

## *Introduction*

I am no builder, but I know that foundations are very important. Think about the freestanding cathedral bell tower in Pisa, Italy. Work began in 1173. Five years later the second floor was being built, but the tower had begun to sink on one side. A century later, when work resumed, the engineers tried to compensate for the tilt by building one side of the upper floors taller than the other. While the Leaning Tower of Pisa may be a popular tourist attraction, it is a stark example of the dangers of an inadequate foundation.

Times change. Not only with regard to architecture, but in all areas. The culture my parents grew up in just after the war was very different to the culture my children are growing

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up in now. For one thing, our culture is so much less aware of biblical content and teaching. But does this mean there is less belief today than there was sixty or seventy years ago?

Not at all. There may well be less belief in the Bible, but there is still belief in something. People may not be believers in God or believers in Jesus, but all human beings are believers. We all believe constantly. All the decisions we make are based on beliefs: we believe a chair will hold our weight and so we sit on it. We believe certain sources of information are trustworthy, while others are to be taken with a pinch of salt. We have beliefs based on past experiences, based on guesswork, based on education, and so on.

This book is about beliefs. Specifically, it is about the foundations of your belief system. Whether you would call yourself a Christian or not, there is a foundation underneath your beliefs. I am convinced if you dig down below everything else, there are four great building blocks underneath any belief system. These great foundation stones are four basic questions. Our personal answers to these questions will determine how we live our lives, how we make choices, as well as what our eternities will look

like. Everything is built on our understanding of these four questions. They are:-

Which god is God?

What does it mean to be human?

What is sin?

What is salvation?

This book seeks to answer these questions biblically, focusing on the book of Acts where we can read about the gospel spreading in the early years after Jesus had been on Earth.

Typically, we assume that if someone agrees on the so-called primary issues – is the Bible inspired, is Jesus God, are we saved by grace through faith alone, etc. – then we must be on the same page. Sure, there may be different views on secondary issues (timing of Christ's return, timing and mode of creation), and on tertiary issues (which style of music our church prefers, etc.), but we assume that unity on the primary issues makes for unity between Christians. But what if Christians agreed on all of these things, primary, secondary and tertiary, but disagreed on the four foundational questions? You would end up with a very different Christianity, a very

different Gospel and quite possibly an entirely different religion. No amount of compensation at the upper levels of a belief system will truly overcome a failure at the level of the foundation.

If you are intrigued by Christianity, I hope that this little book can be helpful to you. It will not answer everything, but I hope it will point you toward the right questions to be asking. I also hope it will prompt you to pick up a Bible and chase after the God who reveals Himself in those pages.

If you would call yourself a Christian, I hope this little book can be helpful to you. I am convinced the church would be a much healthier community if people actively investigated the questions raised here.

How healthy is the foundation of your belief system? We have to probe the foundational four questions. So let's start with the first one.