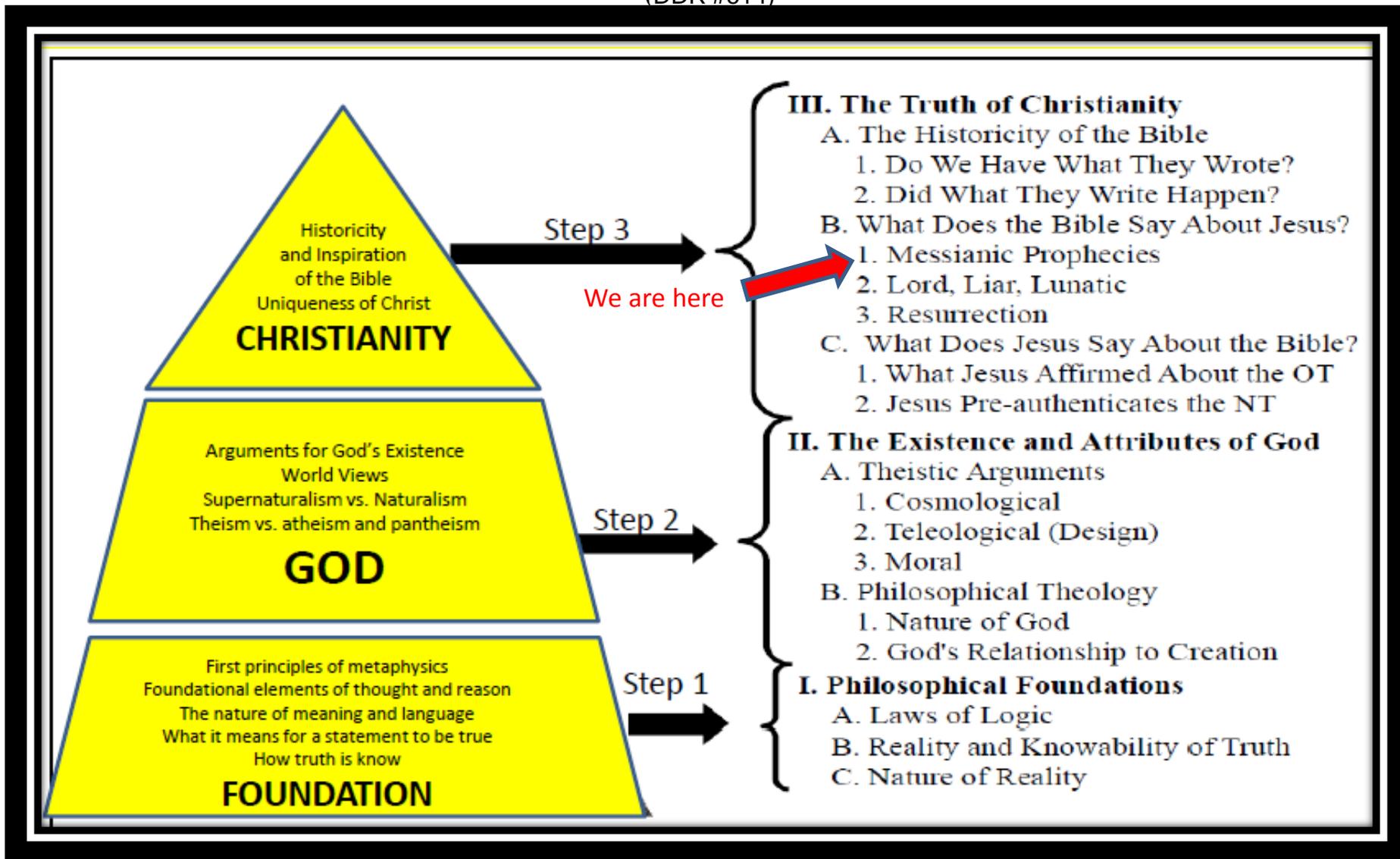


APOLOGETICS 65

What Does the Bible Say About Jesus? Messianic Prophecies (DDR #614)



A Word about the JAMA article in the last DDR

In the last DDR, I included a JAMA article on the medical aspects of the physical sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. It provided powerful insight into the human suffering and condition of Christ up to His death. The only thing I would object to is the claim that He died from a physical cause---ruptured heart. The fact is that He died because His work was finished. He gave up His spirit and soul after bearing the sins of the world,

John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit.

