

Evil Angels, Demons And The Occult

**Evil Angels, Demons,
And The Occult**

The Dark World

By

Don Stewart

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The Dark World

Table Of Contents

Topic 1: Evil Angels

The Fallen Spirit Beings

- Question 1 Why Should The Subject Of Evil Angels Be Studied?
- Question 2 Who Are The Evil Angels?
- Question 3 When Did The Angelic Rebellion Occur?
- Question 4 Where Do The Evil Angels Reside?
- Question 5 How Many Evil Angels Exist?
- Question 6 Are The Evil Angels Organized?
- Question 7 What Do Evil Angels Do?
- Question 8 What Is The Destiny Of Evil Angels?
- Question 9 What Observations And Conclusions Can We Make About The Subject Of Evil Angels?

Topic 2 Demons

The Existence And Work Of Evil Spirits

- Question 10 Do Demons Actually Exist?
- Question 11 How Are We To Understand Jesus' Belief In Demons?
- Question 12 What Are Demons?
- Question 13 What Are The Various Names What Are The Various Titles, Or Names, Given To Demonic Or Evil Spirits?
- Question 14 Where Did Demons Originate?
- Question 15 What Is The Difference Between Demons And Devils?
- Question 16 What Power Do Demons Have?
- Question 17 What Are The Limitations Of Demons?
- Question 18 Do Demons Understand The Limitations Of Their Power?
- Question 19 Are There Such Things As Territorial Spirits? (Daniel 10)
- Question 20 Can Demons Materialize In Human Or Animal Form?

- Question 21 What Are The Doctrines Of Demons?
- Question 22 Is Demon Possession A Reality?
- Question 23 Does The New Testament Give Specific Examples Of People Being Demon Possessed?
- Question 24 What Conclusions Can Be Made About Demon Possession?
- Question 25 What Happens When A Person Is Demon-Possessed?
- Question 26 Can A Person Become Demon-Possessed Today?
- Question 27 Can A Christian Be Demon-Possessed?
- Question 28 Does The New Testament Equate Disease With Demon Possession?
- Question 29 What Authority Do Christians Have Over Demons?
- Question 30 What Are Some Practical Considerations In Dealing With Demonic Forces?
- Question 31 What Is The Ultimate Fate Of Demons?

Topic 3: The Occult
The Unseen Realm Of Darkness

- Question 32 What Does The Bible Have To Say About Various Forms Of Occult Practices? (Magic, Witchcraft, Sorcery)
- Question 33 What Does The Bible Say About The Practice Of Divination?
- Question 34 Can Forbidden Knowledge Actually Be Obtained By Occultic Practices?
- Question 35 What Is The History Of Halloween?
- Question 36 Where Did The Popular Traditions About Halloween Come From?
- Question 37 What Should Christians Do At Halloween?

Appendix 1 Did The Lord Put A Lying Spirit In The Mouth Of The Prophets To Deceive King Ahab? (1 Kings 22:19-23)

Appendix 2 Why Did God Send An Evil Spirit To King Saul? (1 Samuel 16:14; 18:10; 19:9)

Appendix 3 Who Were The Sons Of God Who Married Earthly Women? (Genesis 6) Could They Be Angels?

About The Author

The Unseen World: Volume 2

Evil Angels, Demons, And The Occult *The Dark World*

In the first volume of our series on the subject of the “Unseen World” we explored what the Bible had to say about the good angels. We found that they are created spirit-beings who are used in the service of the Lord. Their ministry is to believers only.

We also discovered that there are other heavenly beings which the Lord has created which are distinct from the angels. They include the cherubim, seraphim, the living creatures, and possibly the twenty-four elders.

This second book in our series examines three separate topics with respect to the unseen world.

Our first section will deal with the subject of evil angels. From the Bible we discover that not all of the angels that exist today are good angels. Indeed, there are evil angels who exist. We will look at the origin, current status, and destiny of these wicked angels.

The next section will consider the matter of demons. Where did they originate? What do they do? What victory do we have over them in Christ?

The last part of the book will look at a number of issues related to the dark world of the occult. This includes such things as talking with the dead and the subject of Halloween.

In our appendices we will examine three often-asked questions about the spirit world.

The first appendix has to do with the narrative between King Ahab and the prophet Micaiah. The prophet spoke of a heavenly council. Does such a group of spirit beings really exist? In addition, this passage has one members of the council suggesting that the Lord should send a “deceiving spirit” to King Ahab. How are we to understand this reference? Does God send deceiving spirits to people?

Then, in our second appendix, we look at the question as to why the Lord would send an “evil spirit” to King Saul. How are we to understand the meaning of this evil spirit? Was it some sort of demon? What are the reasons that the Lord would do such a thing?

Finally, in our third appendix, we look at the controversial question concerning the identity of the “sons of God” in Genesis chapter 6. Specifically, could they have been fallen angels or some other type of heavenly beings rather than humans?

Therefore, the main question in this examination is this: were these sons of God angelic beings who had sexual relations with earthly women? Did their sin become one of the primary reasons for the Lord sending the Flood to the earth in the days of Noah? We will take an extensive look at this subject.

In the end, we will discover that the evidence *clearly* indicates that we are dealing only with humans in this narrative of the Flood. In other words, it was not angels or any other type of heavenly beings, that were the cause of the Flood in the days of Noah. Indeed, the Flood in Noah’s day was the result of the sin of humanity, not some type of angelic or heavenly beings.

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Topic 1
Evil Angels

The Bible says there are creatures known as “angels.” In the first book in our series on the unseen world, we examined the topic of the good angels, the ones who have remained faithful to the Lord.

However, the Bible says that not all of the angels which God originally created have remained righteous. In this first section of our book we will look at the subject of these evil angels.

What do we know about these beings? Where did they come from? Did God create them as evil creatures? Should we be fearful of them? What is their destiny?

This section will answer these and other important questions regarding these evil angels.

Question 1

Why Should The Subject Of Evil Angels Be Studied?

In this first section we are going to explore what the Bible says about evil angels. Before we do this, we will consider why a subject like this should be studied. Indeed, why examine the topic of evil angels? What benefit can it possibly be for us to engage in such a task?

A number of observations can be made as to why this is an important subject for our study.

1. It Is Part Of God's Word

The subject of evil, or fallen, angels is part of God's divinely inspired Word. For that reason alone it should be studied. The Bible teaches us that all Scripture is beneficial:

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right (2 Timothy 3:16 NLT).

Therefore, since the subject of evil angels is covered in Scripture, it should be studied, and not ignored, since all Scripture is useful and is beneficial for us.

2. It Illustrates The Depth Of Sin

A study of evil angels will reveal the depths of sin and ruin that can occur when one turns away from the Lord. We will discover that these created beings willingly and knowingly have rebelled against a loving God.

In other words, they had no excuse whatsoever for their behavior. Their example is one that we should *not* want to follow.

3. It Should Inspire Hatred Of Evil

In addition, a genuine hatred of evil can be gained by seeing the results of the sins of these fallen angels. Their rebellion has affected the lives of so many others. Knowing this truth should further inspire believers to all the more hate evil and love the good.

4. It Shows Evil Beings Will Be Punished

We also learn the lesson from the fallen angels that evil will be judged and then punished. Though wickedness may seem to be winning for the present time, eventually judgment day will come and then punishment will follow. The lesson we learn from this is that evil never triumphs! This is a comforting thought for the believer.

5. It Provides Hope Through Christ Alone

We also discover that Jesus Christ is the only one who can deliver humanity from the power of these evil angels. We, in our own strength, cannot deliver ourselves from their clutches. This should always be kept in mind when we consider this subject.

6. There Is Limited Information Revealed On The Subject

There is one final point that needs to be emphasized. As is true with the other topics about the unseen world, as well as some of the other topics that are found in the Bible, the subject of evil angels is only secondary to the main story of Scripture.

The main concern of the Bible is telling us the story of God and humanity. Indeed, Scripture tells us who He is, who we are, why we are in the sinful state that we are in, and how we can get out of this sinful predicament. Evil angels only come into this story every now and then. In other words, they are not the main characters of the biblical narrative.

Hence, whenever they are discussed, it is always in the context of something wider and more important. While the information revealed about them is certainly true, it is limited.

Consequently, there is so much that we do not know about these evil spirit beings. Hence, we should be careful about any firm conclusions which we make on this subject.

Sadly, we find a number of people putting forth wild theories about evil angels and their behavior, theories that are not taught in the Bible! We must resist such speculations.

Instead, we must concern ourselves with what the Bible, and it alone, teaches on this subject. When we do this, this study can and will be of great benefit.

Summary To Question 1 Why Should The Subject Of Evil Angels Be Studied?

The Bible says that God created the angels at some time in the distant past. While all of them were originally created good, not all of them are now good. Indeed, there are such creatures as evil, or “fallen” angels.

The question then is this: why should take the time to study about these evil beings? Should not our time be better spent studying other subjects?

Actually, the subject of fallen angels can be valuable for a number of reasons. They are as follows.

To begin with, everything contained in the Bible was written for a specific purpose. In fact, the Bible itself says that all Scripture is profitable for our learning. Since this topic of evil angels is covered in Scripture, it is therefore worthwhile for us to study.

From a study of this subject, we learn the depths of sin, a renewed hatred for evil, an understanding that evil will eventually be judged and punished, and that our hope is through Christ and Him alone. All of these are worthwhile subjects to study.

However, we must also be aware of the limitations of such a study. Since evil angels are only minor players in the biblical drama, the information revealed about them is incomplete. Therefore, we must be careful about any conclusions that we make.

Indeed, any doctrines, or teachings, concerning evil angels must only be made from clear statements in Scripture. This is not a subject where we can just use our imagination and come up with some outlandish conclusions. Unfortunately, this has been done way too often.

All in all, the study of evil angels should be a benefit to us for the reasons we just mentioned when studied properly.

Question 2

Who Are The Evil Angels?

Although they are not the main subject of Scripture, the Bible does tell us a number of things about evil angels. From Scripture, we learn the following about these wicked beings.

1. They Were Part Of God's Original Creation

The beings which we now call “evil angels” or “fallen angels” were part of God's original creation of spirit-beings. Like all the other angels, they were originally created good.

In fact, when the Lord created our physical universe, the Bible says that everything was created “very good.” We read the following summary statement in Genesis:

God looked at what he had done. All of it was very good! Evening came and then morning—that was the sixth day (Genesis 1:31 CEV)

Everything that God has ever made has been very good. This includes the angels.

2. They Had The Power Of Choice

The evil angels, like the good ones, were all given the power of choice, or moral judgment. It is possible that they were placed under a period of probation where they could decide whom they would follow. We know that they were not programmed to serve the Lord, they had choice.

3. They Left Their Rightful Place

Under the leadership of one of the higher forms of created spirit-beings, certain angels sinned and left their rightful place. The sin of these evil angels was their revolt against the Lord and His commandments. The Bible says the following about them:

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—(Jude 6 ESV).

They left their proper habitation—the reason for which they were created. When they chose to do this and sin against God, it was at that point they became evil angels.

Again, we stress that they were not created as evil beings.

4. There Was Sin In Heaven

The Bible says that the heavens are now, in some sense, unclean because of the sin of these angels.

We read about this heavenly sin in the Book of Job. In speaking to Job, Eliphaz, made the following comment:

If God puts no trust in His holy ones and the heavens are not pure in His sight how much less one who is revolting and corrupt, who drinks injustice like water (Job 15:15,16 CSB).

Heaven was not exempt from the angelic sin. This was recognized at the time of Job.

5. They Are Not To Be Trusted

Scripture tells us not to put our trust in these evil angels. We read the following warning in the Book of Job from the man Eliphaz:

Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can even a strong man be more pure than his Maker? If God places no trust in his servants, if he charges his angels with error, how much more those who live in houses of clay, whose foundations are in the dust, who are crushed more readily than a moth! (Job 4:17-19 NIV).

Even certain angels cannot be relied upon. Indeed, they cannot be trusted.

We should note that these last two statements of Eliphaz, concerning angels, is consistent with the totality of Scripture on the matter. Indeed, there was an angelic revolt and these evil angels cannot be trusted.

On the other hand, when the Lord eventually broke into the conversation of Job and his three friends. He made it clear that all of them were spouting ignorance. In fact, the Lord said the following to Job:

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: Who is this who darkens counsel with words without knowledge (Job 38:1 NET).

Since the Lord views these speeches as “words without knowledge” we should be careful how much reliability we give to the various statements. In fact, in these speeches, such as those of Eliphaz, part of the problem is determining how much is ignorance and how much is truth.

Therefore, when we cite Eliphaz saying there was sin in heaven and that angels cannot be trusted it is consistent with what we discover elsewhere in Scripture.

6. They Will Remain Wicked Forever

The wickedness of these evil angels is confirmed in the last book of the Bible. After the final judgment of God, and the evil angels are sent off to their eternal punishment, the following words will be spoken:

Let the one who is doing wrong continue to do wrong; the one who is vile, continue to be vile; the one who is good, continue to do good; and the one who is holy, continue in holiness (Revelation 22:11 NLT).

These angels will remain forever evil. In other words, there is no hope that there will ever be any change in their character or in their behavior.

7. There Is No Salvation For Them

Scripture teaches that God has provided salvation for fallen humanity. The Apostle Paul wrote the following to Timothy:

This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3,4 NIV).

The Lord desires all “people” to be saved. However there is no salvation for these fallen angels. Paul wrote:

By him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of his blood on the cross (Colossians 1:20 NLT).

Only those beings on the earth and in heaven will be saved. The fallen angels are symbolically spoken of as being “under the earth.” Therefore, they are not objects of the saving work of Christ.

8. Hell, The Lake Of Fire Was Created For Them

In fact, we are told that hell, or the lake of fire, was actually created by the Lord for the devil as well as his angels. Upon His return to the earth, the Lord Jesus will say the following to all the unbelievers:

Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels! (Matthew 25:41 CSB).

Their destiny has already been determined.

9. They Will Eventually Bow Down To Jesus

Though these wicked angels will never be saved, brought back into a relationship with God, there will come a day when the evil angels bow before the Lord. Paul wrote the following to the Philippians:

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11 ESV).

Paul makes it clear that even the knees of those “under the earth” will bow to Christ. This includes those evil angels who rebelled.

In sum, while not a main topic of Scripture, we do learn a number of things about the angels who rebelled against God in the beginning. Furthermore, everything that we discover about them is not good!

Summary To Question 2

Who Are The Evil Angels?

When God created the angels, they were all sinless, holy, beings. Everything was created good. There was no imperfection in them whatsoever.

However, they were all given the ability to choose good or evil. Though they were created good, some of the angels used their choice to rebel against God. In doing so, these perfect beings abandoned the purpose for which they were created.

Thus, they *became* the evil angels that the Bible speaks about. It is important to stress the fact that they were not created this way. Their fall brought them spiritual and moral ruin, and they will pay the price for their sin for all eternity. Indeed, Jesus said that they will be sent to the “lake of fire” which has been specifically prepared for them!

The Bible says that one day they will eventually bow down to Jesus. Until that time, they will continue with their evil deeds.

Question 3

When Did The Angelic Rebellion Occur?

The fall of the evil angels occurred sometime in the distant past. Though the Bible does not specifically tell us when this happened, there are a couple of clues. We can list them as follow.

1. Everything Was Perfect In The Beginning

We read the following summation of creation account in the Book of Genesis:

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day (Genesis 1:31 NIV).

When God finished creating, “everything” He made was “very good.” If this refers to all of God’s creation, then this would include the angelic world.

If this is the case, then Satan, and the evil angels, did not exist before the seventh day of creation as evil beings. In other words, they were still without sin.

2. Sin Entered By The Time Of Genesis 3

In the third chapter of Genesis, we find Satan, in the form of the serpent, coming to Eve with the temptation. The Bible explains what took place as follows:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, You must not eat from any tree in the garden?” (Genesis 3:1 NIV).

Because the serpent desired to tempt the woman with sin, we know at this time, sin had already entered into the universe. It seems, therefore, that sometime between Genesis 1:31 and Genesis 3 this angelic rebellion took place and sin entered into the universe.

3. The Account In Genesis Could Be Restricted To Earth

It could be argued, however, that in Genesis the emphasis on the perfection of creation was limited to the earth. In other words, it did not include the unseen realm of the universe. The writer, therefore, is only interested in telling his audience about the conditions on the earth, not the entire universe.

Consequently, from the perspective of the writer of Genesis, no comment is made about sin existing elsewhere in the universe. All the writer is saying is that sin had not reached the earth at this time. If this is the case, then the angelic sin could have taken place before the earth was created. However, because the account is limited in what it tells us, there is no possibility to be certain either way.

In sum, we are not able to come to any firm conclusion on the matter.

Summary To Question 3 When Did The Angelic Rebellion Occur?

The Bible says that everything was created perfect. In other words, there was no sin *on the earth* until Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden.

However, this does not necessarily mean there was no sin elsewhere in the universe. If the Genesis creation account is restricted to the earth, then sin could have entered at a previous time at somewhere else in the universe.

If, however, the Bible is saying that everything, everywhere in the universe was perfect, then sin did not occur until after the sixth day of creation.

Because our information is limited, we cannot make any definite conclusions about this question.

Question 4

Where Do Evil Angels Reside?

Where is the exact location that the evil angels presently reside? Do we know where they are now?

There are differences of opinion on this subject. Some Bible students believe that all of them are bound in the dark realms of the unseen world, while others think that some angels remain unbound and live in the heavenly realms.

View 1: All Evil Angels Are Presently Bound In Darkness

The Bible tells us that angels have been bound. We read the following in the Book of Jude:

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day (Jude 6 ESV).

These evil angels are said to live in darkness, bound until the Day of Judgment.

Tartarus

The Bible speaks of them being bound in a place called “Tartarus.” We read about this locality in Second Peter:

For if God didn’t spare the angels who sinned but threw them down into Tartarus and delivered them to be kept in chains of darkness until judgment (2 Peter 2:4 CSB).

This place is the lowest level of captivity for those who are awaiting their final judgment and then their everlasting punishment. In fact, it is the location where the worst offenders go. They are to be kept in this place of confinement until the time of judgment.

The Abyss (Bottomless Pit)

The place of darkness is also called the abyss or the bottomless pit. We find this designation in the Book of Revelation:

He opened the shaft of the abyss, and smoke came up out of the shaft like smoke from a great furnace so that the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke from the shaft (Revelation 9:2 CSB).

We also read about this in the gospels:

The demons kept begging Jesus not to send them into the Bottomless Pit (Luke 8:31 NLT).

These angelic beings seem to have been placed in the bottomless pit because of some horrific sin. However, the Bible does not tell us exactly what this sin was.

From these passages, it is argued, that all angels have been bound. There is no hint that some angels remain loose, or may live in some other place. The “sinning angels” are all bound, waiting for their final judgment.

View 2: Some Evil Angels Remain Unbound

If evil angels are presently causing chaos on the earth, as everyone agrees they are, then the question may be asked, “In what sense are they bound?” Obviously, they have a very long chain!

Another view argues that the angels who have been bound do not constitute all the evil angels that exist. It is argued that when the angelic rebellion occurred, some wicked angels remained free to cause chaos on the earth as well as elsewhere in the universe.

Therefore, there are two groups of fallen angels, those that have been bound, and remain bound, and those who are free and active in the universe.

There are a number of reasons as to why people hold this view of the evil angels. It can be summarized as follows.

There Are Angels In The Heavenly Realm

One of the reasons people believe that some evil angels remain unbound is Paul’s statement in Ephesians. He said the following:

For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens (Ephesians 6:12 CSB).

Paul said that our battle is against various orders of evil spiritual powers in the unseen heavenly realm. This seems to indicate these are wicked beings who roam about freely. In other words, they are distinct from those angels that are chained.

The Bound Angels Will Be Loosed Before Christ Returns

Before Jesus Christ returns to the earth, certain of these bound angels will be loosed for a short period of time. The Book of Revelation says the following:

The sixth angel blew his trumpet. From the four horns of the gold altar that is before God, I heard a voice say to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates.” So the four angels who were prepared for the hour, day, month, and year were released to kill a third of the human race. The number of mounted troops was 200 million; I heard their number (Revelation 9:13-16 CSB).

These four evil angels, when released, will inflict harm on people who do not have God’s seal: His sign of protection, on their foreheads.

Until that time, these angels remain bound. This is another indication that there are two groups of evil angels that exist.

They Will Fight With Michael

Certain angels will make war with Michael and his angelic army in the heavenly realm. We read of this in the Book of Revelation. It says the following:

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought (Revelation 12:7 NKJV).

Therefore, the Bible speaks of an angelic battle in the heavenly realm between the good angels of the Lord against the wicked angels of the devil. This battle has yet to take place.

This seems to be the best view as to the location of the evil angels.

In sum, we find that the angels who sinned are today in two locations. It seems that most of them are free to roam about the universe. However, a number of them have been bound in chains since their original rebellion. They will be loosed at some time in the future to cause damage to those unbelievers who are still living upon the earth.

Summary To Question 4 Where Do The Evil Angels Reside?

There is some question as to where the evil angels presently reside. We can make the following observations about this issue.

The Bible makes it clear that evil angels have been bound in chains of darkness because of their rebellion against God.

The question is whether this constitutes all the evil angels, or merely a portion of them. All sides agree that evil angels still cause problems on the earth.

To say, however, that all angels are bound, yet they still cause untold problems on the earth, makes the idea of them being bound a bit meaningless. If they can still roam around the world and cause havoc, they are not really bound in any real sense of the word.

Therefore, seemingly the best way to understand the location of evil angels is to put them into two different categories. There are certain angels that have been bound since their original sin, and they remain confined. They will remain in their confinement until shortly before the Lord returns. The Bible says they will be loosed for a little while and cause tremendous havoc upon the earth.

Another group of evil angels are free and active in the universe. They are the personages that presently cause trouble to the people of God. This is the most satisfying answer to this question.

Therefore, it is best to see the evil angels as in two groups, the bound and the unbound ones.

Question 5

How Many Evil Angels Exist?

We know that evil angels exist. The Bible is clear about this. We can then rightly ask, “Does the Bible tell us how many of these evil spirit-creatures actually exist?” Do we know the number of evil angels?

Like many other things about evil angels that are unknown, their number is not disclosed to us in Scripture. We do know that there is a limited number of them, but just how many do truly exist is unknown. From Scripture, we can make the following observations.

One Third Of The Angels Might Have Rebelled

It is possible that as many as one third of all the angels who were originally created decided to rebel against God. This number comes from a passage in the Book of Revelation. In speaking of the dragon, or the devil, being cast down to the earth, the following is said:

His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it (Revelation 12:4 ESV).

The dragon is identified for us a few verses later. The text says:

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him (Revelation 12:9 ESV).

The dragon is the devil. The idea that one third of the angels may have rebelled comes from the statement that the tail of the dragon took one third of the stars with him to the earth.

Angels Are Likened To Stars, The Heavenly Host,

In Scripture, stars, or the heavenly host, are one of the designations for angels. For example, we read in Isaiah:

On that day the Lord will punish the host of heaven above and kings of the earth below (Isaiah 24:21 CSB).

The translation God’s Word puts it this way:

On that day the Lord will punish heaven’s armies in heaven and earth’s kings on earth (Isaiah 24:21 God’s Word).

Therefore, it is possible that one third of these evil angels rebelled. However, this is only speculation and it certainly cannot be any more than an educated guess.

There May Be A Large Number Of Evil Angels That Are Bound

Scripture may speak of a large number of evil angels that are presently bound. We read of this elsewhere in the Book of Revelation:

And the voice spoke to the sixth angel who held the trumpet: “Release the four angels who are bound at the great Euphrates River.” And the four angels who had been prepared for this hour and day and month and year were turned loose to kill one-third of all the people on earth. They led an army of 200 million mounted troops--I heard an announcement of how many there were (Revelation 9:14-16 NLT).

If this number is literal, then we are dealing with an angelic army of two hundred million!

While the Bible does not give us the exact number of the angels who rebelled against God, we know that the numbers were large, but they are not countless. Beyond that, we cannot say anything for certain.

Summary To Question 5 How Many Evil Angels Exist?

The Bible teaches that God created angels. Just how many have been created is not stated in Scripture.

However, there are a few things we do know about their number. For one thing, we know that there was a great multitude of them. This seems clear from Scripture.

Furthermore, it is possible that as many as one third of this great number rebelled against the Lord and became evil angels. As to their exact number, there is no way to be certain.

Presently a large number of these evil angels are bound. It is possible that they number as many as two hundred million but, again, we cannot be certain. The safest thing to say is that they are indeed numerous.

Question 6

Are The Evil Angels Organized?

Like the good angels, evil angels are also organized. In fact, the Apostle Paul said that the Christian is battling a highly organized enemy in the spirit world. He wrote the following to the church at Ephesus about this organized army of spirit-beings:

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12 ESV).

From this verse, we learn a number of things about the makeup of these evil angels. They include the following points.

1. They Are An Organized Enemy

This verse speaks of an organized enemy. They are broken down into the categories of rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, and spiritual forces. All of this implies organization. In other words, they are not a disorganized mob.

2. They Have Rulers And Other Ranks

The “rulers” spoken of here are those of the highest rank. Obviously if there are rulers, there must those who are ruled over. The “authorities” would be a separate category from the rulers. Peter wrote about the organization of angels:

Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers are bowing before him (1 Peter 3:22 NLT).

The powers and authorities, spoken of here, also refers to different ranks and classifications of creatures which the Lord has created. In this instance, it is referring to the righteous angels as well as some of the other heavenly beings the Lord has made. This would include the cherubim, seraphim, the living beings, and perhaps the twenty-four elders.

In another place, the Apostle Paul wrote the following about the ruling angels:

God’s purpose was to show his wisdom in all its rich variety to all the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. They will see this when Jews and Gentiles are joined together in his church (Ephesians 3:10 NLT).

These rulers and authorities could be either good or bad angels. Either way, it speaks of an organized group of these spirit-beings. Paul wrote to the Colossians that Jesus Christ had defeated these spiritual authorities:

In this way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ (Colossians 2:15 NLT).

The good news is that they have been defeated by Jesus. Indeed, the victory has been won! Satan, and his evil angels, will eventually fight with Michael the archangel and his good angels. The Bible says:

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought (Revelation 12:7 NKJV).

The fact that the dragon, or Satan, has his own angels implies organization. He is the leader of this vast array of evil angels.

We Fight The Spiritual Battle With Spiritual Weapons

Consequently, we as believers need to fight them with spiritual weapons, not carnal ones. Paul made this clear:

For though we live as human beings, we do not wage war according to human standards, for the weapons of our warfare are not human weapons, but are made powerful by God for tearing down strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:3,4 NET).

This is something we should always remember. Our weapons are spiritual and to win the spiritual battle we must use the spiritual weapons which the Lord has provided for us.

Summary To Question 6

Are The Evil Angels Organized?

Yes they are. The Scripture says that there are highly organized ranks of evil angels. Thus, they are not merely a disorganized mob of terrorizing angels, but rather a well-organized evil army who fight under the leadership of Satan.

This shows intelligence and as well as the ability to plan their evil deed and deceive the people on the earth.

Consequently, these evil beings should not be taken lightly. The battle is the Lord's and to win the spiritual battle we must fight with the spiritual weapons which the Lord has provided for us.

Question 7

What Do Evil Angels Do?

According to Scripture, the angels who have rebelled against God have nothing but evil intentions. These personages ceaselessly oppose God in every way in which they are able. We can make the following observations.

1. They Do The Work Of Satan

The evil angels do the work of their master, Satan. As the righteous angels do the work of the Lord, these evil angels follow the orders of the devil. Scripture makes it clear that these angels belong to the devil:

Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels' (Matthew 25:41 NKJV).

Notice that Jesus referred to these evil angels as belonging to the devil.

2. They Oppose God's People

Evil angels work in opposition to God's purposes and God's people. They attempt to hinder the spiritual life of believers. We find an example of their hindering work in the Book of Daniel:

And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come (Daniel 10:10-14 ESV).

This evil angel, the prince of Persia, hindered the answer to Daniel's prayer for twenty-one days.

3. They Fight Against Good Angels

Evil angels are in a struggle against good angels. We read the following in the Book of Revelation:

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought (Revelation 12:7 NKJV).

They are in a battle against the angels of God.

4. They Afflict God's People

As much as they are able, they attempt to afflict God's servants. Paul wrote about a certain thorn in the flesh that he had received. He described it as follows.

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure (2 Corinthians 12:7 NKJV).

The New Living Translation put it this way:

Even though I have received wonderful revelations from God. But to keep me from getting puffed up, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from getting proud (2 Corinthians 12:7 NLT).

Evil angels are opposed to both the temporal and eternal welfare of humanity.

5. They Deceive God's People

They are involved, with their master Satan, in a ministry of deception. Indeed, they will send their false prophets to deceive the people of God. Jesus warned:

For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce great signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect (Matthew 24:24 NKJV).

They will even produce false signs in their deception.

6. They Can Bring False Teaching

Scripture warns us about angels delivering false teaching to humanity in the form of “another gospel.” Paul wrote:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:6-9 ESV).

Consequently, we have been warned that an angelic appearance does not mean that God sent that angel. Evil angels can deceive humanity by bringing false teaching and another gospel. The Bible makes it clear what message humanity should receive.

And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10 NKJV).

The person and work of Jesus Christ is the central message of Scripture.

Summary To Question 7 What Do Evil Angels Do?

According to Scripture there are a number of things that the evil angels do. They include the following.

First, they do the work of Satan. They follow his orders and are subjects of his kingdom.

This consists of opposing the people of God. We are the object of their spiritual attacks.

They also fight against the good angels. There is a constant war between them. We find this taught in both testaments as an angel who attempted to reach Daniel was hindered by an evil angel, the angel over the kingdom of Persia.

In the New Testament, we are told of a war in heaven between Michael and his good angels against Satan and his evil angels.

The good news is that the war will eventually be over.

Evil angels can afflict God's people in a physical way, as in the case of the Apostle Paul. However, they must have God's permission to do so.

They also tempt humanity to sin in a desire to turn people away from the things of God. We must be aware of this aspect of their character.

We are also warned that angels can appear to humans and bring false doctrine. Again, we have been warned ahead of time.

Consequently, believers must always look to the real Jesus to discover God's straight and narrow way.

Question 8

What Is The Destiny Of The Evil Angels?

Though evil angels are now causing problems in this world, there will come a time when they will be punished for their evil deeds. The Bible has the following to say about their future.

1. The Lord Will Punish The Heavenly Powers

The prophet Isaiah spoke of God punishing the powers in the heavens. He wrote the following:

In that day the LORD will punish the fallen angels in the heavens and the proud rulers of the nations on earth (Isaiah 24:21 NLT).

Their day of judgment is coming. Nothing can stop this.

2. All Enemies Will Be Judged

Scripture says that Christ will judge all of His enemies. Paul wrote the following to the church at Corinth about Christ judging those who have rebelled against Him:

For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. And the last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:25,26 NLT).

“All His enemies” certainly includes evil angels.

3. All Things Offensive Will Be Judged

When Christ returns, He will judge all things offensive, including the evil angels. Jesus spoke of this time in one of His parables:

The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:41,42 NKJV).

These evil angels would certainly be in the category of “things offensive.”

4. They Will Bow To The Lord

The evil angels, along with everything else in creation, will one day acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. Paul wrote the following to the Philippians:

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11 ESV).

Here the things ‘under the earth’ refers to those fallen angels who have been consigned to judgment and eventual punishment.

5. They Will Go To The Lake Of Fire

The place that God has created for this ultimate punishment of the evil angels is called the lake of fire. Jesus said:

Then He will also say to those on the left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels!' (Matthew 25:41 CSB).

They will go to their own place, the lake of fire. In fact, it was specially prepared for them. Indeed, Jesus made it clear it was not created for human beings.

6. This Is Their Final Destination

The lake of fire, eternal death which is eternal separation from God, will be the final destination of the evil angels. As we just noted, the Bible says that the eternal fire was prepared for the express purpose of punishing these evil angels. This is a place of everlasting torment. The Book of Revelation explains this as follows:

Then the Devil, who betrayed them, was thrown into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:10 NLT).

Therefore, the rampage that is caused by evil angels will not continue forever. There will come a time when they experience their final judgment which will lead to their everlasting punishment.

Summary To Question 8

What Is The Destiny Of Evil Angels?

Evil angels will eventually have the same fate as their master, Satan.

During the time of the prophet Isaiah, God promised a future punishment for these rebellious beings.

In fact, Jesus said that the lake of fire was specially prepared for them. They will be confined to this place of punishment forever.

Consequently, their sinning against God will not be something that will continue forever.

Furthermore, there will be an end to the sin and pain they cause - thanks to the sinless life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Question 9

What Observations And Conclusions Can We Make About The Subject Of Evil Angels?

There are a number of basic observations and conclusions we can make from Scripture about the subject of evil angels.

Observation 1: Evil Angels Do Exist

There are such beings as evil angels who do exist. Indeed, they are not mythical creatures. Though they are invisible to the human eye, the Bible makes it clear that these wicked angels are a reality.

However, our knowledge about them is limited since they are not the main characters in the biblical story. In fact, they only appear when they have something to do with the ongoing narrative of God's dealing with the human race.

Observation 2: They Were Not Originally Created Evil

While there are evil or fallen angels, they were not originally created this way. Indeed all of the angels were initially created good. However a number of them chose to rebel against God under the leadership of a created being known as Satan, the devil. When they did this, they became the evil angels.

Observation 3: They Are Highly Organized Under Their Master, Satan

Under the command of Satan, these fallen angels are a highly organized group of evil beings. In other words, these wicked creatures are a skilled group of personages whose sole responsibility is to cause evil. Since they are a formidable foe, it is crucial that we do not underestimate them.

Observation 4: We Do Not Fear The Evil Angels Because Christ Has Achieved Victory Over Them

By His death on the cross at Calvary, and His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ has won the victory over these evil angels. Consequently, we should not fear them. They have no power over us.

Observation 5: They Will Eventually Be Judged And Punished

While there are evil angels in our world today, there will come a time when they will be judged and then punished. In other words, their time of causing havoc in the world is limited.

For all of eternity the believers, along with the righteous angels and other heavenly beings the Lord has created, will rejoice in the presence of the Lord, totally free from any evil angels or wicked influence! What a wonderful time that will be!!

Summary To Question 9

What Observations And Conclusions Can We Make About The Subject Of Evil Angels?

After looking at what the Bible says about evil angels we can make a number of observations. Though our knowledge about them is limited, these beings do exist. Scripture makes this clear.

While they were not originally created evil, they became wicked when they decided to follow another created being who chose to rebel against God. He is called Satan, the devil.

These evil angels are a highly organized intelligent group of beings. Therefore, we should respect this about them. However, we should not ultimately fear these evil beings because Jesus Christ has won the victory over them by His death on Calvary's cross and His resurrection from the dead.

In fact, their destiny has already been settled. Some day they will be judged by the Lord and then set off to everlasting punishment.

Consequently, we will not have to deal with them, or any other type of evil, for all eternity. We do indeed praise the Lord for this!

Topic 2

Demons

Scripture says that creatures, known as demons or evil spirits, actually exist. Although much about these evil spirit-beings is shrouded in mystery the Bible does have a number of things to say about them.

In this section of our book, we will look at the biblical teaching concerning demons.

Question 10

Do Demons Actually Exist?

Are there such personages as “demons” or “unclean spirits?” Can we really believe in their existence?

The Bible is clear that such creatures do indeed exist. In fact, on fifty-two separate occasions in the New Testament, we have references to demons, and there are another twenty-three references to unclean spirits. Clearly, they do indeed exist.

Not only do demons exist, the fact that they influence the destinies of individuals and nations is well-documented in Scripture. The biblical teaching on the subject is widespread. In other words, it is not limited to one place, or one time in history. With Scripture as the final authority, the existence and influence of these spiritual beings is beyond question.

The evidence is as follows.

1. The Old Testament Mentions Demons (Evil Spirits)

To begin with, we find that the Old Testament writers accepted the existence of demons, or evil spirits, though not much is said about them. For example, Moses wrote:

They sacrificed to demons, not God, to gods they had not known; to new gods who had recently come along, gods your ancestors had not known about (Deuteronomy 32:17 NET).

These evil spirits are not called “demons” in the Old Testament since “demon” is a Greek term. However, some translations do use the term “demon” when they translate certain Old Testament terms (as in the above example).

2. Jesus Recognized That Demons Exist

The fact that demons do exist was recognized by the God the Son, Jesus Christ. We find Him speaking about them, as well as to them. When Jesus was engaged in a conversation with the Jewish religious leaders, He said the following to them:

If I force demons out of people with the help of Beelzebul, who helps your followers force them out? That’s why they will be your judges. But if I force demons out with the help of God’s Spirit, then the kingdom of God has come to you (Matthew 12:27,28 God’s Word).

From these statements, Jesus obviously believed in the existence of demons.

We also find Jesus rebuking demons and driving them out of humans. Matthew records the following account when Jesus met two demon-possessed men:

When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. “What do you want with us, Son of God?” they shouted. “Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?” Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. The demons begged Jesus, “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.” He said to them, “Go!” So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. Those tending the pigs ran off, went into

the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region (Matthew 8:28-32 NIV).

From this account, not only did Jesus obviously believe in demons, He drove them out of people who were possessed with them.

3. The Twelve Were Able To Cast Out Demons

Not only Jesus recognized the existence of demons and was able to drive them out, we find that His disciples were given the same power by the Lord. The Bible says the following:

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness (Matthew 10:1 NIV).

Therefore, the recognition of demonic spirits extended to Jesus' disciples.

4. The Seventy-Two Had Authority Over The Demons

Jesus sent out seventy-two disciples to preach the message that the kingdom of God had arrived in the person of the King, Jesus. Part of their mission was the driving out of demons. We find that this was successful. The Bible says:

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name" (Luke 10:17 ESV).

The gospels are very well-aware of the spiritual conflict between the Lord and the forces of evil. Without a doubt, these forces were very active against the ministry of Jesus. Indeed, Jesus, the Twelve, as well as the seventy-two all testify to this fact.

Jesus Never Corrected Anyone Who Believed In Demons

There is something else which we must appreciate. Never do we find Jesus correcting anyone in their belief about demons. For example, when the seventy-two disciples returned, they gave the following testimony:

When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!" (Luke 10:17 NLT)

Jesus always corrected error. If demons were not real, then we would have expected Jesus to correct their misunderstanding. Yet, He acknowledged their belief in these evil spirits was accurate. We read the following:

"Yes," he told them, "I saw Satan falling from heaven as a flash of lightning! And I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you. But don't rejoice just because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered as citizens of heaven" (Luke 10:18-20 NLT).

The fact that He accepted their existence is beyond question.

5. The Book Of Acts Recognized The Reality Of Demons

Not only do we find the four gospels testifying to the existence of demons, we have three occasions in the Book of Acts where demons are shown to be a reality. First, we find the evangelist Philip casting out demons in the city of Samaria.

Philip went down to the main city of Samaria and began proclaiming the Christ to them. The crowds were paying attention with one mind to what Philip said, as they heard and saw the miraculous signs he was performing. For unclean spirits, crying with loud shrieks, were coming out of many who were possessed, and many paralyzed and lame people were healed. So there was great joy in that city (Acts 8:5-8 NET).

Demons Were Recognized By Paul

Another indication that demonic works were not limited to the four gospels is the recognition of their existence by the Apostle Paul. The Book of Acts gives the following account:

As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour (Acts 16:16-18 ESV).

Paul commanded the evil spirit to come out of the woman and the spirit obeyed. Therefore, we have his testimony to the existence of these spirit-beings. Furthermore, we discover that he too, like Jesus and His disciples, had authority over these evil spirits.

A third illustration of demonic activity is recorded in the city of Ephesus with an episode involving the seven sons of a man named Sceva:

But some itinerant Jewish exorcists tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were possessed by evil spirits, saying, "I sternly warn you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." (Now seven sons of a man named Sceva, a Jewish high priest, were doing this.) But the evil spirit replied to them, "I know about Jesus and I am acquainted with Paul, but who are you?" Then the man who was possessed by the evil spirit jumped on them and beat them all into submission. He prevailed against them so that they fled from that house naked and wounded. This became known to all who lived in Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks; fear came over them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was praised (Acts 19:13-17 NET).

