

Why We Believe

Week 5: Intellectual Problems And Deep Seated Desires

I. What are Intellectual Problems?

- A. Intellectual problems are when a claim or tenant of a philosophic system appears to be in conflict with other known or accepted philosophy.
- B. A desire to have things be different is not an intellectual problem, but is often offered as such.

II. The Supernatural World

A. The Bible claims that there is/are:

- 1. One God
- 2. Angels
- 3. A Devil
- 4. Demons

B. The Devil and demons are:

- 1. Powerful, influential, deceitful
- 2. Able to work miracles
- 3. Weaker than God

C. Is it Rational to believe in the Supernatural?

- 1. The vast majority of people do.
- 2. What sort of evidence would you need?
 - a. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. - Romans 1:20
- 3. The belief in God is based on very strong principles of evidence.
- 4. The belief in most other supernatural beings is based on an argument from authority and eye-witness accounts.
- 5. Most arguments against the supernatural world are based on a lack of investigation and the presence of fraud.
- 6. What About Fraud?
 - a. It is clear from any cursory evaluation of the supernatural that fraud is a major concern.
 - b. This is not unique to the supernatural.
 - c. It is not a reason to abandon the study of supernatural.
 - i. \$100 for example.

III. The Problem of Evil

- A. If God is good, and God is all powerful, and God is all knowing, how could there be evil in the world?
- B. This leads some to say that maybe God is not:
 - 1. Good
 - 2. All powerful
 - 3. All knowing
- C. Answering the Problem of Evil
 - 1. Is God good?

- a. God defines good.
 - b. Are we good?
 - 2. Should we be free of the consequences of sin?
 - 3. Is God omnipotent?
 - a. Don't forget that omnipotent means all powerful.
 - b. All powerful means that choice may be given.
 - 4. Is God omniscient?
 - 5. It is important to understand our role in suffering and God's ultimate provision.
- IV. What is a Miracle?
 - A. What does Webster's say?
 - 1. An event or action that apparently contradicts known scientific laws and is hence thought to be due to supernatural causes, especially an act of God.
 - B. A better definition would be:
 - 1. "A striking and religiously significant intervention of God on the system of natural causes."

Kreeft, Peter, Handbook of Christian Apologetics, Intervarsity Press 1994.
 - C. Can Science Explain the Miracles in the Bible?
 - 1. If a miracle is a contradiction to known science then it would be hard for science to explain it, except to say that it could not explain it.
 - 2. If a miracle is an intervention of God on the natural world, then science could only speak to the probability of the event, not the causality.
 - 3. Some argue that as science advances it will be able to explain more of the miracles in the Bible.
 - a. Norman Geisler refutes this stating, "Motions function in accordance with physical laws but physical laws do not do not produce motions; minds do. In like manner, the origin of a miracle is not the physical and chemical laws of the universe, even though the resulting event will operate in accordance with these natural laws."

Geisler, Norman, Miracles and the Modern Mind, Baker Book House 1992.
 - D. A Man Born Blind
 - 1. John 9 tells the story of a man born blind being healed.
 - 2. In the history of the world only one person who was born blind was healed after 18 months of age.
 - E. Is it Reasonable to Believe in Miracles?
 - 1. It is very difficult to prove a negative statement like "Miracles are not real."
 - 2. Do you believe in God?
 - 3. Is your God impotent?
- V. Prophecy
 - A. To declare the future at the direction of God.
 - 1. The Bible sets a very high standard for prophecy.
 - 2. Deuteronomy 18:22
 - B. Biblical prophecy is specific and verifiable.
 - C. Predicts unlikely events often far in the future.
 - D. Babylon the Great
 - 1. Isaiah 13:19-22 speaks about Babylon.

- a. It states that it will fall, never be rebuilt, and no one will sleep there.
- b. Babylon fell and it has never been rebuilt.
- c. Alexander the Great wanted to rebuild Babylon, but died 3 days after giving the order to do so. (Not one brick was laid).
- d. In the Battle of the Dardanelles (WWII) the British landed at Babylon and planned to sleep there, but marched all night instead because no one was willing to sleep there.
- e. Saddam Hussein built an amusement park near Babylon, not on Babylon.

VI. Jesus

- A. Over a 1,000 year period the Old Testament has nearly 300 prophecies about Jesus
- B. These prophecies are both specific and improbable.
- C. Many are simple impossible for a person to control.

VII. Are there Absolutes?

- A. Some in philosophy feel that this is untenable.
- B. Truth is by nature dogmatic.
 - 1.. Relativity supports rather than undermines this conclusion.
- C. Absolute Power
 - 1. Absolute power may be a matter of perspective but we are not in a position to refute it.
 - 2. An example from physics.
- D. Absolute Knowledge
 - 1. In a finite universe absolute knowledge is only a matter of scale.

VIII. Predestination vs. Freewill

- A. What is predestination?
 - 1. God has foreknowledge of all that will happen; all humans sin and deserve only condemnation, but God has pre-ordained, at the beginning of time, who it is that He will graciously save. We, of course, cannot understand why some are saved and others not. -John Calvin
- B. What is free will?
- C. What does the Bible say? (Romans 9:8-24)
 - 1. The Bible uses the word for predestination or election 219 times in the New Testament.
 - 2. It never uses free will.

IX. The Trinity

- A. The Bible claims that God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are God.
- B. The Bible also claims that there is one God.
- C. We understand this apparent contradiction with the concept of the Trinity.
- D. Many people object to the Trinity on the basis of it not making sense to them or because it is not logical.
 - 1. Does everything have to make sense to everyone?
 - 2. Do we understand the world around us?
 - 3. Is logic the best way to understand the world around us?