

Answers for Chris Lesson 7

Lane Cohee
Spring 2014

Answers for Chris

Course Overview

- ▶ Lesson 1 - Chris' World – Values, Meaning and Truth in Our Culture
- ▶ Lesson 2 - Questions About God, Suffering and Pain
- ▶ Lesson 3 - Questions About Christian Exclusivity, Judgment and Hell
- ▶ Lesson 4 - Questions About Genocide and Slavery in the Bible
- ▶ Lesson 5 - Questions About Sexism and Homosexuality in the Bible
- ▶ Lesson 6 - Questions About the Bible and Science
- ▶ Lesson 7 - Questions About the Bible, Superstition, and Mythology
- ▶ Lesson 8 - Questions About the Message and the Messenger

The Bible, Superstition, and Spirits

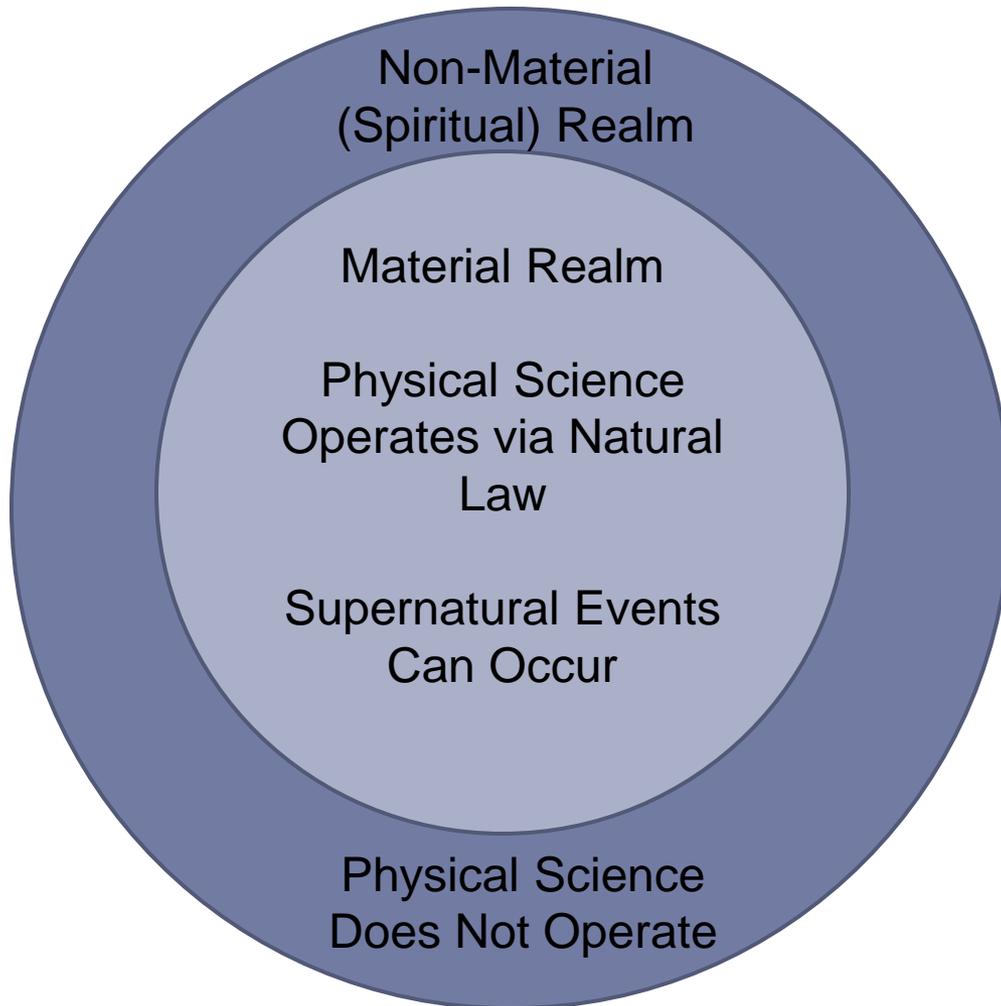


- ▶ In the Bible, Jesus exorcised demons. Isn't this just superstition from a primitive age? Are we really supposed to believe in demons and ghosts and spirits today?