There is no doubt that demonic activity continued during the time of the early church.

6. Paul Wrote About The Teachings Of Demons

The Apostle Paul also wrote about demonic teachings in his warning to Timothy:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons (1 Timothy 4:1 ESV).

This is a further indication of his belief in demons.

7. James Testified To Their Existence

The New Testament author James also testified to their existence. He wrote the following about the belief that certain people had in one God:

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder (James 2:19 NIV).

We, therefore, find James, the author of the book that bears his name, testifying to the reality of demons.

In fact, demons, or evil spirits, are mentioned over one hundred times in the New Testament.

Consequently, we find that the Bible clearly teaches the reality of creatures known as demons.

Our Information About Demons Is Sketchy

We have to make the same disclaimer about this subject of demons, as we had to do about the subjects of angels, good and bad, as well as Satan. Our information is limited, and, therefore, many of the conclusions we make are only tentative.

Since demons are not the main characters in Scripture, and since the Bible has no desire to tell us anything more about them than is absolutely essential to the main story, we are left with many questions about these personages that do not have answers.

Summary To Question 10 Do Demons Actually Exist?

The existence of spirit-creatures called “demons,” or “unclean spirits” is clearly taught in Scripture. Of this, there is no doubt.

The writers of the Old Testament acknowledged the existence of evil spirits. However, they did not write much about this subject.

There is much more information about these spirits in the New Testament. In fact, the Lord Jesus specifically taught about the existence of demons. In addition, the gospels record Him casting them out of a number of different people. Consequently, there is no doubt whatsoever as to their existence.

Jesus’ disciples were also involved in the exorcising of demons. They were given authority by the Lord to drive out the demons. This includes the Twelve as well as the seventy-two which He sent out to preach the message that the kingdom of God had arrived.

We also find the Book of Acts testifying to the existence of demons. In fact, one case of casting out a demon involved the Apostle Paul. As was true with Jesus and His disciples, we find that Paul, through Jesus Christ, had authority over these unclean spirits.

James, the writer of the book that bears his name, also believed in the genuineness of demons.

Especially important is the testimony of God the Son, Jesus. He is the eternal God who became a human being. Therefore, He would be in a position to know whether or not they did exist. Jesus made it clear that demons do exist, and that they cause all sorts of problems with humanity.

Therefore, the Bible says that a spiritual realm exists that is unseen to the human eye. Along with the one true, God, there exists, in this realm, such personal beings as angels, good and bad, and demons.

However, as is true with the subject of angels and Satan, our information on these spirit beings is incomplete.

Consequently we need to qualify many of the conclusions on this difficult subject. Demons do exist but our information about them is sketchy.

Question 11

How Are We To Understand Jesus' Belief In Demons?

The fact that God the Son, Jesus Christ, taught that demons existed is obvious. If Jesus is the Son of God, the final authority on all matters of faith and practice, then we cannot attribute His belief in demons to superstition or ignorance. If the Bible is divinely inspired, and Jesus is the Son of God, then His Word on the matter is final.

However, not everyone is willing to accept the fact that Jesus actually believed in the existence of demons. The following are some of the popular views that deny Jesus accepted the reality of demons.

Option 1: Jesus Accommodated His Beliefs To The Ignorance Of His Day

There have been a number of Christians who have been uncomfortable with Jesus' stand on the existence of demons. They argue that Jesus knew that demons really did not exist, but for the sake of the ignorant and superstitious people of His day, He spoke and acted as though they did. This was for the benefit of His contemporaries who did not know any better.

The argument goes like this. Since Jesus did not come to earth to teach us about this subject He merely went along with the prevailing view of His day, even though He knew it to be false.

With this understanding, we have Jesus not truly accepting the fact of the existence of demons, and yet we can still believe Him to be the Son of God.

This View Causes Many Problems

There are enormous problems with this view. They include the following.

1. Jesus Would Be A Deceiver

First, Jesus would be deceiving the people into thinking demons actually existed when He knew they did not. Since He Himself taught that His Word was the final authority on every matter, He knew that His confirmation of the existence of demons would further substantiate the widely-held view of the people that demons did indeed exist. He who called Himself "the truth," therefore, would be teaching His disciples "untruths."

2. Did Jesus Go Along With The Charade?

In addition, when He told His disciples to specifically go and drive out the demons in His name, the Lord would have known that no such creatures existed. Yet we are expected to believe that Jesus went along with this charade to the point that His disciples were to drive out these non-existent demons in His authority!

3. What Statements Can We Trust?

Finally, if we cannot trust what He said about the existence of demons, seeing that He did it only for the ignorant people of His day, then how can we trust His Word on anything? How do we know that He did not accommodate Himself on other subjects that He taught? How do we know when we can trust Him? How can we take His Word for anything?

Option 2: He Believed They Were Symbolic Creatures

There is also the argument that when Jesus accepted the existence of demons, He was not acknowledging their “literal existence.” Rather, they represented an evil principle to Him. They were more of a “figure of speech” representing evil in general.

Therefore, the fact that He mentioned demons does not necessarily mean that He believed they truly existed.

Response

This point of view evades the obvious teaching of the Bible. There is no hint whatsoever that Jesus is referring to anything other than actual personages that exist. When He cast demons out of people He was not exorcising some evil principle from their lives. Indeed, these people were still sinful after the exorcism! There was some actual personal entity that was dwelling within them.

In addition, we are told that Jesus spoke with demons and that they responded! How does an evil principle talk? Again, this is another way of trying to deny the obvious.

In sum, Jesus believed in the literal existence of these personages because they actually existed. The Scripture could not have been clearer on the matter.

Option 3: The Early Church Added These Words

There are those who believe that Jesus did not really teach about the existence of demons. They argue that the gospel writers added these parts to the text long after Jesus’ death. In other words, the belief in demons was from the disciples of Jesus, and not Jesus Himself.

Response

While this is a popular way of getting around facing the issue of Jesus’ belief in demons, there is no evidence whatsoever that this occurred. The various texts that record His belief in these personages have not been tampered with. There are no variant readings, or variations in the manuscripts, that would give us the idea that these teachings were added to His original words.

There is something else. If one removes the statements about demons from Jesus’ teaching because it does not fit what we think He believed or taught, then this opens the door to the denial of anything and everything that He taught.

Why stop with Jesus’ belief in demons? Why not reject His belief in whom He claimed to be? If we are going to argue that the early church created the teachings of Jesus, and they did not come from the Lord Himself, then we cannot know for certain about anything that we taught. Again, we find ourselves in a hopeless situation.

Therefore, we conclude that Jesus continues the teaching of the Old Testament that evil spirit beings, known by various names, actually exist.

The Choice Is Clear

This puts people in the situation of either accepting Jesus’ teaching on this subject, as well as upon every other subject, or denying that He knew what He was talking about. There is no middle ground. He is either the Lord from heaven who speaks truthfully on every matter, or else He is either ignorant or a willful deceiver. Everyone has to make their own choice as to how they will view Jesus.

Summary To Question 11

How Are We To Understand Jesus' Belief In Demons?

The New Testament has over one hundred references to demons or evil spirits. Furthermore, we find that Jesus Himself believed in their existence. He taught about them as well as casting them out of people who were demon-possessed. In addition, He never rebuked others for holding that belief.

However, Jesus' belief in demons has always been uncomfortable for some Christians. They attempt to explain it away.

Some argue that Jesus did not really believe in their existence, but actually accommodated His beliefs to the ignorance of the times. He only pretended to believe that they actually existed. His mission was to concentrate on more important matters, so He did not correct their mistaken belief in the existence of demons.

Yet, to attempt to say that Jesus really did not believe in demons, but rather accommodated Himself to the superstition of His day, causes more problems than it solves. If Jesus did accommodate Himself to this belief, then how do we know that He did not accommodate Himself to other beliefs? How can anyone determine what Christ really believed?

In truth, Jesus accepted the existence of demons for one simple reason; demons do exist.

Others argue that Jesus did not really believe in literal demons but actually in an evil principle that existed. In other words, the references to demons were to the evil residing within each of us.

However, this does not explain anything. Indeed, how Jesus could have a conversation with an evil principle? Furthermore, after He drove the demons out of people they were still sinful. This explanation attempts to deny the obvious.

There is also the view that the belief statements about demons that came from Jesus did not really come from Him. It is argued that they were actually the words of those in the early church who held this superstition. They are the ones who put the words about demons in Jesus' mouth. Jesus never believed this.

Again, there is no evidence that this occurred. The New Testament manuscripts have been transmitted to us in a reliable manner. In addition, the documents were written at an early date when eyewitnesses to the events of the life of Christ were still living. There was never any charge that they had been tampered with to change Jesus' beliefs.

The issue is simple. Jesus Christ believed in the existence of literal personages known as demons or evil spirits. Either they do exist or they do not exist.

If they did not exist, then Jesus is mistaken, or a liar; He is not whom He claimed to be. However, if Jesus is the truth-telling Son of God, then they do exist, as He clearly testified.

Question 12

What Are Demons?

Scripture clearly speaks of the existence of beings known as “demons,” or “unclean spirits.” We know they do exist. The Bible says the following things about their characteristics.

1. They Are Spirit-Beings

Demons are disembodied spirits. They have no physical form to them whatsoever. We read the following in Matthew’s gospel:

That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick (Matthew 8:16 ESV).

Demons belong to the spirit world. Their only manifestation to humanity is in the disorders they cause.

2. Demons Are Personal Intelligent Beings

It is clear that demons are intelligent beings. Indeed, they have the attributes of personality. We also read of this in Matthew’s gospel. It says the following about them:

Suddenly they shouted, “What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” Now a large herd of swine was feeding at some distance from them. The demons begged him, “If you cast us out, send us into the herd of swine” (Matthew 8:29-31 NRSV UE).

From this verse we discover that demons can talk, they can make requests, they can act in fear, reason, and they can attempt to persuade. These are all attributes of personality.

3. They Are Unclean, Vicious, Spirits

Demons are hateful creatures. Matthew records the following description of two demon-possessed men in his gospel:

When Jesus arrived on the other side of the lake in the land of the Gadarenes, two men who were possessed by demons met him. They lived in a cemetery and were so dangerous that no one could go through that area (Matthew 8:28 NLT).

These two men were described as very dangerous. Everyone was afraid of them.

4. Some Are More Evil Than Others

The Bible speaks of degrees of wickedness among the demons, the unclean spirits. Jesus taught the following about this:

When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation (Matthew 12:43-45 NKJV).

It seems there are various levels of wickedness among these demons.

5. They Are Numerous

The fact that demons are so numerous makes the work of Satan something that takes place everywhere. We read in Mark's gospel:

Then Jesus asked, "What is your name?" And the spirit replied, "Legion, because there are many of us here inside this man" (Mark 5:9 NLT).

This gives us some insight into their number, there are many of them.

When the demons were driven into the swine at Gadera, two thousand pigs ran into the sea and drowned:

And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea (Mark 5:13 NKJV).

This is another indication that the demons are numerous.

6. They Are Messengers Of The Devil

Demons are the messengers of the devil. They do the will of their master - Satan (Matthew 12:22-30). In fact, Satan is called the head, or prince, of the demons. Matthew wrote:

Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons" (Matthew 12:24 NKJV)

Beelzebub is one of the many names of Satan. He is the ruler of the demons. Therefore, these evil spirits seem to answer to Satan. He is the one who directs them.

This sums up some of the basic truths that we know about these evil spirits, or demons. Since they are attempting to lead us astray, it is important that we know as much as we can about them.

Summary To Question 12 What Are Demons?

The subject of demons is taught in the Bible. From Scripture we learn a number of things about them. We can make the following observations. For one thing, demons do exist. There is no doubt about this from the perspective of the Bible. Indeed, in both testaments their reality is accepted. They are spirit-beings which can function without any physical form. Like angels, they can move around in the unseen world without a body like ours.

Demons are also personal intelligent beings. From various encounters that people have had with demons we find that they could speak, think, reason, and show fear. These are all attributes of personal beings. Though these beings are intelligent, they are evil malicious spirits. Indeed, there is nothing good about them.

While all of the demons are evil, some of them are more evil than others. Jesus taught that there were degrees of evil or wickedness among the demons. They are also numerous. Indeed, there are so many of them that the evil work of the devil is likely taking place everywhere on the earth. This leads us to our final point. These evil beings are messengers of the devil. They do his work and are under his authority. This briefly summarizes some of the things which we know about evil spirits, the demons.

Question 13

What Are The Various Titles, Or Names, Given To Demonic Or Evil Spirits?

Demons are evil spirits that are under the control of Satan, the devil. We find that they are known by a number of names in Scripture. They are as follows.

1. Demons

The most popular name for these unclean or evil spirits is demons. We find this term often used in the gospels. For example, we read in Mark:

And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him (Mark 1:34 ESV).

Demons were numerous among the people in Jesus' day.

2. Evil Spirits

The title "evil spirits" is also used of these personages. We read the following in the gospel of Luke:

In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight (Luke 7:21 ESV).

Like their leader, Satan, they are purely evil. The gospels tell us that Jesus often cast these evil spirits out of people.

3. Unclean (Impure) Spirits

They are also called unclean or impure spirits. Jesus gave His disciples authority over these unclean spirits when He sent them out to preach the message of the coming kingdom to the Jews. The Bible says the following:

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness (Matthew 10:1 NIV).

This tells us something of their nature, they are impure, unclean. This is in contrast to the emphasis in the Bible on believers being pure and holy.

4. Mute Spirits

In the gospels, these spirits are also called "mute spirits" or "spirits that can keep people from speaking:"

Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit" (Mark 9:17 NKJV).

The NIV puts it this way:

A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech" (Mark 9:17 NIV).

The fact that they spirits can actually keep people from speaking gives us some idea of their power.

5. Blind And Mute Spirits

We also discover that they can cause more than one problem to the person possessed. Matthew records the following account:

Then a demon-possessed man, who was both blind and unable to talk, was brought to Jesus. He healed the man so that he could both speak and see (Matthew 12:22 NLT).

This verse teaches us that these evil spirits can inflict more than one problem on a person at the same time. In this particular case, the man was mute as well as being blind.

6. Deaf And Mute Spirits

The Bible gives further examples of these spirits harming the bodies of those possessed. We find Jesus addressing the spirit as one that is deaf and mute:

And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again” (Mark 9:25 ESV).

At times, these spirits can make someone unable to speak as well as unable to hear.

7. Foul Spirits

There is also an instance of these spirits being called “foul.” We read of this in the Book of Revelation:

He called out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul bird, a haunt of every foul and hateful beast. For all the nations have drunk” (Revelation 18:2 ESV).

This is another way of saying “unclean.”

8. A Spirit Of Infirmity

In the gospels, there was a person who had the “spirit of infirmity.” We read of this in Luke’s gospel:

And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up (Luke 13:11 NKJV).

The New Living Translation puts it this way:

He [Jesus] saw a woman who had been crippled by an evil spirit. She had been bent double for eighteen years and was unable to stand up straight (Luke 13:11 NLT).

Finally, the New English Translation explains it in this manner:

And a woman was there who had been disabled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten herself up completely (Luke 13:11 NET).

Jesus recognized that this woman had been crippled, or disabled, by this particular evil spirit. Therefore, the problem which she had was not merely physical.

9. Spirit Of Divination

There is also what is known as a “spirit of divination.” Paul encountered a woman who had this spirit. The Book of Acts says:

Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune (Acts 16:16 NKJV).

The New English Translation renders the verse as follows:

Now as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave girl met us who had a spirit that enabled her to foretell the future by supernatural means (Acts 16:16 NET).

Divination has the idea of attempting to contact the dead to receive advice about things that humans are unable to know. In this particular instance, it was a demonic spirit who was enabling her to foretell what was going to happen in the future.

10. Spirit Of Antichrist

The Bible speaks of the spirit of antichrist. We read the following in the Book of First John:

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already (1 John 4:2,3 ESV).

This is the spirit of the one who opposes Jesus Christ, and all that He stands for.

11. Spirit Of The World

The Bible speaks of the “spirit of the world.” This is the spirit that characterizes our present evil world system. Paul wrote about this spirit to the Corinthians:

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God (1 Corinthians 2:12 ESV).

This spirit of the world is in contrast to the “spirit of God.”

12. Spirit Of Dizziness (Foolishness)

There is also the description of a “spirit of dizziness” or a “spirit of foolishness.” We read of this in the Book of Isaiah:

The Lord has poured into them a spirit of dizziness; they make Egypt stagger in all that she does, as a drunkard staggers around in his vomit (Isaiah 19:14 NIV).

The New Living Translation says:

The LORD has sent a spirit of foolishness on them, so all their suggestions are wrong. They cause the land of Egypt to stagger like a sick drunkard (Isaiah 19:14 NLT).

This spirit, though evil, was sent by the Lord to confuse the enemies of Israel.

13. Lying Or Deceiving Spirits

The demonic spirits are also known as lying, or deceiving, spirits. Paul warned Timothy about these evil spirits when he wrote the following:

Now the Spirit explicitly says that in the later times some will desert the faith and occupy themselves with deceiving spirits and demonic teachings (1 Timothy 4:1 NET).

This is an important description. Even when these spirits are telling the truth to people they are lying. Why is this? They never tell people the “complete” truth. Instead, they bring demoniac teachings, known as the “doctrines of demons.”

We also read about this in First John. He wrote:

We are from God; the person who knows God listens to us, but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit (1 John 4:6 NLT).

The purpose of these spirits is to deceive people with respect to God’s truth. Indeed, they are never trustworthy!

This briefly sums up what the Bible has to say about these evil spirits. We discover that they attempt to lead people into error while Jesus leads people into the truth.

Summary To Question 13

What Are The Various Titles, Or Names, Given To Demonic Or Evil Spirits?

The Bible says that evil spirits exist. These spirits do the work of their leader, Satan. We find them called a number of different names in the Scripture.

They include demons, evil spirits, unclean spirits, mute spirits, blind and mute spirits, deaf and mute spirits, foul spirits, the spirit of infirmity, the spirit of divination, spirit of Antichrist, spirit of dizziness, and spirit of deceit. The titles given to these spirits are highly instructive.

These various names give us an idea of what they are like, and how they work. It reminds us that we are facing a spiritual battle with enemies who are determined to cause us to sin.

This is another reason as to why we need to know God’s truth and the various protections that the Lord has given us to withstand these evil spirits.

Question 14

Where Did Demons Originate?

The Bible makes it clear concerning the reality of demons. They are indeed real personages. There is no doubt about this.

Yet there is no information in the Bible regarding their origin. Though Scripture does not tell us specifically where they came from, a number of theories have been put forward. The most popular views of the origin of demons are as follows.

Option 1: They Are Disembodied Spirits, A Pre-Adamic Race

A popular theory is that the demons are disembodied spirits of some race that existed before Adam and Eve. In other words, they are wicked spirit-beings that are a separate order from fallen angels.

It is argued that these demons existed at another place and time in a bodily form, but are now disembodied spirits looking for bodies to possess. A number of Scriptures are used to support this theory. For example, Jesus said:

When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order (Matthew 12:43,44 NKJV).

In this instance, the Lord speaks of a demon, or unclean spirit, attempting to find rest. This, it is argued, means that this personage is seeking a body. Once it enters a body, then the demon can rest.

In another episode, when Jesus was about to exorcise the demons out of the two men at Gadera, one of them responded in this manner:

And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea. The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened (Mark 5:10-14 ESV).

The fact that the demons implored the Lord to enter some type of body is thought to provide further evidence of their need to inhabit some type of living form, whether human or animal.

There is another passage in the Bible that seems to make a distinction between spirits and angels. This is found in the Book of Acts:

(The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three.) Then a great clamor arose, and certain scribes of the Pharisees' group stood up and contended, "We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" (Acts 23:8,9 NRSV UE).

If there is a distinction between spirits and angels, then demons could be part of this order of beings known as "spirits."

Response

There are others who do not find passages such as these as convincing evidence that demons formerly existed in some bodily form. All that the Bible is saying is that they now wish to possess either man or beast. Indeed, it says nothing about the idea that they formerly had bodies.

There Was No Race That Existed Before Adam

In addition, Scripture knows nothing of any race that existed before Adam. The Bible says that the sin of Adam brought the present chaos into the world, it was not some race that existed before him. We read the following in the Book of Romans:

When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned (Romans 5:12 NLT).

Since no race of people existed before Adam, demons could not come from them. Thus, this view has little to support it.

Option 2: They Are The Spirits Of The Evil Dead

Some feel that demons are the disembodied spirits of the evil dead. In other words, they are wandering around the realm of the dead seeking bodies to inhabit. This view has no biblical support.

Furthermore, it is contradicted by the story the Lord told of the rich man and Lazarus. When the rich man died, he was in the unseen world in a place called Hades awaiting his final judgment. He was also told that he could not go back to this world. The Bible says the following:

And besides, there is a great chasm separating us. Anyone who wanted to cross over to you from here is stopped at its edge, and no one there can cross over to us (Luke 16:26 NLT).

The spirits of the evil dead go to Hades, the unseen world, waiting for the last judgment and then their punishment.

At the Great White Throne judgment, they, as well as Death and Hades, are thrown into the lake of fire:

Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death (Revelation 20:14 NKJV).

These spirits are awaiting God's final judgment and then their everlasting punishment. Consequently, a better view needs to be found.

Option 3: They Are The Offspring Of Angels And Earthly Women

There is the view that holds the demons resulted from the relationship between angels and earthly women. The demons did not exist before this point.

This view understands Genesis 6 as referring to the unlawful marriages between angels and human women. Their offspring was the *Nephilim* whom some believe to be half-human, half-angelic creatures.

There are so many problems with this view; not the least of which Jesus said angels do not marry. The Bible records Him saying:

For when the dead rise, they won't be married. They will be like the angels in heaven (Matthew 22:30 NLT).

This seems to limit the abilities of these creatures. They cannot reproduce.

Life-Forms Reproduce After Their Kind

In addition, God created various life-forms to reproduce only after their kind. We read the following in the Book of Genesis:

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so (Genesis 1:24 ESV).

Since God has placed a limitation on reproduction, dogs cannot mate with horses, pigs with cows, humans with apes, it seems impossible that angels could mate with humans.

This is especially true when we discover that the Bible says that angels have an entirely different nature than humans. (For a detailed answer as to the question of whether or not the “sons of God” in Genesis 6 were evil angels see Appendix 3. From the totality of the evidence, we discover that they were not! In this context, the “sons of God” were human beings).

Option 4: They Are Fallen But Not Confined Angels

The best view, with respect to the identity of demons, is that they are “fallen angels.” Some of the angels who fell were bound while others became demons. These wicked angels are doing the bidding of Satan by causing all sorts of evil, as well possessing certain human beings.

Satan, the ruler of the angels, is also called the ruler of the demons:

But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons” (Matthew 12:24 NIV).

This is the best answer with respect to the origin of demons.

Summary To Question 14 Where Did Demons Originate?

Scripture makes it very clear that demons exist. It does not, however, tell us where they came from. Various theories have been put forward. The main ones are as follows.

One idea is that they are disembodied spirits of some Pre-adamic race. However, Scripture does not teach that any race existed before Adam.

Some think they are the spirits of the evil dead. Again, we find that Scripture does not support this theory. The evil dead cannot wander around as disembodied spirits. They are presently in a place of confinement while awaiting the Last Judgment and then their eternal punishment.

Others contend that demons were the offspring of angels and human women. This view is derived from chapter 6 in the Book of Genesis which speaks of the “sons of God” marrying the “daughters of men.” However, for many reasons, this view does not fit with the facts of Scripture.

For one thing, angels and humans cannot intermingle. In the Book of Genesis, it tells us that God created life forms “after their kind.” This means that there are limits as to whom can reproduce with whom.

In addition, there is nothing in the context in these chapters of Genesis about the Flood that angels had anything to do with this punishment that came upon the earth (for those interested in understanding the identity of the “sons of God” in Genesis 6, again we recommend Appendix 3 of this book).

The best answer seems to be that demons are fallen angels. Some angels that fell have been confined while others are allowed to roam around as demons.

In addition, the same titles are applied to both evil angels and demons. While this seems to be the best answer, no one knows for certain about their origin. The Bible simply does not tell us.

Question 15

What Is The Difference Between Demons And Devils?

Is there a difference between demons and devils? Unfortunately some English translations in the past have translated the Greek word for “demons” as “devils.” This has led to much confusion.

We can make the following observations about demons and devils.

1. There Is Only One Devil But Many Demons

There are many demons, but there is only one personage who is the devil. The word translated devil is the Greek *diabolos*, which means “slanderer.” It is always used in the singular when referring to the devil.

2. The Word Diabolos Is Used Of Slanderers

The adjectival form of the word *diabolos* is used three times in the New Testament and is variously translated as “slanderer,” “those who use cruel words,” or “gossips.” The examples are all found in the writings of Paul. We read in Timothy:

Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanderers [*diabolos*], temperate, faithful in all things (1 Timothy 3:11 NKJV).

Their wives must also be of good character. They must not be gossips [*diabolos*], but they must control their tempers and be trustworthy in every way (1 Timothy 3:11 God’s Word).

Here we find this Greek word translated as “slanderers” or “gossips.”

In Second Timothy, it says the following about certain people:

[They are] heartless, unappeasable, slanderous [*diabolos*], without self-control, brutal, not loving good (2 Timothy 3:3 ESV).

The Contemporary English Version puts it this way:

[They are] heartless, and hateful. Their words will be cruel, and they will have no self-control or pity (2 Timothy 3:3 CEV).

Indeed, one who slanders someone does so by using “cruel words.”

Paul wrote to Titus and said the older women are not to be slanderers. He put it this way:

Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers [*diabolos*] or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good (Titus 2:3 NRSV UE).

These references give us further insight into the behavior and tactics of demonic forces.

3. The Word Translated Demon May Have The Meaning Of Intelligence

The word translated “demon” comes from the Greek word *daimon*, or the diminutive form *daimonion*. The root meaning of the Greek word *daimon* is “knowing” or “intelligence.” This may have the idea that their intelligence is above humans. However, we cannot be certain of this.

4. The Words Demon And Devil Are Never Interchangeable

It is important to note that “daimon” and “daimonion” are used in the New Testament in both the singular and the plural (demon and demons), but they are never used interchangeably with “diabolos” (devil).

There is only one devil but there are many demons. It is important that we always keep this distinction in mind.

Summary To Question 15

What Is The Difference Between Demons And Devils?

The Bible says that demons do exist. Indeed, there are many of them. This is in contrast to the one personage who is known as the “devil.”

Unfortunately, some English translations have incorrectly rendered the Greek word for demons as “devils.” This has caused much needless confusion.

Since the root meaning of the Greek word translated as demons means “knowing,” there is the possibility that it reflects creatures with higher intelligence than humanity. This, however, is only conjecture.

Simply stated, there are many demons but only one devil.

Question 16

What Power Do Demons Have?

Demons do indeed have power. There is no doubt about this. Scripture also gives us some idea as to the extent of their power. The Bible says the following about the power of demons.

1. They Are Able To Enter Into The Bodies Of Humans And Animals

Demons are able to enter and control both humans and animals. We discover this in the account of Jesus casting demons out of the Gadarene demoniacs. Mark records what occurred as follows:

For he had said to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion; for we are many.” He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding; and the unclean spirits begged him, “Send us into the swine; let us enter them.” So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea (Mark 5:8-13 NRSV UE).

These demons entered pigs after previously inhabiting humans. We are not told why they wished to enter the pigs. Yet we do know they have this ability to inhabit humans or animals.

In some instances, we find that more than one demon entered into the same victim. As with the case of the Gadarene demoniacs, there were a number of demons inhabiting those men.

We also have the testimony about Mary Magdalene. There were a number of demons that were exorcised from her. Luke records:

Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out (Luke 8:2 NRSV UE).

Seven demons were inside Mary Magdalene when the Lord Jesus cast them out. Consequently, demons can indeed possess or inhabit various life-forms.

2. They Can Inflict Mental Torment

Demons also have the ability to inflict mental torment. One of the Gadarene demoniacs was described as follows:

Because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones (Mark 5:4,5 NKJV).

This tortured man was crying out and cutting himself with stones. Here is an example of demons being able to inflict mental torment upon a human being.

3. They Can Inflict Physical Infirmities

They are also capable of imposing some physical infirmity. We find examples of demons inflicting the following illnesses upon people.

Demons Can Make Someone Mute

According to Scripture, demons have the ability to keep someone from using their powers of speech. Matthew records the following:

So Jesus cast out the demon, and instantly the man could talk. The crowds marveled. “Nothing like this has ever happened in Israel!” they exclaimed (Matthew 9:33 NLT).

Jesus healed a man who was both demon-possessed and mute. This unique miracle caught the attention of the crowd. Indeed, nobody had seen anything like this before!

Demons Caused A Woman To Be Crippled

According to Jesus, a woman had a physical deformity that was caused by a particular demonic spirit. Luke records the following incident:

And a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all (Luke 13:11 NIV).

The Lord then emphasized this woman was suffering because of Satan himself:

And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day? (Luke 13:16 NRSV UE).

Therefore, it is possible that an evil spirit can cause physical deformity. This, of course, does not mean that all physical deformity is caused by Satan or some demonic spirit.

Demons May Cause Blindness

In another instance, we find that blindness can be a side effect of demonic activity. Matthew writes about a blind man who was demon-possessed:

Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and unable to speak was brought to Him. He healed him, so that the man could both speak and see (Matthew 12:22 CSB).

Demons can, therefore, affect both the physical and the spiritual nature of a person at the same time.

However, we must be careful when we attempt to attribute sickness to some type of demonic activity. There are many possible causes for physical disease. Most times it is as simple as being exposed to some virus or bacteria, or the simple breaking down of the human body.

In addition, sometimes sickness is a punishment of God for sin. We read about God’s judgment on the believers at Corinth for abusing the Lords’ Supper:

This is the reason why many of you are weak and sick and quite a number of you have died (1 Corinthians 11:30 God’s Word).

Ultimately, we do not know why someone is sick. In fact, when Jesus disciples asked Him why a certain man had been born blind, the Lord explained it this way:

Now as Jesus was passing by, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who committed the sin that caused him to be born blind, this man or his parents?” Jesus answered, “Neither

this man nor his parents sinned, but he was born blind so that the acts of God may be revealed through what happens to him (John 9:1-3 NET).

Notice that Jesus said that the blindness of this man was for the glory of the Lord. It was not because of some sin, or demonic activity in the life of his parents or himself.

Therefore, we should not assume that sickness is always the punishment of God, or the activity of demons.

4. They Can Cause Erratic Behavior

We further find that the influence of demons can cause people to behave strangely. One man said the following to Jesus:

“Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.” “You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment (Matthew 17:15-18 NIV).

The behavior of certain people may be affected by demons.

5. They Can Harm Unbelievers

Scripture gives us an example of unbelievers being harmed by demons. Certain Jewish exorcists were attacked by evil spirits. We read of this in the Book of Acts:

Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists attempted to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “I command you by the Jesus that Paul preaches!” Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. The evil spirit answered them, “I know Jesus, and I recognize Paul — but who are you?” Then the man who had the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them all, and prevailed against them, so that they ran out of that house naked and wounded (Acts 19:13-16 CSB).

Unbelievers can be harmed by demons. This is another capability which these evil spirits possess. In this instance, the evil spirit showed extraordinary strength.

6. They Deceive Nations

Entire nations can be deceived by the work of the demons. The Book of Revelation tells us the following about them:

These miracle-working demons caused all the rulers of the world to gather for battle against the Lord on that great judgment day of God Almighty (Revelation 16:14 NLT).

The New English translation renders it this way:

For they are the spirits of the demons performing signs who go out to the kings of the earth to bring them together for the battle that will take place on the great day of God, the All Powerful (Revelation 16:14 NET).

This verse is highly instructive. The work of demons is not confined to individuals, but can actually include entire nations.

7. Their Power Is Exercised Within Limits

It must be emphasized that the power of demons is limited. They cannot do anything they wish. Their ability to do evil is always kept under control by the Lord. Therefore, the Lord is the One who ultimately controls all things that occur. Indeed, He sets the limits of what they can and cannot do.

In sum, we must be aware that demons do have power but their power is limited.

Summary To Question 16 What Power Do Demons Have?

Demons exist and they are powerful. Scripture testifies to this. The influence of these demons can be seen by a number of things that they do.

From Scripture, we discover that they can enter into people and animals. How they are able to do this is not stated. What we do know is that they have the ability to inhabit various life-forms.

It is within their capability to inflict mental and physical infirmities upon those whom they inhabit. The Bible gives examples of demon-possessed people being deaf, mute, crippled and blind. Somehow, they seem to be able to inflict these ailments upon people.

However, we should not assume that people who have these ailments are being tormented by a demon. Indeed, there are many other causes of physical suffering apart from any demonic influence.

We also find that demons can cause people to behave erratically. The Bible gives us an example of one person whose erratic behavior was stopped when a demon was cast out of him.

Demons have the ability to even deceive entire nations. The Book of Revelation gives this testimony to their power.

Though the power of demons is far-reaching, it can only be exercised within limits. They are always under the sovereign control of the Lord. In other words, they can only do things which the Lord permits. Beyond this, they have no ability.

Question 17

What Are The Limitations Of Demons?

Though demons are powerful, wicked creatures, they do have their limitations. As created beings, there are certain things that they are not able to do. We can make the following observations about how these beings are limited.

1. They Are Not Everywhere Present

Unlike God, demons are not everywhere present. They are localized. This means that they can only be at one place at one time.

For example, we find that when the demons were indwelling the two men at Gadera (Matthew 8:28-34), they were localized to those two individuals. When they were driven out of the two men by Jesus, the demons then went into the pigs, and nowhere else. They could not be in more than one place at a time.

This is in contrast to the God of the Bible who is present everywhere. Indeed, there is no place where anyone can go and hide from God. The psalmist declared the following:

Where can I go to escape your spirit? Where can I flee to escape your presence? If I were to ascend to heaven, you would be there. If I were to sprawl out in Sheol, there you would be. If I were to fly away on the wings of the dawn, and settle down on the other side of the sea, even there your hand would guide me, your right hand would grab hold of me (Psalm 139:7-10 NET).

Therefore, while demons are limited as to where they can be, God has no such limitations.

2. They Are Powerful But Not All-Powerful

Demons are powerful creatures. We should never underestimate them or what they can do. However, they are not all-powerful. Their power is limited. Therefore, these beings cannot do the same things that God does.

In contrast to the demons, God has the power, the authority, over all things. This includes the actions of demons. In other words, demons cannot do anything unless the Lord allows them to do it. While the demons do perpetrate evil, it is always within certain boundaries. These boundaries have been established by the Lord.

We also find that demons cannot do good works such as a beneficial miracle. These are the sort of works that only God does. When Jesus was accused of being demon-possessed the people responded by saying:

Others said, "This doesn't sound like a man possessed by a demon! Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" (John 10:21 NLT).

That is an excellent question! Demons have no such miraculous power. Indeed, they do not open the eyes of the blind. Neither do these evil spirit-beings do anything good. Again, we stress that their power is limited.

3. Demons Are Intelligent But Not All-Knowing

The knowledge of demons is also limited. As created beings, they are limited in what they know. They cannot read minds and do not know what is going to happen in the future.

This is in contrast to the God of the Bible who is all-knowing. There is nothing which escapes His knowledge. He knows all things past, present, and future.

These are some of the limitations that we find with demons. Therefore, we should not attribute more power to them than the Bible does. Instead we need a balanced view of these creatures.

Summary To Question 17

What Are The Limitations Of Demons?

Demons do exist. There is no doubt about this. Their intention is to cause evil wherever and whenever they can. While demons are powerful creatures, they do have their limitations. We should note three particular ways in which they are limited.

For one thing, demons are limited in that they can only be at one place at one time. They cannot be present everywhere. This is in contrast to the God of the Bible who is everywhere-present.

Demons are also powerful evil creatures. Their power should not be underestimated by those who believe in Jesus Christ. However they are not all-powerful. There are limits to what they can do. Again, this is in contrast to the God of the Bible who can do anything He desires.

Furthermore, demons only do evil, we never find them doing good works. They do not perform beneficial miracles as we find from the God of Scripture.

Finally, demons are intelligent beings. Indeed, they are more intelligent than humans. However, they are not all-knowing. Their knowledge is limited. This is in contrast to the God of the Bible who knows all things past, present, and future.

This sums up some of the limitations which demons have. It is important that we know their strengths as well as their limitations.

Question 18

Do Demons Understand The Limitations Of Their Power?

Yes. Though demons have ability to inflict disease, and to possess people and animals, their power is limited. Furthermore, they understand their limitations.

Indeed, demons are intelligent beings in that they realize the limits of their power. They know the following.

1. They Know That Only One God Exists

Among other things, the demons understand that there is only one God who exists. This is the God of the Bible. We read the following in the Book of James:

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that —and shudder (James 2:19 NIV).

These spirit-creatures realize that the God of the Bible is the only God who exists. In the same manner, they realize that they are not gods. In other words, they cannot do the same things which God does.

Consequently, these creatures understand that they are fighting a battle which they will eventually lose.

2. They Know The Identity Of Jesus Christ

These evil spirits understand Jesus' true nature. They know that He is God the Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Yet they are not committed to Him. In fact, they serve their master Satan, or the devil, rather than the Lord.

In Mark's gospel, we read an account of Jesus being confronted by a man who was demon-possessed. The demon realized Jesus' identity:

And he began shouting, "Why are you bothering us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One sent from God!" (Mark 1:24 NLT).

The demons recognize that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He has authority over them. Contrary to many people living here upon the earth, they were correct in their theology of God! They know Jesus is the "Holy One."

3. They Know Their Fate

Demons also know their eventual fate. We discover this in an episode recorded in Matthew's gospel. When confronted with Jesus, the demons recognized what the future held for them. The Bible records what happened as follows:

And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29 NKJV).

From their response we find that demons realize that punishment is coming for them - a punishment they cannot escape. Furthermore, this punishment includes torment for their evil deeds.

4. Demons Submit To The Authority Of Jesus Christ

Demons know that Jesus Christ is God the Son. They also know that they must submit to His authority. Indeed, whenever Christ gave a command, the demons obeyed it. There are no exceptions to this. We read in Matthew's gospel:

The demons begged him, "If you cast us out, send us into the herd of swine." And he said to them, "Go!" So they came out and entered the swine; and suddenly, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the water (Matthew 8:31,32 NRSV UE).

In this instance the Lord commanded the demons to leave the person and the demons left. These demons realized that they must always submit to Jesus Christ. He has complete authority over them as He has over everything else.

5. Demons Know Genuine Believers

Interestingly, demons also know the identity of those who have truly believed in Jesus Christ. The Book of Acts states the following words of an evil spirit toward those who used the names of Jesus and Paul but were not true believers:

And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" (Acts 19:15 NKJV).

They know who the real believers are, and they also know those who are merely pretending to believe. In this, they know more than humans because we can be fooled. Seemingly, the demons cannot.

6. They Submit To Believers Under Christ's Authority

The disciples of Jesus were given power over demons. In fact, Jesus gave His disciples the following command when He sent them out to preach the good news:

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received! (Matthew 10:8 NLT).

Notice that power to cast out demons was granted to them. Like their Lord, they too would have authority over these unclean spirits.

This power that Jesus disciples had over the demons became known to everyone. We read the following response of the seventy:

The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:17-20 NRSV UE).

The disciples rejoiced that the demons had to submit to them through the authority of Jesus. This is still true today. Demons must submit to believers who have the authority of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote:

We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments (2 Corinthians 10:3,4 NLT).

Indeed, we fight spiritual battles with spiritual weapons.

In sum, demons are powerful beings. Yet they are limited in what they can do. Furthermore, they clearly recognize the limits of their power as well as recognizing who does have all-power, the God of the Bible.

Summary To Question 18

Do Demons Understand The Limitations Of Their Power?

Demons, or evil spirits, have great power. The Bible makes this abundantly clear. However, the Bible also tells us that the power of demons is limited. Indeed, there are many things which they cannot do.

Furthermore, Scripture makes it plain that the demons know the limitations of their abilities. We can make the following observations about this biblical truth.

First, the demons understand that only one God exists. They also know who this God is. Indeed, they know that the God of the Bible is the all-powerful, all-knowing Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

In addition, these evil spirits realize that they are not gods and, therefore, do not have the same authority as the God of Scripture. In other words, they know they are not all-powerful and all-knowing.

