



Demonology: *Understanding and Combatting Your Defeated Foe*

Session 1

Welcome and Course Introduction

Good morning, and welcome to RCF Academy. Over the next eleven weeks, we're going to work through a topic most churches never touch: Demonology: Understanding and Combatting Your Defeated Foe. This is going to be a discussion-rich class — I'll be teaching, but I want you engaging, asking questions, answering questions, and wrestling with the text alongside me, not just sitting and absorbing. This will be a topical Bible study, but our course outline is based on Fredrick Leahy's excellent book, *Satan Cast Out*. If you're interested, you can order a copy from Banner of Truth. My hope is that by the end of this course, you'll know what God has actually revealed about this subject, you'll know where the boundaries of that revelation are, and you'll be equipped to reject and refute the sensationalistic, speculative foolishness that passes for demonology on the internet.

Before we begin our study, I want to answer the question:

Why are we studying Demonology?

First, because we aim to address every subject the Bible addresses; if God's Word speaks to it, we will too.

Second, this particular subject is woefully under-addressed in most churches – and the churches that do address it are usually a little weird. Most Reformed churches simply skip this material. Meanwhile, the churches and ministries that do talk about it a lot tend to swing into strange territory pretty quickly. We're going to try to actually thread that needle — take the subject seriously without getting weird, secular, speculative, and unbiblical about it.



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Third – and this is the one I want to spend a few minutes on – many in our own congregation are getting their demonology from a deeply unreliable source: Refuge Church and their podcast, Haunted Cosmos.

I know some of you have listened to it. I have too. I know it's popular, well-produced, and genuinely fascinating. But here's what you need to know about the men behind it. Brian Sauvé and Ben Garrett are pastors at Refuge Church in Ogden, Utah. Several years ago, they were 1689 Reformed Baptists whom we delighted in as our closest possible allies. Sadly, since then, they have embraced a radical theonomic Christian nationalist form of Presbyterianism that our body strongly rejects. Mind you, by Christian Nationalist, I do not simply mean that they desire and vote so that the laws of our land are more in line with scripture; by that definition, we are all Christian Nationalists. Rather, I mean a movement that seeks the formal establishment of a Christian civil order.

Worse still, this past summer, their church's conference had a vendor booth selling Adolf Hitler's speeches, SS memoirs, and literature promoting *The Turner Diaries* — the novel that inspired the Oklahoma City bombing. When they were confronted about it, they didn't apologize for allowing it. They defended it. Their only complaint was that the vendor handed out a flyer promoting *other* pro-white groups they hadn't pre-approved.

That is who is currently shaping how a lot of Reformed-minded Christians, including some of us, think about angels, demons, and the unseen world. Men willing to share a platform with Nazi propaganda are not men I want catechizing my church on the spirit realm, no matter how good their audio production is or how entertaining their stories are.

Their demonological content also leans heavily on something called the "divine council worldview" — a framework popularized by the late scholar Michael Heiser. Heiser did real academic work on the Hebrew word for "gods," and the heavenly council in passages like

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Psalms 82 and Job 1-2, and some of that work is worth knowing. But he built on it a much larger system — leaning on 1 Enoch and other Second Temple Jewish writings as though they were nearly as authoritative as Scripture, reading "territorial spirits" into Deuteronomy 32, and treating the Nephilim as an ongoing demonic bloodline. That system is not confessionally Reformed, nor is it biblical. We do not build our doctrine concerning demons on non-biblical texts like 1 Enoch or other Ancient Near Eastern texts. We build it on Scripture alone!

But hear me carefully on this next point, because it's just as important as everything I've just said: **rejecting weird secular sensationalism is not the same thing as rejecting the supernatural.** It would be very easy, after hearing everything I just said about Haunted Cosmos and Heiser, to swing hard the other direction — to conclude that Satan and demons are barely worth thinking about, that the safe move is to just not talk about this stuff at all. That is its own error, and Scripture won't let us go there either. The Bible is not shy about the reality of evil spirits, the genuine danger they pose, and the real spiritual war we are in. We are not going to overcorrect and thus assume a tame, sanitized, practically atheist view of the unseen world just because some people have been weird and speculative with it. There are two ditches on either side of this road — one is hyper-fascination, the other is dismissal — and we're aiming to walk right down the middle of it, on the firm ground of Scripture alone.

So, here's the working rule for demonology: **entertaining and popular is not the same as trustworthy and biblical.** Scripture commands us to test everything — every teacher, every podcast, every commentary, including me — against the Word (1 Thessalonians 5:21). This morning we start building that case straight from Scripture, so that when someone tells you something fascinating about the spirit world, you have the biblical learning to know whether it's true.

