

Paranormal ABCs: The Biblical View of the Supernatural for Beginners

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If paranormal beings ever visited earth, they would probably conclude that The First Church of the Paranormal was the new national religion. I began counting the paranormal “reality” TV shows available for streaming and gave up at 132. This doesn’t even include thousands of online podcasts and channels.

The consensus of most of these is that the world is a confusing conglomeration of ghosts, psychics, skinwalkers, spirit guides, sorcery, sasquatches, portals, abductions, and other stranger things that go bump in the night.

On a recent podcast, a popular paranormal researcher was complaining about the difficulty of his work. I’ll summarize:

“I often find it very hard to understand most of what I study. It’s confusing. You’ve got Bigfoot coming out of UFOs. Ghosts who don’t know why they’re here. Skinwalkers disappearing through portals. Mothmen, Dogmen. Wolfmen. There’s no rhyme or reason...”

One of my earliest memories is of my grandfather taking me to a very fascinating but confusing place. I saw horses running in a circle. A woman was swinging way up at the ceiling. An elephant was standing up on two legs. People were running around in silly suits. Yes, of course it was a circus, but my four-year-old brain had trouble interpreting it all. Looking back with my “informed” adult view it makes sense: The random, confusing events were orchestrated for a single purpose—to entertain people (and make a profit).

From my perspective, the difficulty in understanding today’s “paranormal circus” arises when biblical truths are thrown together with

folklore or popular paranormal memes. The chaos begins to make sense when we realize that a single strategy may be involved in staging paranormal phenomena.¹ And most important, this strategy is not for entertainment but for deception.

The biblical description of the supernatural is not overly simplistic, but at least it's straightforward and coherent.² Old and New Testament scriptures provide clues about the unseen world that give us a working knowledge of how to discern the supernatural and guard ourselves against its malevolent side. I encourage the reader to use the following as a starting point for studying more about spiritual warfare and how it is a crucial part of understanding reality...

A. There is an unseen world beyond the one we are in.

We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

B. There are beings in the unseen world, including God and other spiritual beings He has created.

Before the creation of our world, God created spiritual beings to serve as angels and possibly in other roles.

C. Some of these beings now oppose God.

These spiritual beings used their free wills to rebel against God and establish their own rule. They and their leader Lucifer (now Satan) were

¹ And to be very clear—not all strange events are supernatural. There are many misidentifications, hoaxes, and delusions out there! We must see demons behind every bush. Nonetheless, supernatural things can happen, as attested both experientially and biblically.

² I'll use the terms *paranormal* and *supernatural* interchangeably here. See *God and the Paranormal* for an in-depth discussion.

defeated by the sacrifice of Jesus but are still awaiting their final judgment and sentencing.

D. The evil beings from the unseen world can interact with us.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12).

E. Satan and his followers will oppose God, his truth, and his children at any and every opportunity.

With time limited and future judgment sure, Satan and his demons will do whatever it takes to lead us away from God's Word and reality. Satan has no sense of honor or fair play. As God permits, he will use any ploy that works for him. If one's weakness is fame and fortune, he will take advantage of it. If one's obsession is the paranormal, he will play it to the fullest.

F. Satan's primary weapon is deception.

Jesus said of Satan...

He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44, ESV).

According to Jesus then, we should expect interactions from the Enemy to be deceptive. He will attempt to disguise reality (God's truth) in whatever way possible. Satan will "custom-design" his lies to an individual's weaknesses and presuppositions. Therefore, we might expect a confusing array of deceptive experiences.

G. Other than the unseen world described in God’s Word, there are no other realities (realms, dimensions, universes, portals, beings).

I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me
there is no other God (Isaiah 45:5).

For although there may be so-called gods in heaven
or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and
many “lords”—yet for us there is one God, the
Father, from whom are all things and for whom we
exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are
all things and through whom we exist (1 Corinthians
8:5-6).

What appears to be a random circus of events, is likely a well-planned effort...

This is crucial in understanding paranormal occurrences. Most in our culture have a compartmentalized view of reality. Even many Christians who believe in a real Heaven also hold vague ideas about other realms and beings. They often have fuzzy beliefs about ghosts, magic, psychic events, or other paranormal phenomena mixed in with biblical realities. *However, if a phenomenon is truly supernatural it will necessarily be the biblical supernatural and nothing else.*

I. Believers have a strong defense against the enemy.

When we place our faith in Jesus to forgive our sins, the Spirit of God takes up residence within us. We now have the ability to “put on the armor of God” in order to *stand* against the devil (Ephesians 6). This metaphorically armor includes faith, righteousness, and the truth of the gospel. We are instructed...

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

This assumes that we have studied God's Word and are aware of the devil's ways. We are trained to recognize his deceptions and respond quickly. At that point, we refuse to follow his scheming and depend on God for the victory.

A balanced view of spiritual warfare is crucial in today's world. Satan is temporarily the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) and controls the world system in general. His societies, governments, media, and educational strongholds feed us and our children a steady diet of deceptions, including paranormal experience if that fits his strategy.

Today more than ever, Christians must practice the spiritual disciplines commanded in Scripture. We must be watchful and prepared. This includes righteousness, obedience to God, prayer, and the diligent study of the Bible (the whole Bible). A clear, balanced knowledge of the seen and unseen worlds is one of many results of such a study.