Furthermore, these demons realize that they must submit to the one true God. This is something which they must always do. There are no exceptions to this. When the Lord gives a command to the demons, they have to obey it. They realize this fact and they do obey.

There is something else. These evil spirits also know who Jesus Christ is. They are aware that He is God the Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Contrary to many people here upon the earth which deny Jesus' unique identity, the evil spirits know who He is.

These spirits also know that they must submit to His authority as they must submit to the authority of God the Father. Again, there are no exceptions to this.

Demons realize that they will eventually be punished. Indeed, these spirits are not ignorant of the fact that they will one day be judged by God. This punishment includes torment.

The demons also know the identity of genuine believers. We find that they also know the identity of those who pretend to be believers but in actuality are not.

The Bible also says that those who believe in Jesus Christ have power over the demons through His authority. Therefore, we should not be frightened of them. However, this does not mean that we can combat them in our own strength. We cannot. Indeed, we must always call upon the authority of the Lord when fighting spiritual battles.

This sums up some of the limitations of demons as well as their understanding of these limitations. Indeed, they know who they are as well as what fate awaits them.

Question 19

Are There Such Things As Territorial Spirits (Daniel 10)

There is a passage in Scripture, found in the Book of Daniel chapter ten, which some people believe teach the doctrine that territorial spirits exist. That is, certain spirits have explicit geographical boundaries for which they protect.

Thus, these angels protect and fight over the territory which they have been assigned. This is true in the case of the good angels as well as in the case of the evil angels. Each has their own assigned territory which they protect.

This passage in Daniel which is used to teach the doctrine of territorial spirits reads as follows:

Suddenly, a hand touched me and raised me to my hands and knees. He said to me, “Daniel, you are a man treasured [by God]. Understand the words that I’m saying to you. Stand on your feet, for I have now been sent to you.” After he said this to me, I stood trembling. “Don’t be afraid, Daniel,” he said to me, “for from the first day that you purposed to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your prayers were heard. I have come because of your prayers. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me for 21 days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me after I had been left there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to help you understand what will happen to your people in the last days, for the vision refers to those days (Daniel 10:11-14 CSB).

This passage gives us a glimpse of what occurs in the world of the spirits. Daniel realized that the captivity of his nation was about to end. After the Babylonians had taken the nation captive, the Medes and the Persians overthrew Babylon. Daniel and his people were now under Persian rule. Daniel wanted to know when this rule would end. Thus, he prayed to the Lord.

This passage tells us that a certain angel was on his way to answer the prayer of Daniel, but it actually took him twenty-one days to arrive. This late arrival was due to interference of the “Prince of Persia.”

This has been understood to mean that there is a certain angel who looks after the territory of Persia. The conclusion then drawn is that there are angels who have been given authority over other geographical areas as well.

Should we infer from this passage that there are angels who are territorial? Are they assigned to protect certain geographical areas or certain nations?

Michael Protects God’s People Not A Particular Region

In answering this question, we must be careful about drawing too much out of the text. For one thing, we are told that the archangel Michael is the protector of the people, the one who is in charge of the citizens of Israel. Daniel wrote the following words:

At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book (Daniel 12:1 ESV).

While Michael is the protector of Israel, this does not limit him to one geographical area. Indeed we find that Michael was still protecting the people when they were in exile in Babylon. His protection did not cease merely because the people were removed out of a given territory.

Consequently, rather than assuming there are spirits who are assigned to a certain geographical territory, it seems better to conclude that these spirits are aligned with peoples and nations.

Even if their boundaries change, these spirits are, in some way, still joined to these people. While the boundaries may change, these evil spirits remain with the people.

Daniel Did Not Pray Specifically Against These Spirits

Furthermore, we do not find Daniel naming these spirits in his prayer. Daniel focused on the things which the Lord had promised the people. He did not say anything about these spirits.

Accordingly, the idea that certain spirits are territorial is not something that can be clearly sustained from Scripture. We know so little about these evil spirits so we must be careful about coming to any firm conclusions about them. Therefore, it is best to admit our ignorance in this matter.

Summary To Question 19 Are There Such Things As Territorial Spirits? (Daniel 10)

Some people believe in what is known as “territorial spirits.” This is derived from a passage found in Daniel chapter ten where an angel speaks of the “prince of Persia.” This angel told Daniel that the “prince of Persia” was thwarting his attempt to answer Daniel’s prayer.

Obviously, a human could not stop an angel from bringing a message to Daniel. Thus, this prince, as well as the prince of Greece, which is also mentioned in this context, must be some type of angel which has authority over a certain territory.

The fact that these spirits have a geographical listing with their name has caused some to think that evil spirits in general have a territory which is under their control. In other words, there are certain geographical boundaries which these angels are assigned. They protect and fight these particular areas.

However, we do not have to draw this conclusion from the text. Indeed, Michael, the protector of Israel, was still protecting them when they were exiled in Babylon. Consequently, his protection of the nation was not limited to when they were in the Promised Land.

It may be proper to conclude that certain spirits, or angels, are aligned with nations. Yet we must again be careful because we are told so little about them. It is best that we admit our ignorance and not try to draw too much from the text.

What we can say is that evil spirits are operating and certain ones seem to operate for specific nations; at least that is what has happened in the past. Beyond this, we should not try to draw any conclusions.

Question 20

Can Demons Materialize In Human Or Animal Form?

Is it possible for demons to materialize so that we humans can see them? Can they appear in either human or animal form? Though we know that demons can possess humans, is it possible for them to create some physical form and simply appear? What does the Bible say?

1. There Is No Clear Biblical Evidence This Can Occur

As we look through the pages of Scripture, we find no uncontested example of a demon materializing. Being disembodied spirits there is no indication that they have the power to create some human form in which to appear. This would be beyond their capabilities.

2. They Seem To Need Bodies To Work Evil

Furthermore, it seems that demons are powerless to work evil unless they inhabit a body. Jesus said the following about evil spirits seeking a place to dwell:

When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. “Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order” (Matthew 12:43,44 NKJV).

If a demon could simply materialize and cause havoc with humanity, then it wouldn't be constantly looking for some human or animal form in which to inhabit. This is a further indication that demons cannot appear at will in some human-like or animal-like form.

3. The Demons At Gadera Wanted Bodies To Possess

The Bible records Jesus casting out demons from two men in the area of Gadera alongside the Sea of Galilee. When the demons were cast out of the men at Gadera, we find that they did not wish to be bodiless. Indeed, they would rather enter into the bodies of pigs. Scripture records the incident as follows:

He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding; and the unclean spirits begged him, “Send us into the swine; let us enter them” (Mark 5:10-12 NRSV UE).

Notice that they begged Jesus to send them into some type of bodies. On this occasion, they entered the bodies of these pigs.

4. They Can Appear In Other Forms

Although there is no evidence that demons can simply materialize, they can appear in forms other than human. Revelation chapter nine tells us that many demons were released from the bottomless pit. We then read the following:

And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth . . . The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth (Revelation 9:2,7,8 NIV).

In this instance, their appearance will certainly be unlike any creature that is known to exist!

5. There Is Another Example Of A Different Appearance

Later, in the Book of Revelation, we are told that these evil spirits have a different looking appearance:

And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs (Revelation 16:13 ESV).

In this instance, Scripture says their appearance will be “like frogs.”

The appearances of demons in these forms will happen only after the bound angels are released from the bottomless pit. In other words, this is still in the future.

Some may argue that these are examples of demons having the capability to simply materialize. However, if this is the case, they did not materialize in a human form, but rather in strange form of a creature that does not exist here upon the earth. Yet we must be careful in drawing this inference. Indeed, there is also the legitimate question as to how literal we are to understand their descriptions in this contexts. Most Bible commentators understand these to be symbolic descriptions. It seems that this is the wisest way to interpret their portrayal.

Like so many other issues with respect to the topic of demons, we just do not know enough to make any solid conclusions.

Summary To Question 20

Can Demons Materialize In Human Or Animal Form?

While demons have the ability to possess either humans or animals there is the question about their ability to simply materialize in some human or animal form. Does Scripture allow for the possibility of demons to appear in this manner?

The idea that demons can somehow materialize in either a human or animal form is not found in Scripture. Indeed, there is no evidence that they have this ability.

To the contrary, the Bible speaks of these disembodied spirits going around trying to find human beings in which to possess. There are a couple of episodes in Scripture which seem to prove this point.

First, Jesus spoke of evil spirits who, after being cast out of a man, were wandering around seeking a place to rest. This seems to indicate that they need some bodily form in which to dwell. Otherwise they could simply materialize in whatever form they wished.

In another instance, when Jesus was about cast demons out of two men at Gadera we find the demons begging Him to cast them into the pigs. Again, if they could simply materialize at will, there would be no need for them to plead to be cast into some type of bodily form. Demons do appear in animal forms in the Book of Revelation. Yet these are not the forms of actual animals which are known to exist and live here upon the earth. They are composite creatures which have features of several different animals. Furthermore, there is the problem of how literal to understand the description of these demons assuming these animal forms. Did they really look like that, or was the description of them symbolic of something else.

Though it could be argued that this is an actual materialization of demons, there is just not enough information to make that conclusion. Therefore, in this area, as in many areas, we must admit our ignorance and not attempt to say more than the Bible explicitly says.

Question 21

What Are The Doctrines Of Demons?

The Bible warns believers about the doctrine of demons. Paul wrote to Timothy about these evil teachings:

The Spirit says clearly that in later times some believers will desert the Christian faith. They will follow spirits that deceive, and they will believe the teachings of demons. These people will speak lies disguised as truth. Their consciences have been scarred as if branded by a red-hot iron. They will try to stop others from getting married and from eating certain foods. God created food to be received with prayers of thanks by those who believe and know the truth (1 Timothy 4:1-3 God's Word).

From this passage, we can make some observations about the doctrines, or teachings, of demons. They can be summed up as follows:

1. They Want People To Engage In Religious Self-Denial

For one thing, we find that demons would like people to engage in religious asceticism, or self-denial. This would include such things as forbidding people to marry, and not to eat certain foods. By performing such ascetic acts, a person can have the false impression that they are pleasing God by this attitude of self-denial.

In actuality, God has not commanded people to do any such thing. There is nothing that any of us can do to earn favor with God. Nothing! Our responsibility is to believe on Him whom He sent.

Jesus made this clear in a conversation with the people of His day:

“We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?” Jesus told them, “This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent” (John 6:28,29 NLT).

The only way to have eternal life is to believe in Jesus Christ. Indeed, we cannot do anything on our own to earn favor with God on the matter of our eternal salvation. All we can do is believe.

2. Demons Encourage Empty Formalism

One of the things in which demons would like people to be engaged is mere religious formalism. The outward form of godliness is there, but no spiritual life exists. Going through all the motions of religion without any of God's power is a demonic doctrine.

3. They Want People To Depart From The Faith

Another instance of demonic doctrine is the departure from the historic faith. The Bible makes it clear that the faith has been once and for all delivered to the believers. Jude wrote:

Dear friends, although I have been eager to write to you about our common salvation, I now feel compelled instead to write to encourage you to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3 NET).

Rather than embracing the faith that has been once and for all revealed to believers, demonic influences would have people either add or subtract to what God has revealed in His Word. This is what Paul warned Timothy about when he said people would depart from “the faith.”

4. They Bring In False Doctrine

The false doctrine that demons bring is the denial that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. In other words, they deny that God the Son became a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ. The Bible says:

By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world (1 John 4:2,3 NKJV).

Demons deny this basic truth of the Christian faith that God the Son visited our planet some two thousand years ago.

Demonic spirits also curse Christ. Paul wrote the following to the Corinthians:

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3 ESV).

This is in contrast to the Holy Spirit who cannot curse Christ.

5. This Will Increase In The Latter Times

We also find that demonic activity will increase in the latter times. Before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the evil work of these demonic forces will intensify. Consequently, we should not expect things to get better, only worse.

This sums up some of the things which we should be aware of concerning the “doctrines of demons.”

Summary To Question 21

What Are The Doctrines Of Demons?

Scripture warns believers about “the doctrines of demons.” In fact, we are told that in the last days the doctrines, or teachings, of demons will be on the increase. This being the case, we need to know what these particular doctrines are in order that we can avoid them.

Performing works of self-denial is one way in which people believe they are right with God. In other words, they think that they have earned His favor by certain things which they do not do. However, this is not how we please the Lord. In fact, this idea is actually a demonic doctrine.

In addition, the doctrine of demons includes having an outward, formal religious attitude without any of the power of God. People assume that they will please God by merely going through the motions. This type of practice is also called a demonic doctrine.

Basically, demons want people to depart from the true faith that God has revealed. This would include the denial of the basic teachings of the Christian faith that has been once and for all entrusted to believers. Demons also bring false doctrine, or false beliefs, into the church. They want to get believers off of the straight and narrow path and on to beliefs which are contrary to the faith which the living God has revealed to us.

While they have always done this to some degree, it seems this demonic activity will intensify before Jesus Christ returns. This explains why we are seeing so much of this type of activity in our day and age. These are some of the doctrines of demons of which Christians need to be aware. Indeed, we need to avoid them at all times!

Question 22

Is Demon Possession A Reality?

Is demon-possession a reality, or something that is a superstition of a more ignorant time? Can human beings actually be possessed by an evil spirit? What does the Bible have to say about the subject?

There are a number of things we should note as we answer this important question.

1. Demon Possession Or Demonized?

To begin with, while the specific term “demon-possession” or “demon-possessed” is not used in Scripture, the Bible does speak of people “having a demon,” “demonized,” or “demons entering into people and controlling their actions.” For lack of a better term, we will use “demon-possession” to speak of these activities.

2. Demon Possession Does Happen

The New Testament does testify to the fact that demons are able to enter and control both humans and beasts. It is not mere psychological dysfunction on the part of a person. We find this from general statements the New Testament gives as well as specific examples of demon-possession.

3. There Are General Statements In Scripture

There are a number of accounts in Scripture where demons were driven out of people. For example, Matthew makes the following statement about the miracles of Jesus:

News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them (Matthew 4:24 NIV).

Here is an example of one of the gospel writers, Matthew, telling us that Jesus’ ministry consisted of driving out demons.

4. Jesus’ Disciples Had Authority Over Demons

Jesus gave His disciples authority over demons when He sent them out to preach the kingdom of God. We read the following in Matthew:

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness (Matthew 10:1 NRSV UE).

The authority of Jesus extends to the demons. He is indeed Lord over them.

5. Why Are They Not Mentioned In John’s Gospel?

It has been argued that the Gospel of John knows nothing about demon-possession, or exorcism. But this is not true. The crowd accused Jesus of having a demon:

“You are demon-possessed,” the crowd answered. “Who is trying to kill you?” (John 7:20 NIV).

They recognized that people could be possessed by a demon.

Furthermore, John records that the religious leaders of His day also accused Jesus of having been demon-possessed. We read the following:

The Jews answered him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?” (John 8:48 NLT).

In this instance, the Jewish religious rulers accused Jesus of being demonized or demon possessed. While John’s gospel does not record any account of the healing of those demon possessed, it surely acknowledges that the people believed demon-possession was a reality.

6. Exorcism Of Demons In The Book Of Acts

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the exorcism of demons continued through the ministry of His disciples. They were able to drive out demons through the authority of Jesus. We read the following account:

For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed (Acts 8:7 NKJV).

Note that many people who were possessed of demons had these evil spirits driven out of them. Therefore, the exorcism of demonic spirits continued after Jesus Christ has ascended into heaven. We should also assume there remains the possibility that demons can still possess humans.

In sum, people were possessed by evil spirits during the time of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. In addition, this practice continued after the Lord ascended into heaven. Furthermore, the possibility that people can be possessed by demons continues to this day.

Summary To Question 22 Is Demon Possession A Reality?

The Bible talks about people being demon possessed or demonized. This speaks of the ability of demons to enter into and control a person’s life. There are general statements in the New Testament that give evidence of the fact of demon-possession.

In the life and ministry of Jesus Christ we find Him confronting demons. There are several recorded instances when He drove demons out of people. Demon-possession was indeed a reality during His earthly ministry.

Demon possession did not stop with the ministry of Jesus. In the Book of Acts, we are told of instances where people were possessed by evil spirits. Therefore, demons were able to possess certain individuals after the time of Jesus.

This is still true today. Demons can indeed enter individuals and possess them. Demon possession is a reality.

The good news is that Jesus showed that He had authority over the demons. They always had to obey His command to leave the person.

In addition, Jesus’ disciples were given this same authority. By invoking the name, or authority, of Jesus, demons had to leave people.

Consequently, authority over demons is possible through Jesus Christ and His power. However, humans, on their own, do not have any such authority.

Question 23

Does The New Testament Give Specific Examples Of People Being Demon Possessed?

Not only does the New Testament make general statements about people being demon-possessed, there are also specific instances where a person was diagnosed with this problem. We can list the following specific cases of demon-possession which are recorded for us in the New Testament.

1. At A Synagogue At Capernaum

Two of the four gospels relate the story of the demon-possessed man in a Capernaum synagogue (Mark 1:25-27; Luke 4:51-56). Jesus was teaching with authority in this synagogue when suddenly a demonic presence made itself known. Jesus exorcised the demon, causing the people to be amazed with Him, as well as His ability. We read:

Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him” (Mark 1:27 NKJV).

His ability to cast out the unclean spirits caused amazement with the people in His day. Indeed, they had never seen anything like it before.

2. The Gadarene Demoniacs

Three out of the four gospels relay the story of the demoniacs in Gadera that were healed of their demon possession (Matthew 8:28-34) (Mark 5:1-20) (Luke 8:26-39).

These two people were living among the tombs, cutting themselves, and causing fear to all who passed by. Jesus exorcised the demons out of these two individuals. The people saw the change. The Bible says:

When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid (Mark 5:15 NIV).

These demon-possessed men were miraculously delivered by the Lord. They had been possessed by evil spirits and these spirits departed at the mere command of Jesus.

3. The Daughter Of The Gentile Woman

Two of the four gospels tell the story of a Gentile woman who had a daughter who was demon-possessed (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-50).

Jesus healed the daughter of this woman without being physically present. Scripture records the following as taking place:

Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour (Matthew 15:28 NIV).

Among other things, this demonstrates Jesus’ ability to heal anyone, any place, and at any time.

4. The Demoniac Boy

Three of the four gospels tell the account of a boy who was demon possessed (Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-42). Jesus cast the demon out of him. The gospel of Mark explains it this way:

The evil spirit screamed, shook the child violently, and came out. The boy looked as if he were dead, and everyone said, "He's dead!" Jesus took his hand and helped him to stand up (Mark 9:26,27 God's Word).

Jesus exorcised the demon from this young boy. While others had tried, they were not able to do it.

5. The Mute Man

Matthew records an account of a man healed from demon possession. The Bible says that this individual was both mute and demon-possessed. We read:

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, some people brought to him a man who could not talk because a demon was in him. After Jesus had forced the demon out, the man started talking. The crowds were so amazed that they began saying, "Nothing like this has ever happened in Israel!" But the Pharisees said, "The leader of the demons gives him the power to force out demons" (Matthew 9:32-34 CEV).

The religious leaders could not deny what they had personally witnessed. Therefore, this miracle caused them to attribute His power to the ruler, or leader, of the demons.

6. The Mute, Blind, And Demon-Possessed Man

There is also the account of Jesus healing one particular demon-possessed individual who could not speak or see (Matthew 12:22-30; Mark 3:20-27; Luke 11:14-23):

Then some people brought Jesus a man possessed by a demon. The demon made the man blind and unable to talk. Jesus cured him so that he could talk and see (Matthew 12:22 God's Word).

This is the only specific New Testament example of a person who was blind, mute, and demon-possessed that was healed of all three ailments. Jesus had power over each of these.

7. The Slave Girl At Philippi

Demon possession also occurred after the time of Jesus. In the Book of Acts, there is an account of a demon-possessed slave girl who the Apostle Paul encountered. The Bible says that Paul cast the demon out of her. We read:

She kept doing this for many days. Paul became annoyed, turned to the evil spirit, and said, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" As Paul said this, the evil spirit left her (Acts 16:18 God's Word).

In this case, it was the Apostle Paul who exorcised the demon.

These examples illustrate the fact that demon possession was real and that there were a number of specific people, in actual historical situations, in which Jesus, as well as Paul, exorcised a demon.

Summary To Question 23

Does The New Testament Give Specific Examples Of People Being Demon Possessed?

Scripture not only makes general statements about demon possession; it also gives some specific examples of people being possessed by evil spirits. We can list them as follows.

The Bible says that Jesus exorcised a demon out of a man at a synagogue in the city of Capernaum. The response of the onlookers was one of amazement.

Three of the gospels record Jesus casting demons out of two people who lived among the tombs in the region of Gadera. Again, the people were astonished when they saw this take place.

There was a daughter of a Gentile woman who was possessed by an evil spirit. Jesus healed her of this problem without being physically present.

Scripture also records the account of a boy who was demon possessed whom Jesus healed of this scourge. Jesus succeeded in casting out the demon where others had failed.

The gospels also record Jesus casting a demon out of man who could not speak. Once the demon left, the man was able to speak again.

There is also the instance where Jesus cast the demon out of a man who was both mute and blind. He had no problem doing this.

The Bible says Jesus drove the demons out of each of these people. Never do we find Him being unable to exorcise a demon from a person.

The exorcism of demons occurred after Jesus ascended into heaven. The Book of Acts tells us that the Apostle Paul exorcised a demon from a slave girl in the city of Philippi.

Therefore, in the four gospels, as well as in the Book of Acts, we find specific examples of exorcism of demons.

Question 24

What Conclusions Can Be Made About Demon Possession?

From reading the gospel accounts of people who were possessed with demons, as well as from other statements in the New Testament, we can make the following observations and conclusions about this subject.

1. Demon-Possession Does Occur

Demon possession is a fact. Indeed, demonic spirits can take hold of and control an individual. There are a number of specific examples of it occurring, as well as general statements about its reality. There is no doubt that the Scriptures assume that demon possession is real.

2. Possession May Be Voluntary Or Involuntary

This is important to note. There is no indication that each individual who was demon-possessed asked for the demon to enter. Since demon-possession may be involuntary, any unbeliever can be possessed. There does not seem to be any exceptions to this.

3. Demon-Possessed People Do Not Necessarily Live Immoral Lives

Those who were possessed by demons were not all immoral people. Any unbeliever, whether they live a moral life or an immoral life, can be possessed by a demon.

Therefore, it is highly possible that demon possession is not always suspected or recognized in the life of a person. As Satan masquerades as an angel of light, those possessed by demons may also be masquerading as moral, upright people. This type of impersonation can allow them to move about among believers and deceive them. Therefore, the signs are not always that obvious.

4. It May Or May Not Be Permanent

Demon possession can be only temporary. It is possible for the demon to leave the person for a period of time.

5. It Can Affect The Body

Those who are demon-possessed can have their body affected by the demon. The demon can take over their entire person.

6. It Can Also Affect The Mind

It is also possible for the mind to be affected when one is demon-possessed. Indeed, their mental capacities can be affected by the evil spirit.

7. There Can Be A Wide Variety Of Symptoms

There is not just one symptom of demon possession. We find a wide variety of symptoms of those who are possessed. Therefore, we cannot look for just one thing to determine if a person is demon-possessed.

8. When Someone Is Delivered It Is Immediate

When deliverance from demon-possession does come, it is immediate. There are no long periods of waiting for the demon to come out.

9. The Demon May Return

It is possible for a demon to return to a person once it has been cast out. Unless a person trusts Jesus Christ as their Savior, the possibility exists that the demon may return.

If this happens, then that person can be in a worse situation than when they were previously demon-possessed. This sums up what the Bible has to say about the subject of demon possession.

Summary To Question 24

What Conclusions Can Be Made About Demon Possession?

After looking at what the Bible says about demon possession, there are a number of conclusions that can be made about this subject. They include the following.

First, demon possession does occur. Indeed, it is a reality. This is important for us to realize. It happened in Jesus' day and it can happen in our day.

We also find that demon possession may be voluntary or involuntary. In other words, a person can become demon-possessed without asking for this to happen.

Those who are demon possessed do not necessarily live immoral lives. Consequently a man or woman may be a fine upstanding citizen with high morals and still be demon-possessed. Thus, every single unbeliever is a potential candidate for demon-possession.

Demon possession may or may not be permanent. Jesus gave the example of demons leaving a person and then returning. If the demons do leave it is essential to replace the spiritual void with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God only enters into the life of a person when they believe in Jesus Christ.

Demon possession can affect a person's body. Indeed, we find that a demon can actually control some of the bodily motions of the individual who is possessed.

The mind may be also affected by demon possession. In fact, this is one of the expected results. Certainly, an evil spirit indwelling a person can only negatively affect that individual.

Demon possession has a variety of symptoms. Consequently, we cannot merely look for one particular thing to determine whether or not a person is possessed by an evil spirit. There are a variety of possible symptoms.

Deliverance from demon possession, if it happens, is immediate. There is no long, drawn-out process for the demon to come out.

However, unless a person trusts Jesus Christ as their Savior the demon may return. If this happens their situation may become worse.

These are some of the conclusions which we can draw from Bible on the subject of demon-possession.

While there are some things which we do know about demon-possession, there are many things which we obviously do not know.

Question 25

What Happens When A Person Is Demon-Possessed?

Those who were possessed by demons in Scripture showed certain symptoms. They include the following.

1. They Cannot Control Themselves

A person who is under the control of a demon cannot control himself or herself. The evil spirit is able to speak through their lips or can make them mute as it so desires. Scripture gives examples of demon-possessed people who were mute. We read:

And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke; and the crowds were amazed and said, “Never has anything like this been seen in Israel” (Matthew 9:33 NRSV UE).

The mute man spoke when the demon had been cast out.

We also read in Matthew of a blind and mute demon-possessed man being able to both speak and see once the demon was exorcised:

Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and unable to speak was brought to Him. He healed him, so that the man could both speak and see (Matthew 12:22 CSB).

This was an amazing miracle performed by Jesus.

The gospel of Mark records demons speaking through people:

Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:23-24 NRSV UE).

The demon is able to take over the person in some unexplained way and speak through them. In this case, the demon testified to the identity of Jesus.

2. It Introduces A New Personality

Demon-possession means that a new personality is introduced to that person. In other words, the victim becomes a different person. For example, we find that the Gadarene demoniac acted and spoke as one who was controlled by another personality. The Scripture explains the reaction of the demons to Jesus as follows:

They began screaming at him, “Why are you bothering us, Son of God? You have no right to torture us before God’s appointed time!” (Matthew 8:29 NLT).

Therefore, a new personality emerges when one is demon-possessed.

3. The Demon May Speak Instead Of The One Possessed

On a number of occasions, it was the voice of the demon speaking rather than the voice of the one possessed:

Then Jesus asked, “What is your name?” And the spirit replied, “Legion, because there are many of us here inside this man” (Mark 5:9 NLT).

There are occasions when the demon will speak instead of the person possessed.

4. They May Have Supernatural Knowledge

In one incident, the demons speaking through a man, immediately recognized Jesus as the Messiah. Mark records it as follows:

Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:23-24 NRSV UE).

This understanding of Jesus’ identity came from supernatural knowledge. For at this time, Jesus had not yet revealed Himself to His disciples, or to the world, as the promised Messiah. However, the demons certainly knew of His identity.

5. They Have New Abilities

A person who is demon-possessed acquires new abilities. For example, it is possible for those possessed by demons to demonstrate superhuman strength. The Bible speaks of one demoniac in the following way:

He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones (Mark 5:3-5 ESV).

People have new abilities they did not previously have when possessed by a demon. In this case, it was unusual strength.

6. They Have Suicidal Tendencies

Demon possession can lead to suicidal tendencies. The Bible says of one person who was demon-possessed:

It has often thrown him into fire and into water to kill him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us (Mark 9:22 NLT).

It seems that demons may want to physically destroy the person they possess.

In sum, we find that the demon-possessed person may display any number of symptoms. This being the case, it is not always easy, if not impossible, to determine whether or not one is possessed by an evil spirit.

Summary To Question 25

What Happens When A Person Is Demon-Possessed?

The New Testament tells us some of the signs of demon possession within a person. We can sum them up in the following manner.

The main thing we need to understand is that demon-possessed people are controlled by this demonic presence. In other words, they do not control themselves. Instead they are under the influence of another personage.

We also find that demons are able to speak through their victims. This is further indication of the control which demons have.

In some cases, the demon-possessed person can demonstrate new abilities. This includes such things as supernatural strength.

The person who is demon-possessed may show a different personality. Indeed, they can display an entirely different pattern of behavior.

It is also possible for those who are possessed by an evil spirit to exhibit suicidal tendencies. The demon-possessed person may attempt to kill themselves.

Though many of these symptoms may look like mere psychological dysfunction, in actuality, the problem is demon-possession.

Of course, the difficulty is to determine what their real problem consists of. Is it demon possession or is it something else? In many cases, this is something which is impossible for us to determine.

Question 26

Can A Person Be Demon-Possessed Today?

According to Scripture, demon possession is a harsh reality. Though demons did enter and control people during biblical times, is it possible that it still happens today? The answer is an unqualified, "Yes." Demon possession and control did not end with the New Testament. We can make a number of observations about this subject.

1. There Are Symptoms Of Demon-Possession

First, the symptoms of demon-possession today would be the same as in the New Testament era. These would include such things as the following: superhuman strength, superhuman knowledge, a different voice speaking through the person, and the inability to control oneself.

Furthermore, from many personal testimonies, we discover that these symptoms do appear today in people. Demon possession is still with us.

2. There May Be A Correlation With Some Sicknesses

It is possible, at times, to find a correlation between sickness, mental illness, and demonic activity. Caution, however, must be exercised. It is not always possible for us to know the root cause of a particular sickness or mental illness.

Indeed, it is not Christlike, and it is very cruel, to attribute the suffering of a person to demonic activity. This may only add to their problems. The best thing for a believer to do is to pray for that person and ask the Lord to have His way with them - whatever the root of their problem may be.

3. We Must Rule Out Other Possibilities

In so many instances where demon-possession is assumed, the problem turned out to be something else. Only after all other possibilities are exhausted, should demon-possession be considered as the root cause of their ordeal.

4. Demon-Possession Should Be Dealt With By Mature Christians

If demon-possession is suspected, it should not be treated lightly. Spiritually mature people who are in Christian leadership, not new believers, should handle the episode. It is not something to be trifled with!

5. The Demonized Person Can Be Set Free

Since demon-possession is a possibility, it is also possible for people to be controlled by God's Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to set people free from the power of evil, and place them under the control of the Holy Spirit of God. He did it then and He is doing it now. As Scripture tells us those whom Jesus sets free are free indeed!

6. The Demon May Return

Therefore, after a demon is exorcised, the Lord must come in and fill the void. Otherwise the last fate of the person will be worse than the first.

Jesus warned about this when He gave a story about a man who had been possessed by a demon. We read about this in Luke's gospel. The Lord said:

When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' When it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first (Luke 11:24-26 NRSV UE).

The demon not only returns, the person ends up in worse shape than previous.

7. Believers Need Not Worry: They Are Controlled By The Lord

Those who have believed in Jesus Christ are controlled by the Lord. Indeed, they have God's Spirit indwelling them. Jesus gave the following promise to those who trusted in Him:

Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23 ESV).

Therefore, demon-possession is something that cannot directly affect them.

In sum, we can say that demon possession was not limited to the New Testament era. Although rare in certain places in the world, demon-possession does happen today. However, we should be careful not to attribute any strange behavior to demon possession.

In fact, there are many other possible causes for the odd behavior. Therefore, to conclude that someone is possessed by a demon should only occur after all other explanations have been exhausted.

Summary To Question 26

Can A Person Become Demon-Possessed Today?

Demon possession was something which Jesus and His apostles had to face. Scripture gives a number of accounts of them exorcising evil spirits from people.

Demon possession was real then and it is real today. A number of things should be noted about those who are demon-possessed.

First, the symptoms would be similar as to those found in the New Testament. They include the following things such as extraordinary strength, superhuman knowledge, and a different voice speaking through the person. In other words, we should expect people to exhibit odd behavior when possessed by an evil spirit.

However one must be extremely careful when attributing unusual behavior to demon possession. There are other possibilities which should always be considered first. To assume someone is possessed by an evil spirit should be the last conclusion that we make. The good news is that people can be set free from demon-possession. Jesus Christ set people free then and He sets people free today. This is the good news of the message of Christ.

There is something else which must be understood. Believers, who are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, cannot be demon-possessed. It is only unbelievers who can be possessed with an evil spirit.

Therefore, demon possession is a present reality. Hopefully, it is something that we never have to personally deal with.

Question 27

Can A Christian Be Demon-Possessed?

Though demons can enter and possess any unbeliever, they cannot enter into the body of those who belong to the Lord. There are a number of reasons why this is so. We can make the following observations about this subject.

1. Greater Is He That Is In Us

The Bible says that the One who indwells believers is greater than the one who is in the world. John wrote the following to the believers:

You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world (1 John 4:4 CSB).

Jesus Christ, who is in us, is greater than anyone. This certainly includes the devil! There is no room for Christ and the devil to dwell together. None whatsoever!

2. Christians Have Been Delivered From The Possibility Of Demonic Possession

There is another important truth. Those who have trusted Jesus Christ have been delivered from the possibility of demonic possession. Paul wrote the following to the Ephesians:

You used to live just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God (Ephesians 2:2 NLT).

Notice Paul told these believers that this is how they “used to live.” No longer do they live in this manner.

Elsewhere, Paul also emphasized that the believers do not live any more under the authority of darkness:

He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13,14 CSB).

We have been set free from the powers of darkness. This is truly great news!

3. We Have Nothing In Common With Satan

There is still more. Believers have nothing in common with darkness or Satan. The Holy Spirit, and a demonic spirit, cannot co-exist in the same human person. Paul wrote about this to the Corinthians:

What agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? (2 Corinthians 6:15 NRSV UE).

The New Living Translation puts it this way:

What harmony can there be between Christ and the Devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? (2 Corinthians 6:15 NLT).

There is no harmony or partnership between the believer and Satan. Indeed, there cannot be. Therefore, we should not expect the Holy Spirit to live together with a demon.

4. There Is No Biblical Example Of A Christian Being Demon-Possessed

Finally, there is no example in Scripture of a believer in Jesus Christ being demon-possessed. All cases of demonic possession were with those who were unbelievers.

5. Some People Find Passages In Support Of Believers Being Demon-Possessed

While there are no explicit passages in the Bible of a believer being demon-possessed, there are those who think this is a possibility. Sometimes the following passages are cited as support of believers being possessed.

The Delivery Of A Believer To Satan

Paul ordered the church of Corinth to deliver a believer over to Satan. He gave them the following commandment:

You are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:5 NRSV UE).

The New Living Translation puts it this way:

Then you must cast this man out of the church and into Satan's hands, so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved when the Lord returns (1 Corinthians 5:5 NLT).

This is seen as evidence that this person would be possessed by a demon. However, there is no evidence that the person whom Paul delivered over to Satan became demon-possessed. He was being delivered over to Satan to be judged – not to be possessed.

Two People Were Turned Over To Satan

The Bible speaks of two other individuals who were also delivered over to Satan. Paul wrote to Timothy:

Hymenaeus and Alexander are among them, and I have delivered them to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme (1 Timothy 1:20 CSB).

As is the case with the believer in Corinth, there is no indication that either of these men was ever demon-possessed. Merely they were handed over to the devil for some type of temporary punishment.

People Were Taken Captive By The Devil

There is another passage which speaks of people being taken captive by the devil. Paul wrote to Timothy:

Then they will come to their senses and escape from the Devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants (2 Timothy 2:26 NLT).

However, the people under discussion in this context are not believers. Consequently, this passage is not relevant to the question.

We conclude that there is no Scriptural support for the idea that Christians can become demon-possessed.

What About Stories Of Believers And Demons?

If this is the case, then what about the stories that circulate with respect to believers and demon-possession. Examples are provided of believers who exhibit symptoms of demon possession. How do we explain these accounts of such behavior?

When people give examples of believers being possessed, there are a number of questions that immediately arise, “Were these victims of demon possession really believers?” “Were they actually possessed with a demon, or is there another possible explanation for their behavior?”

Since the Bible gives no support that a believer can be possessed by a demon, some other explanation must be in order. The issue is clear. It is not whether a professing Christian can be demon-possessed, but rather can a genuine, “born again” Christian become demon-possessed? The answer to this question is an emphatic, “No.”

What The Bible Says About The Believer’s Position In Christ

The Bible says that those who have believed in Jesus are now “in Christ.” Scripture says the following about the believer and their position in Jesus Christ.

1. There Is A Permanent Indwelling Of Holy Spirit

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit “permanently” indwells those who have trusted Christ as Savior. Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:13,14 NRSV UE).

The Spirit of God everlastingly indwells the believer. Indeed, He will never leave us because the Spirit is the pledge, the guarantee, that the Lord will fulfill all that He has promised.

2. Believers Are A New Creation

Believers are also said to be a new creation in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote the following to the Corinthians:

What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun! (2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT).

When we trusted Jesus Christ as Savior, we became a new creation in Christ. Indeed, we are part of His family.

3. The Body Is The Temple Of The Holy Spirit

The body of the believer is now a temple of the Holy Spirit. Paul stressed this when he wrote to the Corinthians:

Do you not know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own (1 Corinthians 6:19 CSB).

The body is now the temple, the sanctuary, in which the Holy Spirit resides. This means that the Lord will not reside or dwell with darkness.

4. **Nothing Can Separate The Believer From The Lord**

The Bible says that such evil powers cannot separate the believer from the love of God. The Apostle Paul wrote the following words to the Romans:

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38,39 NKJV).

Specially mentioned are the angels and principalities and powers. These are organized evil angelic beings. Not even they can separate the believer from the love of God.

All of these things would make demon-possession something that is impossible for the Christian.

Satan and demons are defeated foes. This is clear from Scripture. Yet they are still very active in this world, causing much harm. Though they cannot possess and control a believer, they can cause a number of problems.

Consequently, believers should never underestimate or overestimate their ability.

Summary To Question 27

Can A Christian Be Demon-Possessed?

While there are those who believe that a Christian can be demon-possessed, the Bible says otherwise. Indeed, the Scripture does not teach that a believer can be possessed by an evil spirit. There are a number of reasons as to why this is so.

For one thing, the believer is “in Christ.” This means that they belong to Him; they do not belong to the devil. Jesus does not share His sons and daughters with Satan!

In addition, every example in the Bible of a person being demon-possessed concerns an unbeliever. In fact, there are no examples of believers being possessed. None. This is further evidence that this cannot happen.

Moreover, we must be careful not to rely on stories of believers who appear to be demon-possessed. There are many other explanations that are possible. Consequently, we should not jump to conclusions.

Therefore, the Christian, who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, need not fear demon possession. Yet, demons do attack believers in various ways. We must recognize this fact.

Accordingly, it would be wrong to say that they cannot have any effect on the Christian. They can. However, they cannot indwell those who have believed in Jesus Christ.

Question 28

Does The New Testament Equate Disease With Demon Possession?

What relationship is there, if any, between disease and demon possession? The New Testament has the following to say.

1. There Is A Distinction Between Illness And Demon Possession

While it is true that demons can inflict disease, the Bible makes the distinction between disease and being possessed by demons. In fact, Scripture distinguishes between ordinary cases of sickness, and other illnesses that are symptomatic of something else. We read of this in Matthew's account of Jesus healing the sick and casting out demons:

News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them (Matthew 4:24 NIV).

Note that we have here the distinction between demon possession and illness. They are not equated. Indeed, they are never equated.

2. The Healings Of Jesus Do Not Always Assume Demon-Possession

When Jesus healed a man with leprosy there was nothing to indicate He thought the man was demon-possessed. Mark records the episode:

As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them" (Mark 1:42-44 NKJV).

There were many cases of people whom Jesus healed in which there was no mention of demon possession. These included people who were mute, blind, and deaf. In none of these cases do we find the writers of Scripture attributing their illness to the demonic.

The Account Of The Demon-Possessed Boy

One of the passages that may seem to link sickness and demon possession is found in the gospel of Mark. It reads as follows:

And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us" (Mark 9:20-22 NRSV UE)

This boy, who had seizures, was actually possessed by a demon. Scripture makes the distinction between the two. Matthew writes:

News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed

them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him (Matthew 4:24,25 NIV).

