Edgar Cayce: The Sleeping (False) Prophet

This article is no longer available. Please see Michael Gleghorn's article "The Worldview of Edgar Cayce" instead.

We apologize for any inconvenience.

"Satanism Has Nothing to do with Satan!"

A lot of Russ Wise's article on Satanism made sense. The only idiot thing he did and every other person on that site did was make a common error due to lack of research. If any of you had researched Satanism properly instead of judging (which made you look very unintelligent) you would have realized that the practice of "Satanism" has absolutely nothing to do with Satan. I have a friend who is Satanic and have studied the religion on my own. In my studies I observed that Satanists don't worship Satan. They believe in the worship of themselves and giving in to desire. I think everyone should do that every now and then, within reason.

Another thing he did wrong was the way he judged teenagers. Almost every teenager is depressed, or has a low self esteem. Teenagers emphasize social acceptance and few get it, and it makes them feel bad. A lot of children don't get the proper attention from parents. Seems they're all Christian to me. A lot of children like vampire movies, which doesn't mean they're satanic. I think that Russ and everyone other Christian should open up their eyes just a little and

recognize that not everyone will be Christian. Not everyone will believe God. I'm wiccan, but I was Baptist for 14 years.

I'm responding to your email regarding my piece on Satanism. Let me first say that the piece I wrote was originally limited to space available for a radio transcript. I wish I would have had more space to have elaborated on the topic. I hope to update the article and broaden the information presented so a more comprehensive understanding will be known.

I agree with you that Satanism is primarily a self-centered belief system that indulges the base desires of an individual. However, you must admit that Satanism, as Christianity, is subject to more than one interpretation. I'm sure you have heard of Richard Ramerez, the night-stalker, and self proclaimed Satanist. He without doubt worshipped Satan.

You may not have heard of Sean Sellers, the 17 year-old self-styled Satanist, who killed his mother and father because Satan told him to. I'm not going to hold Satan accountable for Sean's or Richard's actions. However, it is obvious that the influence of a malevolent spirit being is at play here. Likewise, we cannot hold God accountable for every unloving act that His created beings make. As a result of God's love we have free will and will ultimately be held accountable for our actions.

God does not orchestrate our lives as a puppeteer even though He could if He desired. On the other hand Satan, as a created being, cannot as well. But Satan can influence or oppress the individual in a negative manner, thereby causing one to commit evil acts.

If I can be intuitive for a moment, I suspect that you probably do not believe in Satan as a physical being. If so, could your pre-conceived bias color your view of who Satan is and ultimately his influence on humanity? As a Christian, I believe in Satan and his demons and their desire to confuse

and confound mankind spiritually. In other words, to rob men and women of the joy and peace that can only be found in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Now as for my judgmental attitude of teenagers. I wholeheartedly agree with you that teens are often depressed and suffer from low self-esteem. My observations are simply those made by individuals in the field of psychology and law-enforcement. I do not accept your conclusion that I am judgmental in this case. Maybe others!

It is grievous that many teens do not get the attention they need from parents or other adults. I recognize that when teens do not get what they need emotionally, etc. they are susceptible to negative influences. Sean Sellers is a classic example. I'm sure we could name others.

At the risk of running on, let me thank you for your critique. I consider it part of making my comments more reliable and ultimately more helpful for those who seek truth in the spiritual realm.

Best regards to you in your spiritual quest—remember God loves you!

Russ Wise
Christian Information Ministries
(formerly with Probe Ministries)

"If Angels Can't Marry, Then How Could 'The Sons of God'

Father Giants?”

Hi Michael, I read your answer to “Is the Genesis Story of ‘The Sons of God’ True?” and have a question about it. Mark 12:25 tells us that angels cannot marry. So I’m confused as to how the sons of God could have married women who then “bore giants”?

Mark 12:25 is possibly the passage most often cited against the view that the “sons of God” in Gen. 6 refers to fallen angels. And, of course, this view may be correct.

It’s difficult to know with certainty what the passage in Gen. 6 means. However, when one considers how the phrase “sons of God” gets used elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g. Job 1-2; etc.), it’s clear that it’s often used to refer to angels. Also, New Testament passages like Jude 6-7 and 2 Peter 2:4f, seem to lend support to this interpretation.

One of the Bible.org folks addressing this issue at http://bible.org/question/who-are-%E2%80%9Csons-god%E2%80%9D-genesis-61-8 wrote this about the “marriage” issue:

> *“I heartily agree with Bob Deffinbaugh’s arguments and presentation of this passage in his commentary, Genesis: From Paradise to Patriarchs which is on our web site in the Bible Studies / Old Testament / Books / Genesis section. I believe those who reject this view do so through exegetical gymnastics because of their own refusal to believe this could happen. They often refer to Christ’s statement about angels not marrying, but this is talking about God’s normal plan for them. They were created as a host and were not to propagate like mankind and fill the earth. This in no way says that under Satan’s orders and power they could not leave their own (idios, unique, peculiar, distinct, proper) domain (arche, rule, sphere of rule, influence) and abandon their own proper abode (oike,te,rion, habitation, dwelling place) (Jude 6).”*

Since angels have the ability to assume human form, and since fallen angels are said to sometimes "possess" human beings, it seems to me possible that the "Sons of God" in Gen. 6 were angels. But, of course, I don't know this for sure. And I certainly might be wrong.

If you're interested in exploring this issue further, please see some of the discussions on bible.org here.

Hope this helps.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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"How Do You Explain Knowledge of Past Lives Unless It's True?"

On the History Channel I saw a program on reincarnation, in which a woman named "Jenny Cockel" had memories of being in Ireland. She remembered facts about her previous life, such as the name of her eight children. She drew the correct map of her childhood town, gave an accurate description of her house etc. These things were later found to be true. How can a woman remember the name of her 8 children, the place where she lived, what was in their house (two oval-shaped photos, one of her and a child and the other of a soldier) this accurately? Is there any other proof of people more solid than this of people remembering their past life? Her past life son says what she says is exactly correct, and only she could know it.

Please see this program on the History Channel. Please tell me something about other solid experiences that support reincarnation.

Since the Bible's teachings do not allow for reincarnation to be true ("It is appointed unto man to die once, and after that comes judgement," Hebrews 9:27), we believe that the type of information given to people like Jenny Cockel is the result of the deception of demons. These fallen, sinful beings have been around people since Adam and Eve. They know all kinds of information not available to people naturally, and they will feed this information to those open to believing it.

This is similar to the stage "psychics" who have their shills circulate among the audience, picking up information that the "psychic" would never know on his own, and then this outside information is fed to the performer via a small earpiece receiver. When he reveals it publically, people are impressed with his "supernatural" knowledge.

Demons have no trouble knowing geography to be able to feed someone specific map information, nor do they have trouble collecting genealogical information on a family, or descriptions of physical artifacts, to feed someone. (Demons are sneaky. They can't read minds, but being spirits, they can speak in ways that we think it's our own thoughts. That's what I mean by "feeding.")

(For a purely natural explanation, it's also possible that people gained information from reading books and other sources that they forgot about.)

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Bad Things Are Happening After I Talked to My Angel”

I’m hoping you can help me. A couple of weeks ago, a friend told me that there was a way to talk to my guardian angel by going into a relaxed, meditative state, and asking “Are you there?”

