

Restoring the New Testament Church: Part Two



The Point Church

*Simply***Christians**

thepoint.org.au

F. F. Bruce commenting on Romans 6

“From this and other references to baptism in Paul’s writings, it is certain he did not regard baptism as an ‘optional extra’ in the Christian life, and that he would not have contemplated the phenomenon of an ‘unbaptized believer.’ **We may agree or disagree with Paul, but we must do him the justice of letting him hold and teach his own beliefs, and not distort his beliefs into conformity with what we should prefer him to have said.** (This applies to many other subjects than Paul’s baptismal doctrine!)”

F. F. Bruce. *Romans*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 136. Emphasis mine. Please note this is a 1983 reprint of the first edition (1963). I believe these statements by Bruce were omitted in later editions of the commentary.

The Doctrine of the Church

“The church is a sociocultural reality and it always takes on historically conditioned forms. Even in the Book of Acts, all its forms were borrowed from the surrounding Jewish and pagan environments. For Wesleyans, there is no point trying to regain the forms of worship, organisation, or practices found in a supposed ‘pure’ New Testament church; the focus must be on the same presence of the Spirit in our current developing forms.”

David McEwan. *Exploring a Wesleyan Theology*. (Lenexa, Kansas: Global Nazarene Publishing, 2017), 64.

But if we dismiss the forms of worship, organisation, or practices of the New Testament church as mere reflections of their culture; why not its teachings too ... why dismiss the former but not the latter?

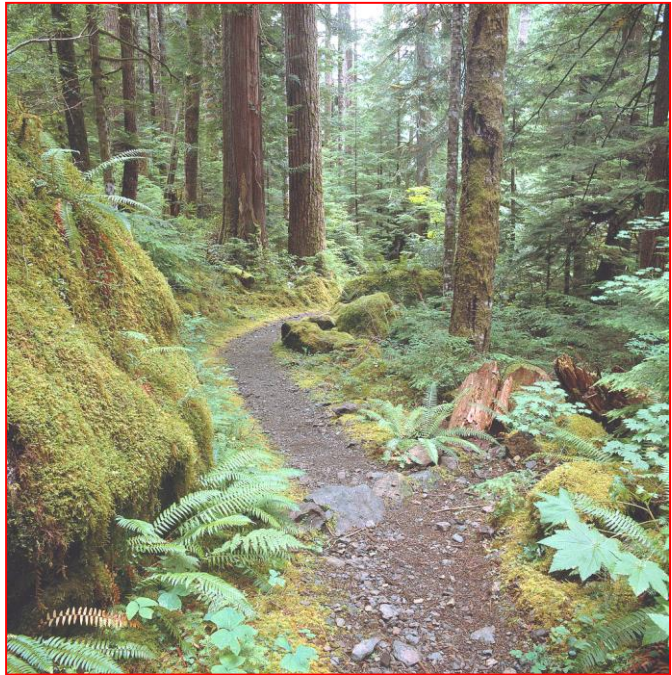
2.2.7 In contemporary discussion about biblical interpretation two answers are being given to this question:

2.2.8 The first answer is that, in spite of the variety of interpretations of the biblical texts now on offer, we must stick to the belief that these texts do have specific meanings expressed by the words of their human authors but, as biblical texts, bearing the inspiration and authority of God. It is the task of the interpreter to discover their meanings and to discern their significance for the world in which we live.

2.2.9 The second answer is that the variety of differing interpretations of the biblical texts now on offer should lead us to realize that the meaning of the text is created as a particular group of people reads the text in the light of its own particular traditions and beliefs and in its own particular context. That is to say, the 'meaning' of a text is relative to the people who interpret it.

The House of Bishops. *Some Issues in Human Sexuality: A Guide to the Debate*. (London: Church House Publishing, 2003), 40.