Here we find a clear distinction between seizures and demon-possession. They are not the same problem!

There is something else that we learn from this verse. The fact that large crowds continued to follow Jesus wherever He went is another testimony to the fact that He actually did heal people.

3. Demon-Possessed People Have More Than The Usual Symptoms

Those who were demon-possessed did have physical manifestations of their possession. This included such things as: seizures, speech impediments, muteness, deafness, and blindness. However, the manifestations of these afflictions were beyond the normal symptoms for the particular ailment.

Indeed, there was something unusual about their symptoms that caused them to be attributed to demons. Yet others, who had the same affliction, were not assumed to be demon-possessed, but rather merely sick. Scripture is careful to make the distinction between the two. We should do the same.

In sum, while demon possession is a reality, we should never equate it with sickness. Scripture does not do this, therefore, neither should we.

Summary To Question 28

Does The New Testament Equate Disease With Demon Possession?

There are people who believe that sickness and demon-possession are to be equated. However, this is not something which the Bible teaches. Indeed, the Scripture makes the clear distinction between sickness and being possessed by an evil spirit.

Indeed, there are passages which demon possession and illnesses are each mentioned. Yet they are never equated. A distinction is made between them.

This includes seizures. It should never be equated with demon possession. Unfortunately, this has often happened. Yet, the Bible makes the distinction between seizures and demon possession.

While we do recognize that there were people who were demon-possessed, and also had certain physical afflictions, this does not mean that we should equate the two. Sickness is not sin. It is not the same as being indwelt by some evil spirit. Those who were demon possessed, and exhibited some physical infirmity as well, seem to have had unusual symptoms of the disease. In other words, they exhibited traits which did not ordinarily come with the illness they had.

However, others who were listed with the same afflictions in Scripture were not considered to be demon-possessed. This is further evidence that demon possession is not the same as being sick.

Consequently, since the Bible never equates the two then neither should we. Therefore, it is wrong, as some people have done, to equate certain kinds of illnesses to demon-possession.

Question 29

What Authority Do Christians Have Over Demons?

Demons can cause much trouble. There is no doubt about this. However the Christian has authority over the demonic realm through the power of Jesus Christ. The Bible emphasizes this truth with the following examples.

1. Jesus Christ Is The Victor!

The Bible makes it clear that Satan and his forces have no authority over Christ and His forces. We read about this in the gospel of Luke when the seventy men that Jesus sent out returned:

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name" (Luke 10:17 NKJV).

The demons were subject to the authority of Jesus Christ. This authority was exercised through the believers whom the Lord sent out.

2. We Are To Be Subject To Christ

Believers, therefore, need to make themselves subject to Jesus Christ in all things. Paul wrote the following to the Corinthians:

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV).

All of our thoughts and activities should be in subjection to Him. Among other things, this means that we fight spiritual battles with spiritual weapons. Indeed, we cannot be victorious spiritually if we are fighting the battles in our own strength and wisdom.

3. Believers Should Think And Pray About Heavenly Things

Our thoughts and prayers should be directed to the things of God. The Apostle Paul wrote the following to the Philippians about what we should have our minds set upon:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (Philippians 4:6-8 ESV).

Believers should pray about everything, worry about nothing. All things should be committed to the Lord. In this way, victory can be achieved over any demonic influence that may come to the believer.

In sum, we find that believers have complete authority over demons, the evil spirits, through the Person of Jesus Christ. We have no need to fear these beings because we have the protection of Christ.

Summary To Question 29
What Authority Do Christians Have Over Demons?

Demonic activity is real, but the Christian should not be afraid of it. The God of the Bible is greater than any demon or anything that they can do. There are a number of important truths which we must appreciate.

First, it is important to recognize that Christ has won the victory over the demonic realm. He has defeated the forces of darkness. We must always remember this.

In addition, those who represent Him also have authority over demons. This authority, however, only comes through the Person of Jesus Christ. He is the One whom we call upon to win victories in the unseen realm. It is the only way in which victory over the evil spirits can be achieved.

Furthermore, when believers put themselves into subjection to Christ and His kingdom, by thinking His thoughts, and praying for heavenly things, then the influence of demonic activity will be negated.

Christians, therefore, should neither fear demons, nor go looking for them. We should spend our time in service to the Lord. If we encounter demonic spirits in our service to Him, then we should recognize that victory is ours through Christ.

Ultimately, we have nothing to fear as long as we trust Him.

Question 30

What Are Some Practical Considerations In Dealing With Demonic Forces?

There are a number of practical considerations that we can make about dealing with demons. We can sum them up as follows.

1. We Must Follow The New Testament Guidelines

Any deliverance from demon-possession or demon influence must be done according to the guidelines found in the New Testament. As our final authority, Scripture tells us what we can, as well as what we cannot, do with respect to demon-possession. Jesus Christ and His apostles are our example. It is imperative that we do as they do.

2. Exorcism Is Not Enough

Exorcism, by itself, is not enough. When a demon leaves a person there is a void. Unless the Holy Spirit comes into that individual's life they can be repossessed by even greater evil spirits. Therefore the new birth is absolutely necessary for one who has been exorcised of a demon.

3. Using The Name Of Jesus Does Not Prove Anything

The mere exorcism in the name of Jesus Christ does not prove anything, in and of itself. Jesus warned that there would be many who cast out demons in His name whom He never knew. We read His words in the Sermon on the Mount:

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers' (Matthew 7:21-23 NRSV UE).

The Word of God must be our final standard when it comes to explaining events where demon-possession is suspected.

4. Genuine Believers Cannot Be Demon-Possessed

Genuine believers cannot be demon-possessed. It is clear that Jesus Christ cannot dwell with the devil. However professing Christians, those who have never trusted Christ as their Savior, are open to demon-possession.

5. Believers Can Be Led Astray By Demons

While Christians cannot be demon-possessed, believers in Jesus Christ can come under the influence of demons. Indeed, Christians may even be an unwitting tool of their evil work. This can occur when we do not allow Holy Spirit to guide us but rather allow demonic influences in our decision-making.

Therefore, while not being possessed by demons, Christians can be led astray by their influences. In doing so, we can actually be the instrument of the devil rather than an instrument of the Lord. It is important that we understand this could happen to us.

6. We Are Not Commanded To Diagnose Possession

Believers in Jesus Christ are never asked to diagnose cases of demon-possession. Instead, prayer should be made for that individual who is suspected of being under the influence of a demon. In other words, we should not go around looking for those who are demon-possessed.

7. Jesus Christ Should Be Magnified As Lord

In cases of supposed demon activity, the Lordship of Christ is what should be emphasized. Since the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ has achieved victory over Satan and his forces, believers should stand upon that truth, and never be afraid of demonic manifestations. Christ is victor over everything. Let us never forget this!

8. There Is Not That Much Space Devoted To This Issue

Finally, we should note that there is not much space given in the New Testament to believers resisting demonic activity, or instruction about how to deal with demons. The emphasis, rather, is upon urging believers not to sin.

In fact, whenever Paul brought up a particular problem in a church, he attributed the problem to sin, not to the influence of demons. Though the reality of the demonic is recognized, this is certainly not the main focus of the New Testament. The problem with sin lies with the individual and their own responsibility. Indeed, it cannot and it should not be blamed upon the demons.

This sums up some practical considerations we should keep in mind when dealing with demonic forces. The key is to look to Jesus Christ as Lord of all. We can never go wrong when we do this.

Summary To Question 30

What Are Some Practical Considerations In Dealing With Demonic Forces?

When we treat the subject of demons, and their activity, it is imperative that we follow the teaching of the New Testament. We can sum up the main points as follows.

First and foremost, we are to follow the rules laid down in the New Testament. God has given us His Word for a purpose. That purpose is to show us how to live to please Him. This includes how we are to deal with spiritual forces. Therefore, we must always follow the instructions He gives us.

We also find from Scripture teaches us that the exorcism of demons, by itself, is not enough. The person who has been exorcised of a demon must turn to Jesus Christ for complete deliverance. Otherwise, the demons which are cast out of a person may return and the last state of that individual will be worse than the first. In other words, the casting out of the demon, without replacing the void with belief in the Lord, will cause even greater problems for that person.

The Bible also warns about false believers. Consequently, when we see someone using the name of Jesus this does not always mean that they are a Christian. There are people who pretend to be true believers. We should always keep this in mind when dealing with spiritual realities. Only God knows those who are truly His.

We also find that genuine believers cannot be demon possessed. Jesus Christ does not dwell with the devil. However, believers can unwittingly function as the devil's instrument. This happens when we allow demonic forces to convince us to sin.

Ultimately, it is our responsibility when we sin, not the demons. We alone commit the sin. The demons do not make us do it.

Also, none of us are commanded to diagnose demon possession. The emphasis in Scripture is only praying for people with suspected demonic problems. Our responsibility is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Above all, Jesus Christ should be magnified as Lord. When this occurs there will be victory over demonic forces.

Finally, we must note that there is not that much space devoted in Scripture to dealing with demons. Since our knowledge is limited, we can only draw tentative conclusions on many questions about evil spirits.

In sum, we should not attempt to do more or less than we find Jesus Christ and His followers doing with respect to demons. Evil spirits do exist, and they do cause problems. But they should not be the focus of the Christian when problems arise. The real problem is our sin.

Indeed, this is something each of us is personally responsible for. While demonic forces can entice us, they cannot make us sin. This is something which we alone choose to do.

The good news is that through Jesus Christ we do not have to keep on sinning. He has given us the path to victory through reliance on the Spirit of God. Therefore, we should look to the Lord for His guidance in all matters.

Question 31

What Is The Ultimate Fate Of Demons?

As the demons are well-aware, they will ultimately face the punishment of the God of the Bible. The Scripture says the following about their eventual destiny.

1. Judgment And Torment Are Their Fate

During the ministry of Jesus, the demons acknowledged their ultimate fate; they will face judgment and torment from the God of Scripture. We read about this in an episode recorded in the gospel of Matthew. When confronted by Jesus, the demons reacted as follows:

They cried out, “Son of God, leave us alone! Have you come here to torment us before the time?” (Matthew 8:29 NET).

They realize the identity of God the Son, Jesus Christ. They also know that torment is their ultimate destiny when Christ judges all unbelief and unbelievers. Therefore, there is a final or last judgment that awaits them. This judgment leads to everlasting punishment.

2. There Are Stages Of Punishment

For demons, there are stages of punishment. Some demons have already been confined during this present age. The Bible says:

And the angels who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgment of the great Day (Jude 6 NRSV UE).

Consequently, we discover from Scripture that certain angels, who are demons, have been jailed by the Lord.

Peter also wrote about these chained angels. He put it this way:

For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment (2 Peter 2:4 NRSV UE).

It seems that their crimes were so horrendous that they could never be set free from their imprisonment.

However, some of these confined demons will be released for a short time during the future Great Tribulation (Revelation 9) and cause havoc on the earth. They will go out to do battle with the Lord:

These miracle-working demons caused all the rulers of the world to gather for battle against the Lord on that great judgment day of God Almighty (Revelation 16:14 NLT).

It must be noted that not all Christians believe there will be a distinct period in the future called the Great Tribulation. Some believe that this period is already in the past while others think that it is happening right now.

3. Christ Will Judge The Nations When He Returns

When Jesus Christ returns, Scripture says that He will judge the nations. Jesus Himself taught the following about future judgment:

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:31,32 NKJV).

At this time of His return, we assume, though it is not stated, that He will judge the demons.

Consequently, they will all be confined and kept from working their evil.

4. There Is No Demon Activity During A Literal Millennium

We are told that the devil is not active during a future millennial reign of Christ on the earth. The Book of Revelation says:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be let out for a little while (Revelation 20:1-3 NRSV UE).

The inactivity of the devil would also include his followers in the spirit realm.

Again we should note that there are differences of opinion among Christians concerning the existence of a future millennium on the earth. Some believe the language is only symbolic while others believe that Christ comes back after the millennium, not before.

5. The Demons Will Ultimately Be Thrown Into The Lake Of Fire

With the devil, the demons will ultimately end up in the lake of fire. The fate of the demons, therefore, is associated with the fate of the devil. Jesus said of their fate:

Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his demons!' (Matthew 25:41 NLT).

This lake of fire has been specifically prepared for the devil and his evil angels, the demons.

This will happen at the Great White Throne judgment or the Final Judgment. The Bible says the following about this event:

Then the Devil, who betrayed them, was thrown into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and I saw the one who was sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to the things written in the books, according to what they had done. The sea gave up the dead in it, and death and the grave gave up the dead in them. They were all judged according to their deeds. And death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death--the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10-14 NLT).

Hades is the unseen world, which includes the realm of spirits. It, and everything associated with it, will eventually be thrown into the lake of fire. This is the ultimate fate of demons.

In sum, these evil spirits which have rebelled against God from the beginning have a righteous judgment awaiting them. This is a punishment they so richly deserve.

Summary To Question 31

What Is The Ultimate Fate Of Demons?

The demons will not escape God's punishment. Indeed, they will one day be judged by the Lord for their rebellion against Him.

Scripture says that the demons know about their eventual punishment. When confronted by Jesus, they spoke of this time of future torment. Therefore, they know the fate awaits them.

We find their punishment occurring in several stages. Some of the demons are presently confined while others are still free to roam around and cause trouble. However, all of them will eventually face judgment and then punishment.

Scripture says that Jesus Christ will judge the nations when He returns. This includes the demons. They, along with all those who are outside of Christ, will be judged and then punished.

This will occur at the Last Judgment. Like the devil, these evil spirits will ultimately be judged and thrown into the lake of fire. According to Jesus, this lake of fire was specially created for them.

These evil beings will remain in the fiery judgment for all eternity where they will be forever punished for their sins. This is their ultimate fate.

Topic 3

The Occult

This final section of the book looks at the subject of the occult. The English word occult is derived from the Latin word *occultus*. It has the idea of something that is hidden or secret.

As we will discover, there are many hidden or secret practices which the Scripture condemns. This includes such things as witchcraft, sorcery, as well as talking to the dead.

Question 32

What Does The Bible Have To Say About The Various Forms Of Occult Practices? (Magic, Sorcery, Witchcraft)

In the Scripture, we find the mention of a number of different forms of demonology, or demonic activity. These include such things as magic, sorcery and witchcraft. We can make the following observations about what the Scripture says concerning these practices.

1. Magic (Sorcery)

Magic and sorcery can be categorized together. It can be simply defined as the desire to use supernatural powers to obtain that which God has said should not be known. In other words, it desires to know things that are not knowable, and are not attainable, by normal human means. The practitioner resorts to various forms of magical practices to gain this knowledge.

This Is Not Referring To Entertainment Magic Or Magic Shows

It must be understood that when we refer to magic it is this occultic or demonic type of behavior. It is not the same as sleight of hand, or magic, for entertainment purposes. Everyone knows that the magician who is performing on stage is employing sleight of hand tactics in an attempt to fool the audience. There is no claim of actual supernatural ability.

While the same word, magic, is used to describe the occultic or demonic practice, it is not the same thing. It is important that we do not confuse the two.

Having said this, we now turn our attention to what the Old Testament has to say about magic, or sorcery.

The Old Testament And Magic

The Bible speaks of magicians, namely, those who practice the magical arts. We find them operating a number of times during the Old Testament period.

Sorcery In Egypt

In the Book of Exodus, we read of the work of the magicians of Pharaoh. The Bible says they were able to duplicate some of the signs that Moses and Aaron performed:

Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts (Exodus 7:11 NIV).

These people practiced the secret arts. We find that they could duplicate some of the signs of Moses and Aaron but there were limitations in what they could do. In other words, they seemed to possess some power but this power was limited.

Magic In Babylon

The prophet Daniel wrote of the magicians that existed among the Babylonians. In fact, the Bible records their inability to interpret the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. We read the following words from the king:

I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous. I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me. So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me. Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream. (He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him (Daniel 4:4-8 NIV).

This was a group of individuals who belonged to the class of magicians in Babylon. We find that they could not interpret the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. Again, their power was limited. However, the man of God, Daniel, was able to do what they could not do, interpret the dream.

Magic Or Sorcery Is Condemned In Scripture

The Lord has condemned, in the strongest of terms, those who practice sorcery. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord said the following:

Both of these will overtake you in a moment, on a single day: loss of children and widowhood. They will come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and all your potent spells. You have trusted in your wickedness and have said, 'No one sees me.' Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me.' Disaster will come upon you, and you will not know how to conjure it away. A calamity will fall upon you that you cannot ward off with a ransom; a catastrophe you cannot foresee will suddenly come upon you. Keep on, then, with your magic spells and with your many sorceries, which you have labored at since childhood. Perhaps you will succeed, perhaps you will cause terror. All the counsel you have received has only worn you out! Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you (Isaiah 47:9-13 NIV).

Notice that those that practiced these occultic arts had no power to save the people when disaster struck. In other words, their power was nothing! Consequently, the Lord had the strongest words of condemnation for those who practiced these types of offenses.

The Mosaic Law Ordered Death For Sorcery

Sorcery was not taken lightly by God. The nation of Israel was not to engage in this sort of behavior. Indeed, the death penalty was ordered for those who practiced such things. We read the following command in the Book of Exodus:

You must not allow a sorceress to live (Exodus 22:18 NET).

The penalty the Lord ordered for the practice of sorcery showed the seriousness of the offense. This is not something which God's people should have anything to do with.

2. Witchcraft

Another popular form of demonology is witchcraft. Witchcraft can be defined as the use of sorcery or magic in an attempt to communicate with the dead. We find a warning against witchcraft in the Book of Deuteronomy:

For example, never sacrifice your son or daughter as a burnt offering. And do not let your people practice fortune-telling or sorcery, or allow them to interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft (Deuteronomy 18:10 NLT).

Again we see that these practices are condemned.

Moses also wrote about the pagan nations who practiced such detestable things. He emphasized that this is something which the Lord does not allow His people to do:

For these nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do this (Deuteronomy 18:14 ESV).

The Lord gave the strictest orders to His people that such practices were forbidden. They were to talk to the Living God but they were not to resort to talking to the spirits of the dead.

Witchcraft Was Practiced In Israel

Although the nation Israel was to represent the Lord in the midst of these unbelieving nations, we read about witchcraft being practiced later in the history of the nation. The Bible says the following about King Manasseh of Judah:

And he burned his son as an offering and used fortune-telling and omens and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger (2 Kings 21:6 ESV)

Manasseh's behavior provoked the Lord to anger.

Manasseh's witchcraft is also mentioned in Chronicles. It says the following:

He sacrificed his sons in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced sorcery, divination and witchcraft, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger (2 Chronicles 33:6 NIV).

The Bible says that such things are abominable to the Lord.

3. The New Testament And Magical Practices

The New Testament also has things to say about the practice of magic. Magical practices were widespread in the world of the New Testament and we find that Scripture mentions them on a number of occasions.

Magic In The Book Of Acts

In the Book of Acts, we are told that Peter and John encountered a magician named Simon when they went to the city of Samaria:

A man named Simon had previously practiced sorcery in that city and astounded the Samaritan people, while claiming to be somebody great. They all paid attention to him, from the least of them to the greatest, and they said, "This man is called the Great Power of God!" They were attentive to him because he had astounded them with his sorceries for a long time (Acts 8:9-11 CSB).

This man Simon, who had practiced magical arts, became a believer in the Lord:

Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw (Acts 8:13 NIV).

Notice that this magician was astonished when he saw the genuine miracles that Philip was producing.

Magic Books In Ephesus Were Burned

In the city of Ephesus, those who came to faith in Jesus Christ burned their magical books. We read the following in the Book of Acts:

A number of those who practiced magic collected their books and burned them publicly; when the value of these books was calculated, it was found to come to fifty thousand silver coins (Acts 19:19 NRSV UE).

These believers in Christ turned away from their occultic practices. Indeed, they publicly burned items associated with witchcraft.

In doing so, they renounced their magical beliefs.

Magic In The New Testament Letters

The New Testament letters mention such practices. The Apostle Paul said that sorcery as one of the works of the flesh. When he wrote to the Galatians, he listed sorcery as follows:

Idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions (Galatians 5:20 CSB).

The New Living Translation calls sorcery demonic activity:

Idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group (Galatians 5:20 NLT).

Scripture is clear that such practices are detestable to the Lord. They should never be done by those who are believers in Jesus Christ.

The Sorcerers Are Outside Of The Holy City

As the Bible closes, and the righteous have been separated from the unrighteous, we find that those who practiced sorcery are said to be outside of God's presence. John wrote:

Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood (Revelation 22:15 NRSV UE).

These people were kept outside of the Holy City. They had been punished by the Lord for rejecting Jesus Christ.

The testimony of the Bible on this particular subject could not be clearer. Indeed, those who practice these things do not have a place in God's Kingdom.

These Sins Can Be Forgiven

Fortunately, forgiveness is available for those who are involved in such occultic practices. When one turns to Jesus Christ as Savior, all sins, including those involving the occult, are forgiven. It is then the responsibility of the believer to forsake such practices and follow Jesus. God's people should have nothing to do with the occult. This cannot be emphasized too strongly!

Summary To Question 32

What Does The Bible Have To Say About Various Forms Of Occult Practices? (Magic, Witchcraft, Sorcery)

The Bible talks various forms of occult practices. These include such things include magic, sorcery, and witchcraft. They are attempts to discover things that God does not want human beings to know. Each of these demonic practices is strongly condemned in Scripture. Indeed, the death penalty was instituted for these offenses during the Old Testament period.

The Bible lists a number of people who were engaged in such practices. This includes those from the nation of Israel, who knew better than to do these sorts of things. There are also examples of pagans practicing the “black arts.”

We can explain these practices in the following manner. Magic and sorcery are similar. They are attempts to know the unknowable through supernatural means.

Magic, in this instance, is not the same as the entertainment shows that magicians perform. Everyone knows they are fooling people with sleight of hand tricks.

The type of magic which the Bible condemns are attempts by humans to have certain knowledge through supernatural means. This attempt to contact these supernatural forces bypasses the God of the Bible.

Witchcraft is a general term used for attempting to communicate with the dead. Such attempts are strongly forbidden by the Lord. The living are not to attempt to contact the dead.

Furthermore, those who practice such things are specifically said to be outside of God’s presence in eternity. This is how seriously the Lord views these practices.

The good news is that there is forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ for those who engage in such forbidden things.

In sum, we cannot warn believers strongly enough: Do not engage in these practices!

Question 33

What Does The Bible Have To Say About The Practice Of Divination?

All of us would like to know what is going to happen in the future. The only certainty that we can have about the future is what God tells us in His Word. However, people have not always been satisfied with what God has said and consequently they have attempted to use other means to determine what is going to happen next. One of the methods used is known as “divination.”

Divination is a form of occultic activity. It can be defined as an attempt to discover what will happen in the future by means of forbidden occultic means. Basically, it does this by interpreting various omens and signs. Fortune telling is another name for divination.

The Bible And Divination

This practice is thoroughly condemned in the Bible. Scripture has a number of things to say about this practice.

1. Joseph Had A Divination Cup

Joseph, the son of Jacob, was sold into slavery by his brothers. However, by the divine plan of God, he was eventually made ruler over Egypt, second only to Pharaoh.

Yet there is a strange statement made about him; he owned a cup that was used for divination. One of his servants said the following to his brothers:

Isn't this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination? This is a wicked thing you have done (Genesis 44:5 NIV).

This seems so out of character with what we know of this man of God. Indeed, the Bible says that Joseph constantly trusted the Lord to guide him. In fact, there is no example of him ever practicing anything forbidden or occultic. In fact, we know that God gave Joseph the supernatural gift of interpreting dreams. These dreams were divine revelations from the Lord. Therefore, Joseph would have been the last person who would need to resort to divination to discover what would happen in the future.

It is possible that the statement made by Joseph's servant was merely a way of frightening his brothers. In other words, it was to let his brothers know that a valuable cup had disappeared. As the story unfolds, the cup was found in the sack of his youngest brother, Benjamin.

Consequently, we should not infer that Joseph did actually adopt this superstitious practice to determine future events. It is likely that the intention of this statement was simply to represent the cup as a vessel sacred to the Egyptians, nothing more. Basically the statement about the cup was made to frighten the brothers of Joseph, not to inform us that Joseph was a practitioner of divination.

2. Balaam Was To Be Paid For Divining The Future

We also find an instance where money was offered for someone to divine, or foretell, the future. The elders of Moab took money to pay the Gentile prophet Balaam for his services. The Bible says the following:

The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said (Numbers 22:7 NIV).

These Moabites wanted Balaam to curse the people of God, Israel. However the Lord would not allow it:

But God said to Balaam, “Don’t go with them! Don’t curse these people, because they are blessed” (Numbers 22:12 God’s Word).

The Lord made it clear that these types of practices would not work against the nation of Israel. He stated it as follows:

There is no sorcery against Jacob, no divination against Israel. It will now be said of Jacob and of Israel, ‘See what God has done!’ (Numbers 23:23 NIV).

We find that the Lord would not allow this sort of thing to stop God’s people from entering the Promised Land and fulfilling their God-ordained destiny.

3. Israel Was Not To Practice Divination Like Its Pagan Neighbors

We are told that the practice of divination was one of the reasons that God drove the people out of the Promised Land. Moses wrote:

When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, never learn the disgusting practices of those nations. You must never sacrifice your sons or daughters by burning them alive, practice black magic, be a fortuneteller, witch, or sorcerer, cast spells, ask ghosts or spirits for help, or consult the dead. Whoever does these things is disgusting to the LORD. The LORD your God is forcing these nations out of your way because of their disgusting practices. You must have integrity in dealing with the LORD your God (Deuteronomy 18:9-13 God’s Word).

Israel was to be different from the other nations. Indeed, they were not to reproduce the practices of these pagan people.

4. Balaam Was Killed For Practicing Divination

Joshua reminded the Israelites the penalty that was to be paid for divination. Balaam, the Gentile prophet was killed by the Israelites for such practices. Joshua said:

Along with these leaders, the people of Israel also killed Balaam, son of Beor, who used black magic (Joshua 13:22 God’s Word).

It was no small thing in God’s eyes to practice divination. Indeed, it was met with the harshest of penalties.

5. The Philistines Used Divination To Know What To Do With The Ark Of The Covenant

We read in the Book of Samuel how the Philistines, the enemies of Israel, used people who practiced divination to determine what to do with the Ark of the Covenant:

The Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we should send it back to its place” (1 Samuel 6:2 NIV).

They attempted to use occultic means to know what to do with the Holy Ark of the Lord.

6. **Jeremiah Said False Prophets Practice Divination**

Jeremiah recorded what the Lord said about the false prophets. He called their words “worthless divination:”

And the LORD said to me: The prophets are prophesying lies in my name; I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds (Jeremiah 14:14 NRSV UE)

According to the prophet Jeremiah, God’s prophet, such divination was worthless.

7. **The Lord Spoke To Ezekiel Regarding Divination**

The Lord told the prophet Ezekiel that the divinations of the false prophets would soon stop. In fact, their words were called false visions and misleading predictions. He wrote the following:

Son of man, what is that proverb they quote in Israel: ‘Time passes, making a liar of every prophet?’ Give the people this message from the Sovereign LORD: I will put an end to this proverb, and you will soon stop quoting it. Now give them this new proverb to replace the old one: ‘The time has come for every prophecy to be fulfilled!’ ‘Then you will see what becomes of all the false visions and misleading predictions about peace in Israel’ (Ezekiel 12:22-24 NLT)

The Lord would put an end to their false prophesying about the “peace” that was supposed to come to Israel. Indeed, the true prophets of God had pronounced judgment upon the nation. It seems these false prophets were using divination to tell the people what would happen in the future. We read what the Lord had to say about this:

My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations; they shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord GOD (Ezekiel 13:9 NRSV UE).

Their words are called “lying divinations.” In other words, these false prophets, through the occultic techniques, never truly proclaim the Word of God. In this case, they gave the people of Israel a false message. In the Book of Ezekiel, we also read about the divination of the King of Babylon. Ezekiel wrote the following about him:

For the king of Babylon stands at the fork in the road at the head of the two routes. He looks for omens: He shakes arrows, he consults idols, he examines animal livers (Ezekiel 21:21 NET).

It seemed this pagan king used divination to guide his future steps.

8. **Daniel Interpreted The Dream Which The Diviners Could Not**

Sometime later, when Daniel was a captive in Babylon, he interpreted the dream of the King. This was something that the diviners could not do. The Bible says:

Daniel replied, “No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about” (Daniel 2:27 NIV)

While the diviners could not explain the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel, the prophet of the living God, was able to explain it. God’s man could do what the diviners could not do.

9. Hosea Wrote Of The Diviner's Wand

In the Book of Hosea, we read about the people of God using the diviner's wand to inform them of things to come. The Lord condemned His people for doing such evil things:

My people consult a wooden idol, and a diviner's rod speaks to them. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God (Hosea 4:12 NIV).

According to the Lord, these sort of practices indicate that the people have departed from Him. Again, we find divination used in the context of leading people astray. Therefore, the Old Testament gives us a number of instances where divination was practiced. This includes those from the chosen people, Israel. We always find divination condemned in the strongest of terms!

The New Testament And Divination

We also read of this occultic practice in the New Testament. Paul encountered a slave girl in Philippi who was bringing in money from her divination. The Book of Acts records the following episode:

One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling (Acts 16:16 NRSV UE)

Her divination, or fortune-telling, stopped when Paul exorcised a demon from her. Again, we read the account in the Book of Acts:

The girl followed Paul and the rest of us and kept yelling, "These men are servants of the Most High God! They are telling you how to be saved." This went on for several days. Finally, Paul got so upset that he turned and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I order you to leave this girl alone!" At once the evil spirit left her (Acts 16:17-19 CEV).

Here we find divination linked with demon possession. Once the evil spirit left the slave girl, she was no longer able to predict the future. Therefore, when we look at what the Scripture says about this topic we see that divination is condemned in the strongest of terms. Consequently, it is something which nobody should ever attempt to practice.

Summary To Question 33

What Does The Bible Have To Say About Divination?

The God of the Bible tells us a number of things about the future. Yet He does not tell us everything. There are those who are not satisfied with what God has to say about "things to come." They want to know more. Consequently, they have resorted to the occultic practice of divination to discover what lies ahead. We find that divination, the practice of attempting to determine the future by occultic means, was widely practiced during the Old Testament period. The Bible provides examples of people who attempted to "divine" the future. This includes such figures as the Gentile prophet Balaam and the Babylonian soothsayers in Daniel's time. Unfortunately, certain people from the nation of Israel also practiced this forbidden method of trying to determine what will happen in the future. Ezekiel, the genuine prophet, spoke out against the false prophets who used divining methods. In the Book of Hosea the Lord says that His people had abandoned Him by practicing such things as divination.

We find divination also practiced in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul exorcised a demon from a slave girl who practiced this forbidden art. She is said to have been demon-possessed. By the power of the Lord, the demon was sent out of her. No longer could she practice this "black art." Therefore, from both testaments, we discover that divination was practiced by pagans as well as those who were from the chosen nation, Israel. Always, it was also roundly condemned by the Lord.

Question 34

Can Forbidden Knowledge Actually Be Obtained By Occultic Practices?

The Bible says that people in the ancient world used magical practices in an attempt to gain forbidden knowledge. They used such things as divination, omens, magic, and sorcery in an attempt to discover things which could not be learned on a natural level.

We also find that the God of the Bible completely and thoroughly condemned such practices. Indeed, those from Israel who were engaged in these things were to be put to death.

Did They Really Obtain Such Knowledge?

The obvious question that arises is this: “Were these practitioners able to gain this knowledge?” In other words, did such magical practices work? The answer is a resounding, “No.” This can be seen by the following observations.

1. These Things Have No Power To Know The Future

First, there is no power to read the future, or to gain hidden knowledge in any physical object such as livers, clothing, the entrails of owls, etc. They cannot tell anyone, anything. The idea that reading them has some type of access to hidden knowledge is absolute nonsense. Consequently, the entire ritual of attempting to divine the future through any physical object is worthless.

2. Deception Often Occurs Among Those Who Practice Such Things

Second, much that goes under this category is sheer deception. Instead of contacting the spirit of some dead man or woman, the practitioner is intentionally deceiving the person or persons who are trying to gain this forbidden knowledge. They tell the people what they want to hear but they are not in contact with any type of entity that can give them this knowledge. The entire process is a fraud.

3. The Demon Spirits Are Lying Spirits

Third, even if the practitioner came into contact with demonic spirits they would not be able to obtain this secret knowledge. Demonic spirits, by definition, are “lying spirits.” In other words, they do not tell the truth. Whatever information they may divulge will be deceitful. This is something which we can be certain about.

The Bible warns of the possibility that lying spirits may speak to people. We read about this in Timothy:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons (1 Timothy 4:1 NRSV UE).

These spirits lie. Therefore, we should not expect to get the truth from them. Indeed, they will only lead people astray.

4. Only God Knows The Future

In addition, while demonic spirits may have knowledge of things that other humans do not know, they have no knowledge of the future. They are not God. Only the God of the Bible is omniscient or has “all knowledge.” Therefore, it is only the God of the Bible who can accurately predict the future.

In fact, this is the claim of the God of Scripture. Notice what He says about Himself:

Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me. Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish . . . Long ago I told you what was going to happen. Then suddenly I took action, and all my predictions came true (Isaiah 46:9,10; 48:3 NLT).

Consequently, anyone seeking knowledge about the future, apart from what the God of the Bible has revealed in Scripture, is not only practicing something that is forbidden, they are seeking something that is unobtainable.

Summary To Question 34

Can Forbidden Knowledge Actually Be Obtained By Occultic Practices?

People have always used occultic or hidden practices in an attempt to determine the future. The Bible warns us against any types of demonic practices to attempt to gain forbidden knowledge. This includes magic, sorcery, witchcraft, divination, and spiritism. The question then arises as to whether or not those who practice such things are actually obtaining truthful information about the future. Are people being told the truth by these diviners?

The answer is a clear, “No.” In fact, there are three problems with using demonic means to gain this knowledge.

First, objects used to gaze into the future have no power to reveal any type of hidden knowledge or coming events. There is no power in a crystal ball or any other device. They cannot tell anyone anything about the unseen world.

There is also the problem that deception occurs when people go to mediums and fortune tellers. Often the information being given is entirely through the deceiving practices of the medium. Therefore, it is not possible to trust anything that they say.

Finally, if a person actually comes into contact with a lying or demonic spirit they will not receive accurate information about the future. To the contrary, these spirits always deceive people. This is why the Bible calls them “lying spirits.”

The Bible says that God alone knows the future. Only He can be trusted to tell us what the future holds, as well as what presently goes on in the unseen realm. No other being is able to do this.

Question 35

What Is The History Of Halloween?

The history of the holiday we call “Halloween” is both long and complex. We will attempt to simply state some of the key points as we seek to understand how this particular holiday developed.

Halloween In Ancient Britain

Halloween in medieval times was known as “all Hallows Eve.” It was celebrated on October 31st the Eve of “All Saints Day.” The way in which the name developed is both interesting and disturbing. We can explain it in this manner.

In ancient Britain and Ireland, the year was divided into two parts, summer was celebrated from May through October while winter was from November through April.

The Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sah-ween; Gaelic for “summers end”) observed the end of summer. It was the eve of the New Year which was celebrated on November 1st. This was the time that the herds returned from pasture and preparations were made for the coming winter.

This night was an occasion to set huge bonfires on hilltops. These bonfires would burn all winter long. This would ensure the survival of the people during the long winter months.

There were other reasons as to why the fires were lit. For one thing, sacrifices to the gods were made on these fires. The spiritual forces were acknowledged on that night as well as placated with the sacrifices. Prayers were sometimes offered for the dead. This, they believed, would guarantee their protection from these spirits.

In addition, it was believed that the light of the fires would frighten away any evil spirits which might have been roaming that night.

Indeed, it was believed that on this particular night the spirit world came into contact with the natural world in a unique way. Thus, the souls of the dead could actually wander the earth on that one particular night. It was also thought that these dead souls would visit the homes of their relatives on Samhain.

Consequently the people offered sacrifices to appease these spirits of the dead. It seems at the beginning these particular spirits were viewed as rather harmless.

Halloween Took On A Sinister Meaning

The festival eventually acquired a more sinister meaning. Ghosts, witches, black cats, fairies, demons, and hobgoblins were thought to be roaming around during this night. These evil spirits were thought to control nature and, therefore, they must be placated.

It was also thought to be a favorable time of year for divinations were practiced about marriage, luck, health, and death. It was the only day when the help of the devil was invoked.

Halloween And The Church

Samhain, along with other native holidays, was still celebrated among the pagans when the church became dominant in Europe. This caused the church to make decisions as to how to respond to these pagan holy days.

In A.D. 601, Pope Gregory, in an effort to wipe out the pagan holidays, issued an edict to missionaries about how to deal with native beliefs and customs. He ordered the missionaries to “use the customs” rather than obliterate them.

For example, if a group worshipped a tree, the missionaries were told to consecrate it to Jesus Christ rather than cut it down and destroy it. Therefore, they allowed its worship to continue but now in a Christian context rather than in a pagan one.

For pagan temples, the missionaries were to remove the idols, sprinkle the place with holy water, and then replace the idols with icons of the church. Accordingly, the pagan temple was turned into a building which honored Christ. In sum, the church was to incorporate the pagan traditions rather than outright rejecting them.

In addition, this allowed the Christian faith to be spread and readily accepted in previous pagan areas. But this was at a cost. While the pagan celebrations were diminished, they weren’t entirely eradicated. The followers of the old religion continued to practice their beliefs. However, because of the stranglehold the church held on these people, the practice was done in secret. Therefore, those who practiced the “black arts” were branded as witches.

All Saints Day Substituted For Samhaim

Eventually, the church holy days were purposely set to coincide with the holidays of the various pagan peoples. It was assumed that this would obliterate the meaning of the pagan holiday.

This led to the substitution of “All Saints Day” for Samhaim. In fact, the day in which the dead saints were honored was purposely moved from its original date of May 13th to November 1st in the year 834. This was done in an effort to thwart the continued celebration of Samhaim.

Instead of giving devotion to Satan, the martyrs were honored. It was thought that the people would see this day as honoring the saints who had died rather than worrying about the evil spirits of the dead roaming around to annoy them.

This resulted in a diminishing of the traditions associated with this night. However, the beliefs were not eradicated. The powerful deities of the Celts were now reduced in their size and status; they became fairies or leprechauns.

Yet, the old beliefs never died. The idea of the wandering dead became more powerful than the feast that honored the dead saints.

In fact, the idea of the traveling dead resonated with the people more than the thought of honoring certain dead saints of the Roman Catholic Church.

All Souls Day

This led the Roman Catholic Church in the year 988 to establish November 2nd as “All Souls Day.” This was a time which the living prayed for the souls of the departed, both believers and unbelievers. Again, the idea was to substitute a holy day for the continual practice on the eve of Samhaim.

Yet, these practices by the Roman Catholic Church did not quell the desire for the people to celebrate the eve of Samhaim on October 31st.

The Protestant Reformation

Interestingly, the Protestant Reformation, in its attempt to bring Christians back to biblical beliefs, rejected the idea of praying for the dead. Indeed, Scripture makes it clear that the fate of the dead is determined in this life alone. Once this life is over prayers for the dead are useless.

All Souls Day was removed from the Church Calendar at that time. It was not restored until 1928 by the Roman Catholic Church.

The Origin Of The Name Halloween

All Saints Day was also known as “All Hallows Day.” Hallow means “set apart” or “holy.” The idea was that the night before “All Hallows Day” was one of intense supernatural activity. People continued to celebrate this night as a time in which the dead wandered around.

However, because of the Christian influence, these dead were now considered to be evil rather than good. The citizens continued to give food and drink to placate these evil spirits.

At this time, masked impersonators began making the rounds asking for food and drink. Eventually “all saints evening” became “all hallows evening.” This was shortened to “all hallow eve” or “hallow evening.”

Finally, it became “Halloween.” Sadly, a day that was supposed to honor Christian saints has been changed to a night in which the world honors the realm of the dead with all its evil intentions.