The point of the article was not to establish the precise cause of the physical *death* of Jesus Christ. The point was to make it clear that under such physical suffering, there is no way (as per some of the alternate theories of the resurrection) that Jesus survived the Cross in any condition to convince the disciples of His brand new resurrection body and thus His lordship. Of course there is also the benefit of appreciating how much physical pain He went through for us to get to the Cross and while on the Cross, where He paid the full penalty for all of our sins---every single one, past, present, and future!

What Does the Bible say about Jesus? Predictive Prophecies

The Logic of the Argument:

1. A miracle is an act of God that confirms the truth of God associated with it.
2. The miracles associated with Christ's claim to be God are acts of God that confirm Him to be the Son of God.
3. In Jesus' case there is a convergence of three great miraculous happenings:
 - a. Prophecy --- this is the focus of this DDR
 - b. Sinless life
 - c. Miraculous deeds

Two Categories of Prophecy:

1. There are prophecies in the OT that are applied to Christ in the NT that were not necessarily understood in its OT context as a prediction. Some prophecies were spoken in connection with other individuals who failed to be the Messiah whereas Christ fulfilled those prophetic descriptions. My plans are to do an entire Jewish apologetic series on these prophecies in the future.
2. On the other hand, there are many OT prophecies that are best understood as applying to the Messiah; and they simply do not make good sense any other way. In this latter category I will single out the most significant predictive prophecies which Christ fulfilled.

Predictive Prophecies of Christ

1. The Messiah will be born of a woman, Gen 3:15; Gal 4:4.
2. He would be born of a virgin, Isa. 7:14; Mat 1:21.
3. He would come some 483 years after 444 B.C., Dan 9:24f.
4. He will be of the seed of Abraham, Gen 12:1-3; 22:18; Mat 1:1; Gal 3:16.
5. He will be of the tribe of Judah, Gen 49:10; Luke 3:23, 33; Heb 7:14.
6. He will be of the House of David, 2 Sam 7:12 f.; Mat 1:1.
7. His birthplace will be Bethlehem, Micah 5:2; Mat 2:1; Luke 2:4-7.
8. He will be anointed by the Holy Spirit, Isa 11:2; Mat 3:16-17.
9. He will be heralded by a messenger of the Lord, Isa 40:3; Mal 3:1; Mat 3:1-2.
10. He will have a ministry of miracles, Isa 35:5-6; Mat 9:35.
11. He will cleanse the Temple, Mal 3:1; Mat 21:12.
12. He will be rejected by His Jewish people, Psa 118:22; 1 Pt 2:7.
13. He will die a humiliating death, Isa 53; Mat 27---involving
 - a. Rejection by his own people, Isa 53:3; Jn 1:10-11; 7:5, 48.
 - b. Silence before His accusers, Isa 53:7; Mt 27:12-19.
 - c. Being mocked, Ps 22:7-8; Mt 27:31.
 - d. Piercing His hands and feet, Psa 22:16; Luke 23:33.
 - e. Being crucified with thieves, Isa 53:12; Mt 17:38
 - f. Praying for His persecutors, Isa 53:12; Luke 23:34
 - g. Piercing of His side, Zech 12:10; Jn 19:34.
 - h. Buried in a rich man's tomb, Isa 53:9; Mt 27:57-60
 - i. Casting lots for His garments, Psa 22:18; Jn 19:23-24
14. He will rise from the dead, Psa 2:7; 16:10; Acts 2:23; Mk 16:6.
15. He will ascend to Heaven, Psa 68:18; Acts 1:9 f.
16. He will sit at the right hand of God, Psa 110:1; Heb 1:3

N.B. There are a vast number of other prophecies about the Messiah that were indeed fulfilled by Jesus but not all of them are clearly predictive---these are not part of the argument here.