Israel's Prophets: Calling God's people to return to covenant faithfulness

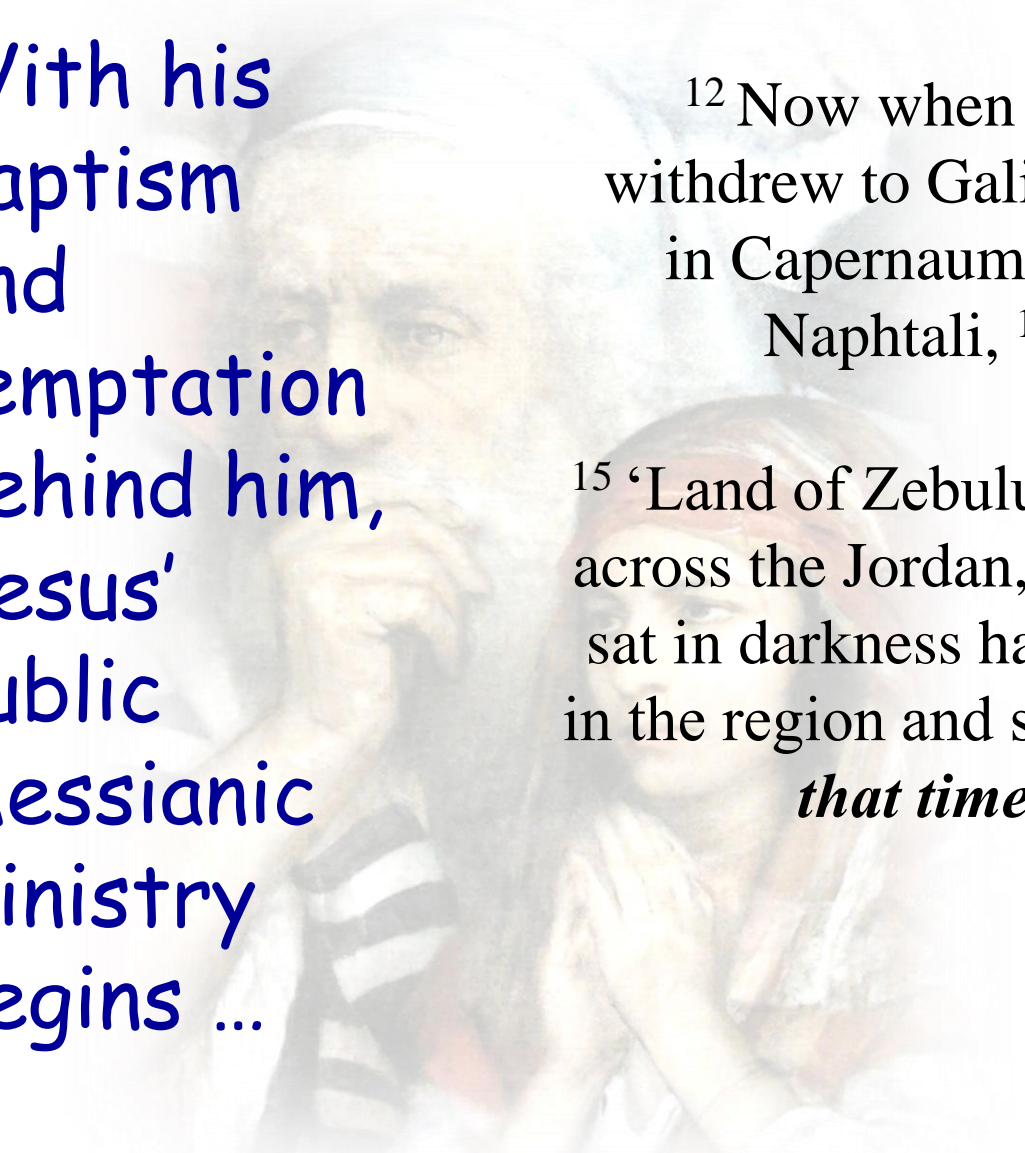


Thus says the LORD:

*“Stand by the roads, and look,
and ask for the ancient paths,
where the good way is; and walk in it,
and find rest for your souls.*

But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’”