From this, we learn a valuable lesson about compromise. Instead of trying to incorporate pagan days into the Christian calendar we should label them for what they are, superstitious pagan days.

Halloween, as we know it, would never have become a major holiday glorifying the dark realm of the dead had it not been for the Roman Catholic Church purposely moving All Saints Day to the same day the pagan festival of Samhain was celebrated.

Summary To Question 35

What Is The History Of Halloween?

The history of the holiday Halloween or Hallowe'en can be summed up as follows. The ancient Celts of England celebrated the end of summer with a festival called Samhain. As time went by, these celebrations took on a sinister meaning. Eventually the church incorporated it as a day to honor Christian saints. They thought that this move would end the paganism connected with it.

However, instead of ending the pagan rituals connected with this night, it took on an entire new meaning. Consequently, the misplaced idea of incorporating the date of a pagan holiday with Christianity has only given rise to the prominence of Halloween.

Question 36

Where Did The Popular Traditions About Halloween Come From?

As we are all aware of, there are a number of traditions associated with Halloween. It is often asked where these traditions originated from. While there is no consensus of opinion on the subject, the following observations seemed to be based in fact.

Harvest Festivals

It seems that Halloween has its origins in the harvest festival which would take place late in the year. The crops were harvested and then portions were brought out as an offering to the gods. This occasion was used to give thanks to the supernatural powers that ensured continual growth of the crops. The main harvest festival of the Celts was the feast of Samhain, held on November 1st. Many of the customs associated with the harvest festival are still being celebrated in one form or another on Halloween.

Bonfires

This was an important part of the Celtic celebration on October 31st. The Celts would light these fires which would be kept burning all winter. On this night they would burn trash, dead vegetation, as well as animals as sacrifices to the gods.

Not only did they sacrifice animals, on occasion they would sacrifice humans to appease the gods. The goal was to ensure that the sun would return after winter. The fire would also frighten away the evil spirits.

There was an old custom where nuts were thrown into the bonfire. They would explode. The purpose was to drive away evil spirits. Later, when fireworks were introduced to the West, they were substituted for the nuts. This explains the origination of fires on Halloween night.

Food

Food was also offered at these bonfire events. The cattle which couldn't make it through the winter were slaughtered. The people would feast on some of the meat and salt the rest for later. However, they would also leave portions of the food for their deceased relatives who might visit on that particular night.

Black Cats

Black cats and Halloween seem to go together. However, black cats were not originally associated with Halloween. This development occurred later on.

Tradition says that witches had the ability to change into black cats. After dark, all cats looked black so the witches' cat was thought to be black. Interestingly, depending upon the country where one lives, black cats can be seen as either good or evil. In Asia and the United Kingdom, black cats are seen as symbols of good luck.

However, in North America it is believed that bad luck will befall you if a black cat crosses your path. Yet if a white cat crosses your path, it is assumed that your luck will be good. As mentioned, the opposite is believed in the United Kingdom.

Witches

Witches are seemingly the first thing one thinks about when the subject of Halloween arises. Traditionally, the witch has been the scary “old hag” who casts spells.

In ancient times, witches were actually burned in the Halloween bonfires. This stopped around 1600. Instead an effigy of the witch was substituted for the person. Yet the witches continue to be a central part of the Halloween celebration.

However, today the witch is seen as an imaginary figure, like the vampire, which represents the scary supernatural realm. Unfortunately, a fascination about witches can develop.

Interestingly, in modern times, the witch is not seen as the traditional “old hag.” Instead she is a young, beautiful girl who is anything but scary. Furthermore, she is said to have power over others. This, of course, makes the idea of becoming a witch as something attractive. Indeed, a number of television shows have used this concept of beautiful young girls as witches.

Wearing Costumes Disguises And Going Door To Door Trick Or Treat

Going from door to door is traced back to the idea of the souls of the dead, along with witches, fairies, and demons, wandered out on this particular night. Food and drink were left out to placate them. As centuries passed, people began to dress up as these creatures.

The origin of wearing Halloween costumes is uncertain. This is also known as “guizing” derived from the word “disguise.”

Some believe that the Celts wore masks and blackened their faces so as not to be noticed by evil spirits. They would just blend in with the spirits. Consequently, they would go around without being spotted. Others denied the Celts wore masks to blend in. Instead they were worn to frighten away the spirits. In other words, the masks were used to scare these spirits of the dead.

Another theory has masks originating when people dressed in costumes and went house to house performing for food. This is also called “mumming.”

Mischief Night

In parts of Ireland and Great Britain October 31st was known as “Mischief night.” The townspeople would go around the town playing pranks on one another. On this particular night, there was no fear of being punished for their antics.

In the 19th century, these customs made their way to the United States through Irish and Scottish immigrants. Mischief night developed into our modern “trick or treat.”

The Jack O’Lantern

This story has come down in various forms. One popular view says a sinful man named Jack trapped Satan in a tree. He refused to let him go until the devil promised to spare Jack from hell. However, since Jack was a sinner, he was unable to enter heaven.

Unable to enter heaven or hell, Jack was given an ember from hell to place on a turnip or carrot to find his way around earth’s dark places. Later pumpkins were used instead of turnips.

Eventually, people would use the Jack O'Lantern on Halloween to frighten away evil spirits. It would be carried around the boundaries of the villages to keep the people safe from the devilish forces.

So the modern carved pumpkin, with its light inside, goes back to the story of Jack and his lantern. According to the legend, Jack continues his journey to find his way around the earth in his deceased state.

Bats And Owls

Because bats and owls were only seen at night, they became associated with the celebration of Halloween. In addition, the creepy look of bats made it a natural candidate for the scary nature of Halloween. It is also believed that these, as well as other nocturnal animals, could communicate with the spirits of the dead.

Bobbing For Apples

The tradition of bobbing for apples came as a result of the Romans incorporating some of the traditions of Halloween. They had similar festivals at this time of year. The festival of Feralia honored the dead while the festival of Pomonia honored the goddess of fruit. In addition, she was also seen as a fertility goddess. Nuts, as well as apples, were used in various games at that time.

These festivals were combined with Samhain at some unknown time in the past during their harvest celebrations. The first person to bite the apple would be next person to marry. Since many people died in childhood in those days it was important to carry on the family name. Therefore, the bobbing for apples was not merely a game to them, it was serious business. Of course, the same meaning isn't attached to this practice any longer. People bob for apples as part of the Halloween tradition.

Orange And Black Colors

The colors orange and black are uniquely associated with Halloween. It is believed that orange is used because it is the color of the changing leaves at that time of year. In addition, pumpkins, one of the staples of Halloween, are orange in color.

Black obviously represents the night. As we know, Halloween is celebrated after the sun goes down in the dark of night. Hence the color black is associated with it.

The combination of orange and black give a sinister look to this particular holiday. In fact, one will never see the combination of black and orange used together for anything but Halloween. It seems to be a trademark for this holiday alone.

This briefly sums up some of the popular traditions surrounding Halloween.

Summary To Question 36

Where Did The Popular Traditions About Halloween Come From?

There are a number of traditions surrounding Halloween that everyone is familiar with. However, what we are not familiar with is the origin of these traditions.

While there is some disagreement as to the exact origin of many of these practices there are some where we can be somewhat certain of their origin.

What we do know for certain is that Halloween has become big business.

Question 37

What Should Christians Do At Halloween?

Every year Christians face the dilemma as to what to do for Halloween. What should be our response when this day rolls around? Since there are not any verses in Scripture which speak about observing or not observing this holiday, what does a Bible-believer do?

Basically there are five different ways in which Christians view Halloween. We will consider each of them as well as offer some suggestions and guidelines with respect to observing this holiday. They are as follows.

Option 1: Halloween Is Harmless: Christians Should Celebrate Most Aspects Of It

There are Christians who think Halloween is a merely a harmless holiday. Indeed, they consider the modern-day Halloween activities as basically being risk-free fun. Therefore, apart from the destructive or violent aspects, they have no problem celebrating the holiday in the same manner as non-Christians. Thus, to celebrate, or not to celebrate, is a non-issue.

Response

In response, we must emphasize that Halloween is anything but a harmless holiday! Indeed, the attention on Halloween is on the evil forces of darkness rather than on the godly forces of light. The basis for Halloween celebrations, such as witchcraft, talking to the dead, and casting spells, are all condemned in Scripture with the strongest language possible. For example, we read the following words of warning which God gave to the nation of Israel as they were about to enter the Promised Land:

When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, be very careful not to imitate the detestable customs of the nations living there. For example, never sacrifice your son or daughter as a burnt offering. And do not let your people practice fortune-telling, or use sorcery, or interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord. It is because the other nations have done these detestable things that the Lord your God will drive them out ahead of you. But you must be blameless before the Lord your God. The nations you are about to displace consult sorcerers and fortune-tellers, but the Lord your God forbids you to do such things (Deuteronomy 18:9-14 NLT).

God told His people that they were not to participate in these detestable practices. What are such practices? This includes attempting to talk to the spirits of the dead, to try to cast spells upon people, or to pledge allegiance to some “spirit” or “power” rather than to the God of the Bible.

When Christian parents allow, or even encourage, their children to celebrate such evil things that the Bible harshly condemns they are teaching them that it’s acceptable to dabble in these forbidden practices. This should not be done! Therefore, for Christians to fully engage in the Halloween celebrations, with all of its symbols of darkness and evil, is not really an acceptable option for Bible-believers. Therefore, we must look for another answer as to how to observe this holiday.

Option 2: Ignore Halloween Completely

Since the main symbols and rituals of Halloween are clearly based upon things which are evil, there are those Bible-believers who think that Christians should have nothing whatsoever to do with any Halloween celebration. They believe that any participating in Halloween events is involving oneself in dark and evil deeds.

In other words, they are involving themselves in the occult. This is something that the Bible condemns in the strongest of terms. Thus, passages such as the following are used to support this idea of not celebrating this holiday:

Am I saying that idols or food sacrificed to them amount to anything? No, I mean that what the pagans sacrifice is to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot take part in the table of the Lord and the table of demons (1 Corinthians 10:20-21 NET).

To some, participating in anything to do with Halloween is the same as becoming partners with demons.

In addition, Paul wrote to the Ephesians about believers not taking part in deeds of darkness:

Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, rebuke and expose them. It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret (Ephesians 5:10-12 NLT).

Therefore, there are some Christians who ignore Halloween completely and treat the day like any other day of the year. They do this because they believe that the Bible commands, or at the very least, encourages, Christians to do so. For them, celebrating Halloween in any form is compromising our belief in Jesus Christ.

Response

While it is certainly true that Halloween is not a harmless holiday, it is possible to be involved in doing something constructive on this day without participating in the unfruitful works of darkness. Our next few options will look at some of these possibilities.

However, those who have come to Jesus Christ with a background in the occult may want to abstain from participating in the celebrations of this day because of their past relationship with the forces of darkness. Indeed, if they have practiced some of these forbidden things before coming to Christ, such as talking to the dead or casting spells, it may be wiser for them to stay away from all Halloween celebrations.

In addition, if a person cannot participate in alternative events with a good conscience, then they should abstain from celebrating this day. Therefore, for certain Christians, it would be wrong to participate in any Halloween celebration. Yet, this is not true for everyone.

Option 3: Use Halloween As A Chance To Witness To Those In Your Neighborhood

This perspective sees Halloween as a time to witness to our friends and neighbors. While it clearly recognizes the dark spiritual aspects and overtones of this particular day, there is the desire to be a light in the darkness. Therefore, in creative ways, a person will do whatever he or she is able to do to bring the message of Jesus Christ to those around them.

Indeed, the Apostle Paul wrote about the necessity of identifying with those around us in an effort to proclaim the gospel of Christ to them. He put it this way:

When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law. When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak

to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some (1 Corinthians 9:20-22 New Living Translation)

Instead of ignoring those around us, this approach reaches out to people who do not know Jesus Christ. As Bible-believing Christians, we are called to reflect the light of Christ to a dark world. Halloween affords us an opportunity. In fact, on this particular night it brings the people of our neighborhood to our doorstep!

Furthermore, having our children dress up in costumes which have a biblical theme can also be used as a testimony of our belief in Jesus to our neighbors. When the meaning of the costume is explained it affords an opportunity to testify to Christ. In this manner, we can turn this night which was meant for evil into a night that proclaims the light of Christ and His gospel.

Consequently, some Christians opt to participate in Halloween in a way which loudly proclaims the victory of Christ over the forces of evil. Unbelievers are, therefore, engaged with us on this particular day.

Option 4: Have A Christian Celebration (Believers Only)

There are those who only want to be with Bible-believing Christians on this particular night. They do not want to engage unbelievers or view any of the sordid things which are associated with Halloween. Consequently there are gatherings which take place at churches, or in houses, which is limited to believers in Jesus Christ. Christians use these gatherings to celebrate light rather than darkness.

Some Christians have dress-up parties where they come as Bible characters. In this way, they can have an alternative celebration with other believers without coming into contact with the evil elements which are associated with Halloween. This certainly is an option for those who believe in Christ.

Option 5: Have An Alternative Celebration (Where Non-Christians Can Be Invited)

There are numerous churches which see this night as a chance to reach out to their community. Therefore, they invite the public to come to their “alternative” celebration. This gives the believers an opportunity to be a witness to the unbelievers in their area while at the same time allowing youngsters to safely celebrate the holiday in a fun atmosphere.

These types of celebrations are used as teaching tools for both believers and unbelievers. The victory of Jesus Christ over the forces of evil is thus proclaimed in an atmosphere of fun and festivity, the light triumphs over the darkness!

Consequently, rather than hide from the darkness and evil that is associated with this particular holiday, Bible believers can boldly create an alternative setting that celebrates light instead of darkness.

Conclusion: Each Believer Must Do What Is Right For Them

Halloween seems to be one of those issues where each Bible-believer must individually choose what to do. This should be based upon our own personal convictions. In other words, it is ultimately between us and the Lord.

Therefore, there is no “right” or “wrong” answer as to how Christians should celebrate or not celebrate Halloween. In fact, there are many ways in which the day can be observed as long as one does not participate in any of the evil practices associated with Halloween.

This being the case, we should not judge other Christians for their celebration or non-celebration of this holiday. Indeed, this is something which is between them and God.

To sum up, it seems that the proper Christian response to the holiday of Halloween is that each believer should personally study the matter and then follow the direction where the Lord is leading them. In doing so, we should always make our goal what Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31 NET)

Summary To Question 37 What Should Christians Do At Halloween?

Halloween is a yearly holiday where Christians, especially in America, are faced with a dilemma. How are we to respond to it?

We find that Christians have a number of options for what they should do at Halloween. They include the following.

One viewpoint says Christians should celebrate it as any other holiday. In other words, Halloween does not receive any more or less attention than other holidays. Nothing special should be made out of this particular day. We should celebrate it just like the unbelievers.

Yet Christians should be made aware that Halloween is not a harmless holiday. It should not be an option for Bible believers to celebrate it exactly like unbelievers do. We are supposed to be different, to be salt and light to the world. Furthermore, we are told not to participate in the unfruitful works of darkness. Therefore, engaging in evil practices at Halloween should not be an option for Christians.

Consequently, such things as attempting to contact the spirits of the dead, to try to cast spells upon people, or to pledge ones allegiance to some spirit or “god” is completely forbidden by Scripture. While unbelievers may engage in these things at Halloween, believers should never participate in any of these practices. Indeed, they are not harmless.

Other Bible-believers completely ignore Halloween. Because of its pagan nature, some Christians act as though the holiday does not exist. Instead of celebrating it, they ignore it.

There are those Bible-believers who use this night as a chance to witness in their neighborhood. This position engages the unbelievers who come to their door.

Many think that this is a night where only Christians should gather. Thus, they have a celebration for believers only.

Still others think that they should have an alternative celebration where everyone is invited. Therefore, Halloween is used as witness for Jesus Christ to those in the community. There are good Bible-believing Christians who hold each of these views. Therefore, each believer should be persuaded in their own mind as to that which is best for them.

However, as we have emphasized, option one should not really be an option for believers. Indeed, we should not participate in some of the evil things that take place on that night. Other than that, options two through five are certainly allowable for those who have trusted Christ as their Savior.

Appendix 1:

Did The Lord Put A Lying Spirit In The Mouth Of The Prophets To Deceive King Ahab? (1 Kings 22:19-23)

There is a difficult passage found in the Book of First Kings that contains a number of issues with respect to God, His knowledge, the work of lying spirits, and a heavenly assembly of spirit-beings. It reads as follows:

... Micaiah said, Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left; and the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said one thing, and another said another. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, 'I will entice him.' And the LORD said to him, 'By what means?' And he said, 'I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And he said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.' Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you" (1 Kings 22:19-23 ESV).

There are many questions that arise from this passage that have a direct connection to the subject matter we are studying in this book. They include the following.

Is the heavenly assembly of spirit-beings to be understood literally?

Does the Lord actually ask for advice from beings He created?

Who was the spirit who suggested that the Lord deceive Ahab?

Was there demonic activity in this heavenly council?

Was the lying spirit a demonic spirit which the Lord sent?

To answer these questions properly, we must first look at the context of this narrative before we can make any tentative conclusions.

The Background To This Passage

To understand the exact situation, we must provide some background. The account begins as follows:

For three years there was no war between Aram and Israel. But in the third year Jehoshaphat king of Judah went down to see the king of Israel. The king of Israel had said to his officials, "Don't you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us and yet we are doing nothing to retake it from the king of Aram?" So he asked Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to fight against Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "First seek the counsel of the Lord" (1 Kings 22:1-5 NIV).

Based upon Jehoshaphat's suggestion, the king of Israel, Ahab, then brought together about four hundred "prophets" to seek their guidance as to whether or not Jehoshaphat should fight with Ahab to retake Ramoth Gilead.

To the man, they all told him that the Lord would give the king the victory if he went to war:

So the king of Israel brought together the prophets—about four hundred men—and asked them, “Shall I go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?” “Go,” they answered, “for the Lord will give it into the king’s hand (1 Kings 22:6 NIV).

Ahab Had A History Of Employing False Prophets

However, there is an important point that should be noted. The reader of First Kings knows that Ahab, and his wife Jezebel, had previously sponsored false prophets. In other words, they employed these prophets to tell them exactly what they wanted to hear! Indeed, none of these so-called prophets had ever brought the true “Word of the Lord” to them.

King Jehoshaphat of Judah realized this. Therefore, he was not satisfied with their answer. He then addressed the following question to the king of Israel:

“Is there no longer a prophet of the Lord here whom we can inquire of?” The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, “There is still one prophet through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah.” “The king should not say such a thing,” Jehoshaphat replied (1 Kings 22:7-8 NIV).

We should appreciate the fact that there was only “one prophet” at this time who was truly speaking God’s Word—Micaiah. Ahab knew this but he still employed these other prophets. Therefore, it is clear from the context that Ahab did *not* want to hear the Word of the Lord.

Because of the suggestion of Jehoshaphat, Micaiah was then summoned to appear before the king. Before he arrived, the Bible says these false prophets continued to proclaim the same message in front of the two kings—the Lord would be with them if they attacked:

Now the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sitting on their respective thrones, dressed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria. All the prophets were prophesying before them. Zedekiah son of Kenaanah made iron horns and said, “This is what the Lord says, ‘With these you will gore Syria until they are destroyed.’ All the prophets were prophesying the same, saying, “Attack Ramoth Gilead! You will succeed; the Lord will hand it over to the king” (1 Kings 22:10-12 NET).

The Leader Of These False Prophets Misquotes Scripture

There is something else here that we should not miss. As Zedekiah, the false prophet, was prophesying victory for Ahab he made “iron horns” and then quoted a verse in Deuteronomy:

In majesty he is like a firstborn bull; his horns are the horns of a wild ox. With them he will gore the nations, even those at the ends of the earth. Such are the ten thousands of Ephraim; such are the thousands of Manasseh (Deuteronomy 33:17 NIV).

The meaning, of the making of the iron horns and the quotation from this passage, was clear. The promise in Deuteronomy was to Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of the patriarch Joseph. The prophecy said that Ephraim would gore their enemies. Ahab was the king over the people of Ephraim.

Therefore, this false prophet proclaimed that Ahab was the representative of that promise that was made to Joseph and his descendants! Consequently, the king could be assured of victory if he went into battle.

However, what we have in this instance is the misquoting and the wrong application of Scripture by a false prophet. The purpose was to convince the king that the Lord would be with him. Ahab, the evil king of Israel, who neither worshipped nor served the Lord, happily embraced these bogus prophets.

Nevertheless, the genuine prophet of God, Micaiah, had not yet been consulted:

Now the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, “Look, the prophets are in complete agreement that the king will succeed. Your words must agree with theirs; you must predict success.” But Micaiah said, “As certainly as the Lord lives, I will say what the Lord tells me to say” (1 Kings 22:13-14 NET).

Though the other so-called prophets were quoting Scripture and telling King Ahab that he would prevail in battle, the man of God made it clear that he would only say what the Lord told him to say. In other words, he was determined to be faithful to the Word of God, not merely to be popular.

Micaiah Stands Before The Kings

When appearing before the two kings, the prophet first gave a sarcastic answer to the question asked by King Ahab:

When he came before the king, the king asked him, “Micaiah, should we attack Ramoth Gilead or not?” He answered him, “Attack! You will succeed; the Lord will hand it over to the king” (1 Kings 22:15 NET).

King Ahab immediately detected something in Micaiah’s voice and demeanor that indicated that his answer was sarcastic. We then read what happened next:

The king said to him, “How many times must I make you solemnly promise in the name of the Lord to tell me only the truth?” Micaiah said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep that have no shepherd. Then the Lord said, ‘They have no master. They should go home in peace’ (1 Kings 22:16-18 NET).

It seems on previous encounters between Ahab and Micaiah the prophet had employed sarcasm in answering the king. As on earlier occasions, Micaiah knew that the king was not truly interested in hearing the God’s Word on the matter.

Contrary to the message of these other so-called prophets, Micaiah’s vision from the Lord made it plain that King Ahab would die in the battle, and that Ahab’s leaderless army would scatter upon the mountains. Eventually, the warriors would safely return home without being pursued and slain by the Syrians. This would be the outcome if Ahab decided to go into battle. This was the true “Word of the Lord.”

However, King Ahab did not appreciate what the genuine prophet of God had said and complained to Jehoshaphat:

The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Didn’t I tell you he does not prophesy prosperity for me, but disaster?” (1 Kings 22:18 NIV).

The Heavenly Scene

The prophet of God then explained another vision he had, namely, the heavenly background of the situation Ahab found himself in:

Micaiah said, “That being the case, hear the word of the Lord” (1 Kings 22:19 NET).

With this understanding of the context of this passage, we are now able to examine the many issues that arise when Micaiah explained his vision of what had previously taken place in heaven.

Issue 1: Is There Such A Thing As A Heavenly Council?

To begin with, Micaiah described seeing the Lord, along with a number of other heavenly beings, in some type of heavenly assembly:

I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, with all the heavenly assembly standing on his right and on his left (1 Kings 22:19 NET).

This is the first interpretive issue that arises in Micaiah's speech. Are we supposed to interpret literally what he told King Ahab? Is there actually some type of divine council that meets with God in heaven? If so, who are these heavenly beings who comprise it?

As can be imagined, Bible commentators hold one of two views. Some believe that such an assembly of heavenly beings truly exists.

Others, however, think it is only a symbolic picture, that is, an illustration patterned after earthly realities. In other words, portraying God in heaven, as a King with a group of counselors, is representative of what takes place on the earth and is not meant to be understood literally. Therefore, his vision is more of a parable than an actual event that took place in the unseen world.

Since this is the only passage in the Bible that clearly speaks of such a "heavenly assembly," where discussions between God and certain created beings takes place, it is certainly wise not to make any biblical doctrine based upon this one portion of Scripture. This is critical for us to understand!

As we will see, there are a number of things that are said to have taken place in this "meeting" that are at odds with what we know about the Lord and His nature.

Issue 2: Does The Lord Ask Other Heavenly Beings For Advice?

If there is such a thing as a "heavenly assembly," as portrayed in this passage, does this mean the Lord actually addresses questions to these heavenly beings? In this passage, it indicates that He does. We read the following:

The Lord said, 'Who will deceive Ahab, so he will attack Ramoth Gilead and die there?' One said this and another that (1 Kings 22:20 NET).

Of course, this could be read as the Lord asking for volunteers as to who would deceive Ahab. However, it could also be understood as the Lord seeking advice about what He should do, as well as asking who the personage should be that would deceive Ahab.

While earthly leaders usually do nothing of importance without asking the advice of their counselors, in the same manner, the Lord is represented as consulting heavenly beings about the fate of Ahab. Does the Lord need to ask for advice from beings whom He created?

God Does Not Seek Advice!

It seems clear that this dialogue should not be understood literally! Indeed, as Paul would later write to the Romans, the God of the Bible does not need to ask the advice of anyone:

For who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? (Romans 11:34 NLT)

The obvious answer is “nobody!” No created being, anywhere in the universe, is able to give advice to the all-knowing Creator. Therefore, this is the first problem with understanding this as a literal event that took place in heaven.

Other Questions Arise

In the next few verses, there are a number of other issues that arise that have caused much discussion among Bible students. It starts when a spirit comes forward and volunteers to be the one who would deceive Ahab:

Then a spirit stepped forward and stood before the Lord. He said, ‘I will deceive him.’ The Lord asked him, ‘How?’ He replied, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.’ The Lord said, ‘Deceive and overpower him. Go out and do as you have proposed.’ So now, look, the Lord has placed a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours; but the Lord has decreed disaster for you (1 Kings 19:21-23 NET).

After the Lord asked who will deceive Ahab, so that he would go into battle thinking that he would be victorious, a certain spirit steps forward and volunteers. The Lord then asks this spirit how he would go about doing this.

This spirit says that he will be lying spirit in the mouths of Ahab’s prophets. The Lord then agreed with his suggestion. Thus, the lying spirit spoke through these false prophets and encouraged Ahab to go to battle.

In sum, the fact that all of these prophets had agreed that Ahab would have the victory was due to the lying spirit that had been placed in their mouths by the Lord, as suggested by one of the members of the heavenly council.

As can be imagined, there are many issues that arise from what we just read in these three verses.

Issue 3: Who Is This Spirit That Suggested Deceiving Ahab?

If one assumes that the heavenly assembly literally took place, then an obvious question concerns the identity of the spirit who suggested deceiving Ahab. Was this a good spirit or an evil spirit? Believers, who accept this account as having literally occurred, are divided on this question.

Option 1: It Was An Evil Spirit

Some see the spirit who spoke up as an evil spirit. Indeed, it is argued that it was Satan, the ruler over the evil spirits, who actually suggested that the prophets should be led by a “lying spirit.” If so, this would mean that Lord went along with the devil’s suggestion.

The Lord Does Allow Satan To Do Certain Things

The Bible does tell us that the Lord allows Satan to do certain things. However, it is always within clearly defined limits.

For example, the Book of Job reveals how God allowed Satan to test the patriarch, Job. Yet we find that the Lord put limits upon what the devil could do (Job 1:13-22). We later read:

Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.” And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life” (Job 2:4-6 ESV).

The Lord allowed Satan to cause physical infirmity to come upon Job but He also placed limits upon it. Some Bible students see something similar happening in this episode with the spirit who guided these prophets to prophesy falsely.

Satan Was Allowed To Encourage David To Number The People Of Israel

In a similar episode, we find Satan was allowed to motivate David to number the army of Israel:

Again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, “Go, number Israel and Judah (2 Samuel 24:1 ESV).

In this passage it states that the Lord is the One who incited David to number the people of Israel. However, in Chronicles, we find someone sinister was behind this idea, Satan:

Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel (1 Chronicles 21:1 ESV)

Consequently, this view would have the lying spirit, that was sent to these prophets, actually coming from the devil. Since it was a “lying spirit,” this is why the prophets told Ahab that he would be victorious.

To sum up, the Lord merely gave His permission for this episode to take place as in the case of the sufferings of Job, as well as David numbering the people of Israel. In other words, the idea to deceive Ahab through these prophets was entirely a work of Satan and one of his demons.

Option 2: It Was A Spirit Whom The Lord Sent

However, others see this “spirit” as actually the spirit the Lord sent. In this instance, the Lord sent this “lying spirit” to these false prophets to tell Ahab what he wanted to hear, namely, that he would be victorious in battle.

This would later cause Ahab to make a decision as to whom to believe when the genuine prophet of God, Micaiah, would tell the king the truth of the matter. Would he believe the man of God or the lying false prophets?

Option 3: We Are Not To Understand This Literally

We should again mention that if this vision is merely symbolic of the Lord’s dealings with Ahab, then we do not have to discover the identity of the “spirit” who made the suggestion.

In other words, the vision described by Micaiah is merely a way of saying that the Lord used these false prophets to bring about Ahab’s demise. The specific details that he related to the king do not reflect a literal conversation in heaven between the Lord and a group of heavenly beings.

Issue 4: Why Would The Lord Deceive Ahab?

Next, there is the issue of God being involved in the initial deception. This idea has troubled many people. God is a God of truth, not deception. Why would He initially ask this heavenly assembly as to how Ahab could be deceived? Why would He then agree to deceive Ahab? Once more we ask, does God need to ask for advice about how to proceed from beings that He created?

This Discussion In The Heavenly Court Never Took Place

Again, if we are dealing with a non-literal event, then no explanation is needed. There are a number of reasons as to why we should come to this conclusion.

First, the Lord does not literally sit on a throne since His nature is that of spirit. Jesus said:

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24 ESV).

As we also mentioned earlier, God is omniscient, all-knowing. In other words, the Lord would not have required any input from created beings. He does not base any of His decisions upon the advice of any other being, whether in heaven or upon the earth.

Therefore, the idea of the Lord sitting upon a throne, as well as asking advice from other beings was not meant to be understood literally. If this is the case, then neither the idea of the Lord agreeing to send a “lying spirit” to Ahab should be understood literally.

This Is The Second Of Two Visions

A further reason to understand this as a prophetic parable is that this is the second of two visions of Micaiah. The first is obviously not to be understood literally. He told the king the following:

I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep that have no shepherd. Then the Lord said, “They have no master” (1 Kings 22:17 NET).

The people were to be scattered “like” sheep having no shepherd. Ahab got the point. Indeed, he would lose his life if he went into battle.

The fact that this first vision is obviously symbolic gives us an indication as to how to understand the second vision of the heavenly council—it too is merely symbolic of God arranging this entire episode.

We could add one more thing—the sarcasm of Micaiah. It seems that on previous occasions the prophet of God spoke sarcastically to the king when delivering the truth of the Lord. The heavenly assembly that he spoke about may be another example of this.

However, Ahab certainly got the point from the man of God. Indeed, if he went into battle he would be killed. This was the genuine message from the Lord.

God Was Behind This Entire Episode

Even if the vision of the heavenly assembly is not to be understood literally, as the evidence seems to indicate, there is still the likelihood that Lord Himself instigated, as well as authorized, the initial deception of King Ahab through these lying prophets.

In fact, the entire episode seems to make this clear. Eventually, the true prophet of God, Micaiah, set the record straight. Therefore, while Ahab was initially deceived by these lying prophets, he was forewarned, by the genuine prophet, as to what would be his fate.

Therefore, at the end of the day, God could not be accused of ultimately deceiving Ahab. Indeed, it was through Micaiah that the Lord told the king exactly what would happen to him if he attempted to battle the Syrians.

Ahab Did Not Listen To God’s Prophet

Instead of listening to the prophet of God, Ahab ordered him to be thrown into prison. The prophet then spoke these words to the king:

Micaiah declared, “If you ever return safely, the Lord has not spoken through me.” Then he added, “Mark my words, all you people” (1 Kings 22:28 NIV).

Micaiah’s response indicated that he placed himself under God’s standards for a true prophet. We read about this in Deuteronomy:

But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.” You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?” If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed (Deuteronomy 18:20-22 NIV).

According to this passage, the outcome of the prediction would demonstrate whether or not a person spoke for the Lord. Indeed, if words of the “prophet” did not come true exactly as predicted, then he is not a prophet of God. To sum up, a prophet of God must be 100% right 100% of the time!

Micaiah declared to Ahab in the strongest of terms that he had spoken the truth of the Lord. In fact, he staked his calling as a genuine prophet on the accuracy of his predictions.

Ahab Had A Previous Experience With Elijah

We should also remember that Ahab had a previous experience with another solitary prophet of God—Elijah. In a similar situation, Elijah stood alone against 450 prophets of Baal. At the end of the day, Ahab saw that Elijah was indeed the true prophet of God (see 1 Kings 18:16-40).

Consequently, this evil king cannot be seen as some type of victim in this situation. In fact, he knew who truly spoke for the Lord as well as who did not.

Ahab Died In Battle As Micaiah Prophesied

Unfortunately for Ahab, he did not listen to God’s prophet. He went into the battle disguised:

The king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah attacked Ramoth Gilead. The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise myself and then enter into the battle; but you wear your royal robes.” So the king of Israel disguised himself and then entered into the battle (1 Kings 22:29,30 NET).

However, as the true prophet of the Lord had predicted, Ahab met his death. We read what happened:

Now an archer shot an arrow at random, and it struck the king of Israel between the plates of his armor. The king ordered his charioteer, “Turn around and take me from the battle line, because I’m wounded.” While the battle raged throughout the day, the king stood propped up in his chariot opposite the Syrians. He died in the evening; the blood from the wound ran down into the bottom of the chariot (1 Kings 22:34-36 NET).

Ahab learned that it is impossible to outsmart a genuine prophetic message from the Lord. Indeed, if the Lord predicted that he was going to die in battle then he was going to die!

Some Basic Conclusions

From this passage, we make a number of general conclusions.

First, whether or not the heavenly assembly should be understood literally, we know that the Lord does not sit upon a literal throne, nor does He ask for advice, or even need advice or suggestions, from any other being.

Second, if the heavenly council is to be understood literally, we should conclude that the spirit that was sent to the false prophets was from the Lord, not Satan. The idea of it being a “lying spirit” does not necessarily mean it was demonic. Indeed, let us remember that it was false prophets who were predicting victory for Ahab. The king, as we know, was not interested in the truth.

However, the better answer seems to be that the vision of Micaiah was more like a parable than an explanation of actual events that took place in heaven. His words were meant to show God’s control over all things and how the Lord used these lying prophets to give Ahab a choice as to whom to believe.

If this is the correct way of understanding this passage, then the various questions about the dialogue in heaven are a non-issue since it did not actually take place.

Ultimately, Ahab had to make a decision. Micaiah explained that the false prophets had been given a lying spirit to deceive the king but he, as a true prophet of God, was telling Ahab the truth. Would it be the false prophets, or the genuine prophet that the king would believe?

We know that Ahab had previous experiences with a single prophet, Elijah, who told him the truth, as opposed to many false prophets who were lying to him. In other words, from past experience the king knew that a solitary prophet may well indeed be the one speaking for the Lord.

Therefore, this entire episode depicts the Lord giving Ahab a chance to respond to a genuine prophet, which is consistent with other similar, earlier opportunities afforded to the king.

To his detriment, he chose to believe the false prophets, and consequently, met his doom. Ahab, who had refused to listen to genuine prophets in the past, decided once again to ignore their predictions. In this instance, it cost him his life. Therefore, the responsibility for this decision was his, and his alone.

A fitting epitaph for Ahab would be the words of the psalmist as he describes how the Lord deals with humans:

To the pure you show yourself pure, but to the devious you show yourself shrewd (Psalm 18:26 NIV).

Summary To Appendix 1

Did The Lord Put A Lying Spirit In The Mouth Of The Prophets To Deceive King Ahab? (1 Kings 22:19-23)

In the book of First Kings, there is an episode where the prophet Micaiah explained to the evil King Ahab that the Lord had earlier deceived the king by putting a lying spirit in the mouths of his prophets. These false prophets promised Ahab victory if he would go to battle against the Syrians.

The genuine prophet of God told the king that going to war would bring about his death. Ahab chose to believe the lying prophets. As always, the prophet of God was correct. Though Ahab disguised himself in the battle he was killed, nevertheless.

This entire episode brings up many questions about God’s dealings with evil humans, such as King Ahab.

For one thing, there is the description by Micaiah of an assembly of heavenly beings who discuss how to deceive Ahab so he will go into battle. Since the Lord is part of this discussion group, questions arise about how we should understand what Micaiah said.

First, and of the utmost importance, what we do know for certain is that this is the only place in all of Scripture that relates to us an alleged discussion in heaven between the Lord and other heavenly beings. Since there are no other passages that even remotely record a similar scenario, we should be careful as to how literally we are to understand the entire episode.

Indeed, does God decide His actions only after discussing it with heavenly beings? Is this what takes place in heaven? Furthermore, would the Lord use a lying spirit to deceive people? Or was it Satan who sent a demonic spirit to these prophets to cause them to lie to Ahab?

Christians are divided on how to interpret this episode. If the heavenly council is to be understood as literally taking place, then it is clear that the Lord was behind the original deception of Ahab. It would be an example of how God, while not the author of evil, uses deception to achieve His ultimate ends. He sent the lying spirit only in the sense that He permitted these false prophets to testify dishonestly.

Nonetheless, Ahab made a choice for which he was personally responsible, since he been warned of the truth by God's prophet, Micaiah. Therefore, he had only himself to blame.

Yet, there seems to be a better way of looking at this episode. Rather than understanding this to be an actual report of a discussion of an assembly of heavenly beings, it appears more likely that we are dealing with a prophetic parable. Micaiah had already related one vision to Ahab that was symbolic of what would happen to him and Israel, namely they would be scattered like sheep without a shepherd.

The next vision was a symbolic way of explaining that the Lord allowed these false prophets to lie to Ahab. As we know, Ahab had a history of not wanting to believe the true prophets of God.

In fact, there are several things about Micaiah's explanation that are contrary to what the Bible says.

First, God does not literally sit upon a throne. Furthermore, the Lord never asks, or needs, advice from any other created being. These two points demonstrate that his description of the heavenly council is not to be understood as an actual event.

Consequently, there would be no need to answer any specific questions about the existence of a heavenly council, how to explain the Lord asking advice of this council, or how to explain the lying spirit God sent to these false prophets. None of these questions would need answering if this is merely a prophetic parable given by Micaiah and not to be interpreted literally.

To sum up, the entire episode reveals that God allowed Ahab to make a choice. Would he believe his own false prophets, who were there to tell him what he wanted to hear, or would the king believe the man of God, who told him the truth. Ahab decided to believe the liars and it cost him his life. Ultimately, he alone chose his destiny.

Appendix 2

Why Did God Send An Evil Spirit To King Saul? (1 Samuel 16:14; 18:10; 19:9)

In the Old Testament, we are told that on three different occasions that the Lord sent an “evil spirit” to King Saul. In the first instance, we read the following:

Now the Spirit of the Lord had turned away from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him (1 Samuel 16:14 NET).

The Bible also says that this evil spirit returned on two other occasions:

The next day an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul and he prophesied within his house. Now David was playing the lyre as usual. There was a spear in Saul’s hand, and Saul threw the spear, thinking, “I’ll nail David to the wall!” But David escaped from him on two different occasions (1 Samuel 18:10-11 NET).

Now once again there was war. So David went out to fight the Philistines. He defeated them thoroughly, and they ran away from him. Then an evil spirit from the LORD came upon Saul. He was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, while David was playing the lyre. Saul tried to nail David to the wall with the spear, but he escaped from Saul’s presence, and the spear drove into the wall. David escaped quickly that night (1 Samuel 19:8-10 NET).

Why the Lord would torment King Saul by sending an evil spirit to him has been a challenging question. As can be imagined, these three accounts bring up a number of questions. They include the following:

Why was Saul sent an evil spirit by the Lord?

Was the evil spirit a demon?

Would God send a demonic spirit to torment a person?

These, as well as other questions, arise from these passages in Scripture. In fact, there are a number of issues that need to be examined.

The Background

To answer these questions properly, it is important that we understand the overall context.

Saul was the first king over the nation of Israel. However, the Bible makes it clear that while he was the choice of the people, he was *not* the choice of the Lord. In fact, it soon became evident that his behavior disqualified him to rule God’s people.

We should remember that the Lord had earlier set down some specific commandments for the kings that would rule His people. Indeed, there was the expectation that they would conduct their lives in the ways of the Lord. We read the following:

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the

commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel (Deuteronomy 17:18-20 ESV).

