first ... (KJV)*

The Greek word for *perfect* means accurate and precise, and if anything can describe Luke's writings, accurate and precise would do so. He's saying, I've had an accurate, precise understanding of all things from the very first. Going on in verse 3,

3 continued) *... to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus ... (KJV)*

Most excellent gives us an indication of who this man was. It means very honorable, most noble. Today we might say, your excellency, meaning somebody of very high rank, so apparently he was a person of high standing.

4) *That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.* (KJV)

So we see he is writing a history of Christ so that Theophilus can have certainty of what occurred in minute detail, just as Luke did in writing the book of Acts. Luke is saying, this really happened; I'm an eyewitness or I've talked to eyewitnesses; I'm writing it down in detail so you can know for a certainty. And today, like Theophilus, we can know for a certainty that what Luke wrote in his gospel and in the book of Acts is 100 percent true down to the word. By the way, there are over fifty figures from the Bible that have been confirmed archaeologically—that was published in the March/April 2014 issue of Biblical Archaeological Review. Fifty figures in the Bible—there are records today of that, again proving the Bible is accurate.

We started the sermon by reading the verse that says all scripture is God-breathed; every single word was inspired by God for a reason. I'm not talking about the mistakes that were made down through the centuries and millennia with regard to translations—I'm not talking about all of that—but that the basic words that were written originally were specifically inspired by God for a reason. We looked at twelve scriptures, that upon surface examination, had details that appear unnecessary. They are certainly unnecessary if you are writing a fabrication, but they are totally necessary if God wanted us to go back and prove these details true. They are unnecessary to the narrative flow, but when we take a deeper look at these little words, we find that Luke was an eyewitness of all that happened; he wrote these events down accurately, as they happened, and I would think he is a master historian because of what he wrote and the detail with which he wrote.

If Luke is accurate and precise in writing the book of Acts then he's just as accurate and precise in his gospel. Luke was inspired by God to write down these little words and he did so, and we today can investigate them and then prove that these words are God-breathed. As God's people today, long removed time-wise from these events, let's be thankful that God loved us to the point that he had these little words recorded for our benefit so that we can know that every such word is God-breathed.