I didn’t believe it would work, but I tried it anyway. Nothing happened, but that night, I was having a strange dream when I was “awakened” by a loud knock at my door. I sat up in my bed and went to ask “who’s there?” and nothing would come out of my mouth but a hoarse whisper. I was still dreaming. Then I really woke up and my heart was pounding and then it felt like my bed was slightly trembling. That was on a Tuesday at 12:57am. The following Tuesday, I awoke at the same exact time to tapping on the wall next to my head. Again, it felt as though my bed was trembling. I didn’t sleep that night and convinced myself that it was just my heart pounding that caused it. Then it happened 2 more times, once on a tuesday a half an hour earlier, and then on a friday. I tried looking at it logically the last time it happened. I felt the walls, the floor and the only thing that was shaking was my mattress. The heater is on the other side of my room.

My manager told me to stop burning incense in my room and maybe that would help. I stopped burning it for the past week and nothing has happened. I am scared though, especially after reading the web page on angels and demons in disguise. Please write back to me. If you can advise me, I would greatly appreciate it, and maybe be able to sleep with my light off for once.

You must be terrified! I am so sorry to hear about this series

of events. From what you write, I conclude that you really are dealing with demons—and they are terrorizing you. This is where you inadvertently opened the door to them:

> *A couple of weeks ago, a friend told me that there was a way to talk to my guardian angel by going into a relaxed, meditative state, and asking "are you there?" I didn't believe it would work, but I tried it anyway. Nothing happened.*

Actually, something DID happen. Your friend gave you very bad, very dangerous advice. The Bible gives us no instruction or allowance for contacting angels; when you opened yourself up to your "angel," it was an unholy angel who answered.

Jesus Christ is the only One who has power enough to make the terrorizing stop. The demons are afraid of Him and afraid of His blood. I suggest you pray a prayer entrusting yourself to Him as God's Son who loved you enough to die (shed His blood) for you. Then, address the demons out loud by telling them they have to leave in Jesus' name. You can also say, "I am protected by the blood of Jesus Christ."

Here's the deal, though. If you haven't trusted Christ to save you, from either your sins or this situation, you have no authority to use Jesus' name and there will be no power behind your words. The words are not magic; the power is in a true relationship with Jesus, where He protects you because you have entrusted yourself to Him.

If you have never trusted Christ as your savior, please read here for a full explanation of what it means: The Most Important Decision of Your Life.

Let me know how you're doing, OK?

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

Wicca: A Biblical Critique

Dr. Michael Gleghorn examines some of the fundamental doctrines of Wicca, offers a biblical critique of those doctrines, and highlights the differences between Wicca and Christianity.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

The Goddess and the God

By some estimates, Wicca "appears to be the fastest growing religion in America."{1} But what exactly is "Wicca" anyway? One scholar writes, "The modern religion of Wicca, otherwise known as Old Religion, Magick, Witchcraft, the Craft, and the Mysteries, is part of the neo-pagan movement."{2} In this article I hope to accomplish two things. First, I want to outline some of the fundamental doctrines of Wicca; second, I want to offer a biblical critique of those doctrines.

Let's begin with Wiccan theology. Although some Wiccans are devoted exclusively to the Goddess, most worship both the Goddess and the God. Raven Grimassi, a Wiccan scholar, has written, "The Source of All Things, also known as the Great Spirit, is generally personified in Wiccan belief as a Goddess and a God."{3}

It's important to point out that the Goddess and God are merely *personifications* of this ultimate source of all things. The Source itself is both "unknowable" and "incomprehensible."{4} It is perhaps for this reason that some "Neo-Wiccans" have simply abandoned such personifications altogether, choosing rather to view the gods as simply "detached metaphysical concepts."{5} But for those who embrace

such personifications, the Goddess has often been associated with the moon (and has thus sometimes been called the *Queen of Heaven*).{6} She is also known in three aspects, corresponding to the three stages of a woman's life: Maiden, Mother, and Crone.{7} She was alleged to have reigned "with a male consort called *The Horned One* who was a nature god and was also associated with the sun."{8} Interestingly, this god was not only viewed as the consort of the Goddess, he was also her son as well. Each year he was born of the Goddess, became her lover, and died-only to be reborn once more the following year from his own seed! This was known as the Year God cycle and was associated with the fertility of the land and the annual cycles of seedtime and harvest.{9}

Interestingly, modern Wicca shares many similarities with the ancient fertility religions of Canaan, religions specifically condemned by God in the Bible.{10} For instance, the Wiccan Goddess is revered by some as the *Queen of Heaven,* by others as *Astarte*.{11} But in the Bible, the worship of Ishtar, the queen of heaven, and Astarte, or Ashtoreth, is repeatedly condemned, as is the worship of her consort, known sometimes as Baal, sometimes as Tammuz.{12} Thus in Judges 2:11-13 we read: "Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord . . . they provoked the Lord to anger . . . they forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreth." But if the only true God rejected the ancient Canaanite religions and their practices, would His reaction to modern Wicca likely be any different?

The Watchers

"The Watchers is a concept common to most Wiccan Traditions, although they are viewed differently by the various systems within Wicca."{13} Raven Grimassi describes these "Watchers" as "an ancient race who have evolved beyond the need for physical form."{14} However, he is quick to add that, historically, the "Watchers" have been conceived in a

diversity of ways. For instance, in the early Stellar myths the Watchers were "gods who guarded the Heavens and the Earth."{15} Later, he says, "the Greeks reduced them to the Gods of the four winds, and the Christians to principalities of the air."{16}

The connection, observed by Grimassi, between the Wiccan concept of the Watchers and the Christian concept of angels may find some validation in the Bible. In Daniel 4:13-17, the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar relates a dream to Daniel. He tells him that during the dream a "watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven" and pronounced a judgment that is said to be "by the decree of the watchers . . . a command of the holy ones . . . that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind." Most conservative commentators understand the "watchers" in this passage to be angels. One commentator writes, "The king is probably referring to the angels which were known to him through the Babylonian religion."{17} But that these beings are indeed the biblical angels seems evident from the fact that they are acting as *messengers* of the Most High God.{18}

In light of this connection between the "watchers" and angels, it is interesting to note that "Rabbinic and Cabalistic lore" made a distinction between good and evil Watchers.{19} This distinction parallels the biblical distinction between good and evil angels, or angels and demons. Indeed, Grimassi notes, "In the *Secret Book of Enoch*, the Watchers . . . are listed as rebellious angels who followed Sataniel in a heavenly war."{20} We find a similar incident recounted in Revelation 12:7-9, where we read of a heavenly war in which Michael and his angels cast Satan and his angels from heaven to earth.