Though the Spirit of the Lord initially came upon Saul when he was anointed as king, regrettably, he had not followed these rules that the Lord had set down.

Saul's Sin With The Amalekites

On one occasion, the Bible tells us that the prophet Samuel ordered Saul to destroy the Amalekites:

And Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have' (1 Samuel 15:1-3 ESV).

However, Saul disobeyed the Lord:

But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them (1 Samuel 15:9 ESV).

This disobedience caused the Lord to reject him as king over Israel:

The word of the LORD came to Samuel: "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments" (1 Samuel 15:10 ESV).

God's Man, David

We are then told that the Lord had His own choice as to whom should rule Israel, David. Samuel was commanded to anoint David as the rightful king of Israel. In doing so, two things happened.

First, the Spirit of the Lord came upon David:

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah (1 Samuel 16:13 ESV).

At the same time, God's Spirit had departed from Saul:

Now the Spirit of the LORD left Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrified him (1 Samuel 16:14 NASB 2020).

We should note the contrast between David and Saul. God's Spirit comes upon David from the very moment of his anointing. Furthermore, His Spirit remained with David. On the other hand, Saul's punishment was this harmful, or evil, spirit that was sent to him by the Lord.

Saul Deserved To Be Punished

There is no doubt that Saul deserved to be punished for his actions. However, this is not the question that we need to address. It is not the *fact* of his punishment but rather the *nature* of his punishment that is problematic. Simply put, why would the Lord send an evil spirit to torment him?

A number of points need to be made in answering this question.

The Punishment Of Saul Was Like That Of Abimelech And The Leaders Of Shechem

It is important that we understand that Saul's punishment was not unique. Previously, we read in the Book of Judges, that the Lord had similarly sent an evil spirit to Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem:

God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the lords of Shechem. So the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech (Judges 9:23 TLV).

Recall that Abimelech was the evil person who had engineered the murder of all the sons of the Judge Gideon, except for one. Abimelech was also made king by the leaders of Shechem.

There are some commentators who claim that it was a demonic spirit that was sent in this instance, as well as in the case of Saul:

Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem, so that they became treacherous towards him. "An evil spirit" is not merely "an evil disposition," but an evil demon, which produced discord and strife, just as an evil spirit came upon Saul (1 Sam. 16:14, 15; 18:10); not Satan himself, but a supernatural spiritual power which was under his influence. This evil spirit God sent to punish the wickedness of Abimelech and the Shechemites ... that God might lay the blood not only upon Abimelech, the author of the crime, but also upon the lords of Shechem, who had strengthened his hands to slay his brethren; had supported him by money, that he might be able to hire worthless fellows to execute his crime (Keil and Delitzsch Old Testament Commentaries)

In the same manner, it is contended the Lord sent an evil spirit to Saul on a number of occasions. What Abimelech and Saul had in common is that both were unworthy to lead the chosen people, Israel. Indeed, in each instance, some type of unexplained evil spirit was sent to them because of their sinful behavior.

Again, the question arises: Why was an evil spirit sent to these men by the Lord?

How Are We To Understand The Term "Evil Spirit" In These Contexts?

With respect to the punishment Saul received, we must first attempt to have a proper understanding what is meant by the "evil" spirit in these contexts. What exactly does it signify?

While most English translations use the word "evil" to describe the spirit, a few of them do not:

Now the Spirit of the LORD had left Saul, and the LORD sent a tormenting spirit that filled him with depression and fear (1 Samuel 16:14 NLT).

Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him (1 Samuel 16:14 ESV).

But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him. (1 Samuel 16:14 NKJV).

The Hebrew word *ra'ab* which is usually translated as "evil" in this verse does have a range of meanings. This includes such meanings as tormenting, distressing, and harmful.

In a note on 1 Samuel 16:14, the New English Translation, the NET Bible, has the following to say about the term "evil spirit:"

Or “an injurious spirit”; cf. NLT “a tormenting spirit.” The phrase need not refer to an evil, demonic spirit. The Hebrew word translated “evil” may refer to the character of the spirit or to its effect upon Saul. If the latter, another translation option might be “a mischief-making spirit” (NET Bible 1 Samuel 16:14 note).

The Moody Bible Commentary understands the evil spirit in a similar manner:

An evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him. Rather than suggesting that the Lord’s Spirit could at times be evil, the Hebrew phrase is better translated, “a spirit of evilness (or disaster),” in this case probably a spirit whose mission is judgment upon Saul ... The terror brought upon Saul was not just fright, but of partial incapacitation (Moody Bible Online Commentary on 1 Samuel).

Bible students have suggested a number of possibilities about the exact meaning of this “evil spirit from the Lord.” They include the following.

Option 1: Saul Had A Mental Illness: He Was Manic-Depressive

This first option holds that Saul had some type of manic-depressive psychosis. As we examine his life, we discover symptoms which included periods of intense despair. This was coupled with intermittent outbreaks of homicidal violence toward David. Furthermore, Saul was paranoid that people were plotting against him. This sort of behavior is said to be typical signs of this type of mental disorder.

If this is what happened, then there was no supernatural spiritual element involved. Instead, the “evil spirit” was essentially a psychological condition that the Lord sent to punish Saul. If so, it may have been a previous condition from which Saul had suffered that had now become worse.

We do know that the Spirit of the Lord was given to Saul at the time he was anointed king. Seemingly this gave him the ability to lead Israel with a sound mind. In other words, at his anointing, the Spirit made him into “another person.” Saul was told the following:

The Spirit of the Lord will come powerfully upon you, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person (1 Samuel 10:6 NIV).

Thus, when the anointing of the Holy Spirit was taken away from Saul he reverted back to the person he previously was. This included some type of past mental disorder which only became worse when the Spirit left him and this mischief making spirit came upon him.

Option 2: Saul Had A Demon Who Afflicted Him At Various Times

There is also the view that the supernatural was directly involved. Some feel that Saul was harassed by a demon who afflicted him from time to time. This theory says the “evil spirit” would come upon Saul periodically to trouble him.

Accordingly, it was not demon possession but rather a demonic spirit would occasionally torment him.

Option 3: A Demon Permanently Indwelt Saul

A third suggestion is that a demon actually entered into Saul and remained with him the remainder of his life. In other words, he was demon-possessed. This, it is argued, would explain his consistently odd behavior once the anointing from God left him.

The Keil and Delitzsch Old Testament Commentaries, which we referred to earlier, believe that in the case of Saul, as it was in the instance of Abimelech and the men of Shechem, it was an actual demonic spirit that was sent by the Lord who entered in and indwelt Saul:

The “evil spirit from Jehovah” which came into Saul in the place of the Spirit of Jehovah, was not merely an inward feeling of depression at the rejection announced to him, which grew into melancholy, and occasionally broke out in passing fits of insanity, but a higher evil power, which took possession of him, and not only deprived him of his peace of mind, but stirred up the feelings, ideas, imagination, and thoughts of his soul to such an extent that at times it drove him even into madness.

This demon is called “an evil spirit (coming) from Jehovah,” because Jehovah had sent it as a punishment, or “an evil spirit of God” ... a supernatural, spiritual, evil power; but never “the Spirit of Jehovah,” because this is the Spirit proceeding from the holy God, which works upon men as the spirit of strength, wisdom, and knowledge, and generates and fosters the spiritual or divine life (Keil and Delitzsch, Old Testament Commentaries, 1 Samuel).

The problem with these last two options is that we nowhere find in Scripture a similar episode of the Lord sending a literal demonic spirit to harass or dwell in a human being.

Furthermore, the fact that the Bible says that the Lord sent an evil spirit to trouble Saul seems to indicate that he was not demon-possessed. Otherwise, there would have been no need to keep sending this evil spirit to him over and over again.

The Expositors Bible Commentary makes the following observation:

Although the “evil” spirit may have been a demon that embodied both moral and spiritual wickedness, it may rather have been an “injurious” (spirit that “boded ill for Saul, one that produced harmful results for him”). It was thus doubtless responsible for the mental and psychological problems that plagued Saul for the rest of his life (Expositors Bible Commentary, Revised Edition)

Option 4: The Lord Sent An Angel, Or Messenger, Of Judgment

Another suggestion is that this “evil spirit” was actually an angel, or messenger, of judgment that was sent from the Lord. In other words, the Lord did not send a demon to enter Saul but rather another sort of supernatural being who was a messenger of God’s judgment. The spirit itself would not be evil but the result of its judgment upon Saul would bring disastrous consequences.

In fact, some argue that the Hebrew phrase in these three contexts is better translated as, “a spirit of evilness,” or a “spirit of disaster.” This righteous spirit would bring God’s punishment upon the rebellious Saul which would result in his wild mood swings.

In sum, this messenger of the Lord caused Saul to experience constant misery as a result of his consistent disobedience to the commandments of the Lord.

What Is The Best Answer?

Since there does not seem to be enough evidence to make a definitive conclusion on the matter it is best to say that we are not really certain as to which answer is correct. However, options one and four may seem to be the best possible solutions. Indeed, it does not appear necessary to assume that the Lord sent a demonic spirit to either trouble Saul or to indwell him.

Saul Was Punished For His Sinful Ways

While we may not know the exact meaning of the words “evil spirit from the Lord,” we do know that Saul was punished for his constant departing from the commands of God.

Ultimately, the Lord was responsible for whatever mental and psychological problems that plagued him for the rest of his life. Indeed, it was the righteous divine punishment for the ungodly behavior of this first king of Israel.

However, as to the exact nature of the punishment, there is apparently not enough evidence to make a definitive conclusion.

Summary To Appendix 2:

Why Did God Send An Evil Spirit To King Saul? (1 Samuel 16:14; 18:10; 19:9)

Saul was anointed as the first king over the nation of Israel. While the people insisted that they be like other nations and have a king rule them, the problem was that their choice, Saul, was not the choice of the Lord. In fact, Saul's erratic behavior eventually led to his removal as king.

On three different occasions in First Samuel the Scripture says that Saul was sent an “evil spirit” as punishment from the Lord. While Saul certainly deserved to be punished for his defying the commandments of the Lord, the nature of this punishment is disputed.

Indeed, the exact meaning of the “evil spirit” that the Lord sent to King Saul has been a subject of much discussion and debate among Bible students.

While it is possible that this spirit may have been demonic, it may also be understood to mean that the Lord sent an “injurious” spirit to Saul. In other words, this spirit produced harmful results for him for the rest of his life.

This idea makes sense in light of what Saul was told when he was anointed as king of Israel, namely he would become a “different person” to lead God's people.

However, Saul resisted the work of the Spirit of the Lord and rebelled against Him. In fact, we find his life was characterized by pride and disobedience. Therefore, when Spirit of God departed from the king, Saul reverted back to the same paranoid depressed person that he was previously.

Others argue that the Lord actually sent a demon either to harass Saul or to permanently possess him. However, this would be the only episode in the Bible where the Lord Himself commissioned a demon to do His work, unless we assume the evil spirit sent to Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem, Judges 9, was also a demonic spirit.

Another solution is that the Lord sent a godly messenger who somehow judged Saul for his evil behavior. While His angels are all “righteous” they can be commissioned to bring punishment upon evildoers.

No matter what solution we may ultimately decide upon for the meaning of the “evil spirit” we must note that text never hints that this spirit provided Saul with any excuse for his erratic behavior.

He, and he alone, remained responsible for his evil deeds. Saul had rejected the Lord, thus, in turn, the Lord had rejected Saul and then punished him.

Appendix 3

Who Were The Sons Of God Who Married Earthly Women In Genesis 6? Could They Be Angels?

One of the most contested passages in the entire Bible is found in the sixth chapter of the Book of Genesis. It reads as follows:

Now when humankind began to multiply on the face of the ground and daughters were born to them, then the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were good and they took for themselves wives, any they chose. Then ADONAI [the Lord] said, “My Spirit will not remain with humankind forever, since they are flesh. So their days will be 120 years. The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, whenever the sons of God came to the daughters of men, and gave birth to them. Those were the mighty men of old, men of renown (Genesis 6:1-4 TLV).

It is widely believed that the “sons of God” in this context refers to angels. Is there convincing evidence for this position?

The Angel View (Angelic View)

To determine this, we will examine in detail the popular view that the “sons of God” in Genesis 6 were actually angels who had sexual relations with earthly women, variously called “the daughters of men,” “the daughters of mankind,” “the daughters of humans” or “the daughters of humankind.”

According to this view, they produced offspring who were half-angelic, half-human beings—the Nephilim. The Nephilim corrupted the earth to such a degree, that it caused God to send a Flood to wipe everyone on the planet, except Noah’s family. For lack of a better term, we will call this the “angel view,” or the “angelic view,” and we will use these terms interchangeably.

While this is a general summation of the angelic view, there are some differences among those who hold this theory. However, all of them embrace the idea that the “sons of God” were supernatural beings—not humans.

Our Recommendations On How To Read Our Response

Before we list the arguments for and against the angel view, we have a couple of recommendations for reading our response. First, we have recommendations for the lay reader. Next, we make other recommendations for anyone who is teaching on the subject or has a desire to teach on it.

For The Lay Reader

First, since we have gone into great detail in our answer, over 40 pages long, we recommend that most readers should do two things. First, look at the points we have listed under the next heading, *Twenty Facts That We Know For Certain About The Possibility Of Angelic Involvement In The Genesis Flood*. This gives an overview of that facts essential to understanding this debate.

Next, go to the summary where we have simplified the points that we have made. It is thorough enough as to touch every basic point that we have made but it saves the reader from having to examine all the detailed arguments. Of course, if one wishes to read the in-depth arguments, they are certainly welcome to do so.

For The Bible Teacher

For those who have either already taught on this subject, or who are planning to do so, we recommend reading everything written in this appendix. In doing so, the Bible teacher will gain a comprehensive understanding of all of the main issues that are involved as well as the main arguments for both sides. This will allow the teacher to engage with the various arguments and then teach their people with a more thorough understanding of the issues at hand.

Twenty Facts That We Know For Certain About The Possibility Of Angelic Involvement In The Genesis Flood

Before we look at the case for and against possible angelic involvement in the Genesis Flood account, there are at least twenty facts that everyone who examines this issue can agree upon. In other words, these are facts that are beyond dispute. They are as follows:

Fact 1: There is no specific mention of angels in the immediate context of the Flood account (Genesis 6-8).

Fact 2: There is no specific mention of angels in the larger context of Genesis, either before or after the Flood (Genesis 1-5, 9-11).

Fact 3: The first specific mention of angels in Scripture is found in Genesis 16:7 where the angel of the Lord appears to Hagar.

Fact 4: Nothing, anywhere in Scripture, clearly names angels as one of the reasons for the Flood.

Fact 5: The idea that angelic involvement may have been a contributing reason for the Flood would never have been an issue if not for one phrase in Genesis 6:2,4—the “sons of God.”

Fact 6: The exact Hebrew phrase “sons of God” in Genesis 6:2 and 6:4 is only used word-for-word twice elsewhere in Scripture, Job 1:6, 2:1.

Fact 7: We know the phrase “sons of God” refers to righteous heavenly beings in Job because of the context.

Fact 8: A similar phrase [you are] “the sons of the Lord your God,” is used in Deuteronomy 14:1 by the same author Moses who compiled and wrote the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch. The phrase is definitely referring to humans.

Fact 9: Accordingly, when the only other time this similar phrase is used by Moses, it is speaking of human beings.

Fact 10: Hosea 1:10 records the Lord using a similar phrase (they will be called): “sons of the living God.” This too refers to human beings.

Fact 11: The Nephilim are said to have been upon the earth both before and after the Flood. They are described as “mighty men,” “men of name,” “humans.” Scripture does not specifically say that they were the offspring of the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men.”

Fact 12: If angelic marriage to earthly women were a cause for the Flood, then it must be decided whether the angels involved were “good angels” or “evil angels.”

Fact 13: If wicked, then why were these evil angels called the “sons of God?” There is no term used anywhere else in Scripture that is remotely similar when it refers to the unrighteous or evil angels.

Fact 14: If good angels were involved with earthly women, then this must mean that there was a second angelic rebellion. The first had to have previously occurred because the serpent, who is later identified with the devil, tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden. Scripture is clear that Satan is the leader of the evil angels. However, one may want to argue that there was no rebellion of the angels before the era of the Flood.

Fact 15: Scripture makes it clear that the Flood was specifically sent because of the sin of humans.

Fact 16: Nowhere in Scripture are angels explicitly condemned for the occurrence of the Flood.

Fact 17: Jesus likened His Second Coming to the days of Noah (Matthew 24:37).

Fact 18: There is nothing predicted in Scripture that angels will have sexual relations with women at the time of Jesus' Second Coming, or the "return of the Nephilim."

Fact 19: The Hebrew phrase "took wives" in Genesis 6 is a standard Old Testament phrase for a legitimate marriage.

Fact 20: Jesus said, "angels do not marry" (Luke 20:36).

These facts are indisputable. Those who contend that the "sons of God" were angels who had sexual relations with earthly women must be able to convincingly respond to these twenty facts.

With these things in mind, let us now look at the case for the angelic view, as well as the case against angelic involvement.

How We Will Proceed To Answer This Question

In examining the case for the angelic view, we will proceed as follows:

First, we will look at the various reasons which are given in support of this theory. After each reason we will give a response. In doing so, we will discover that the evidence for the angelic view is not at all convincing. Indeed, each point which is brought up in its favor has a reasonable comeback to it.

In the next section, we begin by listing three general problems for those holding the "angel view." They will demonstrate as to why it is not a good idea to use this passage to advocate that the Bible says that angelic marriages were made with humans, or that angels lusted after earthly women.

After this, we will then list some specific problems with the angelic view which further demonstrates that this interpretation does not even come close to fitting with the biblical facts.

Consequently, we will conclude that the sons of God were human beings, not angels, nor any other type of supernatural being.

The Case For The Angelic View

The following reasons are usually given for embracing the angelic view as the best interpretation of the evidence.

Reason 1 This Is An Ancient View

To begin with, the belief that the "sons of God" who are mentioned in Genesis 6:2,4 were actually angels is an ancient one.

Early Writers Held This View

In the first century A.D., the Jewish writer Flavius Josephus in his “Antiquities of the Jews” (1:3:1) held the position that angels had sexual relations with women. Philo of Alexandria, who wrote in the early first century A.D., also believed that angelic sin was the reason for the Flood.

Furthermore, many early Christian interpreters also took this position. These include Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Ambrose.

However, while the angelic view was popular in the early years, it fell out of favor among Christian interpreters from approximately the fourth to the eighteenth century. It was Augustine’s denunciation of the angelic interpretation in his work, *De Civitate Dei* 15, written between A.D. 413-426, that caused it to be rejected by Christians.

The Apocryphal Books

Another ancient source that testified to the angelic view is the apocryphal books (books written during the biblical period but not accepted as Scriptural).

In fact, one of the oldest commentaries on Genesis 6 is an elaborate account found in the book of 1 Enoch. In it, there is an attempt to solve the problem of sin at the time of Noah by attributing it to marriages between lustful angels, the “sons of God,” and earthly women, “the daughters of men” (1 Enoch 15:9-16).

The Book of Jubilees, dated to 100 B.C., speaks of angels coming to earth to help humankind. Jubilees reports that these angels became consumed with lust and produced a race of giants (7:21-25).

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, 2 Enoch 18, and 2 Baruch 56 all record that angels were punished for their sin of having sexual relationships with earthly women.

We find other ancient works such as *The Genesis Apocryphon*, among the Dead Sea Scrolls, holding to the angelic view of Genesis 6.

Today There Are Different Groups Embracing This Viewpoint

Interestingly, in recent times, the angelic view has been embraced by two very different groups of Bible interpreters. First, it held by liberal scholars who believe the Genesis account of the Flood is mythical. These people, who reject the historicity of the Bible in many of its parts, believe Genesis 6 is an example of the myths that were common among people at the time when this account was written.

However, there are a number of Bible-believing scholars, who reject the mythological view of Genesis, that also believe that angels are the villains in this account. They believe the angelic view is supported by the best biblical evidence.

Indeed, the Bible-believers, who hold to the angelic view, do so because they feel it best fits all the facts of Scripture. They strongly reject the idea that any part of Scripture is mythological. Furthermore, many Bible students believe that the later myths that arose concerning angels and women producing half-human/half-angelic offspring may have been derived from the actual occurrence of what took place as recorded in Genesis 6.

In sum, the ancient evidence testifies that the angelic view is the best way to understand what occurred at the time of the Flood. This is confirmed by many Bible-believers today who also embrace the angelic view.

Response To Reason 1

Though the angelic interpretation of Genesis 6 was an ancient view, it was certainly not the only view in antiquity. In fact, when all the facts are in, one could argue that the “non-angelic” view was the more orthodox interpretation of this account.

Commenting on the phrase, the “spirits in prison” in 1 Peter 3:19, we find the following helpful observations from Wayne Grudem:

Those who favour . . . the spirits in prison as fallen angels point to many places in extra-biblical Jewish literature where the “sons of God” who married the “daughters of men” in Genesis 6:2,4 and begot children by them, are understood to be sinful angels who married human women. This understanding of Genesis 6 is frequent in extra-biblical literature, being attested in at least the following nine texts: Josephus, Ant. 1:73, Philo, On the Giants 6:Q. Gen 1.92; CD 2:18; 1 Enoch 6:2,6; 106:13-14; Jubilees 5:1; 10:1-6; 2 Baruch 56.12-15.

However, it is often not appreciated that such an interpretation of Genesis 6 is far from uniform in Jewish tradition. The following list shows nine other texts where non-angelic interpretations are held.

While Philo himself calls these ‘sons of God’ angels in one place, he later calls them ‘good and excellent men’ (Q.Gen. 1-92). Moreover the Targums and Rabbinic literature are unanimous in viewing the ‘sons of God’ as human beings. Targum Onkelos on Genesis 6:2 and 4 reads ‘sons of princes;’ (or great men . . .) and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan has the same. Targum Neofiti has ‘sons of the Judges’ . . . in both verses.

Tosefta, Sotah 3.9a interprets ‘sons of God’ as men of the generation of the Flood. In the Midrash Rabbah, they are understood as ‘sons of the judges’ . . . and as ‘leaders’ (Gen.R 26.5 on Gen. 6:2 quoting Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai, c. AD 140), or as the generation of men at the time of the Flood (Num.R 9.24, on 5:27). The Babylonian Talmud at b.Sanh 108a understands them as men at the time of the Flood. Symmachus translates Genesis 6:2 as the ‘sons of the rulers.’

Although this material is admittedly somewhat later than 1 Enoch and Jubilees, which are both to be dated to the second century BC, the citations from Philo and the Targums are certainly not irrelevant for New Testament exegesis—indeed, the Rabbinic material generally represents a stream of Jewish tradition which is certainly relevant for New Testament studies. And the citations in this second group are diverse and frequent enough to give strong indication of a ‘non-angelic’ view of the ‘sons of God’ in Judaism, especially more orthodox Judaism, before or during the time of the New Testament (Wayne Grudem, 1 Peter, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, Electronic Version).

This extended quotation makes it clear that the angelic view was absolutely not the only one that was embraced by Jews at the time of Christ. Furthermore, it also reveals that the more orthodox interpreters of Genesis held the position that the “sons of God” were humans, not angels.

One other point should be mentioned. The so-called “Book of Enoch” is part of the Pseudepigrapha—Old Testament forgeries. In other words, it was not written by the patriarch Enoch but actually is a compilation of texts from a number of unknown writers living between the testaments (for more information on the Book of Enoch see our book *Does the Old Testament Apocrypha Belong in the Bible*, Question 10: What Are The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha? (Enoch, Jubilees).

“Ancient” Is Not Equivalent To True

At the outset, there is something that needs to be emphasized when we attempt to discover the correct answer to this question. The fact that a particular view is ancient, or even perhaps the most ancient, does not necessarily

make it correct. All in all, it must be the “biblical evidence” which causes us to decide which view best fits the facts. Indeed, whatever position one ends up embracing must be based upon the totality of the evidence from Scripture, and from it alone.

We should also mention that there are historical reasons which might explain why the angelic interpretation became so popular. Indeed, in the four hundred years between the testaments, also known as the “silent years,” when God was not divinely speaking through His prophets, there was much fanciful literature written. The patriarch Enoch, who did not die but was taken into heaven (Genesis 5:23-24) was one of the subjects often written about in those silent years. Imaginary stories about him and the Flood were popular.

In addition, elaborate stories and descriptions about angels were also composed during this period between the testaments—a time when there was no divine revelation given from the Lord.

When we put these two together, we can understand how the angelic interpretation became popular, as well as how Enoch was incorporated into these stories about angels and the Flood.

Again, we cannot emphasize this point enough: it is the biblical evidence that we will be concerned with, the writings which were divinely inspired by God. It must be our *only* source to discover the correct answer to this difficult question as to the exact identity of the “sons of God.”

As we have just observed, those in antiquity differed on the question of the identity of these personages. Consequently, we must allow our interpretation to be the one that best fits all of the “biblical facts” and nothing else.

Reason 2 The Evidence From The Septuagint Confirms The Angelic View

It is also claimed that there is the testimony for the angel view from another ancient source, the Septuagint. This Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, which was begun around 250 B.C., gives some support to the angelic view. Some of the manuscripts containing Genesis 6:2 read, “angels of God,” rather than “sons of God.” Consequently, this translation explains how the ancients understood the phrase—it referred to angels, not humans.

Response To Reason 2

Only one manuscript (Codex Alexandrinus) reads “angels of God.” The critical editions of the Septuagint (as well as two other ancient Greek translations) read “sons of God,” not “angels of God” in Genesis 6:2,4. Therefore, one should not appeal to the Septuagint to support the idea of the angel view because the evidence is mixed.

Again, we stress, it is the text of the Bible, and it alone, which must determine our view of the identity of the “sons of God,” not some ancient translation.

Reason 3 It Is The Obvious Reading Of The Text

As far as the biblical evidence is concerned, it is argued that the interpretation of the “sons of God” meaning angels is the natural reading of the text. Indeed, there is a direct contrast between “sons of God” and “daughters of men.” This shows one group is human, while the other group refers to supernatural or heavenly beings.

In other words, we have the supernatural, “sons of God,” having relationships with the human, “daughters of men.” This argues for two different types of beings which are involved in these relationships—angelic and human.

Response To Reason 3

The view is not as obvious as some believe.

Why didn't Moses, the author of Genesis, say angels if he meant angels? There are fifteen references to angels in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, and each time when it refers to angels, Scripture calls them angels! Indeed, they are *never* called the "sons of God," unless we take this passage as the one exception.

In response, some might argue that Genesis 3:24, where the Bible speaks of the "cherubim," is an earlier reference to angels. However, this is simply not true. In fact, the cherubim are a different type of heavenly being, and they are always kept distinct from the angels of God, who are His heavenly messengers (for more on the cherubim see our first volume in this series on the Unseen World, *Angels: God's Invisible Messengers*).

Therefore, calling the "sons of God" angels in Genesis 6 is anything but obvious. As we will later emphasize, the angelic view is inconsistent with the context of this portion of Genesis as well as the overall context of the book. Indeed, angels are never specifically mentioned, either before or immediately after this episode.

Reason 4 The "Sons Of God" Is A Technical Hebrew Phrase Meaning Angels

This argument is often the first that is offered in support of the angel view. It is contended that the Hebrew phrase, translated "sons of God," is a technical construction. According to this argument, whenever this phrase is used elsewhere in the Old Testament (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7) it *always* refers to angels.

In addition, there is also a similar phrase in Daniel 3:25 where Nebuchadnezzar sees a fourth man in the fiery furnace. He describes him in Aramaic as a "son of the gods."

Similar phrases are used in Psalm 29:1, 89:7, and Daniel 11:26 where it is claimed that the text obviously is a reference to angels.

It is also argued that in the rabbinic literature, this particular phrase always refers to angels—it is never attributed to human beings. It is, therefore, concluded that whenever we find this expression we should view it as a reference to angels, not humans.

Response To Reason 4

For a number of reasons, this claim does not fit the facts.

First, there are only two other places in the entire Old Testament where the *exact phrase* is used outside of the Book of Genesis (Job 1:6, 2:1). In Job 38:7, the Hebrew definite article *Ha* is missing and the reference in Daniel is in Aramaic, not Hebrew. In other passages, a similar, but different Hebrew phrase is used.

Therefore, to say that the term is used consistently for angels is misleading since there are only two other verses in the entire Hebrew Scripture where the precise phrase is used. Furthermore, the fact that these two places refer to heavenly beings is clear from the *context*, not from the phrase itself! The same could be said for Nebuchadnezzar's description of the fourth person in the fiery furnace.

This also brings up another important issue. While the "sons of God" are certainly heavenly beings in the Book of Job, as is the personage in Daniel 3, they are not necessarily angels!

Why do we say this? It is because the Bible says that the Lord has created a number of different heavenly beings. This includes the cherubim, seraphim, the living creatures, as well as angels.

What we have in the first two chapters of Job is the account of certain supernatural beings presenting themselves before the Lord. However, they are never specifically called angels. While they may indeed be angels, they may also be some other type of created supernatural being like the ones we just mentioned.

The Phrase Does Mean Humans In Some Contexts

Furthermore, and of the utmost importance, the Old Testament does contain references to the “sons of God” as human beings. In Deuteronomy we read:

You are the sons of the Lord your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth (Deuteronomy 14:1-2 ESV).

The children of Israel are called the “sons of the Lord your God.” This is a phrase, used by the same author Moses, that is similar to the one found in Genesis 6. It is obviously referring to humans, not angels, in this context.

In Hosea 1:10 (2:1 in some translations), we find the following description of Israel as the “sons of the living God:”

Yet the number of the Israelites will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or counted. And in the place where they were told: You are not my people, they will be called: Sons of the living God. (Hosea 1:10 CSB).

Here the phrase “sons of the living God” is almost exactly the same Hebrew phrase as found in Genesis 6. The only difference is the addition of the word “living.” In this context, it definitely refers to humans, not angels.

God also calls Israel “His son,” later in the Book of Hosea:

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son (Hosea 11:1 ESV).

We also read something similar in the Book of Isaiah where the Lord refers to Israel as “my sons:”

I will say to the north, ‘Hand them over!’ and to the south, ‘Don’t hold any back!’ Bring my sons from distant lands, and my daughters from the remote regions of the earth (Isaiah 43:6 NET).

Therefore, we have these words, “sons of God,” at times, referring to humans.

The Same Idea Is Found Elsewhere

The same idea, of God as the Father and Israel as His son, is found elsewhere in Deuteronomy. The Bible says:

They have corrupted themselves; they are not His sons; it is their blemish; they are a crooked and perverse generation (Deuteronomy 32:5 LITV)

In this instance, because of their sinful behavior, a particular generation of the people of Israel will be described as “not His sons.” The inference, of course, is that if the people behaved righteously, they would be “His sons.” This was written by Moses, the same writer who compiled Genesis.

Consequently, this Hebrew phrase, found in Genesis 6:2,4, is not a technical expression for angels or some other type of supernatural being. Old Testament scholar Kenneth Matthews makes an important conclusion about this phrase:

Also important is the weight of the Pentateuch's testimony, which identifies the Israelites as the children of God (e.g., Deut 14:1; 32:5-6; cf. Exod 4:2; Pss 73:15; 80:15); this resonates well with taking the 'sons of God' in 6:2 as an allusion to godly (covenant) offspring (cf. also Isa 43:6; Hos 1:10; 11:1; John 1:12-13). (Kenneth Matthews, *Genesis, New American Commentary*).

Therefore, we find that the Israelites are described as "sons of God" in a number of places in the Old Testament.

In sum, when all the evidence is in, it should not be claimed, as many do, that "sons of God" is always a technical phrase in Hebrew concerning angels or some other type of supernatural beings. It obviously is not.

Jesus Called Humans "Sons Of God"

Furthermore, the phrase "sons of God" is also used by Jesus Himself to describe human beings:

Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:34-36 ESV).

In this instance, the "sons of God" are not only humans, they are specifically said to be distinct from angels! Indeed, Jesus said these "sons of God" will be *like* angels at the time of the resurrection of the dead. "Like" or "equal" to angels has the idea that they cannot die and do not marry in the next world.

In fact, we have several other instances in the New Testament where believers are called the "sons of God." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God (Matthew 5:9 ESV).

Paul described those who believed in Jesus as follows:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Romans 8:14 ESV).

Therefore, from the totality of the biblical evidence, we cannot restrict this particular phrase "sons of God" to heavenly beings—whether angelic or some other type of divine creation of the Lord.

All in all, this argument from the Hebrew words used in Genesis 6:2,4, while so often claimed to prove the identity of the "sons of God" as angels, does no such thing. It is always the context, not the Hebrew phrase, that determines the identity of the "sons of God."

Reason 5 It Is A Consistent Interpretation

It is also said that the angelic view offers the most consistent interpretation of the "sons of God" phrase. For example, the phrases "daughters of men, or "daughters of mankind" in verse two, should be interpreted in the same sense as in verse one. It reads as follows:

When mankind began to multiply on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of mankind were beautiful, and they took any they chose as wives for themselves (Genesis 6:1-2 CSB).

It says, “mankind began to multiply and daughters were born to them.” Obviously, these daughters are human beings.

Since in Genesis 6:1 refers to the human species as a whole, it is argued that verse two should also refer to human beings when it speaks of the “daughters of mankind.”

However, since the expression “sons of God” is used in contrast to “daughters of men,” or “daughters of mankind,” it seems likely that it must refer to beings that are non-human—angels. Otherwise, why should the Scripture make the distinction between the offspring of humans in verse one and offspring of the “sons of God” in verse 2? Why place them into two different categories?

The simplest answer is that we are dealing with two types of beings—humans and angels.

Response To Reason 5

While we do find the classification of the “sons of God” and “daughters of men” into two difference categories, this does not necessarily mean that we are dealing with two distinct entities—one human and the other non-human. Indeed, there are a number of ways to explain as to why this was done.

Option 1 It Contrasts The Godly Line Of Seth With The Ungodly Line Of Cain

One way of looking at these two expressions sees the contrasts of the two genealogies that had been previously listed—that of Seth, the Promised Line, and that of Cain, the ungodly line.

What seems to have taken place is that those men who had previously married within the godly line found spouses from the ungodly. This mixture of the godly and ungodly resulted in the earth being corrupted.

After rejecting the angel view because of its many problems, 19th century writer John Kitto explains this other interpretation in the following manner:

We are thus led to consider the ... interpretation which makes the “sons of God” to mean the pious descendants of Seth, who are assumed to have been seduced into alliances with the women of the corrupted of race of Cain, “the daughters of men” from which the usual consequences of such ill-assorted union ensued. The distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous was no longer maintained, and in a generation or two was entirely lost; and the tide of general corruption advanced until, when “God looked upon the earth, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (John Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations*, 1860, p. 138).

This option is consistent with the emphasis in the early chapters of Genesis between the righteous and the unrighteous descendants of Adam and Eve.

John Kitto then gives a similar explanation as to why the distinction between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” is made in this context. It notes the specific emphasis that Genesis gives to the line of Seth:

It is an interesting observation of one of the best Jewish commentators, that of Seth only it is said that Adam—who was created in the image of God, “begat a son in his own likeness after his image;” an expression not applied to either Cain or Abel. Hence, he refers to the descendants of Seth as the “sons of God” (Kitto, p. 138).

This observation is also consistent with what Genesis has had to say in its early chapters regarding good versus evil.

In sum, the distinction between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” is emphasizing between intermarriage of the godly line of Seth and the ungodly line of Cain which brought about a world filled with sin which led to the Flood.

Option 2 It Simply Refers To Men And Women

There is another explanation of the distinction between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” which also makes good sense in the context of Genesis.

In keeping with the emphasis in the opening chapters of Genesis the “sons of God” would refer to males, whom the Lord specifically created in the beginning (Genesis 2:7). The “daughters of men” would then be a general reference to females—since the first woman was originally created from the body of the man, Adam.

Put another way, males were directly created by God while females were created from the males. Old Testament scholar John Sailhamer, who contends for this view, writes:

Why, then, are the men specifically called the “sons of God” and the women the “daughters of men”? This designation is in keeping with the earlier accounts of the origin of the man and woman. The description of the creation of the man and woman in ch. 1 makes it clear that both have been created in God’s image. In chs. 2 and 3 the man is created by the breath of God (2:7) and the woman is created from the man’s “side.” Thus men are called the “sons” (b^enê) of God — denoting their origin from God — and women are called the “daughters” (b^enôt) of man — denoting their origin from man’s side. In the use of the word “daughters” (b^enôt), there is a possible wordplay on the woman’s origin in 2:22 (John Sailhamer, *Expositors Bible Commentary, Genesis*, Revised Edition).

This understanding of the two phrases is indeed consistent to what the early chapters of Genesis had previously emphasized.

In sum, we should note that either of these two above options fits the context of Genesis.

There Are Similar Expressions In Scripture That Are Used For Two Groups Of Humans

We also find that in other parts of the Old Testament similar expressions are used for two different groups of *human beings*. For example, Judges 20:1-3 speaks of all of Israel assembling for war against the tribe of Benjamin:

All the Israelites from Dan to Beer-sheba and from the land of Gilead came out, and the community assembled as one body before the Lord at Mizpah. The leaders of all the people and of all the tribes of Israel presented themselves in the assembly of God’s people: 400,000 armed foot soldiers. The Benjaminites heard that the Israelites had gone up to Mizpah (Judges 20:1-3 CSB)

In this context, a distinction is being made between all the tribes of Israel and the single tribe of Benjamin. This, however, certainly does not exclude Benjamin from being classified as one of the tribes of Israel!

We can also cite another Old Testament example, Jeremiah 32:20. In this context the distinction is made between the people of Israel and the rest of humanity:

You gave signs and performed miracles in the land of Egypt which continue to this day, also in Isra’el and among other people; thus you made yourself the reputation you have today (Jeremiah 32:20 CJB).

Note that “other people” is used as distinct group of humans from those in the nation of Israel. Yet the people of Israel are certainly in the same category as the rest of the human race!

Therefore, we are not necessarily talking about human and non-human entities in this context when a distinction is made between the sons of God and the daughters of men, or the daughters of mankind.

Basically, Genesis 6 is simply a way of describing two different groups of humans. Whatever the case may be, we certainly do not have to assume that one group is supernatural, and one group is not. In fact, there is nothing in this context that would cause us to do this.

Reason 6 The Phrase “They Took Wives” Can Refer To An Illicit Relationship

The phrase which says that the sons of God “took wives” can also refer to illicit sexual relationships, not just a marriage relationship. In Judges we read:

And they commanded the people of Benjamin, saying, “Go and lie in ambush in the vineyards and watch. If the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then come out of the vineyards and snatch each man his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. And when their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us, we will say to them, ‘Grant them graciously to us, because we did not take for each man of them his wife in battle, neither did you give them to them, else you would now be guilty (Judges 21:20-22 ESV).

It is argued that the phrase “take for each man a wife in battle” does not refer to traditional marriage. In fact, as we read this account, we find that the women were “snatched” from the vineyards by the men of Benjamin who took them home and made them their wives.

In Leviticus we find a similar description of this phrase used for non-traditional marriage:

If a man marries his sister, whether his father’s daughter or his mother’s daughter, and they have sexual relations, it is a disgrace. They must be cut off publicly from their people. He has had sexual intercourse with his sister; he will bear his punishment (Leviticus 20:17 CSB).

As this passage states, there are certain marriages that are a “disgrace.” Consequently, the phrase, “taking a wife” or “took wives” does not necessarily mean a legitimate marriage.

Response To Reason 6

The evidence does not support this idea. In fact, the Hebrew phrase translated as “took wives” is a standing expression in the Old Testament for a legitimate marriage relationship. Moreover, the two above references are the only two places where we find possible exceptions.

Furthermore, there is absolutely nothing stated in the immediate context of Genesis 6 that would indicate these are anything other than genuine legitimate marriages. This is true whether or not it was a wise thing for the “sons of God” to do!

Therefore, the sin was not sexual in nature. The sons of God married: that is, they took wives. Indeed, there is nothing in the context which suggests the marriages were illegitimate or that the “sons of God” wrongly lusted after the daughters of men.