The Old Testament Prophecies Were Made Hundreds of Years in Advance

1. There is no way they could be made by “intelligent guesses” or by reading the “trend of the times” or even by “reading minds,” methods used by some present-day forecasters.
2. These prophecies were actually fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. We have noted that the NT is a historical reliable account of Jesus life, and it records these predictions, which were made hundreds of years before, as being fulfilled in Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and so forth.
3. The fact that events in the life of Jesus correspond to these predictions does not automatically prove He is the fulfillment---there are two other possibilities.
 - a. Jesus may have deliberately attempted to fake “fulfillment” of them.
 - b. They may be merely an accidental concurrence of events in Jesus’ life.

Answering the Charge that Jesus was a Pretender who Deliberately Attempted to Fulfill Prophecy

1. This hypothesis was made popular by Schonfield's *the Passover Plot*.
2. This does not fit the known character of Christ. He was anything but cunning and deceptive; He was open and honest. This would make Christ a major liar and not even a good man.
3. The alleged plot to prove Christ was the Messiah does not fit with the facts known about Jesus' closest disciples. How was it that Jesus could hide from his most intimate friends this intricate plot while allegedly confiding in the young man, Lazarus, and Joseph of Arimathea? It is implausible that Jesus would pick these men for such a plot to feign death by drugs and pretend to rise again. And the honest character of His disciples is incongruous with the inclusion of them in the alleged plot.
4. Even if Jesus could have cleverly connived this plan concealed from his closest disciples, how then can we explain his sinless and miraculous life?
5. The messianic-pretender hypothesis is rendered implausible by the nature of many of the prophecies themselves. There were many prophecies over which Jesus had absolutely no control, including when (Dan 9), where (Mic. 5:2), how (Isa 7:14), and from what tribe (Gen 49:10); or dynasty (2 Sam 7) He would be born. Nor is it plausible to suppose that Jesus could have staged or manipulated the reactions of others to himself, including John's heralding (Mat 3), his accuser's reactions (Mt 27:12); how the soldiers would cast lots for His garments (Jn 19:23-24), and how they would pierce His side with a spear (John 19:34). It takes an even bigger miracle to believe that Jesus possessed superhuman manipulative powers to bring about the apparent fulfillment of OT predictions about the Messiah in His life.

Answering the Charge that Prophecies of the Messiah Were Accidentally “Fulfilled” in Christ

1. In a theistic universe (which of course orthodox Jews accept), God is in control of the course of events and where God makes predictions hundreds of years in advance about His plan of salvation for the world, an accidental “fulfillment” will not happen. It is virtually inconceivable that God would allow either a total deception in His name or an accidental “fulfillment” in the life of the wrong person. An all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-perfect God will not allow anything to thwart His plans. Predictions made hundreds of years in advance in the name of the true and living theistic God cannot fail and will not be accidentally fulfilled by another. On the already established grounds that God exists, the chance of fulfillment hypothesis is ruled out.
2. The mathematical odds that these were accidentally “fulfilled” are staggering. Mathematicians have computed the chances for only 16 prophecies about Christ to come true in Jesus’ life are 10^{45} . For 48 prophecies the chances are an even more amazing 1 in 10^{157} . It is almost impossible to conceive how large a figure this really is (see next slide).
3. If in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, who claimed fulfillment of these predictions about the Messiah made hundreds of years before, there came to pass all that had been prophesied of Him, then we must conclude that He indeed is the Messiah. In short, if Jesus fulfilled the prophecies about the coming Messiah, this fulfillment must be an act of God showing Him to be the Son of God.

Illustrating the Probabilities of Christ's "Fulfillment" as Accidental

In the previous slide, I used numbers like 10^{45} and 10^{157} for chances of accidental fulfillment of prophecy by Christ. These are inconceivable numbers. Although I think God's sovereignty in not allowing anyone else to fulfill His prophecies is a stronger argument, I would like to illustrate how large these numbers are. Instead of 10^{45} and 10^{157} let's just take 10^{17} (= fulfillment of only 8 prophecies). The following illustration is by Professor Stoner in *Science Speaks* (74/106-112):

If we took 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have of writing eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom.

Now these prophecies were either given by inspiration of God or the prophets just wrote them as they thought they should be. In such a case the prophets has just one chance in 10^{17} of having them come true in any man, but they all came true in Christ.

This means that the fulfillment of these eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of those prophecies to a definiteness which lacks only one chance in 10^{17} of being absolute.