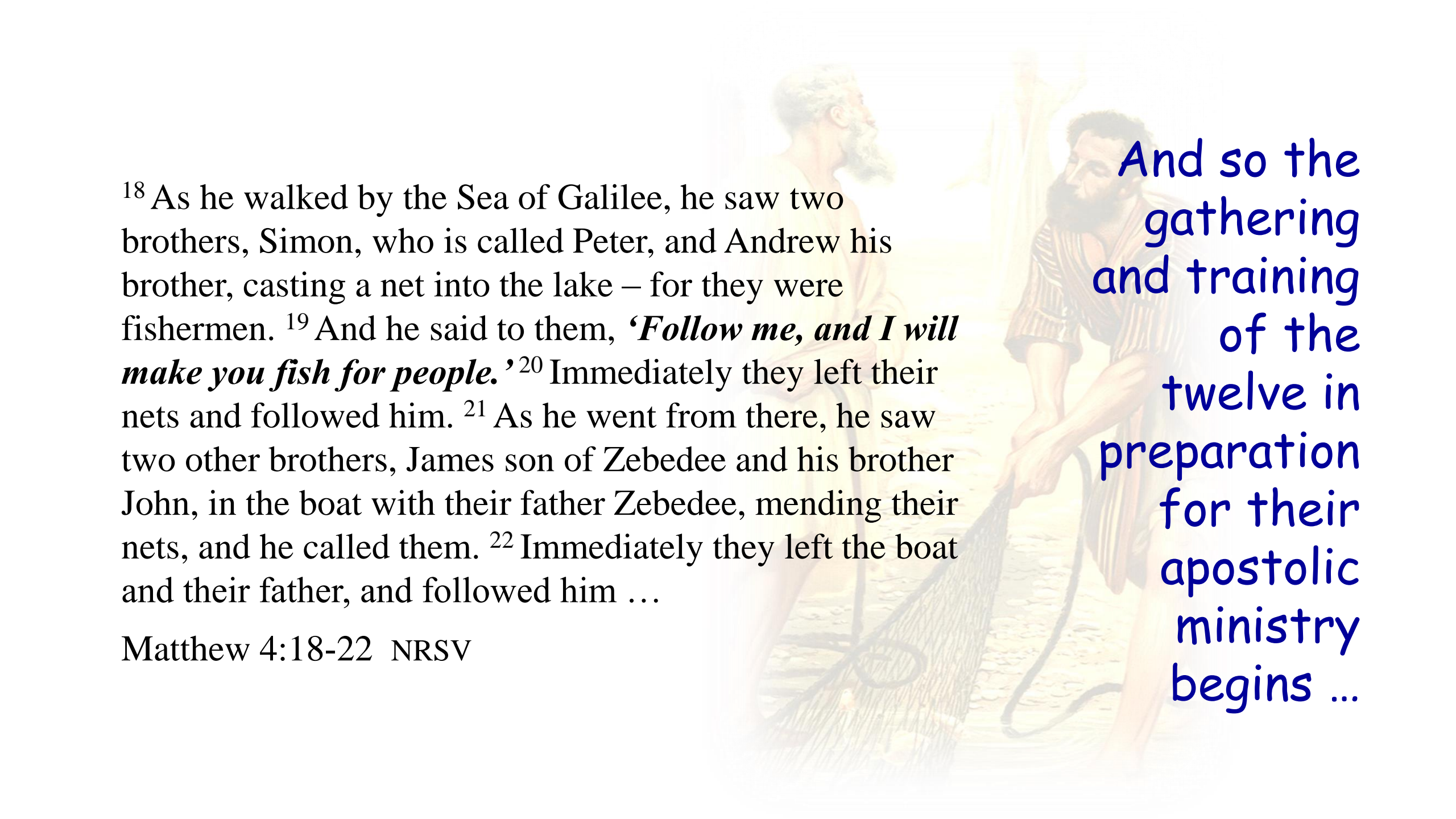
Jeremiah 6:16 ESV



With his
baptism
and
temptation
behind him,
Jesus'
public
Messianic
ministry
begins ...

¹² Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³ He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the lake, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:
¹⁵ ‘Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – ¹⁶ the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.’ ¹⁷ ***From that time Jesus began to proclaim, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’***

Matthew 4:12-17 NRSV



¹⁸ As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake – for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, ***‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’*** ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him ...

Matthew 4:18-22 NRSV

And so the
gathering
and training
of the
twelve in
preparation
for their
apostolic
ministry
begins ...



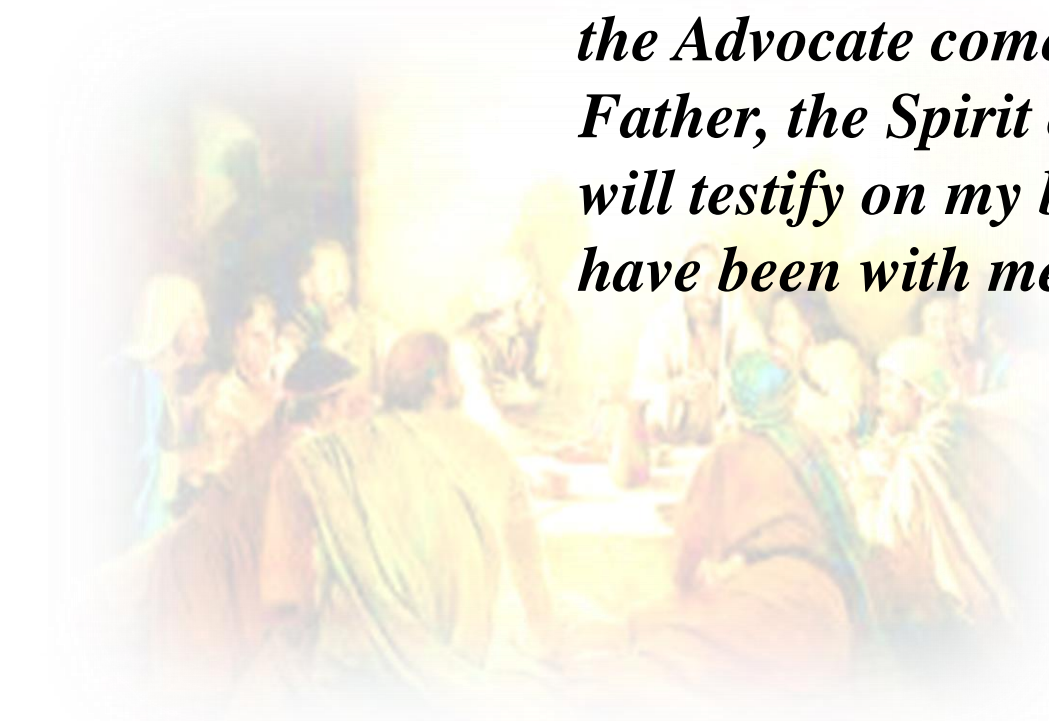
¹⁵ ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you ... ²⁵ ‘I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you ...*