In addition, in the first of these exceptions, the men of Israel, eleven of the twelve tribes, made a vow that they would not personally give their daughters to any of the men of the other tribe, Benjamin. However, in order to

allow the survivors from the tribe of Benjamin not to go out of existence, they came up with a plan. The men of Benjamin were allowed to take wives for themselves from the young women who danced at an annual feast.

Though the men of Shiloh complained, it was explained to them that this was absolutely necessary to prevent the loss of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Consequently, the men of Benjamin went back to their land to rebuild for the future.

To sum up, although this was certainly not a traditional marriage in one sense of the term, the men from Benjamin did marry these women and then settled down with them. Therefore, they were legitimate marriages!

In the other illustration, we find that the law banned the marital unions alluded to in Leviticus 20:17. Consequently, it has been suggested that this particular verse, as well as other verses in the immediate context, may be referring to common law marriages. In other words, the people lived together as husband and wife without an official wedding ceremony.

We again emphasize this particular point—the phrase “took wives” is *the* standard phrase used in the Old Testament for a sanctioned marriage. These two possible exceptions do not negate this.

Consequently, the idea that the marriages in Genesis 6 were somehow illegitimate unions is found nowhere in the context, or anywhere else in the Bible for that matter.

Reason 7 Angels Having Sexual Relations With Humans Is Not A Mythological Story

We should not assume, if the text clearly states that angels had sexual relationships with women, that the story is, of necessity, mythological. Many non-Christian scholars who accept the angel view believe the account is mythological because of certain parallels in other ancient texts.

Indeed, in myths in Ugaritic, Sumerian, Hittite and Akkadian texts, there are statements where the gods are physically attracted to humans, had sexual relations with them, and produced offspring that were half-human, half-gods. However, it is a wrong inference to assume that the Genesis narrative is likewise mythological.

There are also parallels between the Genesis creation account and the Genesis Flood account with other ancient civilizations. We do not reject these biblical narratives because of weak parallels with other ancient writings. Neither should we do the same here.

Response To Reason 7

While it is true that simplistic parallels from other cultures do not make the story mythological, it could explain why some ancient interpreters believed the angelic explanation.

However, as we just mentioned, there is nothing in the Genesis account, or anywhere else in Scripture for that matter, that would suggest the “sons of God” wrongfully lusted after the “daughters of men.” This has to be read into the text.

In fact, there is some question as to how to understand the Hebrew phrase “they saw the daughters of men were beautiful.” The Hebrew word translated “beautiful” is “tov.” This word also means “good.” In fact, some scholars translate the word in this manner in this context.

For example, in a detailed study of the Hebrew text of Genesis 1-11, scholar Barry Bandstra renders the word in this manner:

And it was, when humankind began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, and the sons of the deity saw the daughters of the humankind, that they are good (Barry Bandstra, Genesis 1-11, *A Handbook of the Hebrew text*, 2008, Baylor University Press).

Notice that this scholar translated the Hebrew word in this context as “good.”

Consequently, this has led a number of commentators to believe this statement is referring to the inward character of the women—not their outward beauty. If this is the proper way of understanding the word, then it would remove any idea of angelic or even human lust for these women. In other words, the godly men saw goodness in the godly women.

While this is certainly not the only way in which to understand the meaning of the Hebrew word, it is definitely a possibility. Whatever the case may be, there is nothing in the context of Genesis 6 that demands we interpret it as angels lusting after human women.

Reason 8 Satan Wanted To Corrupt The Seed Of The Woman

The serpent who tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden was later identified in Scripture as the devil:

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him (Revelation 12:9 ESV).

After the punishment of the serpent was pronounced by the Lord in the Garden of Eden, we would expect this evil personage to attempt to defile the “seed of the woman.”

In fact, one of the ways that he could thwart the plan of God is by mixing the “seed of the woman” with angelic creatures. This act, if completed, would frustrate the promises of God of bringing the Savior, the Messiah, into the world.

Consequently, it seems what took place between the “sons of God,” angels, and the “daughters of humankind,” earthly women, was just such an attempt to thwart the plan of God.

Response To Reason 8

Scripture records that Satan did indeed make several attempts to defile the promised seed, but all the attempts were enacted by humans—never by evil angels. In fact, the Old Testament frequently warns against the intermarriage of God’s covenant people with those outside of His covenant. In fact, we read in Exodus of those who took wives from other nations:

And you then take their daughters for your sons, and their daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will make your sons prostitute themselves to their gods (Exodus 34:16 NET).

The Lord warned His people against adopting such practices with the heathen nations.

Consequently, the attempts of Satan to defile the promised line of the Messiah has always been with *marriages* of those from people *outside* of the covenant relationship with Israel.

In addition, the “seed of the serpent” as mentioned in Genesis 3, cannot be a literal offspring of Satan, or evil angelic beings, because angels, as spirit beings, do not, and cannot produce offspring.

Reason 9 The Judgment Of Flood Can Now Be Explained

The reason for such an extraordinary punishment as the Flood can more easily be explained on the basis of angelic sin rather than human sin. Genesis 6:1-4 seems to be a prologue to the Flood. It also provides the reason as to why God resorted to such a drastic form of punishment.

Why else would the Lord totally destroy the human race except for eight people? Merely the intermarriage between humans, whether the godly line of Seth and the ungodly line of Cain, or between kings and common people, would not be sufficient reason for God to wipe out the entire race.

Consequently, the best explanation for the Flood seems to be a mingling of supernatural beings with human beings which corrupted the race to the point that the Lord needed to destroy all human life except for Noah and his family.

Response To Reason 9

The context of Genesis 6 continually emphasizes the sin of human beings. In fact, nothing is said of angels! Indeed, the reason for the Flood is clearly human sin. We will let the narrative speak for itself:

And the Lord said, “My Spirit will not remain with mankind forever, because they are corrupt. Their days will be 120 years.” The Nephilim were on the earth both in those days and afterward, when the sons of God came to the daughters of mankind, who bore children to them. They were the powerful men of old, the famous men. When the Lord saw that man’s wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every scheme his mind thought of was nothing but evil all the time, the Lord regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. Then the Lord said, “I will wipe off from the face of the earth mankind, whom I created, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky — for I regret that I made them.” . . . Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with wickedness. God saw how corrupt the earth was, for every creature had corrupted its way on the earth. Then God said to Noah, “I have decided to put an end to every creature, for the earth is filled with wickedness because of them; therefore I am going to destroy them along with the earth” (Genesis 6:3-7, 11-13 CSB).

As we read this passage, we find that God was aggrieved by the behavior of humans. Indeed, verse three says that the Lord’s spirit will not always remain with “mankind” forever. In addition, it says “man’s wickedness was widespread on the earth.” Obviously, the subject here is human beings.

In fact, as we continue reading this passage, we find that human sin was so horrific that it brought pain to the heart of the Lord. Since humans had fallen to such an extent, it caused the Lord to regret the fact that He had made the human race in the first place! Again, the sinful culprits are humans.

Consequently, this utterly corrupt situation on the earth caused the Lord to eliminate the source of the problem—evil human beings.

Therefore, we read that God’s punishment was directed specifically at humans. Nothing in this passage even remotely hints that angels were involved.

The Comparison To Genesis 3 And The Punishment Of The Serpent

Moreover, we can ask the question, “Why weren’t the “sons of God” singled out for special punishment if they were angels, or some other type of supernatural being?”

When the serpent tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, he, along with the man and the woman, were punished for their sin. Not only was the instigator named, the serpent, his specific punishment was also recorded. The Bible says:

Then the Lord God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, you are cursed more than any livestock and more than any wild animal. You will move on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life. I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel (Genesis 3:14-15 CSB).

Clearly the Bible has no problem laying the blame on beings apart from humans if they are indeed guilty. In this case it was the serpent.

Yet the only blame listed in Genesis 6 is upon the human race. Nothing is said of the involvement of any other creature, whether natural or supernatural, that led to the Flood.

All of this leads us to conclude that it was humans, and humans alone, which were involved in the wickedness which caused God to send the Flood.

Reason 10 The Nephilim (Giants) Were The Results Of The Union Between Angels And Humans

The giants, the Nephilim, that existed in those days (Genesis 6:4) seem to have been the result of the union between the angels and humans. The fact that giants were mentioned points to some type of extraordinary explanation as to their existence. Indeed, if the giants were not the offspring of these two groups, then why is it injected here in the text?

The best answer seems to be that the giants were the result of this union. The fact that Nephilim are mentioned in Scripture as existing after the Flood (Numbers 13:33) does not imply they survived the deluge but rather that their name lived on as referring to men of great stature.

Response To Reason 10

The Nephilim or “mighty ones” were on earth both before and after the marriages between the sons of God and the daughters of men. Scripture makes this clear:

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days (and also after this) when the sons of God were having sexual relations with the daughters of humankind, who gave birth to their children. They were the mighty heroes of old, the famous men (Genesis 6:4 NET).

In other words, the Nephilim did not arise from these marriages. Furthermore, they are called “men” in this context. This is a term that is always used in Scripture of human beings, never of angels nor any of other type of being.

In addition, the exact meaning of the Hebrew word *Nephilim* is unknown. In other words, it does not necessarily mean “giants.”

The word may be derived from the Hebrew *naphal* meaning “fall upon others” (Joshua 11:7; Job 1:15; Jeremiah 46:16). Therefore it could refer to those who attack others.

The word also could be derived from the Hebrew *palab* which means “extraordinary.” This word is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe two humans—Antiochus (Daniel 8:24) and Jonathan (2 Samuel 1:26).

It is also possible that the Nephilim could be physical giants like Goliath (1 Samuel 17:4; 21:19-20).

There is more. In Numbers 13:33, the same writer Moses uses the word Nephilim twice to describe sons of “human parentage,” not angels. The human father is actually named, Anak:

They went up through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, were living. Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt . . . However, the people living in the land are strong, and the cities are large and fortified. We also saw the descendants of Anak there . . . We even saw the Nephilim there — the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim! To ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and we must have seemed the same to them (Numbers 13:22,28,33 CSB).

In this passage the term Nephilim is used by the spies to describe large “human beings.” The spies are not saying that they are non-human beings, but rather large human beings, so that when compared to them, it made them seem like grasshoppers.

To sum up, if the term Nephilim denotes offspring of human parents in Numbers 13:33, then why not in Genesis 6:4?

They Were Human!

We also have this description of the Nephilim:

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days (and also after this) when the sons of God were having sexual relations with the daughters of humankind, who gave birth to their children. They were the mighty heroes of old, the famous men (Genesis 6:4 NET).

Note how the Nephilim are described, mighty heroes, famous men! The Hebrew literally says, “men of name.” In other words, they are humans. This is a description of humans—not angels, and not half-angel half-human monstrosities!

In addition, if the Nephilim were some sinister group of individuals why they are called “mighty heroes?” This is a positive description, not a negative one!

In sum, there is nothing specifically said about the rise of the Nephilim that would single them out as the reason God sent the Flood. Therefore, since the context does not attribute anything sinister to them, or to their behavior, then neither should we.

Reason 11 Jesus’ Statement Does Not Refute The Idea

It is also argued that the angel view is not refuted by Christ’s statement that angels do not marry. Jesus said:

For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven (Matthew 22:30 CSB).

See also Mark 12:25 and Luke 20:35,36 for the same idea.

First, Jesus says angels “in heaven” do not marry. This does not preclude the angels who came down to earth from marrying. It merely says that can’t marry in the heavenly realm.

Second, though angels are deathless and have no need to perpetuate their own species, certain angels may have sought to produce another species through women.

Third, angels are only spoken of in the masculine gender. They have no possibility of marriage among their own kind, but this does not necessarily preclude them from having a relationship with human beings.

Also, if God could impregnate Mary, spirit beings may be able to do the same thing to human women.

Response To Reason 11

Angelic sexual relations with earthly women does not even seem to be a possibility for a number of reasons.

First, God created humans and animals “after their kind” (Genesis 1:27) which means there are limits to the extent that they can reproduce. Indeed, humans can only reproduce with other humans, dogs with dogs, pigs with pigs, etc. When the Lord created human and animal life, He made them with specific boundaries. In other words, there is no crossing of the kinds!

If angels are sexless, deathless creatures, without any physical form like ours, and had no need to perpetuate their kind, it does not seem possible that they could reproduce, even if they wanted since they were not created with this ability.

Moreover, there is no reference in Scripture to “evil angels” ever materializing in a human body. Indeed, demons, fallen angels, can only possess or inhabit the bodies of humans.

Furthermore, grammatical gender is not the same as actual gender. Simply because they are spoken of in the masculine gender does not make them male. Grammatical gender is not the same as personal gender.

Angels are also called “spirits.” The Greek word for spirits is *pneuma*. It is in the neuter gender in Greek. Interestingly, the Hebrew word for spirit, *ruach*, is usually in the feminine gender, while the Aramaic word for spirit is usually in the masculine gender! Therefore, the grammatical gender has nothing to do with personal gender.

There is something else that makes angelic sexual reproduction seemingly impossible. If angels are all males, then there would have been no need for body parts that would allow them to sexually unite with females—since there are no female angels!

Like all other supernatural created beings of the Lord, angels are sexless, neither male nor female. The fact that good angels always appear in Scripture as males has nothing to do with their personal gender, since they have none.

One last thing. Yes, the Lord supernaturally impregnated Mary, but spirit beings certainly cannot do everything that the Lord can do.

Reason 12 The New Testament Evidence Makes It Clear That They Were Angels

Three New Testament passages seem to link angels with sexual perversion in Noah’s day. In fact, there are many people who argue that this is the strongest line of evidence that we have that the “sons of God” were indeed angels.

Jesus Preached To The Spirits In Prison (I Peter 3:19,20)

We read in First Peter where Jesus preached to certain spirits in prison:

In it he went and preached to the spirits in prison, after they were disobedient long ago when God patiently waited in the days of Noah as an ark was being constructed. In the ark a few, that is eight souls, were delivered through water (1 Peter 3:19,20 NET).

This passage is often interpreted as Christ preaching to certain spirits after His death on the cross. It took place either immediately before His resurrection from the dead, or immediately afterward.

The question is: “To whom did Christ preach after His resurrection?” The spirits have been interpreted as fallen angels. The fallen angels are further identified as those who were disobedient at the time of Noah.

This connects them to Genesis 6:2,4. Jesus went to the place where they were imprisoned and spoke to them. The Lord did not announce salvation to these fallen angels—the Bible never speaks of angels having the gospel preached to them or having any chance to repent of their rebellion against God.

More likely, Jesus proclaimed His victory over death, which means salvation for the human race, as well as their eventual doom. Therefore, this verse connects the disobedient spirits with the judgment of the Flood.

Furthermore, the word “spirits,” when used in Scripture, only speaks of supernatural beings. This is another indication that we are not dealing with humans but actually angels in the context of Genesis 6.

The Angels Who Sinned Were Placed In Chains (2 Peter 2:4-6)

A second passage, found in 2 Peter, is more explicit of angelic sin. It reads as follows:

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a Flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly (2 Peter 2:4-6 ESV).

Therefore, in these verses, the Bible specifically speaks of angels who sinned.

Who Were They?

Who were the angels who sinned? Though some commentators believe this refers to the original sin of the angels, there are many Bible students who see this passage as referring to Genesis 6. In other words, it is providing the main reason as to why the Lord sent the Flood.

Three examples of God’s punishment are given in 2 Peter 2:4-6 (the angels who sinned, the ungodly living at the time of Flood, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah).

These three events follow after one another in the early chapters of Genesis. Since angelic sin is not previously mentioned in the Book of Genesis, the reference here seems to be to the angels who sinned at the time God sent the Flood.

The place where these sinful angels are kept is translated “hell” in most English translations. The Greek word is *tartaroo* and it is used only here in the New Testament. It speaks of a special place of confinement until the final judgment of angels which will lead to their everlasting punishment.

These angels, whom Peter speaks of, are confined to “gloomy dungeons” or “chains of darkness.” It is possible that some of these fallen angels have been allowed to plague humankind as demons, while others have remained imprisoned. The account of the “sons of God” in Genesis 6:1-4 seems to be the reference Peter had in mind.

Jude Makes A Reference To Sinning Angels (Jude 6.7)

A third reference is found in Jude. Many think that this is the clearest biblical reference that links the “sons of God” in Genesis 6 to angels:

And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 6,7 NKJV).

Jude, like Peter, gives past examples of the Lord’s judgment of gross sin. He speaks of angels who did not keep their proper dwelling place but did something out of the ordinary. This seems to refer to the angels who sinned at the time of the Flood.

God has reserved for these angels a place in darkness where they are bound with everlasting chains while awaiting Judgment Day. Like we just read in 2 Peter, it seems that some fallen angels are in bondage while others are unbound and active among humanity as demons.

The Comparison Of The Angels To Sodom

Immediately after the reference to angels who sinned is the example of Sodom and Gomorrah. This verse specifies sexual sin as the cause for the destruction of these two cities. We also find that Jude links the sin of the angels as similar to the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah—sexual perversion.

Two things stand out. The word translated “these” is Jude 7 is in the masculine gender in Greek. According to the rules of Greek grammar, it must refer to some masculine noun in the context, like the Greek word for angels. Since the Greek word for “cities” is in the feminine gender, it cannot be a reference to it. Therefore, the obvious reference in Jude 7 is to “these angels.”

In fact, two English translations, the New English Translation, and the Christian Standard Bible, add the words “angels” to the text in Jude 7 to make the reference clear. They read as follows:

So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns, since they indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire in a way similar to these angels, are now displayed as an example by suffering the punishment of eternal fire (Jude 7 NET).

In the same way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them committed sexual immorality and practiced perversions, just as angels did, and serve as an example by undergoing the punishment of eternal fire (Jude 7 CSB)

The NET Bible has the following note.

“Angels” is not in the Greek text; but the masculine demonstrative pronoun most likely refers back to the angels of v. 6.

Consequently, if this is the correct understanding of the statement of Jude, it is argued that it solves the problem of the identity of the “sons of God.” Indeed, they were angels who committed perverted sexual sin like the men of Sodom.

In sum, though angels do not normally marry, Jude’s comment may help explain the situation. He says “they left their own habitation” implying they occupied another habitation. This could mean taking on a human form and then intermarrying with women.

Angels Have Appeared In Bodily Form

Angels do not normally marry, nor do they have physical bodies as humans. However, at times, these supernatural beings have assumed bodies and have appeared in bodily form.

In Genesis 19, we find that two angelic messengers, in the form of men, visited Sodom. The men of that city, thinking these visitors were humans, wanted to sexually molest them. The next day, God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by raining down fire and sulfur on these evil cities. Therefore, the episode in Sodom is linked to the earlier story in Genesis 6, where angels left their own domain and committed sexual sins.

Accordingly, these three New Testament examples link the sinning angels with Genesis 6. Furthermore, Jude specifically attributes angelic sexual perversion to the angels.

Response To Reason 12

These New Testament passages do not clearly link sexual perversion with angels as many suppose. Indeed, a number of things need to be said.

To begin with, the idea of angels committing sexual immorality is at odds with Genesis 6. In fact, the Bible is clear that marriages took place between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of humankind.” There is no mention of anything sexually immoral, or any lustful practices, in the context.

As we will see, the New Testament passages, which speak of angelic sin, refer to the original fall of Satan, along with the angels who rebelled with him. This happened long before the time of the Flood.

If it was speaking of an angelic fall, then we would have two instances of angelic sin. The first would have been at the original fall of Satan and his angels, while the second would be at the time of Noah.

But this is not what the Scripture says. It says these angels “left” their “proper dwelling.” Seemingly, this refers to angels who had sinned at some distant time in the past, long before the time of the Flood.

Therefore, these passages are talking about their original sin. Otherwise, there would be two specific instances of angelic sin, one at the original rebellion against God, and a second at the time of Noah against God and the human race.

We will examine each passage and give an alternative interpretation.

1 Peter 3:19 Does Not Link Fallen Angels To The Flood

As we have stated elsewhere in our book *Hell: The Final Destination For Unbelievers*, 1 Peter 3:19 is speaking of humans whom the Lord evangelized, through Noah, at the time of Flood. These spirits who are now in prison were human beings who were disobedient during the time Noah was building the ark. The passage is not referring to Jesus preaching to confined evil spirit beings after His death on the cross.

We can add to this that there is nothing in the context of 1 Peter that is speaking about fallen angels, or any other heavenly being who may have sinned.

Furthermore, the claim that term “spirits” only refers to supernatural beings in Scripture is incorrect. Actually it can refer to either human spirits also.

For one thing, everyone who has died from the beginning of time, is now alive in the next world, likely in a spirit-form while waiting for the resurrection of the dead, and then their judgment which will be either punishment or reward. The Book of Hebrews says the following:

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect (Hebrews 12:22,23 NIV).

Presently in heaven, the believers are described as the spirits of the righteous who have been made perfect. Therefore, the term spirit, when referring to those in the unseen realm, is not limited to supernatural beings.

Therefore, spirits would certainly be a proper term to describe humans who were disobedient at one time, but are now awaiting judgment.

Furthermore, Peter wrote of the active rebellion of these beings who are now spirits, who had previously disobeyed at a specific time in history—the time Noah was building the ark. This indicates that only human spirits are meant. Indeed, nowhere do we read in Scripture about angels disobeying during the building of the ark.

In addition, as we previously mentioned, Genesis 6:5-13 unmistakably emphasizes that it was “human sin” that caused the Lord to punish the inhabitants of the earth with the Flood.

In Second Peter, we find the same thing being emphasized: human sin brought about the Flood:

If he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the Flood on its ungodly people (2 Peter 2:5 NIV).

Notice the Lord brought about the Flood upon “ungodly people.” Consequently, these spirits in prison that Peter wrote about, are those who are “now” in prison but who had formerly disobeyed the Lord at the time the ark was being built.

In fact, in Second Peter, he likened the scoffers of the last days to the same people who ridiculed Noah:

Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed (2 Peter 3:3-6 NIV).

Scoffers in the last days will be reminiscent of those at the time of Noah. Noah preached, but the people ridiculed him. Therefore, it was the inhabitants of the earth, not angels, who were punished in the Flood.

2 Peter 2:4-6 Is Speaking Of The Original Angelic Rebellion

In this passage, there is no linking of angelic sin with the Flood. To the contrary, the angelic fall is given as one of three examples in which the Lord punished the offenders.

The first illustration is the angelic fall, while the second is the judgment of the Flood. These are two “separate” incidents which caused God to punished gross sin. They are not linked together in this passage as the same event. The third illustration is God’s punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah. It, of course, has nothing to do with angelic sin.

Peter tells us that the result of this original rebellion was that certain of these angels were placed in chains. This is a symbolically way of speaking of their confinement. We know from Scripture that others have been free to roam as demons.

Again we stress, these are three separate illustrations of the Lord punishing horrific sin on three different occasions. Nothing is specifically said, or alluded to, about angelic sin at the time of the Flood.

Jude 6,7 Does Not Link Sexual Perversion To Angels

While a couple of modern translations link the sexual perversion of Sodom to the angels, this is not the only way to interpret the passage.

To begin with, as the translators admit, the word “angels” is not in the text. While Jude may be referring to them, he may not. Translators are to render what is in the text, not add a word to help us understand what they think the author may be saying—particularly in a controversial passage such as this.

Therefore, these translations have gone too far by placing the word “angels” in the text. It would have been much more preferable if they had a note in the margin explaining that it “could” be referring to the angels mentioned in the previous verse.

Furthermore, as John Calvin stated centuries ago, the word translated “these” in Jude 7 likely refers to the inhabitants of the cities around Sodom and Gomorrah. Let us recall that they too were destroyed when the Lord rained down fire and sulphur on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Therefore, Jude uses the masculine pronoun to refer to the people in the other cities which he just mentioned—cities that the Lord also destroyed for their perversion.

Consequently, instead of going back to the previous verse (Jude 6) to find what the “these” is referring to, one need to look no further than the same verse (Jude 7) to find the reference.

Therefore, it is not angels, who are in view, but rather the people in the cities surrounding Sodom and Gomorrah which were involved in the same type of sexual perversion. This is why “they” too were destroyed.

What If It Does Refer To Angels?

However, even if the Greek word translated as “these,” in Jude 7, is referring back to the angels in the previous verse, the issue of the identity of the “sons of God” is not solved.

As we just noted, the parallel passage, 2 Peter 2:4, plainly refers to the *original fall* of certain angels—it has nothing to do with angelic sin at the time of the Flood. Therefore, it would have been the original rebellion of angels that is compared to the sin of Sodom, not angelic sin at the time of the Flood.

Indeed, the question then becomes this: In what sense did the angels, in their original rebellion, sin in a manner that was similar to the people of Sodom?

How are the sins similar? The men of Sodom, along with the angels who rebelled, strayed from God’s original created order. In Sodom, there were numerous sins, including sexual perversion, which distorted the purpose for which men and women were initially created.

With the angels, there was a perversion of their reason for them being created. Indeed, they were made to serve the Lord. Instead of obeying him, they chose to follow another created being—the one who became Satan, the Adversary, the devil. With this rebellion they distorted God’s original purpose for them.

Therefore, as we consider the meaning of what Jude was referring to when he mentioned “these” personages as similar to Sodom, it could be a reference to the inhabitants of the other cities who were destroyed at that time, or it could refer to the angels who originally perverted their purpose for being created.

In other words, there is no need to make it refer to angels who sinned at the time of the Flood.

Evil Angels Do Not Materialize As Humans

Finally, as to the argument that angels at times have appeared in bodily form, we must make the following observation. The angels who visited Sodom were “good angels,” not evil angels. The same is true of every other recorded appearance in Scripture of angels materializing into a bodily form.

Indeed, there is no example in Scripture of evil angels ever materializing into a human body. While the Bible speaks of fallen angels, demons, commandeering a human body, by way of demon-possession, this is not the same thing as an angel somehow materializing into a human-like body. Nothing like this is ever found in Scripture. Never!

Reason 13 The Angels Were Judged Later For Their Sin

One of the arguments against the angel view is that they are nowhere singled out for punishment because of this sin—only the human race was punished for the sin of Genesis 6. Those who hold the angelic view counter by saying that the angels were not immediately judged by God but will eventually receive their punishment. The passages in First and Second Peter, as well as in Jude, refer to their future punishment.

Response To Reason 13

Because there is no mention of angelic punishment in the Genesis passage it is clear that it is only the punishment of humanity that is in view. As we have just observed, the punishment of the angels in Second Peter and Jude refers to their original sin, rather than their sin immediately before the Flood.

If it does not, then there seemingly is no reference in Scripture for the punishment of their “original rebellion” when they initially followed the created being who became the devil.

Reason 14 All Other Views Have Many Problems

Finally, it is often stated that the various explanations of Genesis 6, which argue that humans, and not angels, are the “sons of God,” are all deficient in one way or another. In other words, none of the “non-angelic” views explains all the evidence. Consequently, the angelic view does the best job of taking in all the facts.

Response To Reason 14

While there may be some difficulties about the various “non-angelic” views, this does not mean that the “angel view” is any better. Indeed, as we have seen, the reasons that are given to support the angel view all have reasonable responses to reject it. Therefore, the angelic view should not be accepted merely because the other views have difficulties.

However, as we have noted in our book, *The Sons Of God, The Flood, And The Tower Of Babel*, (Volume 4 of our series *The Bible and Science: Are They In Conflict?*) we find that at least two of the alternative views, that the sons of God were either the godly line of Seth, or simply referring to men in general, have much going for them. In other words, these specific theories fit the context of Genesis 6 as well as the rest of the Book of Genesis.

Conclusion On The Reasons Given For The Angel View

As we have looked at the various reasons offered for the angel view, we have found them unconvincing. While there are many excellent Bible students who hold this interpretation, as we have just observed, we believe the evidence to support this point of view is sadly lacking.

The General And Specific Problems With The Angel View

Not only is the evidence lacking for the angelic view of Genesis 6:1-4, we find that, in addition, there are many other problems with this perspective. They can be summed up under two basic categories, namely, general problems and specific problems.

General Problems With The Angelic View

At the outset, there are three general problems with the angelic view of the identity of the “sons of God” which we should appreciate.

General Problem 1: We Must Interpret Difficult Passages By Those That Are Clear

One of the basic rules of biblical interpretation is that we must interpret the passages that are difficult to understand by those which are clear. Furthermore, everyone agrees that Genesis 6 is one of the most difficult passages in the entire Bible to interpret.

Consequently, whatever conclusions one may make, it must agree with the totality of Scripture. What we find is that there are no clear passages elsewhere in the Bible which teach that angels sinned by having sexual relations with earthly women. NONE!

General Problem 2: We Should Never Use One Single Controversial Passage To Establish Biblical Doctrine

This next point is crucial. We never want to make a doctrine out of a single passage that can be interpreted in a number of possible ways. Never! But this is exactly what has been done with the angelic view. While there are other passages which can “possibly” be seen to support this particular interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4, those passages are anything but clear.

In fact, as we have documented, there are other explanations that are as persuasive, if not more persuasive, than the angelic explanation.

General Problem 3: Each Argument For The Angelic View Has A Reasonable Response

As we have just observed, each argument that has been put in favor of the angelic view has received a reasoned response. In other words, it is by no means clear that the Lord intended us to understand that we are dealing with angelic sin in this passage.

Add to this, the previous two points we just mentioned shows that the angelic view, though held by many good interpreters, should never be seen as “the way” to understand this particular episode. Indeed, there are much better options.

Specific Problems With The Angelic View That Must Be Answered By Those Holding This Position

There is more. We will now list a number of specific problems with the angelic interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4 that shows that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to assume that this is the correct understanding of the passage.

This includes some of the twenty points that we stressed at the beginning of this question—things we know for certain from Scripture about this subject. Consequently, there will be some repetition of what we have already stated.

In addition, in our book, *The Sons of God, The Flood, And The Tower Of Babel* (Genesis 4-11), we go into great detail about the sinful history of the people after the fall of Adam and Eve. As we document, it was the lawlessness and violence of those days that led to the Lord sending the Flood of Noah to destroy the inhabitants of the earth. To the point, it was the sin of humanity that caused the judgment of the Flood—it had nothing to do with angels or any other divine beings.

Accordingly, those who hold the angelic view of the “sons of God” must be able give reasonable answers to the following problems that we will raise if they are to make their case.

Problem 1 There Is Nothing In The Immediate Context Of Genesis 6 That Supports The Angel View

This is one of the many problems with this theory, and it is huge! Indeed, the view that these “sons of God” are actually angels who sinned by marrying human women makes no sense whatsoever in the context of Genesis. None!

First, we do not find anything in the immediate context that angels are in view. Nothing.

Indeed, in this context, we have the genealogies of ten mighty men listed in Genesis 5. Then in Genesis 6 we have the emphasis that it was human sin that caused the Flood. Note the following statements of the Lord:

But the LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind had become great on the earth (Genesis 6:5 NET).

So the LORD was sorry that He had made mankind on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart (Genesis 6:6 NASB 2020).

Then the LORD said, “I will wipe out mankind whom I have created from the face of the land; mankind ...For I am sorry that I have made them (Genesis 6:7 NASB 2020).

These verses are merely illustrative of what the entire narrative states. In fact, *nine times* in the context of the Flood account it is human sin that is specifically mentioned as the cause for the Lord to send His punishment upon the earth! Nine times!

In contrast, there is nothing in the immediate context of Genesis 6 that would remotely give us the idea that angels had anything to do with the cause of God’s judgment upon the earth.

What we discover is that the continual sin of those who lived before the Flood had now reached the point where the Lord had to intervene. The marriages of the sons of God with the daughters of men are possibly the proverbial nail in the coffin as the context may indicate:

The spread and intensifying of sin depicted in earlier chapters reaches its peak in ch. 6 with the intermarriage of the sons of God with the daughters of men. the sons of God is more likely to mean Seth's progeny, which the context of 4:25-26 might imply (cf. Dt 14:1; Hos 1:10). (Ashbury Bible Commentary).

Therefore, in the eyes of the Lord, the human race had come to the place where punishment was necessary.

Since humanity alone was specifically said to be judged, this is a huge problem for the angelic view—a problem for which there is really no good explanation.

Problem 2 The Broader Context Does Not Support The Angel Theory

As we have also indicated, in the broader context of Genesis 1-11, the subject matter is exclusively God and humans. Judgment of angels is nowhere to be found. In fact, angels are nowhere to be found!

We emphasize that angels, those who are God's invisible messengers, have not been mentioned in the Book of Genesis to this point, and certainly nothing in the account demands we understand the "sons of God" as angels. The focus is on the punishment of humans for their sin by means of a Flood as well as its aftermath. There is no reference in the overall Flood narrative to the guilt of angels. None!

Indeed, it is only the two instances of the phrase "sons of God" in Genesis 6:2,4 where anyone could claim that angels are the subject matter. Other than these two references there is nothing else. In fact, without these two references, the idea of any angelic involvement would never have been an issue.

Furthermore, as we will emphasize, this phrase in the context of Genesis 6 is not definitive in supporting the claim that angels, or other supernatural beings, are the focus in this context.

Therefore, the fact that angels have not been introduced to the reader in the Genesis account to this time is a huge argument against them being the main subject in this chapter. Note the observations of the Moody Bible Commentary:

Though long-standing and popular, the view that these sons of God in v. 2 are angels who sinned by marrying human women is to be dismissed since it makes no contextual sense—whether in the immediate context of v. 3, in which God's reaction is exclusively toward man, the slightly larger context of what precedes and follows this episode (i.e., Adam's genealogy and the Flood, both focused on man, not the angels), or the broader thematic context of Genesis, this first "half" of which (chaps. 1-11) represents God's prosecution of human, not angelic, depravity (Moody Online Bible Commentary)

Indeed, nothing in the context even remotely refers to angels.

We should also note what Genesis 6:3 says in this context. It reads as follows:

Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not remain with man forever, because he is also flesh; nevertheless, his days shall be 120 years" (Genesis 6:3 NASB 2020).

Hebrew scholar John Sailhamer explains Genesis 6:3 and how this verse relates to the overall context of Genesis—that humans, and only humans, are in view:

The sense of v.3 is clear if read within the context of what precedes and follows. After creating humans as male and female, God "called them man [Adam]" (5:2), which obviously had a wider scope than the personal individual of ch. 4. After focusing on the lives of ten individuals in ch. 5, God speaks a second time about "man" (6:3). The ages of the men in those intervening verses stand in stark contrast to the "one hundred and twenty years" mentioned in this verse.

The inference is that it was God's Spirit dwelling with these men that gave them their long lives. The sad reality is that such long lives belonged to another age and that they were exceptions rather than the rule. Thus the author continues to show the ages of the men of the book and notes that generally their ages grow increasingly shorter (cf. 11:10-26). At the close of the Pentateuch we finally reach an individual, Moses, who is specifically mentioned as dying at the age of 120 years (Dt 34:7). (John Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*)

Again, we stress that the emphasis in the entire first eleven chapters of Genesis is on humans—male and female—it has nothing to do with angels!

Accordingly, the context of Genesis 1-11, gives no basis whatsoever of seeing the “sons of God” as angels or any other type of heavenly being.

Consequently, this problem is one in which those advocating the angelic view are not able to give a satisfactory answer—especially if one of the primary causes for God sending the Flood was angelic sin.

Problem 3 The Meaning Of The Phrase “Sons of God” In Genesis 6 Is Not A Clear Reference To Angels

As we have noted, the Hebrew phrase translated, “sons of God,” is not a clear reference to angels in Genesis 6. Indeed, the two references to the precise Hebrew phrase “sons of God” in other parts of Scripture are an insufficient data base to understand the meaning of the term.

In addition, the “sons of God” mentioned in the early chapters of Job clearly refer to heavenly beings, but not necessarily to angels. Angels have a unique ministry among the supernatural beings the Lord has created—they do His bidding. However, the other heavenly beings Scripture mentions, the cherubim, seraphim, and the living creatures, all seem to reside in heaven and seemingly have a different function than angels.

Therefore, it is possible that the “sons of God” referred to in the Book of Job may be another class of heavenly being apart from the angels. There is simply not enough evidence to be certain one way or the other.

Moses Calls The People Of Israel Sons Of God

There is another essential point that must be stressed. As we have previously noted, there is also the fact that elsewhere in Scripture the nation of Israel is called the “sons of the living God” and the “sons of the Lord your God.” For example, we read:

You are the sons of the LORD your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead (Deuteronomy 14:1 ESV).

The Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible makes the following observations concerning this verse:

Here the complement [sons]... has been fronted to signal the introduction of a new topic, i.e., the identity of the people of Israel as sons of God (Deut 14:1-2), “sons you (are).” (Bill T. Arnold, Paavo N. Tucker, *The Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible*, Deuteronomy 12-26, Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas, 2022).

Note that these Hebrew scholars, on their technical grammatical study on the text of this portion of Deuteronomy, underscore the fact that this sentence was written in such a way as to emphasize the identity of the nation of Israel as the “sons of God” as they are about to enter the Promised Land.

They also make this important observation:

The following laws are motivated by this opening identity statement, which establishes Israel's kinship with *Yhwh*. This kinship relationship must supersede commitments to biological family if they incite rebellion (Deut 13:7-12), and Israel's commitment to *Yhwh* must supersede expressing commitments to deceased ancestors through the mourning rites of the Canaanites and other neighbors that are considered idolatrous. Bill T. Arnold, Paavo N. Tucker, *The Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible*, Deuteronomy 12-26

In this context, the Lord was about to list the laws that His chosen people, Israel, were now to obey. However, the Lord first emphasized their special relationship with Him. Indeed, commitment to Him was more important than any biological relationship. Why? It is because they are His children in a unique sense, namely the “sons of God.” In fact, the very next verse stresses this truth:

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth (Deuteronomy 14:2 ESV).

Accordingly, let us not miss the fact that this description of the people of Israel is used by the same author, Moses, who compiled Genesis! Therefore, the phrase, “sons of God” in another context in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, refers to humans, not angels!

There Are Other Ways This Phrase This Phrase May Be Translated

There is something else that must be noted. There are other possible translations apart from the traditional “sons of God.” Indeed, the Hebrew word *Elohim* in Genesis 6 can be rendered as what is known as a “genitive of quality.” This would make the meaning “godly sons” as Old Testament Hebrew scholar Kenneth Matthews explains:

Elohim can be rendered as a genitive of quality, meaning ‘godly sons,’ referring to the heritage of the Sethites. We already observed that *bene ha'elohim* has analogues (Kenneth Matthews, *Genesis, New American Commentary Old Testament*).

Therefore, if this is the proper understanding, then the “sons of God” would simply be referring back to the descendants of Seth, whose genealogy is given to us in Genesis chapter 5. In fact, this is a likely explanation as to their identity—they were godly humans, sons of God the Father.

Scholar G.H. Livingstone also notes:

...the concept of a father-child relation between God and his worshipers is not alien to the OT (Deut. 32:5; Ps. 73:15; Hos. 1:10; 11:1). Earlier in the Genesis narrative, in connection with the births of Seth and of his son ENOSH, the comment is made, “At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD” (Gen. 4:24). Thus the context, by identifying the Sethites as worshipers of God, seems to provide a referent for the otherwise ambiguous phrase, “sons of God.” If so, the passage views the intermarriage of such worshipers with the ungodly as the immediate cause of the Flood (G. H. Livingstone *Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, Sons of God*).

In sum, whatever conclusion we arrive at, this Hebrew phrase is by no means a technical way of speaking of a specific class of created beings—angels.

The Term Is Not Restricted To Angels Or Other Heavenly Beings

The great 19th century Hebrew scholar C.F. Keil makes an important observation about the phrase “sons of God.”

But if the title “sons of God” cannot involve the notion of physical generation, it cannot be restricted to celestial spirits, but is applicable to all beings which bear the image of God... to men therefore as well as angels ... so that even magistrates are designated “Elohim, and sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6). (C.F. Keil, *Genesis, Keil and Delitzsch Old Testament Commentaries*).

In other words, this title is not limited to the spirits who exist in the heavenly realms but can be applied to other beings, including humans. Keil then made this statement:

For it is not to angels only that the term “sons of Elohim,” or “sons of Elim,” is applied; but in Ps. 73:15, in an address to Elohim, the godly are called “the generation of Thy sons,” i.e., sons of Elohim; in Deut. 32:5 the Israelites are called His (God’s) sons, and in Hos. 1:10, “sons of the living God;” and in Ps. 80:17, Israel is spoken of as the son, whom Elohim has made strong. These passages show that the expression “sons of God” cannot be elucidated by philological means [the study of language or grammar], but must be interpreted by theology alone (C.F. Keil, *Genesis*)

Indeed, this passage in Genesis 6 must be interpreted by the immediate context as well as evidence from the teaching from the totality of Scripture. It cannot be determined by the mere study of words or by grammar alone.

