



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

How to Understand and Interpret the Bible (Hermeneutics)

Lesson #7

Six Principles of Biblical Interpretation

Principle Two: The Only Worldview of Scripture Is the Supernatural

A person cannot understand the Bible correctly if he does not believe there is a spirit world beyond what we can see with our eyes and hear with our ears. The Bible says that God Himself is spirit, and that there are spiritual beings, both good and evil. These spirit beings are generally called angels (both good and evil), and the evil angels are also called demons or devils. God is the Creator and Preserver of all created things. He can at any time do things that are beyond human understanding and beyond all scientific explanation.

The Bible is full of supernatural miracles that should not be explained away but be accepted as events and actions that really took place in time and space. Since God is omniscient (all-knowing), God knows the future perfectly and so He can therefore prophesy any future event at any time He chooses to do so. He also can control events in the world in such a way as to make the events that have been prophesied happen exactly as He foretold in His Word.

- **“I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure’”** (Isaiah 46:9-90).

Today, however, there are many so-called Bible “scholars” who try to interpret the Bible without sharing this view of the supernatural. Therefore, they try to explain miracles and prophecies in ways that deny the supernatural. This, of course, leads to a rejection of many Bible teachings and events, as well as a rejection of the verbal (word-for-word) inspiration of the Bible.

The Bible teaches that God is in control of everything in His creation and that He is working all things together for good to those who believe in Him and love Him, that is, for the good the Holy Christian Church. We read in:

- **“And He (God) put all things under His (Christ’s) feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body.”** Ephesians 1:22-23
- **“We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”** Romans 8:28

Many of the Psalms talk about God’s rule over all nations, for example Psalms 2, 33, and 46. When the apostle Paul addressed the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13), he showed them God’s control of their history and God’s fulfillment of His ancient prophecies. God has directed history in the past, and He still controls all things in the present in accordance with His purposes.

God has chosen to work through miracles at certain times in history more than at other times. God did many miracles through Moses and Joshua when He led the children of Israel from their slavery in Egypt to the promised land and gave the Israelites victory over the heathen Canaanites in Palestine. God did mighty miracles in the days of His prophets Elijah and Elisha in order to show that He is the only true God. And the ministry of Jesus and His apostles is filled with miracles to show the world that Jesus is true God and that His apostles were sent by Him to preach the Gospel.

On Pentecost Peter addressed a large crowd in Jerusalem and told them:

- **“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know”** (Acts 2:22).

Even Jesus’ enemies had to admit that His apostles were doing miracles in His name. After Peter and John had healed a crippled man, the Jewish leaders met together and said: **“What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it”** (Acts 4:16).

If miracles are impossible and did not happen, we would not be able to believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, or that He was born without sin, or that He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. And if He did not do those things, then we have no reason to believe that He will come again as the Judge of the living and the dead or that He will raise the dead on the Last Day. The apostle Paul tells us what would be true if miracles were impossible:

- **“If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty”** (1 Corinthians 15:13-14)
- **“If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished”** (1 Corinthians 15:17-18).

Although God usually chooses to work through natural means, this does not mean that the miracles described in the Bible did not really take place. Without supernatural miracles we would not exist and we would have no salvation. No one can understand the Bible correctly if he cannot accept the supernatural.

Questions

1. What is meant by the supernatural as opposed to the natural?
2. What does fulfilled prophecy teach us about God?
3. List ten miracles described in the Bible.
4. During what three periods in history did God accomplish many things through miracles?
5. Why did Jesus do so many miracles?
6. Why did God give Jesus’ apostles the power to do miracles?
7. What parts of the Apostles’ Creed would have to be omitted if miracles are impossible?
8. How would this change to the Apostles’ Creed affect our Christian faith?