

## Notes from After the Sermon A Faith Big Enough for Reason

Non-believers in Christ (and truth be told, many Christians) have difficulty in defining “faith.” Mark Twain once defined faith as “believing in what you know ain’t so.” Is that what our faith is, a belief in the irrational?

There are problems aren’t there, with that kind of faith? First, what happens to our faith when the storms of life come? Matthew 7:24-29 tells the parable of the man who built his house on the rock vs. the man who built his house on the sand. When the storms came, the sands shifted and the house fell. But the house built on the firm foundation remained standing despite the storms. A firm foundation leads to a firm faith.

So, our personal faith can be shaken if the foundation isn’t strong. But there is another question we need to ask. How can we lead others to accept a faith that we don’t understand?

The Bible clearly tells us that we must have faith. Proverbs 3:5 tell us that we are supposed to trust God and not lean on our own understanding. Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11 tell us, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.” However, the Bible also tells us that our faith should be based on reason. Isaiah 1:18 says, “Come let us reason says the Lord.” And 1 Peter 3:15 tells us to “always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you.” So, we are to attempt to show unbelievers that our belief in the Scriptures is reasonable, justified, and logically defensible.

We talked this Sunday about who Jesus claimed to be and if we could find reasons, outside of the Bible, to believe He is who he claimed, so that we can believe in Him with our hearts and our minds.

Who did Jesus claim to be? After all, almost everyone would agree Jesus was a great teacher and moral example. But as you know, He didn’t stop there. In John 11:25-26 Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” Look at John 6:35-40 or John 8:49-58. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, and in fact claimed to be God, saying “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30).

We have all heard the phrase, “inquiring minds want to know.” Can we know that Jesus is who He claimed to be?

In John 14:11, Jesus said we could believe in Him because of his works – the miracles he performed. The disciples were clear that the miracles Jesus worked were the evidence to support what he claimed about himself. The problem is this argument will not convince today’s skeptics. First, we are not eyewitnesses. Even the Bible acknowledges that it is harder for one who is not an eyewitness to be convinced. John 20:29 says, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

So, how can we know these miracles really happened? First, Jesus performed many of his miracles openly before the public, rather than just in front of his followers. There were thousands of witnesses to the miracles Jesus performed, yet there is NO historical record of any of his contemporaries stepping forward to claim his miracles were a hoax. None, nobody. Not Romans, or Jews, or Greeks. When you consider the earliest of the gospels was written when many of those eyewitnesses would have still been alive, there would have been an outcry had the disciples been lying. In fact, within just a few weeks of Jesus's death, on the day of Pentecost, Peter openly declared before a huge crowd in Jerusalem, the city where Jesus performed many of his miracles, "Listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know." Acts 2:22.

Second, did you know evidence of Jesus's miracles is not limited to the Bible? A non-Christian author writing shortly after Jesus's death was a man named Flavius Josephus. Josephus was a Pharisee and a one-time commander of Jewish forces who later switched sides and joined the Roman army. Josephus wrote about history for a largely Roman audience and he wrote: "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works...." Other writers at the time, Jewish and Greek accused Jesus of practicing sorcery, but they did not despite he performed miracles.

Third, consider how many people would have had to be a part of this lie. Start with Mary, who was with Jesus throughout his ministry and was standing at the foot of the cross when He was crucified. Would she have let her son die for a hoax? And as for the apostles, ALL of them, except for John, were martyred, killed for their faith and what they were teaching. But not one of them recanted, even at the point of death. Not one!

At the end of the day, we all have a decision to make because we all put our faith in something. Choosing not to believe takes as much, or perhaps more, faith than choosing to believe. Thomas Merton said, "Reason is in fact the path to faith, and faith takes over when reason can say no more." We can build our faith on a foundation. Our faith is big enough.

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Want to know more? Recommended reading:

Lee Strobel's books: The Case for Faith, The Case for Christ, The Case for Christianity  
Cold Case Christianity by J. Warner Wallace  
Reasons for Belief: A Handbook of Christian Evidence by John Oakes