With this in mind it is interesting to note that Richard Cavendish, in his book *The Powers of Evil*, "lists the Watchers as the Fallen Angels that magicians call forth in ceremonial magick."{21} This remark is especially noteworthy when one considers Grimassi's comments concerning "the relationship

that exists between a Wiccan and the Watchers."{22} Grimassi points out that "every act of magick that a Wiccan performs is observed and noted by the Watchers."{23} Furthermore, he says, "There is a definite link between the 'powers' of a Wiccan and their rapport with the Watchers."{24} But since the God of the Bible clearly prohibits magic, is it likely that these "Watchers" should be thought of as good spirits (inasmuch as they oppose the ordinance of God)?{25}

The Art of Magick

Wiccans view magick as a genuine possibility because of humanity's intrinsic connection both to Deity and a supernatural order. Raven Grimassi states: "The art of magick is one of creation. . . . The power to create from *thoughts* is linked to the divine spark within us. We create in accordance with the divine formula that created all things."{26}

But how is this possible? Grimassi explains, "The astral plane is the link between the divine world and the physical. . . . Whatever manifests on the astral plane will eventually manifest on the physical plane."{27} And human thought can manifest on the astral plane.{28} Thus, for one accomplished in the art of Wiccan magick, the power to secure a desired effect in the physical world is alleged to begin with the careful creation of a thought-form on the astral plane.{29} Grimassi continues: "Thought-forms begin to appear in the astral material, which then become vehicles for the spirits or deities that have been invoked (through which they will respond to the desire of the magickal intent)."{30} If done properly, "the magickal seeds planted in the astral plane" will eventually bear fruit on the physical plane.{31} This is the basic theory behind Wiccan magick. And one practitioner has boasted, "No matter what type of coven magic is used, it is usually effective."{32}

Might there actually be some truth to this? Indeed, there might. The book of Exodus tells us that the Egyptian magicians

were able to duplicate, by means of "their secret arts," the initial plagues God brought upon Egypt!{33} Furthermore, the text never hints that this was done by any means other than some genuine secret power. In light of this we might ask why God is so opposed to the practice of magic. After all, couldn't such power be used for good, as well as evil? But God specifically warned the Israelites: "There shall not be found among you anyone" who practices divination, witchcraft, sorcery, or spiritism.{34} Why is this?

Could it be that the "secret power" of magick is due, not to its various rituals, symbols and gestures, but rather to the supernatural intervention of spirit beings? In Acts 16 we read of a demon-possessed slave-girl described as "having a spirit of divination . . . who was bringing her masters much profit by fortunetelling."{35} This passage clearly ties the power of divination to demons. With this in mind, it's interesting to remember Grimassi's admission: "There is a definite link between the 'powers' of a Wiccan and their rapport with the Watchers."{36} Wiccans view the Watchers as a race of highly evolved spiritual beings.{37} But these beings are linked with angels and demons in other religious literature (including the Bible).{38} Is it possible that God prohibits magic because He wants to protect people from involvement with demons?

The Summerland and Reincarnation

Like Christians, Wiccans do not believe that physical death is the end of personal existence. Nevertheless, in its details the Wiccan doctrine of the "afterlife" differs substantially from the biblical view. How so?

To begin, Wiccans do not accept the biblical doctrines of heaven and hell. Rather, they believe that after physical death, "Wiccans pass into a spirit world known as the Summerland . . . a metaphysical astral realm of meadows, lakes, and forests where it is always summer. It is a Pagan paradise filled with all the lovely creatures of ancient lore,

and the gods themselves dwell there."{39} The Summerland is viewed as a place of rest and renewal for the soul before its rebirth into the physical world.{40}

The belief in the soul's rebirth into the physical world, also known as reincarnation, is another way in which Wiccan doctrines differ from those of biblical Christianity. Though the doctrine of reincarnation is completely unbiblical, many Wiccans actually believe it is taught in the Bible. Raven Grimassi cites John 9:1-3 as evidence that even Jesus and His disciples believed in reincarnation!{41} In this passage Jesus' disciples ask Him about a man born blind: "'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?' Jesus answered, 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him.'" Grimassi comments: "Jesus does not denounce the question of this man's existence prior to this birth, but explains that [his blindness] had nothing to do with his sins prior to his present life."{42} But is this interpretation correct? Is Jesus really affirming that this man existed *prior* to his present life?

It's important to understand both the disciples' question, and Jesus' response, from within the historical context of first century Judaism. "The Jewish theologians of that time gave two reasons for birth defects: *prenatal sin* (before birth, *but not* before conception) and *parental sin*."{43} In other words, first century Jewish rabbis did not believe that birth defects resulted from bad karma in a previous incarnation! Rather, they thought such defects arose either from the sins of the parents being visited upon their children, or from the sin of the child while still in the mother's womb.{44} Although Jesus denies that either of these causes was responsible for this man's blindness, we must still bear in mind that His *disciples* were asking this question from within a first century Jewish context. We must also remember that elsewhere the New Testament explicitly affirms, "[I]t is appointed for men to

die once and after this comes judgment."{45} Thus, far from affirming the Wiccan doctrine of reincarnation, the New Testament clearly denies it.

Is Wicca Another Way to God?

Scott Cunningham claimed, "All religions have one ideal at their core: to unite their followers with Deity. Wicca is no different."{46} He also wrote, "Perhaps it's not too strong to say that the highest form of human vanity is to assume that your religion is the only way to Deity."{47} But is it really true that there are many ways to God, or is there only one?

Although it's quite common in today's pluralistic society to assume that all the enduring religious traditions of mankind are equally valid ways to God or Ultimate Reality, there are tremendous philosophical difficulties with this belief. Since we are here concerned with both Wicca and Christianity, let's briefly compare some of the fundamental tenets of these two religions and see what we come up with.

Wiccans appear to believe in the essential divinity of human nature. Raven Grimassi writes, "[E]verything bears the 'divine spark' of its creator."{48} He also claims, "Souls are like brain cells in the mind of the Divine Creator, individual entities and yet part of the whole."{49} Thus, there doesn't seem to be any clear distinction in Wicca between humanity and Deity. This explains why the Witch Starhawk could confidently declare, "there is nothing to be saved *from* . . . no God outside the world to be feared and obeyed."{50}

Christianity, however, maintains a firm distinction between God and man. Man is created in God's image, but he is neither God nor a part of God. Furthermore, although man bears God's image, his nature has been corrupted by sin, which separates him from God. Man's need, therefore, is to be saved from his sins and reconciled to God. This explains the significance of Christ for Christianity. As Peter put it, "Christ . . . died

for sins once for all . . . that He might bring us to God."{51} Christians believe that God dealt fully and finally with man's sin through the death and resurrection of His Son.{52} Thus, contrary to Wicca, Christianity teaches that there *is* something to be saved from and that there *is* a God outside the world to be both feared and obeyed.

Because of their differences, the law of non-contradiction makes it impossible for both of these religions to be true. It's therefore interesting to note Charlotte Allen's observation: "In all probability, not a single element of the Wiccan story is true. The evidence is overwhelming that Wicca is . . . a 1950s concoction . . . of an English civil servant and amateur anthropologist" named Gerald Gardner.{53} But surely such questionable historical origins cast doubt on the truth of Wiccan religious beliefs as well. Christianity, however, is firmly rooted in the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth, whose claim to be the *only* way to God was clearly vindicated when God "furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."{54}

Notes

1. Charlotte Allen, "The Scholars and the Goddess" *The Atlantic Monthly* (January 2001): 18.

2. Fritz Ridenour, *So What's the Difference?* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2001), 209.

3. Raven Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries: Ancient Origins and Teachings* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2000), 33.

4. Scott Cunningham, *The Truth About Witchcraft Today* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 1999), 76.

5. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries,* 33.

6. Ibid., 25.

7. Cunningham, *The Truth About Witchcraft Today,* 73.

8. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries,* 26.

