

Why Trust the Bible - Week 8

Chapter 7: Take it On the Word of a Resurrected Man

Week 7 Highlights

- We discussed miracles, their definition, and why it's not implausible to believe in them.
- We reviewed the two main objections to miracles, as originally presented by Scottish philosopher, David Hume in 1748:
 - *Scientific objection*: Is it possible that the witnesses of Biblical miracles just didn't understand science enough to know that what they were seeing was not miraculous?
 - *Philosophical Objection*: Even if science cannot prove the impossibility of miracles, we should still say that the probability of miracles is too small to believe that they are possible.
- We studied 11 characteristics and 3 purposes of biblical miracles as presented by Pastor Bob Deffinbaugh.
- We discussed the centrality of the resurrection to our faith in Jesus Christ and why the disciples themselves believed the resurrection.
- We debunked several alternative theories to the reality of the resurrection.
- For our apologetics bonus, we looked at Christ's proclamation of deity to John the Baptist, quoting from Isaiah 35 and 61, and correlating missing text found in the Dead Sea Scrolls that states he will "rise from the dead".

The Resurrection and Reliability of the Bible

Because of Jesus' resurrection, we believe what Jesus said, and since Jesus himself endorsed the entire Old Testament and authorized the entire New Testament, we believe they are reliable and true.

"Holy Scripture could never lie or err... it's decrees are of absolute and unavoidable truth." - Galileo Galilei, the 'Father of Science', 1613

What the Resurrection Should Mean to Us

- Those of us united to Jesus by faith will be resurrected just as He was.
- God fully accepted Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as sufficient payment for our sins.
- Jesus now lives to lead, rule, protect, intercede for, and do good for His people who are still alive on earth.
- God ratified, endorsed, vindicated, and confirmed all of Jesus' claims about who He was and what kind of authority He possessed.

Chapter Question

Matthew tells us 3 times that Jesus predicted His own death. What do we learn through these predictions? In particular, what do they teach us about how Jesus understood His own identity as the Messiah?

Jesus presented His death and resurrection as the necessary and confirming culmination of His identity as Christ. The role, mission and destiny of Christ was not to be determined, but was already established in the Old Testament. It was not something Christ was choosing to do, but it is what he *HAD* to do. There was no doubt that it would be carried out, thus revealing the fulfillment of the OT prophecies and confirming Jesus' identity as THE long-anticipated Messiah.

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." - Acts 2:36

"God's nature is revealed most perfectly in the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth...who was sent by God to reveal the divine nature." - George F.R. Ellis, PhD, *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature*, 1997

What does the resurrection mean for the Old Testament?

The resurrection establishes Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament, thus establishing His authority to speak for God the Father. It also made it clear that Jesus was *THE* prophet who could perfectly reveal who God is and what He says. Therefore, it means everything that Jesus not only treated the Old Testament as authoritative, but as THE very Word of God, thus confirming the divinity of the scriptures.

He told 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." - Luke 24:44

When Jesus says things like "You have heard it said, but I say to you", is He correcting errors in the Old Testament? If not, then what is He doing?

Jesus was correcting the misinterpretation and misuse of the Old Testament scriptures by Pharisees and exercising his kingly, prophetic authority to say what the Old Testament *REALLY* meant in the first place.

What does the resurrection mean for the New Testament? How do John 16:12-16 and 2 Peter 3:15-16 help us to answer this question?

The resurrection established the authority of Jesus as the promised Messiah, in turn, giving authority to the fulfilled promises that He made. Those promises included sending the Holy Spirit to guide the Apostles in truth and wisdom as they spread the Word throughout the early church. Therefore, the Apostles weren't just eyewitnesses, they were particularly and specifically authorized by the King to teach the church the rest of what he wanted taught.

"If Christianity was something we were making up, of course we could make it easier. But it is not. We cannot compete, in simplicity, with people who are inventing religions. How could we? We are dealing with Fact. Of course anyone can be simple if he has no facts to bother about." - C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 1943

So, in your own words, why should you trust the Bible?

1 Peter 3:15

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect..."

Do you feel that you are more prepared than you were 8 weeks ago?

"Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them." - E. Paul Hovey

Apologetics Bonus: *Faith, Reason, and Bill Craig's Big 5*

"Just have faith." We have probably all heard it.

Problem: What on earth does that mean? Just blindly believe something without any evidence? What are we telling our kids to have?

Atheistic (and popular) culture is redefining faith as *the opposite of reason*. Should we continue to allow popular culture to be the primary voice in our kids ears, causing them to feel shamed and stupid for believing something "without any evidence?"