After looking at the totality of the evidence, Keil then made this conclusion:

The question whether the “sons of Elohim” were celestial or terrestrial sons of God (angels or pious men of the family of Seth) can only be determined from the context, and from the substance of the passage itself, that is to say, from what is related respecting the conduct of the sons of God and its results. That the connection does not favour the idea of their being angels, is acknowledged even by those who adopt this view (C.F. Keil, *Genesis*)

Therefore, since this phrase does not clearly refer to angels, or some other type of supernatural being, then there is no evidence whatsoever in the context of Genesis that the Flood was due to the sin of some type of non-human creatures. Zero!

Problem 4 The Sons Of God In Job Were Good Angels (Or Other Righteous Beings)

This is very important question that must be answered by those holding the “angel view.” In Job, the “sons of God” is either a reference to angels, or some other group of heavenly beings, who were godly. The Bible says:

One day the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD (Job 1:6 CSB).

In other words, we do not have any unrighteous angels in view. In fact, these same “sons of God” are said to have praised the Lord when He created the earth. The Lord said to Job:

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. . . . when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:4,7 ESV).

The takeaway from these two passages in Job is that the “sons of God” were righteous beings.

A Similar Phrase To “Sons Of God” Is Used In Other Contexts (Psalm 29:1; Psalm 89:6-7). They Both Refer To Righteous Beings, Never Evil

In two other passages, Psalm 29:1 and Psalm 89:6-7, there are seemingly other heavenly beings, or sons of God, referred to. Whoever they may be, they are always assumed as being righteous—never evil.

Let us observe how the phrase is variously translated in these two passages:

Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength (Psalm 29:1 CSB)

Give ADONAI his due, you who are godly; give ADONAI his due of glory and strength (Psalm 29:1 CJB)

Acknowledge the LORD, you heavenly beings, acknowledge the LORD's majesty and power! (Psalm 29:1 NET)

Ascribe to ADONAI, O sons of God, ascribe to ADONAI glory and strength (Psalm 29:1 TLV)

We should note that the Hebrew word ADONAI as is found in some of these English translations, is the transliteration of a Hebrew word for Lord which is used instead of the divine name, Yahweh, or Jehovah. The Hebrew text read Yahweh, Jehovah.

We should also appreciate that this particular phrase translated as “heavenly beings” is from a Hebrew text which reads “sons of God.”

The same Hebrew text is recorded in Psalm 89:6-7. There is a slightly different spelling of the Hebrew than what we find in Genesis 6:2,4 and Job 1:6 and 2:1. However, the meaning seems to be similar as we discover in the following translations of these verses:

For who in the sky, compares himself to YHWH? [Who] is like to YHWH among sons of the mighty? God is very terrible, In the secret counsel of His holy ones, And fearful over all surrounding Him (Psalm 89:6-7 LSV).

For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD, a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him? (Psalm 89:6-7 ESV).

For who in the skies can compare to the LORD? Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings, a God who is honored in the great angelic assembly, and more awesome than all who surround him? (Psalm 89:6-7 NET).

In Psalm 89, these heavenly beings are also called “the assembly of the holy ones” and “council of the holy ones.” The Hebrew text in verse 7 reads, “in the great assembly of the holy ones.”

Some scholars link them to statements in Job and Zechariah where heavenly beings are called the “holy ones,” but this is not clear from the context. For example, Job 5:1 reads as follows:

Cry out now! Will anyone answer you? To which of the holy ones will you turn? (Job 5:1 TLV).

Call if you like, but will anyone answer? To which of the holy ones will you turn? (Job 5:1 CJB)

All of this makes an obvious point, namely, these particular angels, or heavenly beings, are always seen to be righteous or holy beings, never evil!

In sum, if the sons of God in Genesis 6 were righteous heavenly beings, then this is a huge challenge for the angelic view as we will now explain in their next problem.

Problem 5 Are We To Assume A Second Angelic Fall?

As we just noted, if these are angels, or supernatural beings, that are referenced in Genesis 6:2,4 then we must assume they are good angels, not evil! Indeed, these same beings are referred to elsewhere as “holy ones.” Never do we find phrases referring to these personages as anything but righteous beings.

If, therefore, the “sons of God” in Genesis 6 were good angels, then this must mean we have another angelic rebellion. This one would have consisted of certain angels, or other heavenly beings, who did *not* originally rebel and follow Satan. This would seem to be the *only* logical way of interpreting the passage.

Why do we say this? As we previously noted, the original angelic rebellion seemingly took place *before* sin entered into the human race. This was long before the events in Genesis 6.

Though Scripture knows nothing of any second rebellion of righteous beings in heaven, it seems there would be no other way of explaining why the personages are called “sons of God,” if angels, or some other class of supernatural beings, are in view.

If so, are we then to assume that some of these righteous angels later decided to rebel against the Lord and take earthly women for their wives, or perhaps lust after them? Seemingly, this is what we would have to conclude. However, it appears that nobody wants to argue for this.

Consequently, this is a huge problem for those who advocate the “sons of God” in Genesis 6 are actually angels, or some other type of righteous heavenly beings.

Was This The Original Angelic Rebellion?

The only other possible alternative is that Genesis 6 records the original angelic fall—where good angels initially turned evil. In other words, while the personage who became the devil had already rebelled against God, there were no angels who joined him until the era of the Flood—several thousand years after his rebellion and the creation of Adam and Eve.

However, if someone would contend for this it would cause another huge problem—why weren’t these angels identified and condemned at this time? Indeed, earlier the Lord had no problem listing the serpent, who we know from Scripture was controlled by the devil himself, as the one who tempted Eve and caused her to sin.

Add to this, the specific punishment of the serpent is also recorded for us in Genesis 3. Furthermore, the fact of the serpent’s involvement in the original fall is listed elsewhere in Scripture:

But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3 ESV).

Since the Flood and its aftermath was a huge biblical event, almost like a second creation of the human race and the animal kingdom, it is unfathomable to imagine that angels were not singled out for punishment, as was Satan in the Garden of Eden, if they were somehow involved.

However, when we read the narrative of the Flood as well as its aftermath, we find the constant refrain that it was humans who were the culprits. As we noted, nine times the sins of humans are referred to in this context. No other type of being is mentioned, or even remotely referred to. This seemingly makes it impossible that the sin of certain angels took place at this time.

Therefore, the problem remains—how could good angels have been involved in this sin that led to the Flood? Those who hold the angelic view have no satisfactory answer to this question.

Problem 6 Are They The Same Evil Angels Who Originally Fell?

The only other choice is that it was the sin of evil angels—those who had long-before rebelled against the Lord. It was their sin that led to the Flood. Yet this also causes a problem for the angelic view.

Simply put, evil angels would never be called the “sons of God.” As we just noted, there is no reference in the entire Bible where “evil angels” are specifically called the “sons of God” or anything close to that designation.

Yet if angels are the personages who are in view in Genesis 6, then it logically follows that we are dealing with evil angels, not good angels. Therefore, it might be asked, “Would God call the evil angels who rebelled against Him, “sons of God?”

In point of fact, the righteous angels are always kept distinct from the unrighteous in Scripture. When the unrighteous are in view there is always something in the context that lets us know that they are the subject under consideration. For example, Jesus gave the following description of the angels who rebelled:

Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41 NIV).

Notice these beings are not called the “sons of God” but rather “the devil and his angels.”

We observed that the personage who became the devil had already rebelled against the Lord since we see him behind the serpent in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3). The Book of Revelation explains that he has an evil angelic army:

Then war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels also fought, but he could not prevail, and there was no place for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was thrown out — the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:7-9 CSB).

When did the devil acquire these angels that became his army?

While we are not specifically told in Scripture it seems likely that this occurred before the fall of humanity recorded in Genesis 3. If so, then these evil angels had already joined with Satan and would never have been called “the sons of God” as found in Genesis 6:2.

All in all, there is nothing in Genesis 6 that even remotely indicates that we are dealing with evil angels in this passage. Therefore, combined with the previous problem we looked at—the unlikelihood that good angels were the “sons of God” who became sinfully involved with humanity as a cause for the Flood, then there are no other types of angels who are left who could have committed the sins that led to the Flood. None!

Accordingly, for these above reasons, it is logical to conclude that angelic interference with humanity, whether good or bad, was not *the* cause as to why the Lord sent the Flood in the days of Noah.

Problem 7 It Would Be Cryptic Reference To Angels, Why?

There is another obvious problem with the angelic view. If the “sons of God” refer to angels in Genesis 6, then the reference is cryptic. As we previously noted, angels have not been cited thus far in the Book of Genesis.

However, in the five books of Moses, angels are mentioned some fifteen times. We find that on every other occasion, where they are spoken of, these particular heavenly beings are specifically called “angels.”

So, why not here if they were angels? Indeed, especially if they were the cause for the Flood that destroyed the entire world. One would think that Scripture would make it clear that angels were involved! But we read nothing about angels, nothing!

As we have previously mentioned, the Lord had no problem singling out the serpent for special punishment when he enticed Eve to sin. Why is there not any mention in Genesis 6 of the sin of angels, or their punishment, if they were the “sons of God” whose sin led to the punishment of the Flood?

The simple answer is that we are not dealing with angels, either good or bad, in this account.

Problem 8 Legitimate Marriages Are In View In Genesis 6

The Hebrew phrase, which is used in explaining what took place before the Flood, is very clear—the sons of God “married” the daughters of men, the daughters of humankind. The Hebrew phrase “always” refers to legitimate marriages.

Furthermore, the Bible defines marriage as something that takes place between one “man” and one woman. Earlier in Genesis we read this explanation of marriage:

So the man named all the animals, the birds of the air, and the living creatures of the field, but for Adam no companion who corresponded to him was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was asleep, he took part of the man’s side and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the part he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” That is why a man leaves his father and mother and unites with his wife, and they become a new family. The man and his wife were both naked, but they were not ashamed (Genesis 2:20-25 NET).

Notice that a biblical marriage is when a “man” leaves his father and mother and then unites with one woman. At that time, they become a “new family.”

The fact that there were marriages between the sons of God and daughters of humankind should rule out the possibility that angels are in view. Indeed, a “family” according to the Bible consists of the marriage of one man to one woman, and the offspring they give birth to—human beings.

C.F. Keil convincingly makes the appropriate conclusion:

It cannot be denied ... that the connection of Gen. 6:1-8 with Gen. 4 necessitates the assumption, that such intermarriages (of the Sethite and Cainite families) did take place about the time of the Flood (cf. Matt. 24:38; Luke 17:27); and the prohibition of mixed marriages under the law (Ex. 34:16; cf. Gen. 27:46; 28:1ff.) also favours the same idea. But this ... is placed beyond all doubt, by what is here related of the sons of God. In v. 2 it is stated that “the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose,” i.e., of any with whose beauty they were charmed; and these wives bare children to them (v. 4). Now ... (the Hebrew phrase “to take a wife”) is a standing expression throughout the whole of the Old Testament for the marriage relation established by God at the creation, and is never applied to ... (fornication), or the simple act of physical connection. This is quite sufficient of itself to exclude any reference to angels. For Christ Himself distinctly states that the angels cannot marry (Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25; cf. Luke 20:34ff (C. F. Keil, *Genesis*))

Again, let us not miss Keil’s observation—that this Hebrew phrase never refers to fornication or to any mere sexual act. Instead, it only speaks of legitimate marriages. As he concluded, this rules out the possibility of angels being involved with human women.

Once again, we find another seemingly insurmountable problem for the angel view.

Problem 9 Angels Are Not Able To Produce Children

Another major problem with the angel view is that the Bible says that they are ministering spirits. In other words, they do not have any physical or corporeal form like that of humans. The Bible says:

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14 NET).

The fact that they are “spirit-beings” seems to rule out the possibility of them having physical relationships with humans. Humans have their unique DNA while angels have an entirely different makeup.

Furthermore, to have offspring, beings, whether humans or animals must have a sexual nature and must consist of males and females. Angels are neither male nor female. In fact, they only appear as males in Scripture and there is no indication whatsoever that there are any female angels.

If they only appear as males, then there would be no need for any body parts that would allow them to have sexual relationships, or any ability to cause another personage, whether human or angel, to conceive!

To sum up, there is no biblical evidence whatsoever that procreation is a trait of any of the heavenly beings. While angels are able to take on certain human properties, there is a huge difference between the righteous angels who were given, on occasion, the ability to eat and the evil angels who can supposedly acquire sexual abilities that allow them to procreate.

Therefore, to propose that angels somehow had the ability to procreate is contrary to everything that we know about them from Scripture. Thus, we have another seemingly unsolvable problem for those holding the angel view.

Problem 10 Evil Angels Are Never Said To Have Materialized In Human Form

Though the Bible teaches that good angels at times have assumed some physical form and have appeared as humans, this is not the case with evil angels.

In fact, there is not one biblical example of evil angels, or evil spirits, materializing in a physical form of a human being! This passage would be the only exception to this rule. Therefore, this seems to be an impossibility for them.

Consequently, it does not appear that an evil angel assuming a human body is even a remote possibility. This, of course, would be another argument that would strongly refute the angel view.

Problem 11 Angels Cannot Perform Miracles On Their Own

This next point is very important in our discussion. Miracles are only something that the Lord has power to do. The Bible consistently teaches this. For example, we read in the psalms:

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things (Psalm 72:18 ESV).

It is the Lord “alone” who does wondrous things, miracles. While angels are powerful creatures, they are limited in what they are able to do. They are created beings, not the Creator.

Indeed, they cannot create, neither can they change the substance of their form as spirit-beings. In addition, they have no power over the laws of nature. Only God has this authority.

Thus, Scripture, rules out the idea that evil angels could have the power to materialize in a human form.

However, as we once again stress, everything we read in the context of Genesis 6 blames humans for their sins that caused the Flood.

This is a further reason to reject the idea that angels were involved in a negative way in the Flood narrative.

Problem 12 God Only Allows Angels, And All Other Created Beings, To Act Within Certain Limits

This point builds upon the previous one. Although these fallen angels do bring about evil, there are certain limitations as to what they can and cannot do. In fact, even the devil could not do anything to the patriarch Job until he asked permission from God. We read the following exchange between the Lord and Satan:

And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord (Job 1:12 ESV).

Later, when Satan wanted to do Job further harm, he again had to ask permission of the Lord:

"Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face." The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life" (Job 2:4-6 NIV).

Satan could not act on his own in dealing with Job. Indeed, God had to permit the extent of the things which he was allowed to do.

The Implications Of This Truth

We must appreciate what this means. Since angels, whether good or bad, cannot act without God's permission, this has important implications in determining the identity of the "sons of God."

If the "sons of God" are fallen angels, then we would have to conclude that the Lord allowed them to come down to earth and materialize as human beings, or at appear in some form making them capable of having sexual relationships with women. Then these evil beings took the earthly women, had sexual relations with them, producing offspring that caused the human race to be corrupted.

If this is what occurred, then God would have had to allow these angels to materialize into these human bodies to be able to produce this race of half-angel, half-human personages. This idea is totally inconsistent with the character of God as revealed in Scripture. Indeed, He does not participate in sin!

Accordingly, if evil angels somehow miraculously materialized into human bodies, who were capable of producing offspring, and then had sexual relations with earthly women which brought forth beings with an angelic-human nature, then this miracle would have to have been something that was permitted by the Lord. In other words, *He* would have had to allowed this entire episode to happen.

Therefore, the sin that caused the Lord to send the Flood would have only been made possible by the Lord equipping these angels with the ability to procreate.

Hence, the question stands: "Do those who hold the angel view really want to ultimately blame the Lord for the angelic sins of marrying humans?"

Furthermore, instead of punishing angels, the instigators of these evil deeds, that is, if the phrase “sons of God” refers to angels, then the Lord instead punishes those whom they victimized, humans!

Again, as we have emphasized, the entire Flood narrative centers completely upon the sins of humans. Nothing at all is said about the sins of angels. This seems hard to imagine if the masterminds were angels. Add to this, they were permitted to commit this sin by the Lord Himself.

In sum, to allow these evil angels to come to earth in a form that could have sexual relations with women, is something that the Lord would have had to allow. Yet when we read chapter 6 of Genesis, we find that the Lord is troubled by the behavior of humans.

Indeed, violence and lawlessness were everywhere. In fact, God was distressed to the point that He sent the Flood to destroy all the human inhabitants of the earth except for Noah and his family.

Therefore, we again ask this question—why would the Bible emphasize the pain that the sins of the human race caused the Lord if He Himself allowed the entire episode with these angels to take place? He certainly would have known the outcome of allowing these marriages to occur. Why then would He permit them or even make them possible?

The simple answer is that He did not! It was human sin, and human sin alone that was the cause for the Flood.

Problem 13 The Nephilim Were In The World Before The Sons of God Married The Daughters Of Men

We have discovered from the Book of Genesis that the Nephilim were not a result of a union between the sons of God and the daughters of men but were actually in the world before they got together as well as afterward.

Indeed, nothing is stated in the Bible that they were a direct result between the sexual relationships of the sons of God and the daughters of men. *The Baker Illustrated Study Bible* observes:

The text does not say that the Nephilim (6:4) are the offspring of this alliance [between the sons of God and the daughters of men]. Rather they are contemporaries of the other two parties. According to Nm 13:33, they form part of the pre-Israelite population of Palestine (*The Baker Illustrated Study Bible*, Genesis)

Based upon this evidence, the Old Testament scholar C.F. Keil made the logical conclusion:

To an unprejudiced mind, the words, as they stand, represent the Nephilim, who were on the earth in those days, as existing before the sons of God began to marry the daughters of men, and clearly distinguish them from the fruits of these marriages. . . . Now if, according to the simple meaning of the passage, the Nephilim were in existence at the very time when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, the appearance of the Nephilim cannot afford the slightest evidence that the “sons of God” were angels, by whom a family of monsters were begotten, whether demigods, daemons, or angel-men (C.F. Keil, *Genesis, Keil and Delitzsch Old Testament Commentaries*).

Therefore, we cannot lay blame on the Nephilim for the cause of the Flood for they were not the offspring of the “sons of God” and “the daughters of men.”

This raises another insoluble problem for the angel view.

Problem 14 In Scripture, The Word Nephilim Later Refers To Large Humans

In the Book of Numbers, we find that the term Nephilim is used to describe large humans—not some type of offspring which was the result of a sexual relationship between humans and angels.

In fact, when Israel confronts the Nephilim in the Promised Land, we are specifically told that they are descendants of a man, Anak:

And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.” (Numbers 13:33 ESV).

Consequently, the Hebrew word is not a specific term for some type of offspring between humans and angels. In fact, as we just mentioned, in the Genesis account, the Nephilim were already upon the earth before the “sons of God” married the “daughters of men.”

Furthermore, as we previously emphasized, they are called “mighty men, heroes of old.” In other words, they were fully human. This is confirmed by the comments about them from *The Complete Jewish Study Bible*:

The N’filim were on the earth. N’filim literally means “fallen ones.” Onkelos in his targum on Genesis (33) translates this word “mighty men.” Rashi likewise states in his commentary on Genesis that they are called N’filim because they fell, thus causing the entire world to fall, whereas the Hebrew is often translated “giants.” There have been many ideas about their identity; the consensus is that they possessed incredible physical strength, had generally evil intentions, and corrupted the world greatly (*The Complete Jewish Study Bible* ©2016 by Hendrickson Publishers Peabody, Massachusetts)

It is significant that this Jewish Study Bible emphasizes that their sages of old believed that the “sons of God” were a certain class of human beings. Nothing at all is said about them being angels.

We again emphasize the fact that the word Nephilim is used elsewhere by the same author Moses to describe a certain class of large human beings. Furthermore, when the term human being is used in Scripture, it is always describing beings who are fully human! It *never* describes any other type of being.

This is another insurmountable problem for those who hold the angelic view.

Problem 15 How Could The Offspring Of Angels And Humans Be Called Humans?

There is another issue that those who promote the angelic view must have an answer for—the offspring of the “sons of God” and the daughters of humankind are called “human.” However, how could they, in any sense, be considered to be human beings?

Indeed, the Lord made humans distinct from any other of His creations! We have been made in the image and likeness of God!

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26-27 NIV).

The alleged offspring of angels and humans certainly wouldn’t qualify as being made in the image of God! Therefore, they would not qualify under the definition of humans.

Furthermore, there would be the problem as to how the Lord would eventually punish these half-human half-angelic beings.

Scripture knows of only two types of future punishment—those of human beings and those of evil angels. There is no third type of future punishment that the Bible speaks of.

However, if these beings existed, they would fit in neither category. When and how will they be punished?

There is no answer to this question because no such beings have never existed.

Problem 16 Jesus Compared The Last Days, The Time Before His Return, To The Days Of Noah (When Humans Were Marrying)

In giving the signs of His return, our Lord compared the last days to the days of Noah:

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the Flood came and destroyed them all (Luke 17:26,27 NIV).

Notice what He said. The people were “marrying and giving in marriage” until the time of the Flood—legitimate marriages between two humans. There is not a word about angels or angelic marriages, or even illicit marriages as some have claimed. Add to this, Jesus specifically said that angels don’t marry:

For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven (Matthew 22:30 CSB).

This, in and of itself, contradicts the perception that supernatural beings were somehow involved in the marriages that took place at the time of the Flood.

As we have stressed, the phrase used in Genesis 6, that the sons of God “took wives” from the daughters of men is always used in the Old Testament of legitimates marriages between a man and a woman.

Since it will be people, humans, who will be marrying and giving in marriage at the time the Lord returns, the inference seems to be clear that it was people, human beings, who were doing the same thing when the Lord sent the Flood.

The point Jesus is making is that it was “business as usual” until the time the Flood came to destroy the inhabitants of the earth. The same will be true when He returns to earth the second time.

Therefore, we find nothing in either testament, with respect to the predictions of the “last days” that would give the slightest indication that angels would somehow be involved with earthly women to produce some type of monstrous offspring.

Again, this is another seemingly insurmountable problem for the angel view.

Problem 17 The New Testament Passages Do Not Support The Angelic View

As we mentioned in our previous section, if the rebellion of the angels that Peter and Jude wrote about refers to Genesis 6, then we should assume that there were two angelic rebellions.

This seems to be the only logical inference if we interpret those two New Testament passages as referring to angelic sin at the time of the Flood. These evil angels had already rebelled before the sixth day of creation—they had already perverted the reason they were created.

Did some righteous angels eventually decide to sin at the time of the Flood, long after the original angelic fall? There is nothing in Scripture that would support this. However, this seems to be what one would have to conclude if these New Testament passages are used to support the angelic sin at the time of the Flood.

We again emphasize that it was the original rebellion of certain angels that Peter and Jude are writing about—not some angelic sin at the time of the Flood.

In sum, there is no real evidence from the New Testament that angels were involved for the sending of the Flood.

This is another unsolvable problem for the angelic view.

Problem 18 Why Punish Humans For Angelic Sin?

As we have continually noted, if the sin was angelic, then why was the human race punished? The “sons of God” are the initiators of relationships with the “daughters of humankind.” Why punish the victims? Why is there no mention of the punishment of those who instigated this sin, the angels, if indeed this was angelic sin. The idea that we are dealing with human beings seems to be clear from this verse:

So the Lord said, “My spirit will not remain in humankind indefinitely, since they are mortal. They will remain for 120 more years (Genesis 6:3 NET).

Clearly, we are dealing with humans and their sin.

Furthermore, if the judgment of the Flood was against the “sons of god,” and they were angels, they would actually have escaped any punishment since they are spirit beings and thus would not have been harmed by the waters that covered the earth.

C.F. Keil concludes that the punishment, that the Lord meted out, clearly tells us about who was guilty:

Why then should judgment fall upon the tempted alone? The judgments of God in the world are not executed with such partiality as this. And the supposition that nothing is said about the punishment of the angels, because the narrative has to do with the history of man, and the spiritual world is intentionally veiled as much as possible, does not meet the difficulty. If the sons of God were angels, the narrative is concerned not only with men, but with angels also; and it is not the custom of the Scriptures merely to relate the judgments which fall upon the tempted, and say nothing at all about the tempters (C.F. Keil, Genesis).

Point well taken. Scripture tells us that the Lord punishes those who are guilty, not the victims. The fact that no punishment is directed toward angels leads us to the only logical conclusion—angels were not involved.

Problem 19 We Should Only Use The Bible To Determine The Identity Of The Sons Of God, Not The So-Called Book of Enoch

There is one another problem that is worth mentioning in our evaluation of the identity of the “sons of God”—the Book of Enoch. It is often cited as evidence for the angelic view. A couple of things should be said in response.

As we have already noted, the Book of Enoch was not written by the patriarch Enoch. It is a forgery that was written between the testaments. This was during a time when much fanciful writing took place. Consequently, there is no direct link from the Book of Enoch and Enoch himself.

However, there is a bigger problem for those who cite Enoch. The book, which is a compilation of five separate writings is NOT part of Holy Scripture. Therefore, by definition, it should not be consulted as an authoritative source to answer this, or any other question.

As we have consistently emphasized, the Scripture alone is God's Word. Furthermore, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, we are not to go beyond that which is written in Scripture:

I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6 ESV).

In sum, the Book of Enoch should never be consulted as an authoritative text on which to solve issues of biblical truth. Indeed, it is the Bible and the Bible alone that should always be our only reference book—it is the Word of the Living God!

Problem 20 We May Be Looking At The Account In Genesis 6 The Wrong Way

There is one final thing we must mention to the assumption that the marriages of “sons of God” to the “daughters of men” were angelic-human marriages.

It is assumed that Genesis 6:1-4 gives us the reason for the worldwide Flood that the Lord sent to judge the people of the earth. In other words, these four verses are a prologue to the Flood narrative. They explain how the “sons of God,” angelic beings, married the “daughters of humankind” and produce an offspring of half-human, half-angelic beings, the Nephilim. The results of this union caused the Lord to punish the entire earth with a worldwide Flood, saving only Noah and his family.

Yet there is another way of looking at this entire account. We must remember that there were no chapter and verse divisions in the original writings of the Bible. They were put in later for convenience. As it stands now, Genesis 6:1-4 introduces the Flood story.

However, there are a number of skilled Bible commentators who believe that these first four verses of Genesis 6 actually belong to Genesis 5, where the genealogies of the ten patriarchs are listed. Old Testament scholar John Sailhamer develops this alternative answer:

All such interpretations originate from the assumption that vv. 1-4 introduce the Flood and must be understood as the immediate cause of the Flood. If, however, vv. 1-4 serve as a conclusion and summary of ch. 5, there is little to arouse suspicion that the events recounted here are out of the ordinary. If vv. 1-4 summarize ch.5, they may be only a reminder that the sons and daughters of Adam had greatly increased in number (suggested in ch. 5), had married (assumed in ch. 5), and had continued to have children (stated in ch. 5). The impression given by the events in vv. 1-4 is that they are an interlude, a sort of calm before the storm. For a brief moment we see a glimpse of humankind in the midst of their everyday affairs: “marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the Flood came and took them all away” (Mt 24:38–39) (John Sailhamer, *Expositors Bible Commentary*, Revised Edition)

Therefore, the phrase “sons of God” can logically be understood as a succinct way of simply describing males who have been created in the image of God.

In other words, if this is what Genesis is saying, then there is no need whatsoever to bring angels, or any other divine beings, into the picture as a reason for all of the evil that was on the earth for which the Lord sent the Flood.

Accordingly, these four verses at the beginning of chapter 6, are NOT giving us a prologue to the Flood. Instead, they are an appendix to chapter 5. Therefore, all the Scripture is saying is this: at the time these people mentioned in chapter 5 were on the scene there were marriages between certain groups of people, the mighty men, the “sons of God” and the daughters of humankind. They produced offspring who were the heroes of old.

In sum, if this is the correct way of interpreting the passage, then it has nothing whatsoever to do with the cause of the Flood. As we have emphasized repeatedly, there is nothing negative said in Genesis 6 about either the “sons of God,” the “daughters of men,” the “marriages between the two,” or “the Nephilim.”

This interpretation, simply stating what took place over the centuries with men marrying women and producing offspring who were mighty heroes, would make perfect sense if it is an appendix to chapter five.

Therefore, it seems possible that people may have been asking the wrong questions when attempting to determine the identity of the sons of God, the Nephilim, and the reason for the Flood (We develop this theory in more detail in our book, *The Bible And Science: Are They In Conflict? Volume 4 The Sons Of God, The Flood, And The Tower of Babel*).

Conclusion On The Identity Of The Sons Of God

Having looked at the totality of biblical evidence for the angel view, we find that when it is weighed in the balances it is indeed found wanting. The consistent teaching of Scripture is that we are dealing with humans and their sin which caused God to send the Flood, not angels or any other heavenly beings.

Again, we want to emphasize the three general observations that we made about this issue.

First, we must interpret difficult passages by those that are clear.

Second, we should never use one single controversial passage to establish Bible doctrine.

Third, each argument for the angelic view has a reasonable response.

Add to this, as we have just documented, there are twenty seemingly insurmountable problems with the angelic view, problems that have no convincing answers!

Accordingly, from the totality of the evidence we must conclude that the “sons of God” in Genesis 6 were human beings, and not angels.

There Is No Such Biblical Teaching As The Return Of The Nephilim!

One more important point must be emphasized. There is nothing in Scripture that remotely predicts, as some have done, that in the last days the world will be faced with personages who are half-angelic and half-human!

Since the Nephilim were human beings, and there is no convincing case that can be made from the Bible that angelic sin was the reason the Lord sent the Flood, we should not pay attention to anyone who claims that we are to expect these non-human creatures to live among us at the time of the end. Indeed, they do not exist, they never have existed!

Therefore, anyone who is teaching this idea needs to take a long, hard look at what the Scripture has to say about the matter and then act accordingly. It does not honor the Lord to continue to teach something for which there is no genuine biblical evidence whatsoever.

Who Then Were The Sons Of God?

The exact identity of these humans, called the “sons of God” in Genesis 6, is another question. There are a number of possibilities and at least two of them make good sense in the context of Genesis.

We deal with these possibilities in great detail in our book, *The Sons of God, The Flood, and the Tower of Babel*. It is volume four in our series, *The Bible and Science: Are They In Conflict?*

However, what can be confidently say about this account recorded in Genesis 6 is that it is dealing with human beings, who, from their human sin, caused the Lord to destroy the human race except for Noah and the seven members of his family.

Summary To Appendix 3

Who Were The Sons Of God Who Married Earthly Women? (Genesis 6) Could They Be Angels?

Recapping what we have said, we have found that throughout history there have been a number of excellent Bible commentators who have believed and taught that the “sons of God” mentioned in Genesis 6 were actually fallen, or evil angels.

It is believed that these supernatural beings came to earth, took human women for wives, and then produced a race of half-human half-angelic beings known as the Nephilim. The results were catastrophic.

Indeed, evil filled the entire earth. This led the Lord to send a global Flood which destroyed all humanity, except for Noah and his family, and all animals, except those upon the ark.

Is this what took place? Were these “sons of God” actually angels? There have been a number of arguments listed in favor of this point of view.

To answer this question, we first looked at twenty things that everyone can agree upon when the biblical narrative of the Flood and its aftermath are examined. This is our starting point, and we often refer back to these points in our evaluation of this theory of angelic interference with humans.

Furthermore, as we have documented, each argument for the angelic view has a reasoned response. In fact, the overwhelming evidence from Scripture is that these “sons of God” were humans, not angels.

We can summarize the main arguments for the angelic view, and the responses to them as follows.

The angel view is an ancient view, nobody denies this. Yet, it was not the only view held in antiquity. Indeed, many ancients believed the “sons of God” were humans. However, the real issue is not whether a view is ancient or not but rather does the Bible teach it.

There are those that argue that angels is the obvious way in which the text should be understood. Nevertheless, we might ask, why wasn't the specific term “angel” used in Genesis 6 if this was the identity of the “sons of God?” Indeed, since the same author, Moses, used the word “angel” fifteen times in the first five books of the Bible to specifically refer to these heavenly messengers, why not in this context? This would be especially true if they were one of the primary causes for the Flood. The likely answer for this omission is that we are not dealing with angels, rather we are dealing with humans.

The Hebrew phrase translated “sons of God” is often said to be a technical phrase which always refers to angels. However, this is not true since it is also used in Scripture of humans. While the phrase *could* refer to angels in Genesis 6, it is not the language, but the context which is the determining factor. As we emphasized, the context does not indicate these “sons of God” were angels.

Contrary to the claim of those who hold to the “angel view,” the phrase “took wives” in Hebrew is the standard way in which the Bible refers to legitimate marriages in the Old Testament. In other words, there was nothing sinister about these marriages between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of humankind.” In fact, the natural way to understand the phrase would be a joining of one man and one woman.

There is something else. Contrary to what is claimed, the angelic view does not seem to be the obvious view of the passage, or even the likely view. In fact, the entire sixth chapter of Genesis emphasizes that we are dealing with the gross sins of humans, not angels, which caused God to send the Flood. Indeed, the Lord said He was fed up with the human race because of their repugnant sins. Therefore, He sent a Flood to judge the evil humans. Nothing is stated about angels being punished for any role in causing the Flood.

While certain passages in the New Testament are cited to support the angel view, we find that when they are examined more closely, they do no such thing. In fact, two of them, rather than speaking of an angelic fall immediately before the time of the Flood, are actually referring to the original rebellion of certain angels. This rebellion likely took place before our world was created.

Finally, there are those who say the angel view must be correct because all of the other explanations have many problems. While there may be certain difficulties with other views, as we have seen, there are enormous issues with the angelic view which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to accept.

Furthermore, there are at least two possible views of the “sons of God” as humans which make perfect sense in the overall context of Genesis. They include the view that the “sons of God” are the offspring of Seth, and the view that the “sons of God” is merely another way of stating that they were males. Either of these two views will work in the context of the Genesis Flood.

Consequently, every reason offered in favor of the angelic view has a sensible answer that refutes the claim.

In addition to this, there are also three general problems as well as twenty specific problems with the angelic view.

The first general problem can be stated as follows: there is an important rule of biblical interpretation that difficult passages must be interpreted in light of the clear ones. Since this is admittedly a difficult text, it must be interpreted in light of the totality of the teaching of the Bible. In other words, unless other passages clearly teach the angelic view of the “sons of God” as angels, then we should not use this one passage to establish this teaching.

Secondly, we should never make a doctrine out of a controversial text when there are other good options as to its meaning. Therefore, since the angelic interpretation is beset with many problems, it should not be used to create a biblical doctrine.

A third general problem is that each argument for the angelic view has a reasonable response to it. If we add this to the previous two general problems, we then conclude that the view that the “sons of God” are fallen angels should never be seen as “the answer” to this problematic question as to the identity of the “sons of God.”

However, these are not the only difficulties associated with the “angel view.” Indeed, there are many specific problems that arise when one attempts to defend it—problems that have no solutions to them!

To begin with, there is a huge problem—there is nothing in the context which remotely suggests that angels were involved in this episode of the Flood. Everything in the context of Genesis leading up to the Flood, as well as its aftermath, stresses the sin of “humans.” As we indicated, nine times in the Flood account the sins of humans are mentioned but angels, or their sins, are never mentioned. This alone should make the angel view highly suspect.

In fact, if it weren't for the phrase “sons of God,” found in only Genesis 6:2,4, then nobody would have assumed that sinful behavior of angels would have had anything to do with the Lord sending the Flood.

Furthermore, the meaning of the Hebrew phrase, translated “sons of God,” is unclear. In fact, there are a number of possible options as to what it could mean. This includes angels, other supernatural beings, regular human beings, a special class of humans, or ancient rulers. The fact that there are various possibilities must be appreciated.

While the word refers to heavenly beings in the first chapter of Job, it is the context which makes it clear. Indeed, these beings are in heaven appearing in the presence of the Lord. However, in Genesis 6, the context refers to events that take place solely upon the earth, not in heaven.

One of the main refutations of the sons of God being angels is found in Deuteronomy 14:1. In this verse, Israel is told “you are the sons of the Lord (Yahweh) your God.” This is clearly a reference to the “sons of God” as human beings. Interestingly, it is the only other time, apart from Genesis 6, that this phrase is used in the first five books of Scripture. Therefore, since it obviously is referring to humans in this context, nobody should claim that this Hebrew phrase applies to angels and to them alone.

Moreover, the “sons of God” in Job refers to “good angels,” or another type of righteous heavenly beings. We are told that they are the ones who praised the Lord when the universe was created (Job 38:7). Therefore, the clear reference to “sons of God” in Job is to beings who did not follow the personage who became the devil—Satan. In other words, they are good angels, or some other type of righteous beings.

However, this brings up a problem for the angel view of Genesis 6. Should we then assume that the beings mentioned in Genesis 6, if angels, were good angels who decided to sin? If so, then we have another angelic rebellion.

Yet, if we assume they were the angels who originally fell away from the Lord, then they would be evil angels. If that is the case, then why would the Lord call them “sons of God?” He never does this anywhere else in Scripture.

Indeed, every other time evil angels are mentioned in Scripture there is something in the context by which we know they are evil. In other words, they are never given any designation that would link them directly to the Lord. In fact, in describing them, Jesus referred to the devil and “his angels.” They certainly do not belong to the Lord!

We also have another huge problem for those who hold the angel view—only humans were punished in the Genesis Flood. There is no guilt assigned to angels and no punishment for them. Since humans would basically have been victimized if the angel view is correct, then it is unheard of that the Lord would punish the victims and not the victimizers.

Another problem has to do with the relationship between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men.” Scripture says they married. In other words, legitimate marriages. In fact, the Hebrew phrase that is used is the standard expression in the Old Testament for legal marriages. Yet the only legitimate marriages that the Bible approves of are those between one man and one woman. Add to this, Jesus made it clear that angels do not

marry! Therefore, the Bible would never call a union between angels and earthly women a “marriage.” However, Scripture says that this is precisely what took place between the sons of God and the daughters of men.

We also have the problem of angels producing children. The fact that angels are spirit beings, neither male nor female, and thus have no ability to procreate. This truth seemingly rules out the possibility that they could marry earthly women and then have children born to them. Thus, the angelic theory advocates something that is impossible—angels having offspring!

There is also the problem with the people known as the Nephilim. From Scripture we learn a few things about them. First, they were on the earth before the time the “sons of God” took wives from the daughters of humankind. In other words, they were not a result of the union between them and therefore not the reason that God sent the Flood.

Second, they were called “mighty men,” “heroes of old.” This is describing human beings. Furthermore, it is a positive term. If they were the result of an angelic/human union, they would not be called mighty men or heroes.

Third, we find later in Scripture in the Book of Numbers, that the Nephilim were related to a human ancestor, Anak. These facts led us to one simple conclusion—we are dealing with humans, not angels!

Let us also remember that Jesus said the time of His Second Coming would be similar to the days of Noah leading up to the Flood. People married and were given in marriage. Notice the Lord said “people.” He did not say angels!

The logical assumption is that it was “life was going on as usual” until the moment the Flood came and took the people to their deaths.

Finally, if we view the first four verses of Genesis 6 as an appendix to Genesis 5, and not as an introduction to the story of the Flood, then the “sons of God,” and their marriages to the “daughters of humankind” would not be viewed as anything evil whatsoever.

Basically, this would mean that Genesis 6:1-4 merely summarizes the fact that the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve had greatly increased, married, and had children. These four verses are an interlude before the narrative of the Flood. Consequently, the “sons of God” were simply human men—nothing more.

In sum, the fact that all the reasons given for the “sons of God” being angels have more than adequate responses, and with the three general problems associated with making this a biblical doctrine, and with all the specific problems the angelic view creates, we conclude that this understanding of Genesis 6 is not built upon a solid scriptural foundation. Therefore, we believe it is best to view these “sons of God” as human beings, and nothing more.

Consequently, there should be no claims of the “return of the Nephilim” in the last days as some have done. Scripture gives many signs of the time of the end—signs that we have documented in our book, *25 Signs We Are Near The End*. These signs do not include angels returning to earth and taking earthly women and producing some type of monstrous offspring. This type of teaching should cease and desist.

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