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Ok, so that's why we're studying demonology. Now for our first lesson, which is an introductory lesson.

The Lesson: Angels, Good and Evil

1. Angels are real, personal, spiritual, and morally accountable beings

We see this in texts like:

- ✦ *Hebrews 1:13-14 - And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?*
- ✦ *Matthew 22:30 - For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.*
- ✦ *Psalms 103:20-21 Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will!*
- ✦ *Matthew 8:28-29 And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"*

Scripture doesn't argue for the existence of angels; it assumes it, and announces it authoritatively. Angels are not mere symbols or literary devices. They are true personal beings that have intelligence and moral character. As true personal beings, they rejoice (Job 38:7), desire (1 Peter 1:12), worship (Hebrews 1:6), and speak (too many references to list).

Notice Hebrews 1:14 calls them "ministering spirits." From this, we begin to learn they are spiritual, not physical, beings. When they appear bodily in Scripture, that's a temporary

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form, not their nature. Matthew 22:30 pushes this further. It tells us that there is no marrying among angels, which means no procreation — angels are not a race that reproduces. Every angel was individually created, and their numbers are fixed.

Further, Matthew 8:28-29 shows us that the fallen angels, demons, are fully aware that they are morally accountable. There are angels that delight to obey the Lord's word and obey his will (Psalm 103), and there are fallen angels who, while fulfilling God's purposes and plans, disobey his word and will, and they will face judgment on the final day.

Discussion: Before we go on to point 2, any questions or comments?

2. Angels are a company, not a race.

✦ *Matthew 22:30 - For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.*

Based on this passage, author Fredrick Leahy rightly says,

"We may say that angels constitute a company as distinguished from a race. Each was created separately and there is nothing in the angelic world corresponding to descent or procreation (Matt. 22:30). Consequently we may say that each apostate angel fell by himself, that is, by his own personal decision; whereas humanity, being a race, fell at once in its father and representative head."

Here, our aim is to distinguish one moral personal creature from another, men from angels. You see, we men are a race. By race, I do not mean ethnicity or nationality. Rather, I mean a single created kind that propagates itself through descent from a common ancestor. As you all know, the human race propagates itself through descent from a common ancestor: Adam and Eve. Further, our common ancestor stands as our representative, or

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federal head. This means that when Adam fell, we all fell in him. When Adam sinned, we all sinned in him. When Adam's nature was marred and made sinful, ours was too. We see this most plainly in Romans 5. Further, when Christ, the last Adam, the true and better Adam, came into the world and accomplished the obedience that Adam failed to accomplish, all who are born again in him are counted as righteous and obedient in him.

Angels, though, are not a race. They do not propagate themselves through a common ancestor. They have no representative, or federal head. Thus, none of them inherit a fallen or elect nature. They are not "born,"; thus they are not "born" guilty in Adam. But since being born is not of their nature, neither can they be "born again." Thus, we conclude that each apostate angel fell individually, by his own personal rebellion, and cannot be redeemed. Likewise, the elect angels did not avoid falling because of some righteousness that they inherited from their ancestor, their federal head, since they have no such ancestor or head.

We see this truth in:

✠ *Hebrews 2:16-18 - For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

Further, it is for this reason that the elect angels are so full of wonder and curiosity concerning our salvation. We see this in:

✠ *1 Peter 1:12 - It was revealed to them (the prophets) that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

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Discussion: How does knowing there's no gospel for angels change the way you think about God's love and mercy towards you?

3. Some angels were kept from falling; others were not

God is just as sovereign over the angels as he is over the rest of creation. We see this undeniably in texts like:

✦ *Daniel 4:35 - all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"*

In Job 1, God exerts his sovereign rule over the chief fallen angel, Satan, saying,

✦ *Job 1:12 - 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.*

Thus, we can, and must, conclude that he was sovereign over which angels fell, and which were kept from falling. But this need not merely be a logical deduction, Paul says,

✦ *1 Timothy 5:21 - In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.*

In speaking of elect angels, Paul is saying that the angels that did not fall were kept from doing so because of God's election of them, or preservation of them.

To be clear, all angels were created holy, included in God's "very good" pronouncement over creation. But some were preserved from sin by God's decree of election, while others, though created holy, were not shielded from the possibility of sinning.

This means the fall of Satan and his angels wasn't a surprise to God or evidence of some flaw in creation. It happened within God's sovereign decree, the same way your salvation

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did. We don't know why some angels were elected and others weren't, any more than we fully know why we were chosen and others aren't.

