

Apologetics-Defending the Faith

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What About the Supernatural?

The objective of this session is to address the questions concerning the three major teachings concerning _____ beings, _____ beings, and _____.

The Question of Heavenly Beings:

What Does the Bible Teach About Angels?

The Bible has much to say concerning angels. The New Testament speaks of angels more than *165* times; the Old Testament more than *100* times. We call the study of such a discipline, *angelology*. The study of angelology gives us God's perspective on angels. It is a study of how the angels relate to humanity and serve God's purposes. A key verse on angelology is Hebrews 1:14: "*Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*"

Angels are called "ministering spirits." They are spirit servants who render aid to the heirs of salvation in the outworking of God's purposes on earth. The holy angels live in heaven (Is. 6:1-6; Dan. 7:10; Heb 12:22). When they are assigned a task by God, they leave heaven, complete their work on earth, and then return to heaven. Their service takes many forms, including being used by God in:

- answering believers' prayers (Acts 12:7)
- bringing announcements and warnings to God's people (Luke 1:13; Acts 10:3-33)
- giving encouragement (Acts 27:23-24)
- providing protection (Psalm 91:11)
- giving guidance (Gen. 19:17)
- providing deliverance (Acts 12:7)
- caring for believers at the moment of death (Luke 16:22)
- providing aid in winning people to Christ (Acts 8:26; 10:3)
- serving as instruments of God's judgments (Revelation 7:1; 8:2)

Angels are entirely a different order of being from humans. God created angels, just as He created humanity. However, angels were created _____ to God's creation of the earth (Job 38:7; Psalm 148:2-5). Though created, angels are _____, and never cease to exist (Luke 20:36). While angels are *personal* beings, with minds (2 Sam 14:20; 1 Peter 1:12), emotions (Luke 2:13; Heb. 12:22), and wills (Rev. 22:8-9), they are also _____ beings. Angels are not "everywhere present" like God. They have to move from one place to another (Dan. 9:21-23). Because they are created beings, their knowledge is also limited. This means they do not know all things as God does (Matthew 24:36). Angels are _____ (*without true physical bodies*). Although they do not have physical bodies, they are still _____. Angels are also _____, which means we are generally *unaware* of their activities around us (2 Kings 6:17). Nevertheless, angels can take on _____ appearance when their assigned task calls for it (Genesis 18:1-8; Heb. 13:2).

The Bible nowhere states that angels are created in the *image* and *likeness* of God, as humans are (Genesis 1:26). Angels are spiritual beings that can, to a certain degree, take on physical form. Humans are primarily physical beings, but with a spiritual aspect. The greatest thing we can learn from the holy angels is their instant, unquestioning _____ to God's commands. Though they have wills, angels, like all creatures, are subject to the will of God.

The Question of Evil Spiritual Beings:

Can We Still Believe in Demons Today?

What is Christian Demonology?

Many modern scholars regard belief in demons as a primitive worldview. However, skepticism about the existence of angels and demons is at odds with the direct and explicit testimony of Scripture. From Genesis to Revelation, the pages of Scripture are filled with references to evil supernatural beings who *opposed* God and His purposes. It is also interesting to note that their _____ of appearance both *heightened* and *intensified* during the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles.

Demonology is the study of demons whereas, Christian demonology is the study of *what the Bible teaches* about demons. Closely related to angelology, Christian demonology teaches us about the demons, what they are, and how they attack us. Satan and his demons are true and real personal beings who wage spiritual warfare against *God, the holy angels, and humanity*. Christian Demonology helps us to be aware of Satan, his followers, and their evil schemes. It also helps us to understand the nature of our *spiritual enemy* and how to resist and overcome the *devil* and his temptations. A key Scripture related to Christian demonology is 2 Corinthians 11:14-15:

"And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve."