9. Ibid., 88-89.

10. Ridenour, *So What's the Difference?,* 210. This is not to imply, of course, that Wicca itself is ancient. The antiquity of Wicca has been seriously challenged by modern scholarship.

11. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries*, 25; Cunningham, *The Truth About Witchcraft Today,* 72.

12. For instance, see Judges 2:11-17; 2 Kings 23:4-14; Jeremiah 44:15-23; Ezekiel 8:14-15. For documentation concerning the consort of Ashtoreth being Baal and/or Tammuz see J.D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney, eds. *The New International Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1987), s.v. "Ashtoreth," 100-01; "Tammuz," 986. For documentation that Ishtar, the queen of heaven, was associated with Tammuz see Trent C. Butler, gen. ed. *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), s.v. "Ishtar," 721; "Tammuz," 1321.

13. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries,* 99.

14. Ibid., 100.

15. Ibid., 101.

16. Ibid.

17. Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 103.

18. Compare Daniel 4:17 with 4:24.

19. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries,* 102.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., 103.

22. Ibid., 106.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid. This is not to imply that Wiccans explicitly worship Satan or demons (understood in the Christian sense). They are very careful to say they do not, and we should take them at their word. At the same time, is it legitimate to ask if one can be deceived by the devil without actually worshipping the devil? For while Wiccans may not worship the devil, the Bible seems to indicate that they have nonetheless been deceived by him. Wicca, for example, rejects the biblical doctrines of God, man, Christ, sin, salvation, etc. As a religion, therefore, Wicca helps prevent men and women from coming to a saving knowledge of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible, however, declares that this is also one of the activities of Satan! It reveals that the devil "has blinded the minds of the unbelieving" to keep them from saving faith in Christ (see 2 Cor. 4:3-4). It is for this reason that Christians, while acknowledging that Wiccans do not worship the devil, nonetheless view the religion of Wicca as a means of Satanic deception since it keeps its followers from saving faith in Christ.

25. See Deuteronomy 18:9-13.

26. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries*, 140.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., 150.

29. Ibid., 140-41.

30. Ibid., 140.

31. Ibid., 159.

32. Cunningham, *The Truth About Witchcraft Today,* 125.

33. See Exodus 7:11-12, 22; 8:6-7.

34. See Deuteronomy 18:9-13.

35. See Acts 16:16-18.

36. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries*, 106.

37. Ibid., 100.

38. Ibid., 101-03.

39. Ibid., 30.

40. Ibid., 32.

41. Ibid., 113.

42. Ibid.

43. Norman L. Geisler and Ron Rhodes, *When Cultists Ask: A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), 175.

44. Ibid.

45. Hebrews 9:27.

46. Cunningham, *The Truth About Witchcraft Today,* 77.

47. Ibid., 66.

48. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries*, 26.

49. Ibid., 27.

50. Starhawk (Miriam Simos), *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 9, cited in Ridenour, *So What's the Difference*, 213.

51. 1 Peter 3:18.

52. See Romans 4:25.

53. Allen, “The Scholars and the Goddess,” 19.

54. See John 14:6 and Acts 17:31.

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“Where Do Demons Come From?”

My friends and I are doing a Bible project on demons. I read your website and it had a lot of helpful information. But we are having trouble finding information on the origin of demons. We can’t find very many references to when Satan rebelled against God, or where demons came from. Can you help us?

The problem is that the Bible doesn’t give much information about the origin of demons, and that is the ONLY reliable source of truth.

In fact, we’re only given the faintest hint of what happened, in Revelation 12. The writer, the apostle John, uses poetic, symbolic language, and the events are not in chronological order. Here’s what it says:

> “. . . a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.” (Revelation 12:3-4)

Shortly after these verses, the same event is described again:

> “And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging

> war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him." (Revelation 12:7-9)

We are not told exactly when this happened. Sometime between the time God created the earth, and Satan's temptation of Eve, he and his demons (apparently, a third of the angels) rebelled and were thrown out of heaven. But we don't know when that was. In Job, when God is doing His wonderful work of creation, we are told that "the morning stars sang together, and ALL the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). That would indicate to me that the angels (also called "the sons of God") were all still holy at that point.

This is where we run out of information, so I have given you all I have. I hope it helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Did I Encounter a Demon?"

Dear Miss Bohlin,

I am a 17 year old aspiring writer who has just recently gotten back into the Church after a hiatus of several years after getting caught up in some odd religious fever and being baptized. I've often wondered why that off sensation came over me, but I'm starting to piece together the way my life has panned out and how things are indeed serving a purpose.

I am writing you because of the article on the web you wrote entitled, "Angels: The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly." I was reading because I am trying to do research for a comic book project about a Christian "super hero" in the future, and I would like to feature an angel or two as supporting characters to my heroic lead character.

As I read the article, I came upon the part speaking of the falseness of those preaching the practice of channeling angels and praying to angels, and how these so called angels providing the information were more than likely actually demons. The part that hit me hardest, though, was the part speaking of the promise that those who seek out these "angels" will be visited by a "Shining" angel that is more than likely a personal encounter with an actual demon.

This hit me because of something that happened several years ago. If I remember correctly, I had just entered my teenage career, and had already been baptized sometime before. By this point, though, I had drifted away from religion, and had stopped attending church almost altogether. Lord forgive me if this isn't entirely accurate, I have horrible memory about some things. Anyways, I had become interested in ghosts and psychic phenomenon, and had decided to call a psychic 900-number. The man I spoke with was more than happy to assist when I asked if he could help me strengthen any abilities I may have had. He went with me through the motions for several days of meditating and "filling myself with a light" in my mind's eye. Finally, I actually saw the outline of a being's face, a being that looked like a perfect representation of what I have tended to see Angels as, like some kind of a Greek statue or something.

As I came back to the church, I have been at war with myself internally over what to believe in this world we live in, and in some ways I've been frustrated because I haven't felt a level of religious belonging like the one I experienced in the few weeks leading up to my baptism since the baptism itself. I

had been using this “vision” of my “angelic guide” as proof of faith for so long, and now I realize I was trying to use an encounter with a demon as justification of believing in God.

Do you think this could be what has been holding me back from experiencing the joy I felt during the time surrounding my Baptism? If so, now that I have realized it, how should I deal with it? My first impulse at this discovery that I likely encountered a demon and have probably been under some sort of influence since then has been to be horrified and afraid. But as I talked about it with a friend, I began to see it as a backfire in the plans for whatever this being was. If there is a demon, then there must be angels. And if there are Angels, then there must be a God to follow, and obey and have faith in. Is this a good interpretation? Is this a personal victory for me? I’ve heard it said that nearly anything used for evil can be turned back and used for good. Should I be using my encounter with evil as reinforcement for a belief that there must, undoubtedly, be a good, and I have every reason to seek that good?

Your thoughts on this strangeness are greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

_____

Dear _____, I wish you could see the smile on my face as I read this particular section of your letter:

> *If there is a demon, then there must be angels. And if there are Angels, then there must be a God to follow, and obey and have faith in. Is this a good interpretation? Is this a personal victory for me? I’ve heard it said that nearly anything used for evil can be turned back and used for good. Should I be using my encounter with evil as reinforcement for a belief that there must, undoubtedly, be a good, and I have*

every reason to seek that good?

Yes, yes, yes!! It's an excellent interpretation!