Discussion: If God is this sovereign over fallen angels, should we tremble as if they could wreck His plan for us? And when God *does* allow demonic oppression — as He allowed Satan to afflict Job — what is our confidence in the middle of it?"

4. Where revelation stops, we stop with it (7-8 min)

✠ *Deuteronomy 29:29 - "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."*

There is an important theological principle for us in this verse. No, this verse isn't about demons, but it does teach us about how we ought to study demons. There is a category of things God has simply not told us, and that is not a gap in your Bible to be filled in by speculation, tradition, ancient cultural studies, or popular podcasts. It's a category God built in on purpose.

Through our study, we will run into this category again and again. You will likely want to know, "Why did God choose those angels, and not others?" God won't tell you, and it's not yours to know. The secret things belong to him, not you. You might come up with dozens of questions that the Bible doesn't answer. Here's what we won't do: we won't merely speculate, and we won't, like Michael Heiser, borrow from the unholy ancient religions of the Ancient Near East- the Canaanites, Assyrians, Babylonians, and others. We will say what the Bible says and no more. In doing so, we will be able to see the many ways that demons are active in our world, yet we will avoid creating our own false fables and myths which serve only to entertain and frighten children.

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Discussion: If you've ever read a piece of fiction and wished that an author would give you the whole backstory on a certain interesting character (perhaps Tom Bombadil), and then the author didn't give you that backstory, you know the frustration of not being told things you wish you knew. Have you done this same thing with things that belong to the Lord? If so, how?

5. Not everything "everybody knows" about Satan is true

Just briefly, I want to apply the previous point. Hear now the words of Isaiah 14:

✠ *Isaiah 14:12-15 - How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.*

How many of you have heard these words, or read these words before? How many of you had been taught that, or were fairly certain, or at least suspicious, that these words referred to the Devil? Right, me too.

But, let's now read verse 3 and 4, where the LORD says to Isaiah:

✠ *Isaiah 14:3-4 - When the LORD has given you rest from your pain and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve, you will take up this taunt against **the king of Babylon:***

So, dear ones, who is being addressed? The devil? No, the plain, clear answer is the king of Babylon. The "morning star" language describes a proud human ruler's self-deification and his fall from power, not a cosmic being's fall from heaven.

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This passage is almost universally assumed to be about Satan — it's the source of the name "Lucifer" applied to the devil, and made more popular because there is apparently a TV show called *Lucifer*. But that reading isn't drawn from the text; it was imported centuries later. Luke 10:18 ("I saw Satan fall like lightning") got read back into a passage about someone else entirely.

So, dear ones, be ready to have some of your assumptions challenged by the Bible.

Discussion: Most of us have heard "Lucifer" as a name for Satan our whole lives. Does it surprise you that this rests on a text that isn't about him? What else do you think might be worth double-checking?

6. Two ditches we tend to fall into.

Let me put my cards on the table regarding my opinion of us. I think there are two ditches that most of us are going to be prone to falling into.

Here's one ditch. Some of us are fascinated. We've listened to many, if not every, episode of *Haunted Cosmos*. The unseen world is genuinely gripping to us, and if we're honest, some of that fascination is something less than healthy. Here's how it can become unhealthy: when we want to see demons in action because we think it's thrilling. It is unhealthy when we choose to fantasize about demonic activity. And it is most unhealthy when we functionally forget that God is sovereign over demons, and they cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (see Romans 8:35-39), so we develop a low-grade terror of them. Dear ones, that is a terror that Scripture does not prescribe. We fear the LORD, and him only. So you see, our fascination with demons is quite unhealthy when the fear of demons has to any degree replaced or eclipsed our fear of the LORD.

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Here's the other ditch. Some of us are skeptical. Maybe by temperament, maybe because we've watched the excesses of pop demonology up close and want nothing to do with it. And so we've settled into a functional posture where the devil is a doctrine we affirm on paper and never think about again. We'd never *say* he isn't real. We just live as if he isn't. The danger of this is simple. If we will allow ourselves to live as if the doctrine of demons and the devil isn't real, what other doctrines might we do this with? If we allow it here, what would keep us from allowing it elsewhere?

So, to those who have embraced an unhealthy fear of demons. Hear now Paul's comforting words. Speaking particularly of those spiritual beings, he says,

✠ *Colossians 2:15 - He (Jesus Christ) disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

And, to the overly skeptical, I must remind you of Paul's words that say,

✠ *Ephesians 6:10-13 - Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 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. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*

Discussion: Be honest with yourself: which of those ditches are you more likely to fall into?