The Origin of Demons

When exactly God created angels is open for debate, but what is known for sure is that God created everything good because God, in His holiness, cannot create anything *sinful*. While some of the angels created by God remained *loyal* to Him; others did not. An angel *rebellion* headed by the evil one, arose against God. Apparently the evil one became so impressed with himself that he wanted to take God's place. He came to be referred to as *Satan*, meaning "_____." Satan being cast from heaven is symbolically described in Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:11-19. Revelation 12:4 seems to indicate that Satan took _____ of the angels with him when he sinned. Jude 6 also mentions angels who sinned. Revelation 12:9 is the *clearest* scripture on the *identity* of demons;

"The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him."

Thus, the Bible indicates that the demons are _____ angels who, along with Satan, rebelled against God (2 Peter 2:4). Consider how Satan and his demonic host are described:

- Satan and his demons look to destroy and deceive all those who follow and worship God (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)
- Satan and his demons deceive the world (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- Satan and his demons attack Christians (1 Peter 5:8)
- Satan and his demons combat the holy angels (Revelation 12:4-9)
- Demons are described as evil spirits (Matthew 10:1)
- Demons are described as unclean spirits (Mark 1:27)
- Demons are described as angels of Satan (Revelation 12:9)
- Demons are spiritual beings, but can appear in physical forms (Second Corinthians 11:14-15)
- Demons (fallen angels) are enemies of God, but they are defeated enemies (Rev 12:9)

Can a Christian Be Demon-Possessed?

While the Bible does not *explicitly* state whether a Christian can be possessed by a demon, related biblical truths make it abundantly clear that Christians _____ be demon-possessed. There is a distinct difference between being *possessed* by a demon and being _____ or *influenced* by a demon. Demon possession involves a demon having direct/complete _____ over the thoughts and/or actions of a person (Matt. 17:14-18; Luke 4:33-35; 8:27-33). Demon oppression or influence involves a demon or demons _____ a person spiritually and/or encouraging him/her into sinful behavior. Notice that in all the New Testament passages dealing with spiritual warfare, there are *no instructions* on how to cast a demon out of a *believer* (Eph. 6:10-18). Believers are told to _____ the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9), not to cast him out!

Christians are *indwelt* by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). It would be _____ for the Holy Spirit to allow a demon to possess the same person He is indwelling. Believers wage war with Satan and his demons, but not from within *themselves*.

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Who is the One in us? *The Holy Spirit!* Who is the one in the world? *Satan and his demons!* Therefore, the believer has overcome the world of demons, and the case for demon possession of a believer *cannot* be made scripturally.

Can a Christian Be Demon-Oppressed?

Because there is strong biblical evidence that a Christian cannot be demon possessed, the question then arises regarding what *influence/power* a demon can have over a Christian. Many Bible teachers describe demonic influence on a Christian as “demonic oppression,” making it clear that a Christian cannot be “possessed,” but can be “oppressed.” So, the question becomes “To what _____ can a Christian be oppressed by demons?”

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that the devil seeks to *devour* believers (1 Peter 5:8), and that Satan and his demons, “scheme” against Christians (Ephesians 6:11). As Satan did to Jesus (Luke 4:2), the demonic forces tempt us to sin and oppose our efforts to obey and serve God. Should a Christian allow the demons to succeed in these attacks, oppression results. Demonic oppression is when a demon is _____ victorious over a Christian, successful in tempting a Christian to sin, and able to hinder a Christian’s ability to serve God with a strong testimony. If a Christian continues to allow demonic oppression in his/her life, the oppression can increase to the point that the demonic has a very strong influence on the Christian’s *thoughts, behavior, and spirituality*. Christians who allow *continuing sin* to fill their lives open themselves up for *greater and greater* oppression. However, the Apostle John gives us great encouragement in this area:

“We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him” (1 John 5:18).

For the Christian, the *power* for victory over and freedom from demonic oppression is always available. _____ and _____ of known sin is necessary to restore fellowship with God who can then break the power of demonic influence. The power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9; 1 John 4:4) is always available to overcome demonic oppression. No demon, not even Satan himself, can prevent a Christian from surrendering to the Holy Spirit and thereby overcoming any and all demonic oppression.

