

WHY I AM A CHRISTIAN - REASONS FOR FAITH IN AN AGE OF UNBELIEF - Part two

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WHY I BELIEVE THERE IS A GOD

Psalm 14:1 - "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good."

The first verse of Psalm 14 says something more than is frequently noticed. The psalmist is not calling this man a fool for **thinking** there is no God in any evidence he can find. The psalmist calls this man a fool for **telling himself** there is no God when he really knows better - "**The fool has said in his heart, There is no God....**"

In other words, the psalmist is critiquing **self-deception**. The atheist, at least in the **first** stages of disbelief, is **playing dumb**. He is arguing with his own heart. We all do this in different areas. We pretend we don't know what we really know deep down inside. It's just that the atheist is doing this with the most important issue of life itself.

We know this is true, not only from psychological investigation, but from the clear teaching from Scripture. The Bible is absolutely clear that people **do** know the basic truth about the existence of God - **all** people:

Romans 1:18-20 - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, {19} because that which is known about God **is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.** {20} For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that **they are without excuse.**"

Notice the way Paul says this knowledge of God is "**evident within them.**" This is the argument the psalmist describes in the atheist's own heart. There is something "**within**" the atheist that must be silenced if God is to be ignored. You **can** do this, but it's not easy. At least at first, **disbelief is not a natural condition when it comes to the human heart and God.**

Atheism is like a body-builder's physique - you have to work at it to maintain it. And the apostle Paul tells us **why** this is so. He says God has constructed **us** and our **world** in such a way that He is **manifested** all around us and in us:

Romans 1:20 - "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood **through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.**"

Again, read those words very carefully. Paul, exactly as the psalmist, is saying more than many people see at first glance. Paul is **not** criticizing disbelievers because they **don't** know about God, but **ought** to. That's not the point. He's criticizing disbelievers because they **do** know about God, but **pretend to themselves they don't.**

This is made very clear especially in **verses 18-19** - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men **who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, {19} because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.**"

This suppressed truth is never enough knowledge to **save** us. But it is enough knowledge to **awaken and alert us** to the reality of God and the need of Jesus Christ. And it **is** enough knowledge to **condemn** us - to establish our guilt before the God we knew and rejected.

Let me quickly go through some of the basic arguments for the existence of God from the world of creation - both of our **world**, and of **ourselves**:

1) **I BELIEVE GOD EXISTS BECAUSE OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE UNIVERSE ALL AROUND ME**

However one chooses to do it, you simply **must** have some explanation for why there is **something** instead of **nothing**. Matter is not eternal. Things have **causes**. No scientist alive has ever witnessed **matter** coming from **non-matter**. This **is** a material universe. How did it get here?

“Well, pastor Don, the universe came here because of the “Big Bang” billions and billions of years ago. So there is a cause for its existence.”

Supposing just for a minute that the Big Bang theory is true, there are still too many questions needing answers. ***What banged?*** I mean, let’s bring it all close to home just for a minute. None of us was around for the great cosmological big bang, but most of us have heard, at least occasionally, smaller bangs.

Imagine you heard, right while I’m preaching, a huge explosion. Most of you would immediately do the very same thing. You would ***look around***. Your head would turn. Some might even get up, grab your children and leave the building. Then perhaps the fire department would come. They would investigate the different areas and zones of the building to make sure everything was safe.

Why would everybody react this way? Because we know ***bangs don’t just happen***. Explosions have causes. In other words, ***what’s true of a little bang must be true of a big bang as well***. There had to be something that ***“banged.”*** There had to be something that was ***before*** the bang - that ***caused*** the bang to happen.

And so the question remains: Where did that ***pre-existing cause*** of the big bang come from?

This is what the secularist and the materialist have to explain. Never think for a moment that all the evolutionist has to demonstrate to make his case is the discovery of the part of a broken tooth under a mountain in Tibet. That’s not it at all. What the materialist has to explain is why there is something rather than nothing.

2) **I BELIEVE GOD EXISTS BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF THE WORLD ALL AROUND ME**

Given that physical life exists, quite literally, on the knife edge of required conditions to sustain it, the odds of a chance world coming into existence that ***prohibited*** life are much greater than the odds of a chance world ***promoting*** life. Look at the rest of our own small solar system. Most of the planets could never even come close to sustaining life. There are simply millions of necessary conditions to make our existence on this earth possible.

Yet here we are. We live in world where life ***can*** exist and even ***flourish***. We live in a world in which mathematical laws can be discovered and applied. We live in a world where teams of scientists (Christian and atheists alike) can work with observable “laws” and “equations” and where repeatable, demonstratable conclusions are the foundations of research and study.

Yet the chances of ***this*** kind of world happening by pure, blind, random chance are extremely remote. True, that this all happened by chance is ***possible***, but the fact is, in the situations of our daily living we would ***never accept*** chance as an explanation for realities far less complex than the world around us.

For instance, imagine you wake up one sunny morning. You look out the window only to discover there is a new BMW in your driveway. It actually has your name on the licence plate. Naturally, you begin to ask around to find out how the car got there? Who gave it to you?