To answer your question, "how should I deal with it?" the best answer I can suggest is that you get Neil Anderson's book *The Bondage Breaker*. He explains the power and authority we have in Jesus Christ and how to completely renounce any hold Satan and demons have over you in an orderly, step-by-step manner. Many, many people have experienced freedom as a result of Neil's book.

Welcome back to the family of God! I am sure that you will experience the joy that is part of knowing Christ when you disengage yourself from the demonic oppression that is holding you back. . . but only until you find out how the Lord will free you.

In His grip,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

Angels: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly – The Range of Angelic Activity

Sue Bohlin presents accounts of angelic activity in our world today consistent with the biblical account of angels and their actions. From a biblical worldview perspective, she considers both the involvement of good angels and bad angels in the circumstances of life. A good understanding of angelic

activity will aid us in understanding the full world around us, both the seen and the unseen.

This article is also available in Spanish. 

I was about thirteen years old when I had my first encounter with an angel. I was going upstairs to my room, pulling my entire weight on the handrail, when it suddenly came off in my hand. I fell backwards, head first. Halfway into a terrible fall, I felt a strong hand on my back push me upright. There was nobody there—well, nobody *visible*!

Angel stories are always fascinating, and in this essay I address angels: the good, the bad, and the ugly. The good angels are the holy ones, the bad angels are the evil ones, which the Bible calls demons, and the ugly angels are demons disguising themselves as good angels. These ugly angels have deceived many people in a culture that has embraced "angel mania."

The Good Angels

The book of Hebrews calls angels "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). Angels minister in many ways to us, and I'd like to look at some of their ministries with examples from the scriptures as well as some modern anecdotes.

Provision

The Lord uses His angels to physically provide for His own. It was an angel who brought Elijah bread and water while fleeing from Jezebel after his victory on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 19:5-6).

In 1944, the penniless wife of a pastor and evangelist in Switzerland, Susie Ware prayed, "God, I need five pounds of potatoes, two pounds of pastry flour, apples, pears, a cauliflower, carrots, veal cutlets for Saturday, and beef for

Sunday.” A few hours later, someone knocked on the door, and there was a young man carrying a basket, who said, “Mrs. Ware, I am bringing what you asked for.” It was precisely what she’d prayed for—down to the exact brand of pastry flour she wanted. The young man slipped away, and even though Rev. and Mrs. Ware watched at the window to their building, the man never exited. He just disappeared.{1}

Guidance

Sometimes, angels give guidance so God’s people will know what He wants us to do. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and instructed him to take Mary as his wife and to name her baby Jesus. (Matthew 1:20-21)

And it was an angel who told Philip where to go in his travels so that he could meet the Ethiopian eunuch and lead him to Christ. (Acts 8:26)

My friend Lee experienced the comfort of guidance from an angel when the other men in his army unit were pressuring him to visit a red-light district. As he prayed for strength, an invisible messenger came to him and said, quite audibly from about ten feet away, “Have no fear of them. Do not succumb. I will sustain you and deliver you.”

Encouragement

Angelic ministry to us can include powerful encouragement. When Paul and his shipmates were caught in a horrible storm and faced shipwreck, an angel appeared to him, assured him that not a life would be lost, and that he would live to stand trial before Caesar. (Acts 27:23)

One mother of a young girl told me that the night after her daughter’s cancer surgery, a very tall nurse with long braids, a real Amazon, ministered to her all night long. She was caring for the girl with a strong but gentle tenderness, and

talking with the mom about how good God is. After they went home, the mother decided to write a thank-you note to the nurse, and called the hospital to ask for her name. Everyone—even the head of nursing—insisted that there was no nurse with that description working at the hospital. She believes God sent an angel to encourage her through that dark night.

Protection

This world is a dangerous place, and angels can provide supernatural protection. Daniel 6 tells the story of how an angel shut the mouths of the lions when he was thrown into their den.

A young lady named Myra worked in the inner-city ministry of Teen Challenge in Philadelphia. One neighborhood gang liked to terrorize anyone who tried to enter the Teen Challenge building, and they harassed Myra as well. One night, when she was alone in the building with the gang banging on the door, she felt she should continue to try to reach out to them with the gospel of Jesus. As she opened the door, she breathed a prayer for protection. The boys suddenly stopped their shouting, looked at each other, turned and left quietly. Myra had no idea why.

Later on, as the staff people were able to build relationships with the gang members, the ministry director asked them why they dropped their threats against Myra and left her alone that night. One young man spoke up, saying, “We wouldn’t dare touch her after her boyfriend showed up. That dude had to be seven feet tall.” The director said, “I didn’t know Myra had a boyfriend. But at any rate, she was here alone that night.” Another gang member insisted, “No, we saw him. He was right behind her, big as life in his classy white suit.”{2}

Another young woman walking home from work in Brooklyn had to go past a young man loitering against a building. She was

fearful; there had been muggings in the area recently, and she prayed for protection. She had to go right by him, and although she could feel him watching her, he didn't move. A short time after she reached home, she heard sirens and saw police lights. The next day her neighbor told her someone had been raped, in the same place and just after she had passed by the young man.

She wondered if the man she'd passed was the rapist, because if it were, she could identify him. She called the police and discovered they had a suspect in custody. She identified him in a lineup and asked the policeman, "Why didn't he attack *me*? I was just as vulnerable as the next woman who came along." The policeman was curious too, so he described the woman and asked the suspect about her. He said, "I remember her. But why would I have bothered her? She was walking down the street with two big guys, one on either side of her."{3}

Rescue

Sometimes, angels rescue people in danger. It was an angel—if not the Angel of the Lord, who is the pre-incarnate Christ—who joined Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego in the fiery furnace, rescuing them from the flames (Daniel 3).

My friend John told me that he and a friend were walking through a rough neighborhood one night when 12 or 15 gang members jumped them. John took two punches and sank to the ground. He expected to be robbed and severely beaten, but he wasn't. Instead, he heard a voice from about six feet up: "It's okay, they're gone." He looked up and saw his friend who mysteriously was now about 25 feet away, leaning against a wall with his fists still clenched as if he were ready to fight. But there was no gang. They just disappeared. And there was nobody next to John.

Warrior Angels

The ministry of warrior angels catches the imagination in a special way. The prophet Elisha prayed that the Lord would open the eyes of his servant so he could see the mighty angelic army of God protecting them.

In Nazi Germany, one mother took her little boy, who was unchurched, to a shelter run by nuns that had become known as a safe place because nothing bad ever seemed to happen there. His first night, while everyone else was praying that God would protect them, this little boy kept his eyes open. After the "amen," he told his mother, "It came up to here on them!" and pointed to his breastbone. When asked what he meant, he said, "The gutter came up to here on them!" A nurse asked, "What are you talking about?" and he told her that he saw men filled with light guarding each corner of the shelter, so tall that they towered above the roof. The shelter was protected by huge warrior angels that only a little boy could see.{4}

Guardian Angels

Do we have guardian angels? The Bible doesn't give a definitive answer on that, although the Lord Jesus did say, "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:10) And Psalm 91:11 promises, "For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."

One day, when my son was a baby, I tripped while I was holding him, and he went flying headlong toward a brick wall. There was nothing I could do to protect him, but I watched as he inexplicably stopped an inch from the wall and fell gently to the carpet. I knew immediately that an angel's hand had been his bumper pad.