In fact, Peter went on to encourage believers to resist the devil, “standing firm in your faith” (1 Peter 5:9). Standing firm or *steadfast* in the faith means *relying* on God, and the power of the Holy Spirit, to successfully resist demonic influence. Faith is built up through the spiritual disciplines of feeding on the *Word of God*, persistent *prayer*, and godly *fellowship* with others who can encourage and pray for us. Strengthening our faith by these means enables us to put up the *shield of faith* with which we can “*extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one*” (Ephesians 6:16). C.S. Lewis stated that we can err in two (2) ways as regards the devil.

“*We can fail to take account of him, or we can give him too much attention.*”

The Question of Signs & Wonders:

What Does the Bible Teach About Miracles?

Definition of a Miracle:

God’s *unique, purposeful, special intervention* into the natural process to accomplish His will.

Miracles are essential to the *historic* Christian faith. In order to grasp the significance of miracles, one must understand the _____ of the miracle, the _____ of the miracle, and the _____ behind the miracle.

- Power: To give God _____ for being the _____ of the miracle (Mark. 2:10-11; John 11:39-40; Acts 3:12, 16)
- Purpose: To _____ the _____ of the miracle worker (Mark 2:8-9; John 11:41-42; Acts 3:6-7)
- Personality: To display God’s _____ as being loving and benevolent (Mark 2:5; John 11:43-44; Acts 3:17-19, 25-26)

When a miracle is done outside of God’s will:

- 1) The God of the Bible is _____ and a false gospel is proclaimed (2 Thess. 2:9-10)
- 2) The purposes are not benevolent, but _____ - _____ (Acts 8:18-23)
- 3) God responds by demonstrating that His power is _____ (Ex. 7:10-12)

Thus, when we see signs and wonders in the Bible performed by those who deny the God proclaimed by the Bible, we may characterize them as _____ miracles. They are false not in the sense that they are not miraculous, but in the sense that they reveal *blasphemy* and promote unbelief through *deceit* as to the nature of their power.

Should Biblical Miracles Be Taken Literally?

Miracles of the Bible are to be taken *literally*, just as all Scripture is to be taken literally except those portions which are clearly intended to be _____ (Psalm 17:8). However, miracles themselves are not symbolic happenings; they are *real events that actually happened!* Each of the miracles in the Bible served a purpose and accomplished something that could not be accomplished in any other way. The earliest and most profound miracle of all was that of _____. God created everything *ex nihilo*—from nothing—and each succeeding miracle reinforced His incredible power. The book of _____ is filled with miraculous events God used to bring about His will. God continued to do miracles throughout the Old Testament to remind the stubborn Israelites that *He alone* is God and *He alone* deserves worship. In the New Testament, Jesus performed numerous miracles beginning with His first one at the wedding in Cana where He turned *water into wine* (John 2:1-10). His most spectacular miracle was the *raising of Lazarus* after he had been dead four (4) days (John 11). All the miracles He did were to *prove* that He was indeed who He said He was—*the Son of God*.

If the miracles of the Scripture did not occur, then how can we trust anything the Bible tells us, especially when it tells us eternal life is available through Christ? Once we begin to *question* the reality of any miracle, we have to discount everything the Bible says came about as a result of the miracle, which puts all of Scripture *in doubt*. When we begin to call any part of Scripture into doubt, all of God's marvelous plan is *suspect*, and we open the door for the *lies* and *distortions* which are Satan's plan to destroy our faith (1 Peter 5:8).

God performed countless miracles, yet the *vast majority* of people did not believe in Him. When God performed amazing and powerful miracles for the Israelites, did that cause them to obey Him? No, they constantly disobeyed and rebelled against God even though they saw all the miracles.

