

Session 12: Does The Bible Predict The Future?

(1). The Black Swan Theory:

In his bestselling book, *The Black Swan*, writer, Nassim Taleb, penned a ground-breaking _____.

Engrossingly authored, the volume chronicles the unexpected impact of highly _____ events.

The book opens with a brief summary of the theory, describing the first ever sighting of a black swan, noting that prior to it's detection, no one could have _____ that such an animal existed.

- “The sighting of the first black swan...illustrates a severe limitation to our...knowledge. One single observation can invalidate a general statement derived from...millions of white swans.”
- “[Our] inability to predict [a Black Swan] implies [our] inability to predict the course of history.”

But is Taleb's chance view of history _____?

Or, might we discover other hidden explanations to account for the strange appearances of these kinds of unexpected occurrences?

In the eyes of most skeptics, the question is already _____: There is no ultimate direction to which any single historical event aspires.

In the eyes of most Christians, however, Taleb is simply mistaken: the game is fixed, the outcome rigged, the end—already determined.

So then how do we go about deciding who is right?

Is Taleb's thesis really the only sensible option?

Or, to borrow his own words, could a “single observation” rather serve to invalidate his own supremely winsome thinking?

Normally atheists hold that Christian beliefs, such as Divine providence, depend too naively upon ideas which cannot themselves be _____.

But could the opposite in this case be more accurate—that a provident God has somehow _____ human history?

(2). The Black Swan Fallacy:

In the inside dust jacket of the volume, the best-selling author defines the Black Swan Theory as follows:

“A Black Swan is a highly improbable event with three principle characteristics:

- It is unpredictable;
- it carries a massive impact; and
- after the fact we concoct an explanation that makes it appear less random...”

Due therefore entirely to his own highly suspicious wording, Taleb’s favored theory is made _____ to question or test.

For the moment we offer God as an alternative to “the random,” we have already, in a sense, proven that Taleb is right.

This is a bit like my claiming that watermelons are really blue on the inside until the precise moment that you cut the skin.

Simply put, such a theory is untestable (and thus unfalsifiable). For the very same reason—neither can it be _____.

Hence, the only sure way to know if Bible prophecies are truly indeterminate is to simply question point blank: _____?

Provided we discover any narrow predictions are scarce, then Bible prophecy could be soundly labeled as nonsense.

As it turns out, however, the opposite appears to be true: Extremely _____ predictions appear which bring such arguments to task.

(3). Case Study: Daniel 2:

The ancient and mysterious biblical book of “Daniel” carries a startling prediction—one which, if true would have a devastating impact on Taleb’s theory.

The text records the intriguing story which opens with a troubled king sweating in his bed. As he tosses and turns, his dreams deeply disturb him, causing his mind to be filled with unrest.

Accordingly, the story tells us that the king became greatly frightened. The text reads:

“...his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him.” (Dan 2:2)

The king therefore commanded that his royal astrologers be summoned in order that they might come and interpret to him his dreams. The king demanded:

“if you do not make the dream known to me and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb and your houses shall be laid in ruins. But if you show me the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards and great honor.” (Dan 2:5-6)

At this, the astrologers were brought to utter _____.

None in fact were able to show to the king his dreams. For he had enjoined unto them the impossible task of perfectly reciting the dream apart from his first-hand telling of it.

No one was therefore courageous enough to venture a guess. (Would you?)

For how could anyone know for certain what the king had dreamed?

Only one man, in fact, dared to offer an explanation. His answer, if authentic, proves that history is divinely _____.

(4). The King’s Dream:

The young Jewish Lad (Daniel), quietly entered the story. He confidently declared,

“To you O king...came thoughts of what would be after this and he who reveals mysteries has made known to you what [will be].” (Dan 2:29; ESV)

The boy then went on to show the exact details of the dream along with their clear and *un-ambiguous* meaning.

“Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a...statue...” (Dan 3:31; NIV)

The young boy accurately described its brazen human form.

The sculpture was an effigy of the history of western civilization, spanning from the time of Babylon clear to Jesus’ day.

The head was made of gold, and the chest and arms of silver, while the torso was molded from a single slab of bronze.

Finally, the legs were fashioned from a piece of hefty iron with feet that formed a mixture of iron and clay.

“While you were watching a rock was cut....[and it] struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay...” (Dan 2:34; NIV)

Instantly, the idol burst into powder and a curious wind blew the remaining fragments away.

Yet the stone that remained, which had been cast by God, became a great and mighty mountain, filling the whole earth.

To this day, the predictive character of the dream is so undeniable, even secular historians have wondered at it’s powerfully accurate _____.

(5). The Dream Interpreted:

According to the text, the statue was a symbol, featuring four successive kingdoms which would rule over the _____.

The first kingdom, Babylon, was symbolized by _____, and spoke of the tremendous wealth of her lauded capital city.

Explorer and historian, Francis H. Buzzacott, described it as a “...golden kingdom of a golden age.”

The statement doubtless spoke of Nebuchadnezzar's taking of Jerusalem—a move which brought Babylon unparalleled _____.

Next came the age of the medo-persian empire, symbolized by the pair of _____ arms.

Silver was the sign of this kingdom's power, which was founded on its system of universal taxation.

Darius the Great, the kingdom's third ruler, introduced the system of coinage, increasing her strength.

It was then that the "Daric" emerged as its primary _____ tender, a silver coin which became the source of Persia's notable fame.

Following the fall of Persia, the Greek empire arose, lead by military genius, _____.

The kingdom of Greece was symbolized in the text by _____ which denoted her dauntless soldierly strength.

According to period experts, her troops were clad with breastplates of _____, helmets of _____, and shields and swords of _____.

By these historically unique weapons, Greece gained power, and _____ Bible prophecy, ensuing the third age.

Last of all, the mighty _____ empire arose, inaugurating the fourth and final phase.

Noted secular historian, Edward Gibbon, made this remarkable mention of Rome's iron power:

"The arms of the republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with paid steps to the Euphrates...and the images of gold, or silver or [bronze], that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the Iron Monarchy of Rome." (Edward Gibbon)

Rome thus fulfilled Bible prophecy for the _____ time with weapons of iron which fueled her bloody campaigns.

The short _____ gladius, Rome's saber of choice, was attended by a breastplate, forged from the same.

Hence, the case for Biblical prophecy powerfully confronts Taleb's views and lays before the skeptic a formidable point: Random universe models, such as the Black Swan Theory, simply cannot account for what the Bible prophetically claims.

(6). Summary Argument:

P1: If the Bible makes genuine prophetic predictions, _____.

P2: The Bible _____ makes genuine prophetic predictions.

C: Therefore, God _____.