These are only a few of the stories of thousands about angels

who protected and rescued people, both Christians and non-Christians. But a nagging question continues to arise: where are the angels when girls are raped, and drunk drivers crash headlong into a car of teenagers, and evil people blow up buildings with hundreds of innocent people in them?

The angels are still there, continuing to minister in pain and death. We usually don't realize the role of angels in the midst of horrible circumstances because their work is unseen and often unfelt.

Behind the question of, "Where are the angels?" is the very difficult problem of why a good God would allow pain and suffering. The book of Job gives us two important insights into the problem of pain: first, when disasters and suffering assail us in the physical realm, there may be something bigger and more important going on in the unseen spiritual realm.{5} Second, God never gives Job an answer to his demand to know the "why": He just says, "I am the sovereign Lord, acting in ways you cannot understand. You just need to trust Me, that I know what I'm doing." The fact that God is in control, that He allows all pain and suffering for a reason, is the great comfort that we need to remember when it seems like the angels have forsaken us. They haven't, because God hasn't.

The Bad Angels

There are good angels, and there are bad angels. All of them were created as holy angels, but about a third of them rebelled against God and fell from their sinless position. Satan, the leader of these demons or unholy angels, is a liar, a murderer, and a thief. (John 10:10) He hates God and he passionately hates God's people. The Bible tells us that he prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). We need to remember that Satan and all the demons are supernaturally brilliant, and Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

It’s this masquerade as a holy angel that is behind the current angel craze in our culture. While there are a number of wonderful Christian books available that relate stories of holy angels helping people, there are many books, publications, and seminars that are filled with demonic deception of the ugliest kind. Because when you start talking to angels, you end up dealing with demons.

The Ugly Angels

The enemy of our souls is using a new twist on an old lie, exploiting the current interest in angels to attract the untaught and the undiscerning. Much of the current angel mania is simply New Age philosophy, which is actually old-fashioned pantheism. Pantheism is the belief that everything—an impersonal God as well as every part of the creation—is one big unity. All is one, God is one, we are God—and New Age philosophy throws reincarnation into the mix as well.

You know you’re around “ugly angels,” or demons masquerading as angels of light and holiness, when you see or hear these terms:

1. Contacting or communing with angels.

There are now books available with titles like *Ask Your Angels*{6} and *100 Ways to Attract Angels*{7}. But the Bible gives neither permission nor precedent for contacting angels. When people start calling on angels, it’s not the holy angels who answer. They’re demons, disguising themselves as good angels to people who don’t know how to tell the difference.

2. Loving our angels, praying to our angels.

Some self-styled “angel experts” instruct their followers to love their angels and call upon them for health, healing, prosperity, and guidance. But angels are God’s servants, and all this attention and emphasis and glory should go to God, not His servants. God says, “I will not share my glory with

another" (Isaiah 42:8). Scripture makes no mention of loving angels—only God, His word, and people. And it never tells us to pray to angels, only to the Lord Himself.

3. Instruction, knowledge, or insight from angels, particularly ones with names.

Some angel teachers are proclaiming that angels are trying very hard to contact us, so they can give us deeper knowledge of the spiritual{8}. Invariably, this "angel knowledge" is a mixture of truth and lies, and never stands up to the absolute truth of Scripture.

There are four angel names that keep popping up in the angel literature: Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael. Michael and Gabriel are the only angels mentioned by name in the Bible. The other two show up in the apocryphal *First Book of Enoch*, which includes a fanciful account of the actions of these four beings. [Note: it has been brought to my attention that there are actually two other named angels in the Bible: Apollyon, the angel of the abyss in Revelation 9:11, and Satan, who is an evil, fallen angel.] Those who report modern day angel teachings are actually channeling information from demons.

4. Special knowledge or teachings from angels.

Naomi Albright distributes teachings about the deep meanings of colors, and numbers and letters of the alphabet which she claims is "knowledge given from above and brought forth in more detail by the High Angelic Master Sheate, Lady Master Cassandra, and Angel Carpelpous, and the Master Angel, One on High."{9} These same beings told Mrs. Albright to stress two main teachings: first, that God accepts all religions, and second, Reincarnation.{10} These two teachings keep showing up in much of the New Age angel literature, which shouldn't be surprising since they are heretical lies that come from the pit of hell, which is where the demons feeding these lies to the teachers are from.

Other angel teachings are that all is a part of God (pantheism); the learner is set apart from others by the "deep" knowledge that the angels give (this is a basic draw to the occult); and that eventually, the one who pursues contact with these angels will be visited by an Ascended Master or a Shining Angel (which is a personal encounter with a demon).

We need to remember that God's angels are not teachers. God's word says they are messengers—that's what "angel" means—and they minister to us. God has revealed to us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), so any hidden knowledge that spirit beings try to impart is by nature occultic and demonic.

5. Human divinity

The message of the ugly angels is that we need to recognize that we are one with the divine, we are divine . . . we are God. In Karen Goldman's *The Angel Book: A Handbook for Aspiring Angels*, she says things like, "Angels don't fall out of the sky; they emerge from within."{11} And, "The whole purpose in life is to know your Angel Self, accept it and be it. In this way we finally experience true oneness."{12}

The following bit of heretical garbage was channeled from a demon posing as an angel named Daephrenocles: "The wondrous light of the Angels, from the elohim to the Archangels to the Devas and Nature Spirits, are all bringing to you the realization that you are magnificent—you are divine now and divine first."{13}

Much of the angel literature refers to "the angel within." But angels are a separate part of the creation. They were created before man as a different kind. They are not within us. The movie "It's a Wonderful Life" notwithstanding, when we hear a bell ring it does not mean that an angel is getting his wings. Nor do good people, especially children, become angels when they die. We remain human beings—not angels, and certainly not

God.

What our culture needs in response to the angel craze is strong discernment built on the foundation of God's word. We need to remember, and share with others, three truths about angels:

1. The ministry of holy angels will never contradict the Bible.

2. The actions of holy angels will always be consistent with the character of Christ.

3. A genuine encounter with a holy angel will glorify God, not the angel. Holy angels never draw attention to themselves. They typically do their work and disappear.

It's very true that many have "entertained angels unaware" (Hebrews 13:2). But we need to make sure we're entertaining the right kind of angels!

Notes

1. Anderson, Joan Wester. *Where Angels Walk* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), pp. 60-62.
2. Malz, Betty. *Angels Watching Over Me* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1986), p. 40-41.
3. Anderson, p. 93-95.
4. Ibid, p. 162-163. 5. Webber, Marilynn Carlson and William D. Webber, *A Rustle of Angels* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), p. 66.
6. Daniel, Alma, Timothy Wyllie, and Andrew Ramer, *Ask Your Angels* (New York: Ballantine, 1992).
7. Sharp, Sally, *100 Ways to Attract Angels* (Minnesota: Trust Publications, 1994).
8. Karyn Martin-Kuri, in an interview with *Body Mind and Spirit* journal, May/June 1993. Also, Albright, Naomi, *Angel Walk* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: Portals Press, 1990).
9. *Paths of Light* newsletter, Angel Walk F.O.L. (Followers of

Light), No. 24, July 1994, p. 6-10.
10. Albright, *Angel Walk*, p. 77-78.
11. Goldman, Karen, *The Angel Book—A Handbook for Aspiring Angels* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1988), p. 20.
12. Ibid, p. 95.
13. *These Celestial Times* newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 1. (Gaithersburg, Maryland), p. 4.