The same people who saw God part the *Red Sea* later doubted whether God was able to conquer the inhabitants of the *Promised Land*. If God performed miracles today as He did in the past, the result would be the same. People would be amazed and would believe in God for a *short time*. A faith based on miracles is not a mature faith. That faith is *shallow* and would disappear the moment something *unexpected* or *frightening* occurred.

Why Do People Seek Signs & Wonders?

Today, many people still seek to experience the miraculous, and some will go to *great lengths* to have that experience. There may be many reasons for such a desire, and Scripture gives us at least *five*:

- 1) Some people seek after signs and wonders because they want _____ of the truth of God (Judges 6:36-40). There is nothing inherently wrong with this desire. However, there comes a time when *enough* miracles have been performed—the truth has been *proved*—and it is time to exercise *faith*.
- 2) Some people seek after signs and wonders because they do not _____ the signs and wonders which have _____ been performed. The heart of some people can be *hardened* towards the truth, even after numerous public miracles. Nothing will make them believe (Exodus 9:34-35). They will demand an even greater sign.
- 3) Some people seek after signs and wonders because they seek an occasion to _____ their unbelief (John 20:24-25). There are people who will request *outlandish* signs, most often in an attempt to ask for something so big and so *spectacular* that the chances of it happening were so small in order to justify their unbelief.
- 4) Some people seek after signs and wonders because they are curious _____ - _____. Some people just want to see something *sensational*, but they have no real desire to know the truth of Christ (John 6:2; Luke 23:8).
- 5) Some people seek after signs and wonders because they hope to get something for _____. Some people's desire is not to know Christ, or even to see more miracles; it is simply to have a *personal need* met (John 6:26; John 20:29).

Does God Still Perform Miracles Today?

First, it is important to recognize that this is not a question of whether God still performs miracles today. It would be *foolish* and *unbiblical* to claim God does not heal people, speak to people, and perform miraculous signs and wonders today. The question is whether the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, described primarily in 1 Corinthians 12–14, are *still active* in the church today. This is also not a question of can the Holy Spirit give someone a miraculous gift. The question is whether the Holy Spirit *still dispenses* the miraculous gifts today. Above all else, we entirely recognize that the Holy Spirit is free to dispense gifts *according to His will* (1 Cor. 12:7-11).

Beside the _____ and their *close associates*, the New Testament nowhere specifically describes individuals exercising the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. It was the apostles who were “marked” by signs and wonders. Thus, it would seem that miraculous gifts being given to “ordinary” Christians was the _____, not the _____. However, we now have the *truth of Jesus* recorded in Scripture. We now have the *writings of the apostles* recorded in Scripture. Jesus and His apostles, as recorded in Scripture, are the _____ and _____ of our faith (Ephesians 2:20). In this sense, miracles are no longer _____, as the message of Jesus and His apostles has already been *attested to* and *accurately recorded* in the Scriptures. Thus, we do not need more miracles. What we need is to believe in the miracle of *salvation* through faith in Jesus Christ. God does still perform miracles today. However, many of them simply go *unnoticed* or are *denied*. But while God still performs miracles, we should not necessarily expect them to occur today, *in the same way* they did in Biblical times. There is nothing in our lives that is too hard for God to handle. He wants us to *trust Him* and know that He can perform miracles in our lives even today.

Finally, one thing that is often over-looked in discussions about signs and miracles is the _____ and _____ of them in the Scriptures. Contrary to popular belief, people in Bible times *did not see miracles all the time*. In fact, the miracles of the Bible are generally grouped around *special events* in God's dealing with mankind. Israel's deliverance from Egypt and entrance into the Promised Land were accompanied by many miracles, but the miracles *faded away* soon afterward.

During the late kingdom years, when God was about to place the people in exile, He allowed some of His *prophets* to do miracles. When Jesus came to live among us, He did miracles,

and in the early ministry of the apostles, they did miracles, but *outside of those times*, we see very few miracles or signs in the Bible. The vast majority of people who lived in Bible times never saw signs and wonders with their own eyes! They had to *live by faith* in what God had *already* revealed to them.