Let's examine how we can change the narrative, starting with Reason...

What is Reason?

"[Reason is] fundamentally the act of engaging the mind - whether done intuitively or rigorously, poorly or flawlessly. It is, ideally, a process of careful thinking, always involving logic, and often drawing upon evidence."

Peter Grice, True Reason

Key Points

- Though atheistic culture makes reason sound praiseworthy, and in opposition to faith, **everyone** reasons
- The implied charge is that Christians reason **poorly**

Let's hear what the atheistic community is putting out there...

"Tell a devout Christian that his wife is cheating on him, or that frozen yogurt can make a man invisible, and he is likely to require as much evidence as anyone else, and to be persuaded only to the extent that you give it. Tell him that the book he keeps by his bed was written by an invisible deity who will punish him with fire for eternity if he fails to accept its every incredible claim about the universe, and he seems to require no evidence."

Sam Harris

"Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence."

Richard Dawkins

"The difference between faith and insanity is that faith is the ability to hold firmly to a conclusion that is incompatible with the evidence, whereas insanity is the ability to hold firmly to a conclusion that is incompatible with the evidence."

William Harwood

"We may define 'faith' as the firm belief in something for which there is no evidence. Where there is evidence, no one speaks of 'faith.'"

Key Points

- All of these statements rest on the assumption that there is no evidence for God
- All of these statements provide a *new* definition of 'faith' that is based on a presupposed worldview

What is Faith?

Oxford

faith (n)

1. complete trust or confidence in someone or something.
2. strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof.

Webster

faith (n)

1. allegiance to duty or a person - "lost faith in the company's president"
2. fidelity to one's promises
3. sincerity of intentions - "acted in good faith"
4. belief and trust in and loyalty to God
5. belief in the traditional doctrines of a religion
6. ***firm belief in something for which there is no proof - "clinging to the faith that her missing son would return"***
7. complete trust
8. something that is believed especially with strong conviction
9. especially : a system of religious beliefs - "Protestant faith"
10. ***without question - "took everything he said on faith"***

The Bible

"Faith is the *assurance* of things hoped for, the *conviction* of things not seen."

Hebrews 11:1

"Many skeptics latch on to the words 'hoped for' in this verse and claim that even the Bible says faith is just a matter of wishful thinking. But that completely ignores the other key words - 'assurance' and 'conviction.' This verse doesn't say faith is the hope for things hoped for, but the assurance of things hoped for. Furthermore, the verse doesn't suggest that assurance is based on boundless fantasies, but on conviction. In other words, this

doesn't portray faith as an irrational leap into the unknown. Rather, it presupposes that Christians have good reasons for belief, leading to assurance and conviction." - Natasha Crain, *Keeping Your Kids on God's Side*

Key Points

- In spite of attempts to change the definition, faith is not a belief by itself
- Rather faith is the *commitment* to a belief
- That commitment comes when you trust something you have good *reason* to believe

Good Reasons: Bill Craig's Big 5

Reason #1: God Makes Sense of the Universe's Origin

We have reviewed this (The Cosmological Argument). The universe came into being. Science calls this the Big Bang. First, whatever begins to exist has a cause. Second, the universe began to exist. Third, therefore the universe has a cause.

"Suppose you suddenly hear a loud bang... and you ask me, 'What made that bang?' and I reply, 'Nothing, it just happened.' You would not accept that."

Kai Nielsen - Prominent Atheist

Furthermore, whatever caused the universe must be causeless (otherwise regressing causes infinitely) cannot be bound by universal laws like time, space, matter or energy.

Reason #2: God Makes Sense of the Universe's Complexity

Scientifically (mathematically), it's far more probable for the Big Bang to result in a life-prohibiting universe, than a life-sustaining one. Here are some key calculations from today's scientific community:

- **Stephen Hawking** - If the rate of the universe's expansion one second after the Big Bang had been smaller by even one part in a hundred thousand million million, the universe would have collapsed into a fireball
- **P.C.W. Davies** - The odds against the initial conditions being suitable for the formation of stars (necessary for life) is a one followed by at least a thousand billion billion zeros. For context, the human genome is 3 billion characters long. That's a book the height of the Washington Monument.
- **P.C.W. Davies** - If the strength of gravity or of the weak force were changed by only one part in 10 followed by a hundred zeros, life would not be possible.
- There are about 50 constants and quantities - the amount of usable energy in the universe, the difference in mass between protons and neutrons, the ratios of the fundamental forces of nature (gravity, the weak force, electromagnetism, the strong force), and the proportion of matter to antimatter - that must be balanced to an infinitesimal degree for any life to be possible.