Agreements and Differences

- ▶ We agree that there are many superstitions such as “good luck charms” and “omens” that are frivolous and nonsensical
- ▶ We agree that there are religious sects that falsely sensationalize “casting out demons” and performing supernatural “miracles”
- ▶ We do not agree that any belief in the supernatural automatically equates to superstition
 - ▶ This is driven by materialistic/naturalistic bias
- ▶ We believe powers of good and evil exist and operate inside and outside the spiritual (non-material) realm

Historic View of the Natural and Supernatural



- ▶ Spiritual beings inhabit the spiritual (non-material) realm
- ▶ Natural law normatively operates in the material (physical) realm
- ▶ Spiritual beings are capable of supernaturally influencing the material realm outside normal operation of natural law

Modern View of the Natural and Supernatural



- ▶ Many people deny supernaturalism *ipso facto* based on their assumption that materialism is true
 - ▶ This is simply concluding the premise
- ▶ This is an assumption rooted in philosophy, not nature or science

Materialism can become a self-fulfilling prophecy *when the material world is all we train and allow ourselves to see*

What the Bible Teaches About Angels and Demons

- ▶ Angels and demons are spiritual beings created to do the bidding of their respective masters
 - ▶ Although powerful, they do not share God's incommunicable (aka "omni") attributes
- ▶ Angels are messengers and ministers of God
 - ▶ Perpetually attending the throne of God (Eze 1-2, Rev 4-5)
 - ▶ Doing God's will on earth (Gen 3:22-24, 2 Ki 6)
 - ▶ Ministering to others (Mt 4:11)
 - ▶ Delivering a message from God (Josh 5:13-15, Lk 5:1-38)
- ▶ Satan (adversary) is "angel of light" and "ruler of this world" opposing God's plan/people through power, lies, murder, and deceit
 - ▶ In the gospels, demons do Satan's bidding through opposing Christ and conducting possession, oppression, physical harm and property damage (Luke 8: 26-36)
 - ▶ Although powerful, they do not overpower or inhabit those having God's Spirit

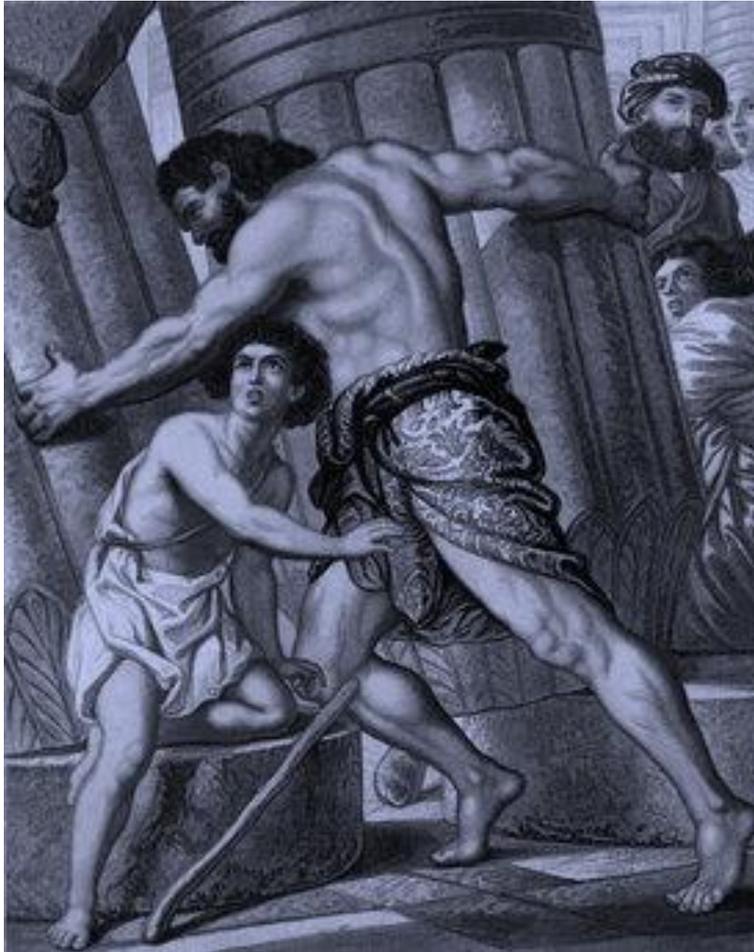
Observations and Questions About the Supernatural

- ▶ Skeptics often like to lump “ghosts, goblins, witches, and spirits as if the Bible is talking about Halloween
 - ▶ More precision is needed about what the Bible teaches
- ▶ Do you believe good and evil are explainable solely through natural behavior?
 - ▶ If so, why do themes of light and darkness e.g., music and archetype seem to impact us at a “core” level?
- ▶ In our increasingly advanced technological society why do you think there is so much interest and obsession with supernatural themes?

