

The situation is, in fact, even worse than this. The gospels tell us that Jesus appointed twelve apostles, and gave their names. There is no mention in the gospels of Paul having been appointed as an apostle. Nor is there any statement in the book of Acts that the apostles decided to add Paul to their number. Except for the two cases in Acts 14, every use of the term apostle in the book of Acts refers to the group selected by Christ during His earthly ministry, and not one of those occurrences can be shown to include Paul. In all the chapters devoted to Paul's missionary journeys the word apostle is never applied to Paul or his associates with the sole exception of the two instances in chapter 14. In these two cases (14:4,14), it would seem to be used in a general sense, for it is used in the plural, so as to include Barnabas, and in fact, where the names are given, that of Barnabas is mentioned first! It has never been claimed that Barnabas was an apostle, and no portion of the Christian church accepts the so-called Epistle of Barnabas as inspired Scripture. It is only in the letters written by Paul himself that we find any evidence that he was a member of the apostolic group. In them we find him making the claim that he was an apostle, not because of any selection by the other apostles, but purely as a result of the action of the Holy Spirit, performed after Jesus had departed from the earth and the other apostles had been active for many years.

Approximately half of the books of the New Testament, therefore, come from a man who is not mentioned among the twelve apostles, and for whom our only evidence that he was an apostle rests upon the statements that he makes in his own writings. Do we believe that these books are inspired, because Paul was an apostle, and then prove his apostleship by the statements which the books contain? Or can we rest our belief that they are inspired books upon some other basis, and therefore have a solid foundation for belief in Paul's apostleship?