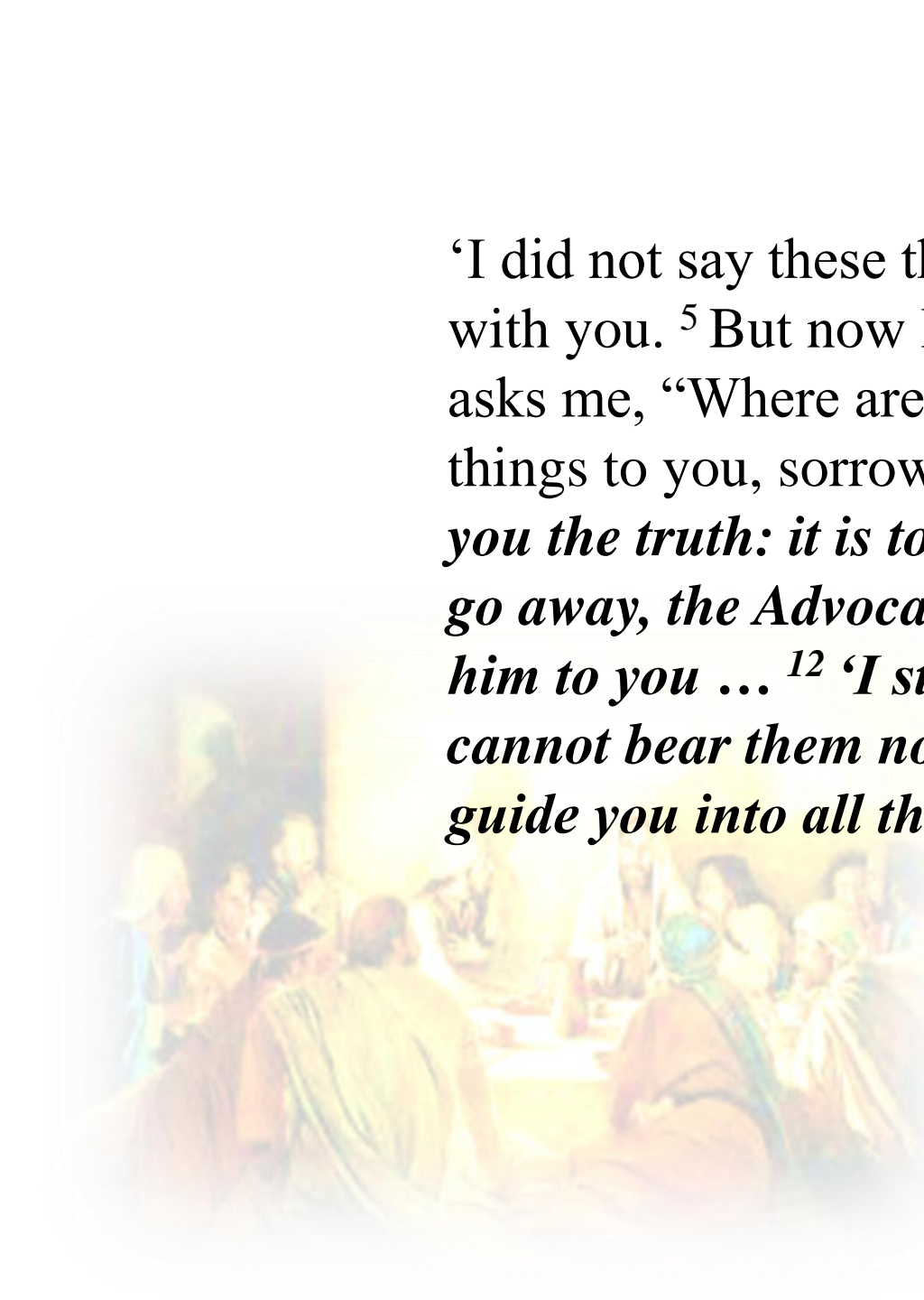
John 14:15-17, 25-26 NRSV

²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, “Servants are not greater than their master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; *if they kept my word, they will keep yours also.*

²¹ But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me ... ²⁶ *‘When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. ²⁷ You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.*

John 15:20-21, 26-27 NRSV





‘I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵ But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, “Where are you going?” ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. ⁷ *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you ...* ¹² *‘I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth ...*