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Is There Really a Hell?

Rick Rood discusses the biblical teaching on hell, as well as the practical effects of this belief for Christians.

This article is also available in Spanish. 

The story has been told of C. S. Lewis listening to a young preacher's sermon on the subject of God's judgment on sin. At the end of his message, the young man said: "If you do not receive Christ as Savior, you will suffer grave eschatalogical ramifications!" After the service, Lewis asked him the question, "Do you mean that a person who doesn't believe in Christ will go to hell?" "Precisely," was his response. "Then say so," Lewis replied. (1)

This story illustrates something that most Christians know, but few articulate: that of all the doctrines of the Christian faith, the one we feel most uncomfortable discussing is the doctrine of eternal punishment or hell. And it is not difficult to understand why this is so. The doctrine of hell is offensive to unbelievers, and contradicts the emphasis on tolerance and on human potential that dominates our times. Who

of us enjoys alienating our friends by speaking of eternal judgment for sin? For many of us, the doctrine of hell is also difficult to reconcile with the the love and grace of God. Furthermore, we are well aware of Christians who have misused the doctrine of hell by using it to manipulate and control other people. In seeking to distance ourselves from the abuse of this doctrine, and to avoid appearing intolerant and uncaring, many of us have eliminated the word "hell" entirely from our vocabulary (making our belief an entirely personal matter).

Recent surveys have revealed some very interesting facts about current attitudes toward hell. A survey conducted by George Gallup in 1990 revealed that just under 60% of Americans believe there is a hell (down over 10% from 1978), though only 4% believe that hell was their own personal destination. A survey in the mid-1980s of American evangelical college and seminary students revealed that only one in ten believed that the first step in influencing unbelievers for Christ should be to warn about hell. 46% of seminary students believed that to emphasize to non-believers that eternal judgment would be a consequence of rejecting Christ was "in poor taste." A survey conducted in 1981 revealed that 50% of theology faculty believe in the existence of hell (61% of Roman Catholics, and 34% of Protestants)! (2)

In spite of the prevailing current attitudes toward hell revealed by these surveys, however, it is still apparent to most Christians that the doctrine of hell is firmly grounded in the teaching of Scripture. All but one of the letters of the Apostle Paul mention the wrath or judgment of God on sin. And of the twelve uses of the word *gehenna* (the strongest word for hell) in the New Testament, eleven come from the lips of Jesus himself! In fact, the Savior taught more about hell than He did about heaven! Of the more than 1850 verses recording the words of Christ, 13% pertain to the topics of judgment and hell. Of the 40 or so parables uttered by Jesus, more than

half relate to God's eternal judgment on sin. Surprisingly, the much beloved "Sermon on the Mount" contains some of Jesus' most straightforward words about hell!

What Does the Bible Teach About Hell?

In his book simply titled "Inferno," Dante Alighieri describes in great detail his imaginary tour through nine levels of hell. Dante's book makes for fascinating reading. But to learn what hell is really like, we must turn to another source: the Bible.

As we begin reading through the Old Testament, we find frequent references to "sheol" (the world of departed spirits) as the abode of all the dead (cf. Deut. 32:22). As we continue reading, we find also that a day will come when the bodies of all who are in sheol will be resurrected: some to "everlasting life" but others to "everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2).

The common belief of godly rabbis during the intertestamental era that sheol was divided into two sections is reflected in the New Testament, which refers to the abode of the righteous as "Paradise" (Lk. 23:43) or "Abraham's bosom" (Lk. 16:22), and the abode of the unrighteous as "Hades" (Lk. 16:23). After Christ's resurrection, it appears that those who resided in Paradise were ushered into the presence of God in heaven where they await the future resurrection of their bodies. But those who are in Hades await a resurrection to a different destination— hell.

The word that is used most frequently in the New Testament for hell is *Gehenna*. Gehenna is a reference to the Valley of Hinnom located on the south side of Jerusalem, which served as the city's "garbage dump" during Jesus' time. The fires that burned here never went out.

As did his contemporaries, Jesus referred to Gehenna as the place where "the fire is not quenched" and where "their worm

does not die" (Mk. 9:48). Whether He implied a literal flame and a literal worm is not of great importance. Jesus also described hell as a place of "outer darkness" (Mt. 22:13). But it is clear that He meant us to understand that hell is a place of continual deterioration and suffering for those who inhabit it! Jesus also referred to those who were cast into hell as being "cast outside" (Mt. 8:12), or as Paul simply puts it "away from the presence of the Lord" (II Thess. 1:9). Hell is a place of exclusion and loss of every blessing that comes from God. Hell is described as a place of "contempt" by the prophet Daniel (Dan. 12:2)—where every person is despised by every other inhabitant. As one writer has put it: "Sinners in hell will have company but no sympathy" (3)

Jesus said hell will be a place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 13:42). The weeping no doubt speaks of terrible remorse and grief. But the gnashing of teeth speaks of intense anger—anger at oneself, anger at Satan, anger at God. Paul speaks of hell's inhabitants as experiencing "wrath and anger … trouble and distress" (Rom. 2:8-9).

The Bible also tells us that in hell not all will be judged alike. Jesus made it clear that there will be degrees of judgment in hell. He said that the one "who knew his master's will and did not … act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few" (Lk. 12:47-48). But though not all will be judged equally, all will be judged with certainty. Exodus 34:7 tells us that though the Lord is "compassionate and gracious, … yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished."

Why Would a Loving God Send People to Hell?

Does the Bible teach that hell is a place of eternal conscious punishment for sin? One alternative proposal is that for many

(if not all) a second opportunity will be given after death to respond to the grace of God. Appeal is usually made to the statement in Peter's first letter that "the gospel … has been preached even to those who are dead" (4:6). William Barclay states that in this passage we find a "glimpse of nothing less than the gospel of a second chance" (Commentary on the Epistles of Peter). Yet, the context makes clear that he is speaking of those to whom the gospel was preached during their lifetime, but who now were deceased! There is no indication at all that a "post-mortem" opportunity to repent exists.

In John 8, Jesus says that for those who "die in their sins" there is no possibility of joining Him in heaven (vv. 21,24). In contrasting the expectation of the believer of being reunited with loved ones in heaven, he says that unbelievers "have no (such) hope" (I Thess. 4:13). These statements are difficult to reconcile with the belief that the deceased are offered a second opportunity after death. Hebrews 9:27 says that "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."

Another proposal, that is gaining a wider acceptance today, is that unbelievers will simply be snuffed out of existence or "annihilated." Support for this belief is often sought in statements throughout Scripture that describe sinners as "perishing" or being "destroyed." The psalmist says, "May the wicked perish before God" (68:2). The same word, however, is used in Isaiah 57:1 to refer to the righteous: "The righteous perish and no one ponders it in his heart." It is clear that in the latter case, the word implies "severe suffering." It could not possibly mean that the righteous are "extinguished." There is, therefore, no reason to believe that the opposite is the case when the word is used to describe the fate of sinners. To "perish" or be "destroyed" means to "suffer ruin," not to be "annihilated."

