

IS CHRISTIANITY IRRATIONAL AND LACKING EVIDENCE?
JOHN 20:24-31
REASONS PEOPLE AVOID FAITH IN CHRIST: PART 2 OF 7

¹Corinthians 15:1 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ²By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

³For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. ⁶After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

¹²But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. ²This is what the ancients were commended for.

³By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

⁴By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

⁵By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. ¹

¹ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984.

1. The Objection

Christianity is Irrational and Devoid of Evidence.

A. Who is saying this?

Those who are vocal in their opposition Christian Faith

People who have assumed this to be true

B. The Assumptions

Irrational

Something is only rational if it has clear evidence

(Scientific and empirical)

Something is only rational if I believe it

(Personal bias)

Devoid of Evidence

What measure of evidence is being sought?

For God?

For Jesus?

How is existing evidence dealt with?

2. General observations

A. The Analysis (is it really true)

Is something rational only if there is empirical evidence?

What is the nature of faith and trust?

What do you trust or take by faith without full evidence?

For a belief to be rational it is the product of a rational mind

What do you believe in that has not yet happened?

B. A False Dilemma?

It is either this or that

Is there another option?

C. Other Ideas Piled on

Why would God allow a tsunami to wipe out part of Japan?

An atheist doesn't need to prove God doesn't exist

Things about God are incomprehensible therefore irrational

We cannot understand how or why God does stuff so we reject him

3. Biblical Response

*After his suffering, he showed himself to these men
and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive Acts 1:3*

A. There is evidence

1 Corinthians 15:1-18

Without evidence don't bother
But this evidence is often rejected

Acts 1:3

Somebody seemed convinced

Hebrews 11:1-6

The nature of Faith

B. The question of faith itself

A Noun and a verb

Human freedom and the ability to not notice God

It is rational to not believe in God – by design

A person convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.

C. How does Jesus engage unbelief and doubt?

Doubt is uncertain faith and normal for believers – John 20:24-29

Unbelief is rejection of Faith in Christ

Most people are not a-theist

How do we reply?

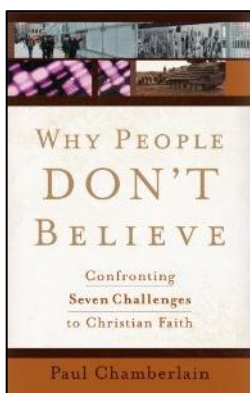
Christianity at its heart is belief and faith in a God who is purposefully elusive. We believe he is loving and findable but also hidden and avoidable. James 4:8 '*draw near to God and he will draw near to you*' is true in both directions. This is God's genius of faith.

Care needs to be taken in the definition of irrational. If faith and trust is the product of a rational mind the implication is, it is rational. If by irrational it means you just don't think or believe like me that is a different issue.

Care needs to be taken on the burden of proof. What kind of evidence would be demanded? It is reasonable to expect that kind of evidence? Simply to reject the certain kinds of evidence based on the information provided is not helpful.

A helpful question to ponder in conversation with another person. 'If all of your objections and questions were answered in the next ten minutes would you commit yourself fully as a follower of Jesus Christ?' The answer to that question might be a clue to where things are at.

Next week's Question: Is Christianity Anti-scientific?



Message Methodology: I am using the book pictured to the left, "*Why People don't Believe*" by Paul Chamberlain, Baker Books, 2001, as my primary resource to build this series of messages. From there I will supplement the framework provided from reading, current events and conclude with biblical reflection on the key idea being presented.

Message Purpose: To provide teaching, information and encouragement so that you need not be troubled by these objections. Secondly that in conversation with others you might have a reasonable response to offer. Third that if these objections are somehow preventing you from moving forward in faith that those barriers would begin to be taken down.