John 16:4-7, 12-13 NRSV



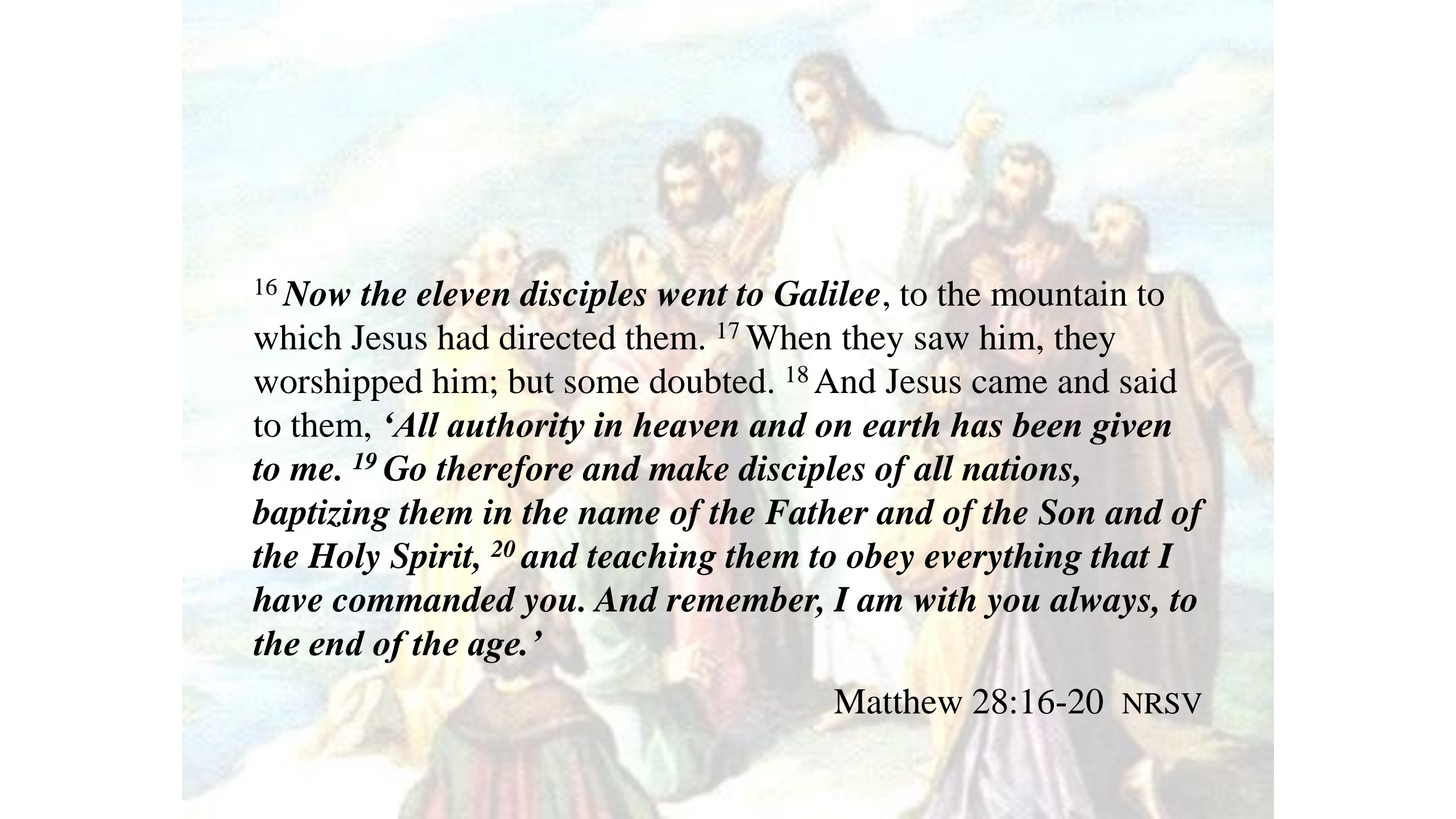
After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him ... ²⁰ *‘I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me ...* After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered ...

John 17:1-2, 20-21; 18:1 NRSV









¹⁶ *Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee*, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, *‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* ¹⁹ *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,* ²⁰ *and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’*

Matthew 28:16-20 NRSV

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ *You are witnesses of these things.* ⁴⁹ *And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.*’

Luke 24:44-49 NRSV

John 14-16

Apostles promised another Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father would send in Jesus’ name to guide Jesus’ apostles into all truth (new and old)

