

# An Intelligent Faith or "Don't check your brain at the door"

Part One- Biblical Faith vs Blind Faith

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"Welcome to First Mount Sinai Baptipentecostal Church!!" , the nicely dressed church usher says in a friendly voice early on Sunday morning. She gives you a hug. "May I take your coat?" "Sure," you reply, taking your coat off. "May I take your brain?" You stop in puzzlement. "Excuse me?" She looks at you with a smile and asks again: "Can I take your brain, sir?", she says again, with an ever innocent smile. Laughingly, you ask "Why would you need my brain?" A bright smile comes across the usher's face as she says confidently , "Oh, you won't need it in there. We don't do any thinking: Just believe. It has nothing to do with your mind whatsoever."

Okay, maybe it wouldn't happen that literally. But with the recent wave of anti- intellectualism among believers, it makes it increasingly harder to make Christ relevant to folks in the 90's. Some believers stuck on tradition, have become content to go to church every Sunday and have their faith hidden during the week. Others, too lazy to examine the word for themselves, are content to sit under the instruction of clergy who teach aberrant doctrines and accept anything that sounds good to them. Still others, in the face of skeptics and those who question the validity of the Christian faith, retreat into their shell like turtles, content to just "believe" because Christ "works for them" From these circumstances, an attitude has developed, which to this day I encounter when I visit local churches- "What evidence? It's not necessary. All we have to do is believe. That's what faith is." Isn't it? Sure it is.....if you're also willing to accept the Easter bunny and Santa Claus as personal Savior as well.

## MISCONCEPTIONS OF BIBLICAL FAITH

A skeptic on eWorld once wrote to me in a posting saying the following: >>>>I maintain that it insults the intelligence of others to claim a factual basis for religious belief. What is more, through rational induction we can see that facts leave no room for belief. And without belief your religious life must come to an end. Luckily for many Christians everywhere, the Bible provides no facts, only suggestions and recommendations.<<<<

To which I answered: "Are you serious? Facts leave room for belief. Even after seeing the evidence, you still need to trust Christ as Savior. I've met many an individual, some of whom I'm still in contact with, who, even after being shown the evidence, still had a problem accepting Christ in their heart as Savior. God provides the evidence so that there won't be any excuse for man not to accept Him at His word, as printed in scripture. Faith is not blind as you claim. Thomas could have still refused to acknowledge Christ as Lord and God in John 20:28, even after seeing the evidence of Christ's resurrection up close and personal. Faith in the New Testament is always a two pronged approach- "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17) If your heart isn't open to listen, it won't matter if Christ Himself comes down from heaven and stands in your face, you won't hear. You won't listen. You won't accept Him. That's just plain truth."

As you can see above, the assumption by many unbelievers is that the claims of the New Testament and the Bible in general are so "outrageous" and "phenomenal" that they have to be fiction and fantasy. Thus, starting from this presupposition, they come to the conclusion that Christians are believing "fairy tales" based on blind faith.

In the wake of more than seventy years of liberal teaching, some believers are buying into this garbage as well. The conclusion is that Christianity is an anti-intellectual fantasy that believers use to

escape reality. It is an unintelligent, irrational belief system that ignores fact and has no relevance for contemporary man today.

**BIBLICAL FAITH vs BLIND FAITH** In the New Testament, we find the Apostle Paul with the following admonition to the believers in Thessalonica - "Critically examine all things; keep firm possession of that which is genuine." (1 Thess. 5:21, my literal translation). The greek word at this point for "Critically examine" is the word dokimazo. It's the same word which describes how a metalsmith critically examines and scrutinizes precious metals to make sure they are genuine. In contrast to the "blind faith" theory, scripture shows that biblical faith is based on proof and evidence, not just on "belief". Observe the following examples from scripture:

Deut. 13:1-5 and 18:18-22 - God is very explicit- the TEST of a true prophet is that his word and teachings must line up with God's already established revelation (Deut 13) and if he ever misses even ONE prophecy (Deut. 18), he is NOT a prophet of God. The evidence is pure and simple.

Isaiah 7:1-7 - King Ahaz was rebuked by God for not asking Him for evidence!!

Dan 1:10-16 - Daniel in a foreign situation, didn't appeal with a simple 'trust us' as some believers do today--he said 'test us'...and depended upon God for concrete, visible results.

Paul appeals to the 'openness' of the historical facts of early Christianity in his public trial: "The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner." (Act 26:26) He did the same in his sermon at the Areopagus in Acts 17 where he used the resurrection of Christ as historical proof that God will hold men accountable for their actions now.

Peter tries to 'force his readers back into the bedrock of data' in 2 Peter 1:16: "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."

Luke praised the careful and thorough Bereans in Acts 17:11 "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." Luke also investigated the sources and wrote his gospel account for his royal reader, SO THAT he could know for CERTAIN.

These examples could be multiplied many times. The entire canon of scripture is unanimous in affirming that the Judeo-Christian faith is steeply rooted in historical and spiritual fact. Thomas placed his trust in Christ because he saw the evidence (John 20:24-29). Many in the New Testament believed and placed their trust in Christ because of the miracles He performed (John 2:23, 4:39, 10:41-42). Even today, many of our Christian teachers came to Christ based on the testimony of the evidence surrounding and concerning God's word: Simon Greenleaf, famous Harvard Lawyer; Josh McDowell, former skeptic, now Christian Apologist; University Lecturer and Professor Carsten Thiede and many others whose names are now recorded in the Lamb's book of life.

#### A RATIONAL FAITH

Christianity is the most rational of belief systems because it is rooted in fact and not fiction. Our faith is placed in a risen Savior whose words and deeds survive not only in the New Testament documents, but in early christian and secular historical reports as well. The challenge now remains for the believer and the skeptic alike, to examine the evidence together. God in His love toward us, left more than enough evidence for us to feel confident in placing our trust in the Jesus Christ presented in the New Testament. No other religious book in the world can claim this type of evidence, nor are any supported in such fashion. Indeed, it is most irrational and anti- intellectual to reject Christ as Savior in spite of the evidence for the Bible, in favor of "myths and fables" (insert your religion here.).

It is my prayer that the lethargic believer in our Lord will wake up and use ALL of his/her facilities- we're not only to love God with all of our heart and body, but our mind as well (Deut. 6:5). God gave us reason and logic to make choices and He made it so that our reason and logic would lead us to Him, even in the face of hearts darkened by sin. That same reason is used repeatedly in the Bible (see examples above) to not only point man to God, but to point out error as well (ex: False prophets). God never intended for one to follow Him blindly-but for us to examine and test all things (1 John 4:1-4). If folks tested everything like scripture commands (heck, if folks studied and KNEW their Word like they should) instead of being too lazy and letting others do it for them, we would not have cults, aberrant doctrine and such divisions among believers today. The church as a whole, needs to wake up, be diligent in God's word (2 Tim. 2:15) and take up the responsibility of not only knowing God's word, but actively defending and sharing it as well. In the face of a post-Christian America, we can't afford to check our brains at the doors of the church. We need to get active and we need to do it now.

In the next segment of this series, I will give some examples of the historical documentation for the New Testament. In the third part of this series, I will demonstrate that scripture appeals to reason. Until the next issue and even thereafter, may the Lord bless you with His love.

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