

Our Cultural Moment

SESSION 2 – April 24, 2023 – Pastor John Bellis

REMINDER: WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

- **Discipleship** – 1 Peter 3:15 – “always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you”
- **Equipping** – Ephesians 4:12 – “equipping the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”
- **Evangelism** – Matthew 28:19-20 – “go therefore and make disciples...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”

12 POINTS THAT SHOW CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

1. Truth about Reality is Knowable
2. Opposites Cannot Both be True
3. The Theistic God Exists
- 4. Miracles are Possible**
- 5. Miracles Can Be Used to Confirm a Message from God**
6. The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable (5.1.23)
7. In the New Testament Documents, Jesus Claimed to be God (5.1.23)
8. Jesus' Claim to be God was Confirmed by a Unique Set of Miracles (5.1.23)
9. Jesus was Supernaturally Confirmed to be God in Human Flesh (5.8.23)
10. Whatever Jesus affirmed is True, is True (5.8.23)
11. Jesus Affirmed the Bible is the Word of God (5.15.23)
12. The Bible is the Word of God and Anything Opposed to it is False (5.15.23)

REVIEWING SESSION 1 – HIGHLIGHTS

Point 1 – Truth about Reality is Knowable

- Truth corresponds to reality
- Falsehood, therefore, does not correspond to reality

Point 2 – Opposites cannot both be true

- Law of Non-Contradiction
- Law of Identity
- Law of Excluded Middle

Point 3 – The Theistic God Exists

- All that follows this point depends on the reality of a Theistic God
- If theism is true, Christianity can be true
- If theism is false, Christianity cannot be true
- If a theistic God exists, all non-theistic religions are false
- The Moral Argument, revealing a morally perfect God
- The Religious Need Argument

POINT 4 – MIRACLES ARE POSSIBLE

If a theistic God exists, then miracles are possible. Why?

- Because the biggest miracle already occurred

All that Glitters is not Gold - Not everything that is unusual is supernatural

- 1) Anomaly – an unusual event with an unknown or poorly understood natural cause
- 2) Psychosomatic event – unusual event with a known mental cause
- 3) Providential occurrence – unusually beneficial event from a known natural cause
- 4) Magic trick – unusual event but a natural cause that tricks the eyes or mind or both
- 5) Satanic signs – not miracles

True Miracles (Supernatural Cause) have God's Fingerprints

- 1) Creating Life
- 2) Raising the Dead
- 3) Instantaneous production

5 Characteristics of Miracles

- 1) Wonder
- 2) Theological dimension
- 3) Moral dimension
- 4) Doctrinal dimension
- 5) Teleological dimension

The Possibility of Miracles within the laws of nature

- Many of Jesus' miracles were just doing instantaneously what normally happens gradually

David Hume (18th century skeptic & naturalist) / Response

- First form of reasons (against the possibility)
- Second form of reasons (against the credibility)

Scientific Objection to Miracles / Response

- Anything that occurs in the natural world is subject to natural scrutiny
 - Methodological naturalism: a miracle is in violation of the scientific procedure
 - Metaphysical naturalism: simply denies miracles by nature

Historical Objection to Miracles / Response

- One Objection: The past can only be known in terms of the present, thus, since no miracles occur in the present, no basis for suggesting any in the past (principle of analogy)
- Another Objection: critical history is dependent on using the past as evidence to reconstruct history in order to know it, and current knowledge of the possible and probable must be criteria in knowing the past

Conclusion

- If God exists – a theistic God – then miracles are possible
- A God who created the world from nothing cannot be “barred” from the world He made
- A God who made life from non-life can surely bring life back into a dead corpse
- Miracles can happen, biggest one already did in creation

“Miracles are retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see.” CS Lewis

POINT 5 – MIRACLES CAN BE USED TO CONFIRM A MESSAGE FROM GOD

- A miracle performed in connection with a truth claim, confirms the truth of God through a messenger of God
- Important to prove this point, to next show that the New Testament documents are historically reliable (Point 6)
- Which leads us to Jesus’ truth claim that He is God (Point 7) and that His divinity is confirmed by a unique convergence of miracles (Point 8) – so then we can conclude that Jesus was indeed God in the human flesh (Point 9). This sets up (Point 10), that whatever Jesus (who is God) affirmed as true is true, and that He affirmed that the Bible is the Word of God (Point 11) and conclude that the Bible is the Word of God (Point 12).

Primary Purpose of Miracles

- Reasonable assumption: personal God makes persons in His image
- Personal God wants to communicate with them
- Method of communication = Miracles
- The 3 greatest Theistic religions all agree (Judaism, Christianity, Islam)

Purpose of Miracles in Judaism

- Exodus 4:1-9 (V5 & V8-9)
- Numbers 16:5, 28-33 (V5 & V28-30)
- 1 Kings 18:36-37

Purpose of Miracles in Christianity

- John 3:2
- Mark 2:10-11
- Luke 7:18-22
- Acts 2:22
- Hebrews 2:2-3
- 2 Corinthians 12:12
- John 20:30-31

Purpose of Miracles in Islam

- Muhammad was aware that God confirmed prophets of old by miracles
- Muhammad recognized that God gave Jesus special power

Logical Connections – Miracles & Divine Confirmations

- If a Theistic God exists, miracles are possible
- A miracle is a special act of a theistic God
- A theistic God is all-knowing
- A theistic God is a morally perfect Being
- An all-knowing, all perfect God cannot err or deceive
- A theistic God would not act to confirm something as true that was false
- True miracles in connection with a message confirm that message to be from God

Criteria for Miraculous Confirmation

- Events must be immediately supernatural (Matthew 8:3, Matthew 8:13, Acts 3:7)
- There must be multiple miracles (Acts 1:3, Acts 28)
- Must be connected with a truth claim
- Must have a predictive element

WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT?

- Miracles confirm the Bible is the Word of God
- Without miracles, Jesus would not be the Son of God
- Without miracles, Jesus did not raise from the dead (1 Cor. 15:13-14, 17, 19, Rom. 10:9)
- Without miracles, we have no salvation
- If miracles are not credible, then neither are Jesus' claims
- All of Christianity is based on miracles