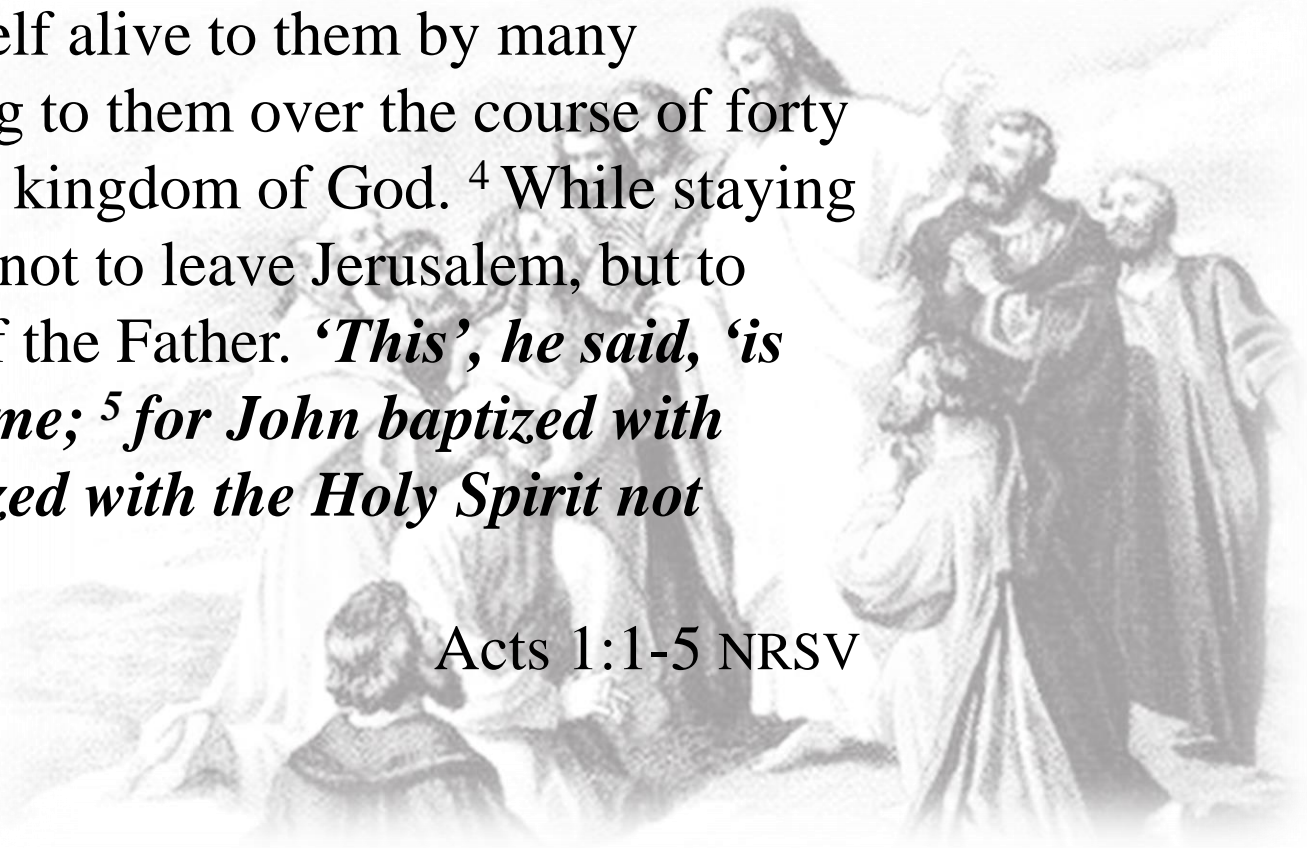


Luke 24

Promise of power from the Father reaffirmed at Great (apostolic) Commission: apostles to wait in Jerusalem

In the first book, Theophilus, *I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ² until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.* ³ After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴ While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. *‘This’, he said, ‘is what you have heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’*

Acts 1:1-5 NRSV



So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?’ ⁷ He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ ***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.***’ ⁹ When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight ...

Acts 1:6-9 NRSV

John 14-16



Luke 24



Acts 1

The apostles received their apostolic commission and now are to wait in Jerusalem to be empowered by the promised Spirit to enable them to fulfil their apostolic mission

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability ...
¹⁴ *But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say ...*

Acts 2:1-4, 14 NRSV

John 14-16

Luke 24

Acts 1



Acts 2

**The apostles
receive the
empowerment
(baptism) of the
Holy Spirit as
promised and
proceed to carry out
their apostolic
mission proclaiming
the gospel and
establishing Christ's
church**

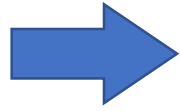
³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what should we do?’ ³⁸ Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.’ ⁴⁰ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ ⁴¹ *So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.* ⁴² *They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers ...*