Observations and Questions About Demonic Influence

- ▶ We would agree that understanding of human behavior was more elementary in ancient times.
 - ▶ Do you believe they attributed every mental disease to demon possession? (e.g., 1 Sa 21: 12-14)
- ▶ Demonic activity appears to be amplified during the gospel ministry of Christ. Why?
- ▶ In our increasingly advanced technological society
 - ▶ why do we see a growing number of disorders and increasing behavior like cutting and self-harm, random deadly violence, sexual predators, and even cannibalism?
 - ▶ do you believe psychological characterization of a disorder means it is limited solely to natural causes?

The Bible, Mythology and Miracles



- ▶ Samson purportedly killed 1000 men with a jawbone and derived his strength from the length of his hair. Aren't these Bible stories just mythology from primitive times?

Mythology Defined

- ▶ Historically, mythology is a narrative or body of stories attempting to explain the origins and fundamental values of a given culture and “higher meanings” such as the nature of the universe and humanity.
- ▶ Modern connotations of mythology usually translate primitive and outdated fantasy stories
 - ▶ When associated with Christianity, this criticism sometimes ties to accuracy of historical events
 - ▶ However it is usually connected to supernatural events like divine inspiration and miracles

Biblical Historical Accuracy

- ▶ While there are ongoing timeline debates about the Jewish exodus and Canaan occupation (e.g., Ai), the Bible has held up very well against prior historical criticism e.g.,
 - ▶ 19th century assumptions about Mosaic writing and law codes (aka JEDP or Documentary Hypothesis) disproven in 1970s
 - ▶ 19th/ 20th century statements of Hittite, Sargon (Assyrian king), and Belshazzar non-existence disproven in 20th century
 - ▶ Pre -21st century beliefs that patriarchal systems did not exist in Abraham's times has been invalidated
 - ▶ Dating of Daniel's prophecy validated with findings of the DSS
 - ▶ Early (1st century) dating of gospel authorship validated
- ▶ Evidential debates can quickly devolve into “my facts and figures vs. yours” but history indicates skeptics should keep an open mind about Biblical historical accuracy

Samson and Mythology

- ▶ Samson's Nazirite vow was a statement of dedication to God (Jdg 13:5)
- ▶ In the "meta-narrative," Samson is commissioned to deliver Israel from Philistia
- ▶ In the "personal-narrative," Samson is a testimony of the downfall of a flawed man consumed by passions and lusts...and the ability to still be redeemed
- ▶ Although one could infer his strength was tied to his hair-length, more appropriate is his downfall allowed by God due to his relentless sensuality and pride (Jdg 16:17)
- ▶ In the Bible, at least 15 instances of one thousand can be taken as "a symbol of multitude"
- ▶ If Samson's story is a myth, it is a myth that should be learned by every young man

This is just one example of
analyzing the Biblical message with
Chris

Observations on Miracles

- ▶ Biblical miracles have a specific purpose – to authenticate God’s message and messengers
 - ▶ Jn 10:38, Jn 20:30-31, Ro 15:17-19, 2 Co 12:12
 - ▶ If the Christian view of the world is true, how else would God authenticate himself?
- ▶ While God certainly can and may do miracles today, we should “test the spirits” against their ultimate purpose
 - ▶ The miracles performed by Christ and Apostles were not refuted by eyewitnesses in their day – and they easily could have been
 - ▶ It is unclear how many “modern miracles” can stand up against similar scrutiny

The Miracle That Matters Most

- ▶ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. (1 Co 15:3-8)
 - ▶ Were they all lying?
 - ▶ Were they all deceived?
 - ▶ Would it have been easily discredited?
 - ▶ Would they all be willing to die for it?