

Systematic Theology 1 (TH3)

Doctrines of the Supernatural

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1. Introduction to Systematic Theology
2. Doctrine of the Word of God
3. Doctrine of God
4. Doctrines of Creation and Providence
5. Doctrines of the “Supernatural” –
Miracles, Prayer, Angels and Demons
6. Doctrine of Christ
7. Doctrine of the Holy Spirit; Final Exam

Miracles

- Wayne Grudem's definition: *“A miracle is a less common kind of God's activity in which he arouses people's awe and wonder and bears witness to himself.”*
- Ross Arnold's definition: *“An event or occurrence in which God acts, or allows his servants to act, with intentionality in a way not limited by the usual boundaries of natural law which He has put in place.”*

Miracles

- God created the natural law/natural order of things, and he did so for our protection.
- God does not permit us to subvert natural law by our own authority, by appealing to spiritual forces outside ourselves that are not God.
- But God is compassionate towards our limitations, knowing there are times we feel great need but are unable to address those needs under the restrictions of natural law.
- At such times God – and only God – can set aside his own natural law to help us by miraculous means.

The Reasons for Miracles

- To demonstrate God's power and authority, even over the natural order that he put in place.
 - To give evidence of God's presence and activity.
 - To help those who are in need, especially if they are beyond help by natural means.
 - To demonstrate the truth of the Gospel message.
- *Since all of these needs still exist today, there is no reason to suppose God does not still do miracles today.*

Miracles

- There are false miracles – demonstrations of power that come from demonic sources of magic, divination, spiritism, etc.
- Answered prayer is one of the most common ways in which people experience miracles – God’s setting aside of his natural law.
- Miracles occur at different speeds.

“...but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” *Isaiah 40:31*
- There are right reasons and wrong reasons for Christians to seek miracles.

Prayer

- Prayer is personal communication with God, and it clearly implies a relationship. (Talking WITH God, not TO God)
- 78% of Americans pray at least once a week.
- 57% of Americans pray every day.
- 20% of professed atheists or agnostics confess to praying daily!
- On any day, more people will pray than will go to work, exercise, or have sex.

Prayer

- **Aiteo** means to officially or formally request or demand, usually for oneself. (sometimes negative)
- **Deomai** means to request something to address a need or lack, but to do so courteously and even warmly.
- **Erotao** means an intimate or personal request.
- Most common Greek word for prayer in the New Testament is **proseuchomai** – which **means to draw near to; to seek the presence and participation of; to earnestly desire partnership with God in accomplishing a need.**

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer (proseuchomai) and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

Angels

- Angels are immortal spiritual beings without material bodies but with personal intellect, emotions and will, created by God to serve him.
- *“An angel is a spiritual creature created by God without a body, for the service of Christendom and the Church.”* Martin Luther

Angelic Summary

- Angels really do exist. (Psalm 148:1-2)
- Angels are here, now, present with us. (Psalm 34:7)
- Angels are not people's pets. They are not cute or cuddly. They are formidable; the first impression they usually give when appearing to people is terrifying. (Luke 2:9-10)
- Angels are spirits, without physical form, though they can sometimes appear in physical form if God desires it. Angels often appear in disguise. (Hebrews 1:7; 13:2)
- Angels are aware of you, even if you are not aware of them. (Luke 15:10; 1 Corinthians 4:9)
- Angels really do watch over and protect people. (Psalm 91:11-12; Matthew 18:10)
- There are also evil fallen angels, which we call demons or devils. (Isaiah 14:12-15; Rev. 12:3-9; Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4)
- A great war is ongoing between angels and demons, and we exist on part of the battlefield. (Matthew 13:36-50)

Angels

Angels serve four primary roles:

1. God's attendants, servants and ministers. (*Ps. 104:4*)
2. God's messengers. (*To Abram & Sarai, Jacob, Joseph & Mary, the shepherds, etc.*)
3. God's warriors. (*Rev. 12:3-9*)
4. God's assistants in protecting and caring for human needs. (*Ps. 91:11-12; Hebrews 1:14*)

Demons

- Demons are fallen angels who, out of pride and under the leadership of Satan, rebelled against God, were cast out of heaven, and now work against God's people until the final consummation.
- Demons represented themselves as gods both in ancient times and today – which is why worship of false gods has so often been so destructive. (*Deut. 32:16-17; Ps. 106:35-37*)
- This is NOT dualism – Satan is a created being and NOT God's equal. The demons are weakened by their sin and so are less powerful than angels.