Acts 2:37-42 NRSV



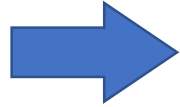
Father

Son



Trained & Commissioned Apostles

Holy Spirit



Empowered & Guided Apostles

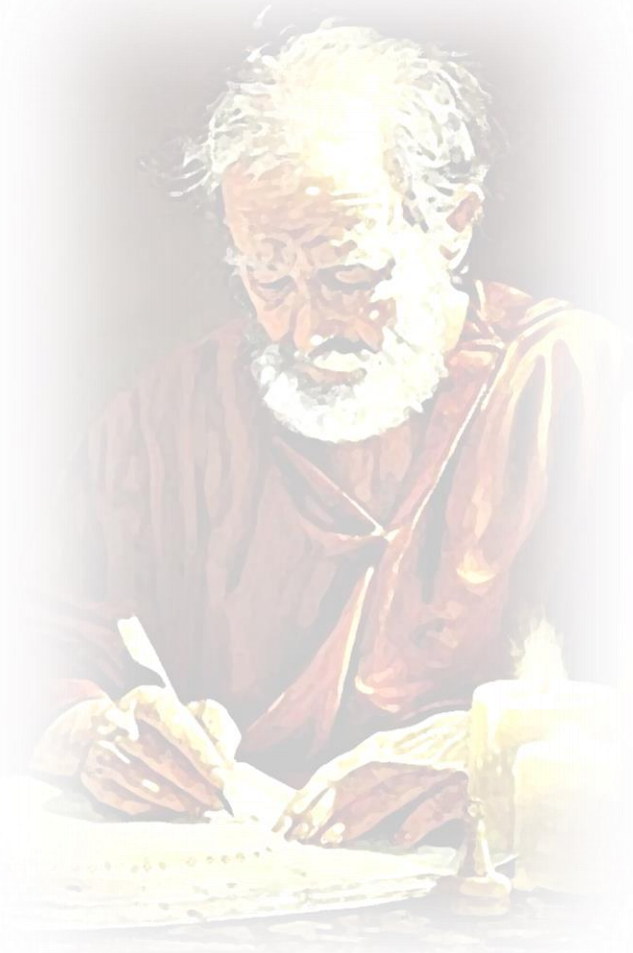


Apostolic Witness
Gospel (*kerygma*) preaching



Apostolic Traditions
Teaching and practice (*didache*) for the new covenant
community – the church

Apostolic witness and teaching initially oral; then in writing (Scripture). **The faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints in the first century AD is the same faith we have recorded and preserved in Scripture right down to this twenty-first century.**



Beloved, while eagerly preparing to write to you about the salvation we share, I find it necessary to write and appeal to you to ***contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.*** ⁴ For certain intruders have stolen in among you, people who long ago were designated for this condemnation as ungodly, who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jude 3-4 NRSV

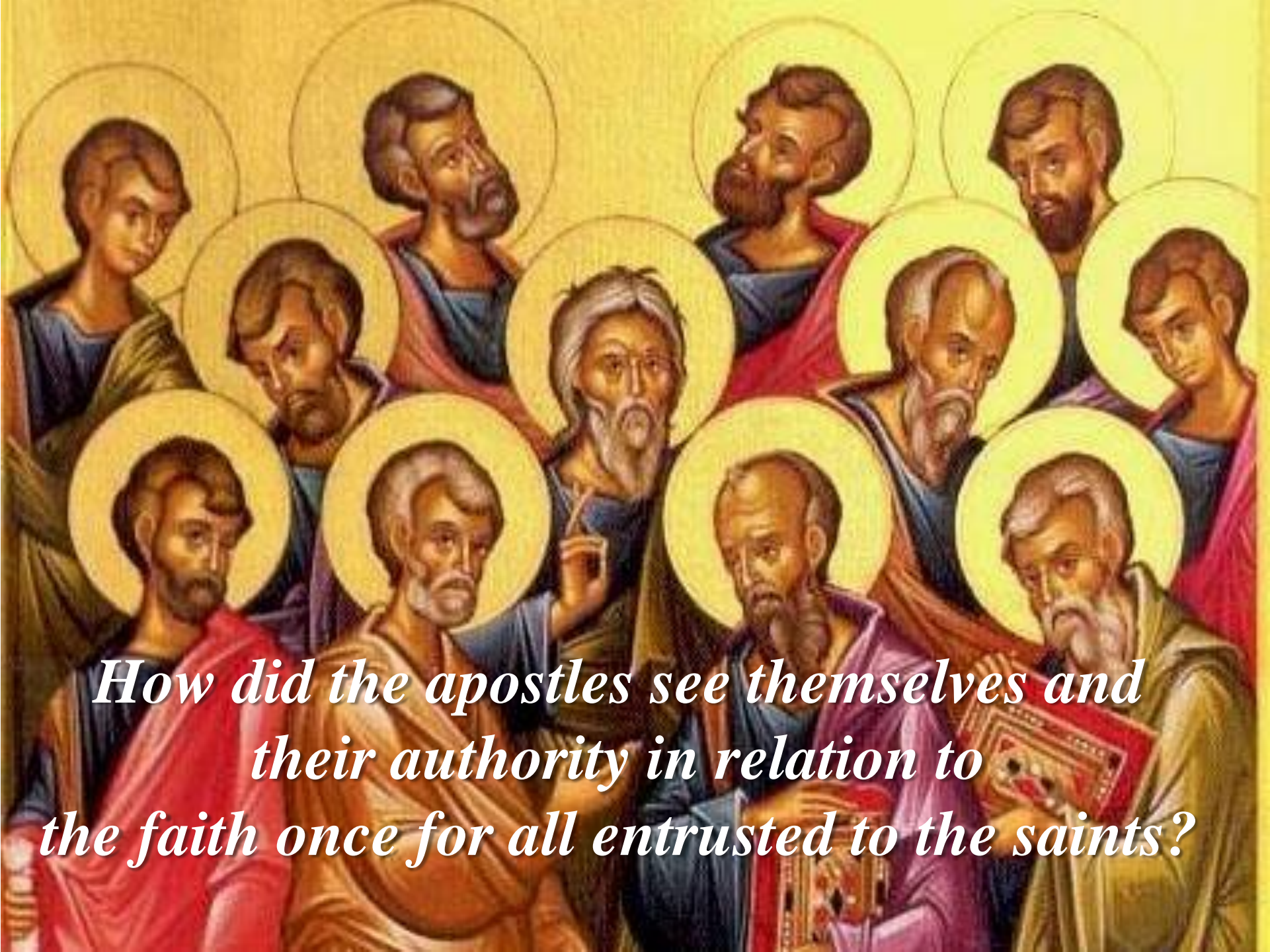
Assuming the priority of Second Peter (AD 64-66); Jude was probably written in the period AD 66-85