That the Bible teaches eternal conscious punishment for sin in hell, is the only deduction that can be reached from the fact

that the most emphatic words available to the biblical writers were consistently used to describe hell's endless duration, as well as to describe the duration of heaven, and even the eternal existence of God! Just as Jesus described the destiny of the righteous as "eternal life," so He described the destiny of the unrighteous as "eternal punishment" (Mt. 25:46). Just as John described God as the one who "lives forever and ever" (Rev. 15:7), so He described the fire of hell as lasting "forever and ever" (Rev. 14:11).

Sometimes it is said that the Greek word for eternal (*aionios*) really means "age lasting," implying that at the end of a series of ages God will empty hell of all its inhabitants. Those who hold this interpretation, however, fail to recall that while this present age is finite in duration, it was the common understanding among Jesus' listeners that the "age to come" was eternal!

In reference to the fate of Judas, Jesus said: "It would have been better for him if he had never been born" (Mt. 26:24). If indeed it is as terrible a fate as these words suggest, and if it is eternal in duration, why would a loving God send people to hell? If God is a God of love, why would He consign anyone to an eternity as terrible as the Bible describes the fate of those whose destiny is hell?

Perhaps the biblical doctrine of hell can begin to make more sense to us when we reexamine our understanding of two other teachings of Scripture: the nature of God, and the nature of man and of sin.

One of the wonderful revelations of Scripture is that God is a God of infinite love and grace. Who of us is not refreshed when we read the words of the psalmist: "But Thou, O Lord, art a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth" (86:15)? Yet it is the same God who is also described as the One who "will by no means leave the guilty unpunished" (Ex. 34:7)! The God who loves the sinner is

also the God whose “eyes are too pure to approve evil” and who cannot “look on wickedness with favor” (Hab. 1:13). The psalmist quotes God at one point as saying, “You thought that I was just like you” (50:21). But we are in need of the realization that just as God’s love is far beyond our own, so the purity of his holiness exceeds all our conceptions! When Isaiah was granted a vision of the Lord on his throne, he was shaken by his impression of his holiness (Isa. 6:3)! For sure, God is a God of indescribable love, but He is just as much a God of absolute holiness and righteousness! When we gain a vision of the holiness of God as it is portrayed in the Bible, we begin to understand the reasonableness of the doctrine of hell.

We are also helped when we allow Scripture to more fully inform us in our comprehension of the nature of man and of sin. The emphasis in our generation on the value and dignity of the human person has been a welcome corrective to a past overemphasis on the depravity of man. Yet it is easy for us to lose sight of the fact that though we are indeed created in the image of God and of very special value in His eyes, nonetheless we are also deeply and indelibly stained by sin in every area of our being. The God who knows every thought and motive of every human heart, said that it “is more deceitful than all else, and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9). Jesus himself said that “from within, out of the heart of men, proceed (all manner of evil)” by which we are defiled (Mk. 7:21-23)!

When Ezra learned of the disobedience of the people of Israel in marrying unbelievers, he said, “I tore my garment and my robe, … and sat down appalled” (Ezra 9:3). When the Apostle Paul saw the city of Athens filled with idols, “his spirit was … provoked within him” (Acts 17:16)! Is it possible that we have lost something of the sense of the seriousness of sin that seemed to grip the heart of these two men?

Some have objected that while sin is certainly worthy of

punishment, a “finite” sin is hardly worthy of the “infinite” punishment of hell. But that our rebellion against God should be considered “finite” in nature is not entirely clear.

When we consider that the One against whom we have rebelled is the One who gave us life, who is the source of every good thing that we know in life, and who has extended his love by giving his own Son as payment for our sin, how can we possibly measure the gravity of our sin or the punishment it deserves? When we consider too that there is no indication that those in hell will ever experience a “change of heart” in attitude toward God, perhaps we can see that God’s judgment is entirely just.

The Doctrine of Hell: What Difference Does It Make?

We want to focus on three areas of life that should be impacted by our understanding of the biblical doctrine of hell.

The first is our attitude toward sin … particularly our own. A number of years ago, Dr. Karl Menninger wrote a book entitled *Whatever Happened to Sin?* In it he challenged the popular notion that all of our thoughts and actions can be accounted for by factors beyond our own personal control, that we are rarely responsible for our own conduct. For sure, there are “mitigating” factors in most of our lives that influence our character and conduct to greater or lesser degree. And God is not unaware of these things. “He knows our frame, that we are but dust” (Ps. 103:14). He knows as well that we are born with a sinful nature that is beyond the power of human will to overcome (cf. Rom. 7:14-25). But He also knows that the choice is our own as to whether we approve and condone the fruit of our sinful nature, or whether we turn to Him for grace to hold in check our sinful impulses and to learn to follow his will. In his book *The Screwtape Letters,* C.S. Lewis said that there

are two kinds of people in the world: those who say to God, “Thy will be done,” and those to whom God says, “Thy will be done.” The choice is ours as to which kind of person we will become.

When we realize that we are responsible for what we choose to do about our sin, and that it is more than merely an act that may result in unpleasant consequences for ourselves, but that it is also a disposition of rebellion against God, that requires his holy judgment, we cannot help but become more sensitive to its presence in our lives!

The second result of a biblical understanding of hell is a much greater appreciation for the grace and salvation we have received from God! Our appreciation for the immense value of this gift is greatly enhanced when we fully comprehend the nature of that from which we have been delivered. Our perception of the awesomeness of salvation is determined in large measure by our perception of the awfulness of hell!

Finally, a biblical understanding of hell should move us to include in our proclamation of the gospel a clear warning about the consequence of failing to respond. We need to be more forthright than the preacher whom Charles Spurgeon reported as saying, “If you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be sent to the place which it is not polite to mention.” (4) C.S. Lewis once said: “If Christianity only means one more bit of good advice, then Christianity is of no importance. There has been no lack of good advice for the last four thousand years. A bit more makes no difference.” (5) If there really is a hell, then Christianity is far more than one more bit of good advice!

In his book *Our Guilty Silence*, John Stott recounts how the seventeenth century Jesuit missionaries to China, not wanting to offend the sensitivities of the Chinese, excluded the cross of Christ and other details from their message. Quoting Hugh Trevor- Roper, Stott says, “We do not learn that they made

many lasting converts by the unobjectionable residue of the story." (6)

There is little question that the doctrine of hell has at times been abused. But as one writer has well put it: "May its misuse not result in its disuse" in our efforts to lead people to Christ.

Notes

1. Larry Dixon, *The Other Side of the Good News*, Wheaton: Victor Books, 1992. p. 13

2. Dixon, pp. 10-13; Jerry L. Walls, *Hell: The Logic of Damnation*. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992, pp.2-3.

3. John Blanchard, *Whatever Happened to Hell?* Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1992, p. 146.

4. Quoted in Ajith Fernando, *Crucial Questions About Hell*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991, p. 171.

5. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*. New York: Macmillan Press, 1960, p. 133)

6. John Stott, *Our Guilty Silence*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, nd, p. 45.

Recommended Resources on the Subject of Hell:

Blanchard, John. *Whatever Happened to Hell?* Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1992.

Dixon, Larry. *The Other Side of the Good News*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1992.

Fernando, Ajith. *Crucial Questions About Hell*. Wheaton:

Crossway Books, 1991.

Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. New York: Macmillan Press, 1960.

Morey, Robert A. *Death and the Afterlife*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1984.

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