Skeptic's theories have become deliberately rooted in non-science (Many Worlds theory... think Marvel metaverse), to cope with the specified complexity of the Universe and remain atheistic.

Reason #3: God Makes Sense of Objective Moral Values

Evidence that objective morality exists among humans of all deistic perspectives and worldviews is so overwhelming that it's nearly incontrovertible. Rape, torture, child abuse... the overwhelming majority of humanity would agree that these acts are abominations.

It's unlikely that objective morality would be a biological adaptation, as it is conceivable that actions like rape and selective murder would be advantageous to the survival of the species.

Therefore, if object morality exists, and it is not likely an evolutionary byproduct, then there must be a moral lawgiver.

Reason #4: God Makes Sense of the Resurrection

If Jesus of Nazareth really did come back from the dead, we have a genuine divine miracle on our hands, and thus very strong evidence for the existence of God...

Congrats, you have 8 weeks of studying this very thing under your belt!

Reason #5: God Can Immediately Be Experienced

Philosophers have a term called "properly basic belief." It is the core of why we assume we exist, and that we are not the product of electrodes probing a brain in some vat, even though we cannot logically prove we are not. Our belief that we exist is "properly basic."

This belief is viewed as entirely rational, and grounded in our own experience (waking up, moving matter, etc.).

As Christians, we understand our belief in God as 'properly basic.' We have real experiences with him. Therefore, like our belief that we exist, we can term our belief in God this way (properly basic), and be completely rational.

Atheists will likely believe that the idea that there is no God is equally 'properly basic.' This is a sad reality. Philosopher William Alston says that in this case Christians should do whatever is feasible to find common ground, like logic or empirical facts, to show in a non circular way whose view is correct.

This is exactly the point of arguments 1 - 4.

One Atheists' Change of Mind

"When I began my career as a cosmologist some twenty years ago, I was a convinced atheist. I never in my wildest dreams imagined that one day I would be writing a book purporting to show that the central claims of Judeo-Christian theology are in fact true, that these claims are straightforward deductions of the laws of physics

as we now understand them. I have been forced into these conclusions by the inexorable logic of my own special branch of physics.” - Frank J. Tipler, PhD, The Physics of Immortality, 1994

Apologetics Bonus Bonus: Aliens

Does the existence of aliens undermine the Christian worldview?

Reasons It Could

1. Aliens would undermine the human centrality of the Biblical narrative
2. Aliens would undermine the Incarnation
3. Aliens would undermine the story of creation

But wait a second... there ARE aliens

Christians have ALWAYS believed that God created at least one other sentient, intelligent race in the universe... angels. According to the Bible, angels are powerful beings of pure spirit, recorded as appearing to humans in our space & time. Most biblical scholars agree that their creation predates the creation story of Genesis.

Human Centrality

The basic concept here is the belief that because the Bible is human-centered, other races or species must be disqualified from a relationship with God. If we accept this, and Aliens are found, then Christianity must collapse, because Aliens are not human, and the Bible doesn't account for them.

However, this is a false dichotomy. Any parent with multiple children understands that just because they have another child, they are not diminishing the love and care that they have for their first child.

This makes it at least conceivable that there could be other biological races that are special to God.

Incarnation

What about aliens and the uniqueness of the Incarnation? Back to the “alien race” of angels, we can see from scripture that God deals with them in intimate ways. They clearly frequently take on the role of His messengers, and we're told in Scripture that they have other appointments given to them by God.

If we can assume that God is dealing with angels intimately (i.e. personally) without ever being incarnated as one of them, it's not a far jump to assume that He could be dealing with other biological forms of intelligent life similarly.

Creation

The idea here is that the introduction of Aliens would put a big hole in the Biblical story of creation. John C. Lennox summarizes it best in *7 Days that Divide the World*, when he explains that in the same way that, over

time, Christians saw how Scripture accommodates a heliocentric solar system, with new science and discovery, it's possible to see how the Bible's creation account can accommodate an Old Earth creation perspective.

So the problem isn't really aliens, it's unguided evolution accounting for the existence of aliens. Looking back at the specified complexity of the universe, the very point that would be required to be rock-solid, which is "How did the first self-dividing cells come to be?" for aliens to exist, is the very point at which all of our existing scientific theories fall apart.

In a nutshell, and contrary to popular belief, science is currently the strongest antagonist of the existence of aliens.

That said, and going back to John Lennox, the existence of something unpredicted doesn't collapse Scripture if Scripture is our foundation, it only serves to shape our understanding of it.