Behaviour

(let us sin that grace may abound)

Doctrine

(denying the incarnation)



How did the apostles see themselves and their authority in relation to the faith once for all entrusted to the saints?



The Apostle Paul

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – ⁷ not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! ⁹ *As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!*

Galatians 1:6-9 NRSV (AD 48)



The Apostle Paul

But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴ For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers and sisters, *stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.*

2 Thessalonians 2:13-15 NRSV (AD 51)



The Apostle Peter helps us understand the transition from the oral to written medium:

Therefore I intend to keep on reminding you of these things, *though you know them already and are established in the truth that has come to you.* ¹³ I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to refresh your memory, ¹⁴ since I know that my death will come soon, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵ *And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.*

2 Peter 1:12-15 NRSV (AD 67)



That's why the Apostle Paul told churches to share apostolic letters with one another:

Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. ¹⁶ *And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea.* ¹⁷ And say to Archippus, “See that you complete the task that you have received in the Lord.”

Colossians 4:15-17 NRSV (AD 62)



The Apostle Paul

Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and *not according to the tradition that they received from us.* ⁷ *For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us;* we were not idle when we were with you ...

Take note of *those who do not obey what we say in this letter;* have nothing to do with them, so that they may be ashamed. ¹⁵ Do not regard them as enemies, *but warn them as believers.*

2 Thessalonians 3:6-7, 14-15 NRSV (AD 51)



The Apostle Paul

However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. ***This is my rule in all the churches.***

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. ² ***I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you ...***

For ***I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you***, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread ...

1 Corinthians 7:17; 11:1-2, 23 NRSV (AD 55)

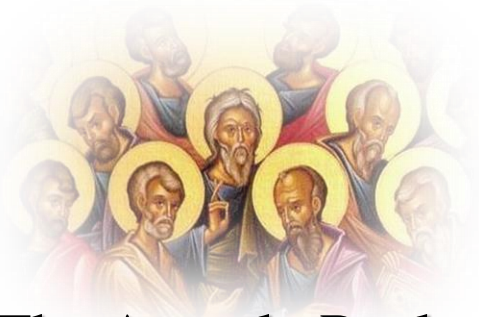


The Apostle Paul

... for God is a God not of disorder but of peace. *As in all the churches of the saints,* ³⁴ women should be silent in the churches ...

Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to have spiritual powers, must acknowledge that *what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord.*

1 Corinthians 14:33, 37 NRSV (AD 55)



The Apostle Paul

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰ ***built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.*** ²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²² in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Ephesians 2:19-22 NRSV (AD 60)



The Apostle Paul

I hope to come to you soon, but *I am writing these instructions to you so that,* ¹⁵ if I am delayed, *you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God,* which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

1 Timothy 3:14-15 NRSV (AD 63)



The Apostle Paul

*Hold to the standard [**tupos, pattern or model**] of sound teaching that you have heard from me*, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

... and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well.

2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2 NRSV (AD 64)



The Apostle Peter regarding Paul's authority

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; ¹⁵ and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. *So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.*

2 Peter 3:14-16 NRSV (AD 67)



The One Holy Catholic Apostolic Church of the Triune God!

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ *making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,* ⁵ *one Lord, one faith, one baptism,* ⁶ *one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.*

Ephesians 4:1-6 NRSV

Restoring the Apostolic Faith ... Restoring the New Testament Church

Beloved ... *contend for the
faith that was once for all
entrusted to the saints.*

