

*Even matters which in Torah seem as fruitless as thorns,
are in reality of the highest significance.
—Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah, 1*

Six reasons why I believe in Jesus

If what Christianity teaches about Jesus is true, then it should make sense (as much as humans can understand) on every level. Whenever something is “right” it somehow fits and fills many needs and requirements at once, giving us reasons to believe no matter how we look at it. So what about Jesus? Is faith in him strictly a matter of an illogical “leap,” or are there many reasons to believe?

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. (Luke 24:45)

Consider...

1. God wants to be intimate with me; Jesus makes it possible.

“...God sometimes describes himself in human terms in the Torah in order to meet me on a level I can understand. ...the Lord knows I need a God I can relate to if he and I are to have a deep and loving relationship. ...such a relationship is impossible with the Master of the universe because the Creator is too huge to fill this empty heart I have.... But because Jesus is both God and man, I can feel completely connected with the Lord, which is something God clearly wants, if the Hebrew Scriptures are true.” (TGAM)

- ▶ In what ways can Jesus interact with us that God the Father cannot? (Hints: **Ex 33:19-20**, **Mt 17:7**,

- ✓ Unlike the Father, Jesus can be seen; he can be touched. In other words, he is a God we can draw close to, a God we can survive.

2. God has always interacted with creation through human beings.

“Prayer, sacrifice, and fasting prove that he has always operated in creation through human beings. Why should he not visit us personally in the same way?” (TGAM)

- ▶ Why does God want us to pray? Why does he use us to demonstrate His love through our actions? In other words, why does He choose to interact with creation through human beings? (See **Ge 1:27**, **Ge 2:15**, **1 Cor 12:27** and **John 16:7-11**)

- ✓ Because the fallen creation cannot survive direct contact with the perfectly holy Lord, and because the Lord wants His garden tended, we serve as Jesus’ “body,” God’s way of interacting with His creation without destroying it with His perfect holiness. The Holy Spirit through Jesus’ “body” (the church) is God on earth, just as Jesus is God who draws close without destroying (see **Ex 33:19-20** again, and remember Nadab and Abihu).

- ▶ How does Jesus’ earthly ministry fit in with your answer? (See **1 Tim 2:3-6**)

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- ✓ Jesus fits the pattern of God's interaction with the garden through human hands. Indeed, he is the ultimate expression of that pattern, and we are the mere reflection of it.

3. Jesus explains many confusing paradoxes.

"...the Paradox of Fertility, the Paradox of Blessing, the Paradox of Omnipresence, and the Paradox of the Red Heifer...God seems to thrive on paradox and can only be explained to the human mind through paradox. The Paradox of Jesus—that a man can be God and that the immortal God can die on my behalf—fits this pattern." (TGAM)

- ▶ What are the paradoxes mentioned above and their connections with Jesus? (For the paradox of Fertility: compare **Ge 17:17; 25:21; and 29:31** with **Luke 1:30-34**. For the paradox of the Blessing: compare **Ge 15:5-6; 18:17-18; Dt 7:7-9** with **Ro 11 Mt 28:19-20**. For the paradox of Omnipresence, compare **Ex 25:8** and **1 Ki 8:27** with **John 2: 18-19**. For the paradox of the Red Heifer, see the handout from Lesson 8)

- ✓ Paradox of Fertility. God established his chosen people through Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel who were all barren yet gave birth miraculously. Jesus was born of a virgin.
- ✓ Paradox of the Blessing. Abraham was promised descendants beyond counting, yet there have never been many Jews on earth. Then through Jesus, God brought the gentiles into communion with him, and Jesus is a descendant of Abraham, thus the countless number of Christians are all descendants of Abraham.
- ✓ Paradox of Omnipresence. God longs to "dwell among" us, yet His glory and holiness means we cannot survive close contact with Him. Jesus makes this possible.
- ✓ Paradox of the Red Heifer. The one sacrifice made away from the altar, outside the camp, by those who are unclean, to make them clean. All of this is the opposite of every other sacrifice in the Torah. All of it is a perfect symbol of Jesus' Passion.

4. Jesus cannot be fully understood.

"...if Jesus' man/God nature or the Trinity were completely understandable, I would abandon Christianity precisely because...all true explanations of God's nature must openly include paradoxical concepts my mind cannot grasp." (TGAM)

- ▶ If we cannot understand Jesus completely, why did He try so hard to explain Himself in the Bible with parables, similes and metaphors? (Hints: **John 3:16** and **8:31-32**)
 - ✓ Everything God teaches us is for our sake. Jesus explains himself because in doing so, he explains the Truth—how things really are—and in believing him, we can love Him back wholeheartedly, which is our highest and best possible state of existence.
 - Jesus says "I am telling you the truth" 30 times in Matthew.

- The Greek word for “truth” is *ameen*, from which we get “amen” in English.
- Jesus says, “Truly, truly” 25 times in John.

5. Jesus makes sense of grace.

“...Jesus is the only founder of a worldwide religion who claimed to be God. I believe in Jesus because he makes sense of grace. Since it is impossible for me to climb to heaven, heaven came down—in Jesus—and carried me up.”
(TGAM)

- ▶ God wants to bridge the gap between us, but in our pride, His grace is often refused. We pretend we do not need God, or we are too far gone for even God to reach this low; both of these are pride. In his *Autobiography*, Benjamin Franklin had this to say about pride: “For even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility.” How does this relate to the cross? (Hint: see **Luke 18:9-14**)
 - ✓ Since I cannot “work my way into heaven,” and yet God does want intimacy with me, it makes sense that God would find a way to do the work on my behalf (give grace), which is just what Jesus did.
 - ✓ I cannot benefit from Jesus’ work on my behalf unless I am prepared to accept it, and I cannot accept it unless I admit I need it, and I cannot admit I need it without humbling myself before the Lord. (This is the point of Jesus’ story about the Pharisee and the tax collector.)
 - ✓ Yet from the depth of my need (my sinfulness) it hard to be humble, so in Jesus, God led the way. The Creator of the universe was placed in a feed trough stained by the drool of farm animals. He lived the poorest of lives as a member of a universally despised people, and was stripped naked in front of strangers to die a criminal’s death. God not only humbled himself, He was humiliated. Jesus not only did the work of grace, he showed me how to accept it with utter humility.

6. Jesus makes sense of justice.

“Justice is balance. If Adam was spiritually perfect before his first sin condemned him to death, only a second flawless Adam rising up from death can restore the balance of the Garden. But I cannot pay that price because I cannot be blameless before the Lord, so Jesus became my surrogate, my substitute perfection on the scales of justice, providing the perfect life for perfect life that perfect justice requires.” (TGAM)

- ▶ Thirst proves the existence of water; hunger proves the existence of food, and loneliness proves that love exists. When someone steals something of yours, what do you long for? How common is this reaction? What do your answers prove concerning justice?
 - ✓ I long to have the thing replaced, and the thief punished. In other words, I long for justice.
 - ✓ This is a universal instinct, that spans all religions, cultures, races and nationalities.

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- ✓ Just as my longing for love, sex, food, air and water proves the existence of those things, so the universal human longing for justice proves it is a natural requirement of life (a law of nature).
- ▶ When a thief is caught, our legal system calls for both compensation and punishment. Why not stop at compensation? How does your answer relate to the cross?
 - ✓ It takes both the replacement and the punishment to re-establish balance, because I not only lost the thing stolen, but I suffered as a result. Both the loss and the suffering must counter-balanced. This explains not only Jesus' death, but the manner of his death.

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