Now, it is, I suppose, in some very remote mathematical percentage, ***possible*** that the car just ended up in your driveway ***all by itself***. Perhaps atoms and electrons just came together randomly. All the parts just landed in the right place. The molecules required for rubber formed tires. Those for glass formed windows. Those for metal formed the frame. And the engine came together with all the latest enhancements and advances - there’s a six speed automatic or manual transmission - it’s all turbo charged, etc.

But, while it may be technically ***possible*** in some remote sense for this to just happen, not many people would consider this the ***best*** explanation, nor the ***most likely***. The finer the design of the ***effect***, the greater the creativity and intelligence of the ***designer***.

Or suppose one of these exploration vehicles landing on Mars sent back some incredible pictures that none of us could have expected. Suppose we saw a large biosphere - a large, plexiglass-like structure. And suppose, through ultra sensitive measuring instruments, we were able to determine that the temperature was maintained at 25 degrees centigrade. The humidity was kept at about 55%. Then suppose we saw modern buildings, and a

mono-rail transportation system, with vehicles transporting cargo back and forth across the dome. And then there was a sprinkling system to produce growth for various plants and vegetation.

Would we draw the conclusion that all of this just happened by chance? Absolutely not. Of course, there would be no way from this distance to **prove** that it all hadn't happened by chance. But who among us would consider the chance explanation the very **best** explanation?

One could, I suppose, speculate that, at some point long ago, there was a huge volcanic eruption on Mars. Molten glass and metal and material simply spewed into the air and, over time, formed this incredibly complex biosphere. It's not absolutely impossible, but that scenario strikes most of us as highly unlikely.

In fact, physicist John Jefferson Davis, of Cambridge University, has pointed out that the chance of this kind of organized, life sustaining world just happening to form all on its own are about one in ten to the power of 60. Or, as he puts it, **"...in layman's terms this would be about comparable to firing a bullet at a one inch target on the far side of our visible universe, having the bullet travel the distance to the target 20 billion light years away, and hitting the dead center of the target."**

And all God's people said, **"Give me a lottery ticket!"**

3) **I BELIEVE GOD EXISTS BECAUSE WE FIND OURSELVES IN AN INESCAPABLY MORAL UNIVERSE**

This too is something one would not expect if the material universe was a product of time and random chance. And it is, to my mind, one of the strongest arguments for the existence of a personal, moral Creator.

Mankind is unique from the rest of creation in this one respect. He not only **acts**, he **judges** his actions. And he judges the actions of **others**. Every day, around the world, in multiplied billions of different situations, in every culture on earth, people make **judgments - moral** judgments.

We looked at this in last week's teaching. We not only judge **individuals**, we judge **whole cultures**, ruling out culture itself as being the **source** of our moral sense. This is obvious when we remember that we frequently make moral judgements **against** the opinion of the majority. **Martyrdom** still exists in this world.

This is the story of the whole of human existence. We often wrestle with what we **"ought"** to do in given situations. The point isn't that the right choice is always obvious. It isn't. Nor is the point that we always **do** what we know we ought. We don't. The important point is that we wrestle **at all**. We can't seem to **escape** this sense of moral **"oughtness."** We don't **invent it**, or **seek it out**. On the contrary, as one would expect if we are created by a moral God, moral struggles seem to **seek us out**. It's as though these moral realities were **already present** - waiting for us upon our arrival in this world.

Even when we make the **wrong** choice the sense that there was a moral judgment being made at some level is unavoidable.

The other important point is that this sense of moral **"oughtness"** is incredibly strong. We all know what we mean whenever we say, **"I ought to do so and so."** There is incredible power in that experience. We don't mean, **"It seems to be to my advantage to do so and so."** Nor do we mean, **"I think it simplest, or most convenient to do so and do."** We don't even mean, **"I prefer to do so and so."**

I know these things seem obvious, but we need to **think deeply** about them. Frequently what we know we **ought** to do is neither advantageous or pleasant, nor even simple. But there seems to be a law - a **moral magnet** - an ethical **imperative** churning deep inside our beings.

Where does this come from? It simply must be accounted for somehow. It makes up such a huge and dominant part of what we are and where we came from.

The Bible says it comes from being made in God's image. We don't just **act**. We **measure** and **judge** our actions, however faultily at times.

Actually, this last point brings us full circle to the text we looked at in the introduction of this message:

Psalm 14:1 - "The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good."

Notice, these fools are committed to "***abominable deeds.***" And the existence of God and the existence of moral laws are so tightly woven together that, if you're going to ignore morality, your only option is to explain God away as well.

That's why this fool has to "***play dumb***" toward God. This is why he must argue with his own heart. He can't afford to face the moral fingerprint of God in his own life. Unbelievers don't ***disbelieve***. They ***reject***.

Next week we're going to continue this same subject by considering why these types of arguments we're studying today, while they can promote deeper confidence in the Christian, will rarely turn the sinner to God. And we'll also look at the proofs, not only for the existence of ***a God, or a supreme Being***, but the God of the Scriptures and the Christian faith, who has spoken and revealed Himself finally in Jesus Christ.