

Natural or Supernatural?

Which Defines Your Life, the Natural or the Supernatural?

I had a dream recently. Actually I had two. In each dream there was someone who I had never seen before and certainly did not know. They both played key parts in the respective dreams. I can chock them up to being created in my mind by powers far more powerful than AI. You have dreams and so do I that are brilliant, creating characters and situations that when awake we could never conjure. Yet there they are, plotlines and events that we cannot conceive of developing as normal human beings. The Bible makes it clear that there have been dreams, put in place in the minds of a wide range of people by God Himself or to put it another, way, planted supernaturally. There are those who do not believe the supernatural exists, that all we have is what we can see or hear or touch, what is verifiable by our senses and is in the sense of philosophy, natural. So what do you think of the supernatural, what is beyond molecules and energy and the rules of nature? Do you think it exists? Jesus certainly did and we will now turn to one of the most beautiful portions of the Bible that speak of what we commonly refer to as the supernatural.

We have noted the great pride of Nicodemus, the Pharisee who came to Jesus. He expressed great confusion when Jesus told him he needed to be “born again” or “begotten from above” if he was ever to see the Kingdom of God. This certainly was not what Nicodemus expected to hear. **“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.** (John 3: 9 NIV) Many have had this same reaction to any talk of the supernatural. C.S. Lewis, perhaps the greatest Christian writer of the last one hundred years, as a young scholar did not believe there was anything supernatural, that any talk of it was fantasy. But over time, he came to realize that it was impossible to have a universe without the supernatural, that God clearly exists and it is foolish to think otherwise. As has been mentioned before, something has to be eternal, something has to have always existed. It is either God, or matter and energy. We have not a sliver of evidence that something can come out of nothing. Without building blocks, either atoms or something smaller, nothing is and nothing can be, unless it starts with the supernatural, with God. There has not been an experiment ever conducted that indicates that without energy or matter, matter or energy can come into existence. Now here is where it becomes quite interesting. We have the dilemma that life exists. How did it come about? Science has never shown, and I daresay never will, that non-life can, without intelligent intervention, produce life. Life does not just spring out of rocks or water or air when there is no life to generate it. It is a myth of many who consider themselves scientists, one of more fantastical proportions than Greek or Egyptian mythology, of the tooth fairy or of the man on the moon that anything, let alone life, can be birthed by nothing. Many though would rather live in a fantasy world than come to grips with the reality that God exists because they want no God telling them how to live. Our big idea for today is most profound. Fall in love with the Son of Man.

As was mentioned last time, Jesus insisted on a supernatural transformation being needed if Nicodemus was to live a supernatural life. **Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”** (John 3: 5-8 NIV) The Spirit has the ability to do something supernaturally that can be observed naturally and that is critical to grasp and a magnificent declaration Jesus made. It is true that you may not understand how a supernatural work in you can transpire but just because you don’t understand it doesn’t mean it can’t and doesn’t happen. Jesus uses a play on words to make this point. Spirit and wind are the same Greek word. They are alike in this way. You may not grasp what is going on with either but in the case of the wind, you can tell something is happening because it makes a sound that is registered in the brain. Or you feel it on your face. Or you see dust or papers blowing around. The supernatural work of God is observable even if you do not understand how it happens. C. S. Lewis could have told you that he knew the Spirit of God was real because of what He did in Lewis. It was measurable and observable. Millions of families have been transformed because of the work of God in one person or several in the family. Enemies have become friends because of the working of the Spirit of God. I remember reading that Lewis reported that before the Spirit of God started transforming him, he was full of pride and despised those not as smart or as cultured as him. But when He was begotten from above. He began to love and respect those who before he would have mocked. Supernatural transformation is real and the effect is tangible, even if it is not understood.

When Nicodemus questioned the validity of what Jesus was insisting by stating, “How can this be?”, Jesus made it clear that Nicodemus was truly in the dark about reality and the supernatural working of God. **I tell you the truth, we**

speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven — the Son of Man. (John 3: 11-13 NIV) Notice. Jesus told Nicodemus that He had come out of heaven and has gone into heaven. That certainly was a quite disturbing statement to make. Either Jesus was psychologically unstable, He was making something up or it was so. There is no evidence in anything Jesus said or did that would indicate He was psychotic. And where can you find an example of Jesus telling blatant lies? It just isn't there. The third option, that Jesus was telling the truth that He is God, is the most rational and viable of the three possibilities. Now let us see what Jesus is saying. The Greek text indicates that Jesus descended from heaven and that is in the aorist tense which means it happened at some time in the past, but it doesn't last forever. In contrast the perfect tense is used to tell us Jesus has gone into heaven. This tells us that Jesus going to heaven happened at a point in time in history but the effect of it lasts forever. He does not leave heaven. He does not come to us but we, if we have been begotten from above go to Him.

Both of these events are described in the Bible. When Jesus was conceived, He became earthly, not heavenly. It was an act of supreme courage for Jesus, the Son of God, to leave heaven and face us, not as supernatural but as human as we are. One of the great mistakes, a terrible mistake many make who read the Bible is this. They see Jesus speaking of Himself as the Son of Man as a somehow lesser title than Son of God. It was not. First, remember that the term Son of Man is used in Daniel as a technical term for God. **"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.** (Daniel 7: 13-14 NIV) Let's be clear about this. The Son of Man is God and no one else. But before He came and was born of an earthy mother, He was the Son of God.

The grander and more noble title of the two is Son of Man over Son of God. That is where His enormous strength and love and even faith is revealed, is manifested. Let me ask an important question. Which do you think was easier for our Lord? To stay in heaven as Son of God and be revered for His greatness or leave His throne and be born in a manger, becoming Son of Man, rejected, hated, beaten and crucified? I dare say, and maybe you agree with me, the far easier decision would have been to stay as Son of God within the sanctity of heaven's protection and never venture into the violent hatred the Son of Man would face. Who would you respect more, the father who sits on shore watching his two young children drown in the roaring surf or the one who dives in and plows through the raging waves, risking his life to save them. The Son of Man is God courageous, God self-sacrificing, God loving to the outer regions of love. Of course Jesus was Son of God when He walked among us but far nobler and courageous is that He became Son of Man when Mary gave birth to Him. Who do you honor more? The Son of God watching from heaven as His people die of Sin or the Son of Man sitting with a Samaritan woman and telling her the way of eternal life, the Son of Man promising the thief on the cross that today he would be in paradise, the Son of Man healing the man born blind on the Sabbath day? It is the difference between the two Jews who passed by on the opposite side of the road and the good Samaritan who risked his life to rescue the man beaten by thieves. If I had to choose which title of Jesus reflects the supernatural nature of our Lord more, I would say it is the Son of Man.

When Jesus told various ones that He was the Son of Man, He was letting them in on a secret. Not that He was God...the miracles did that. He was sharing with them that He was and is the Savior of the world and that is the greatest news He could have ever provided. Too many treat the Son of Man title as the lesser of the two. Critics wonder why He didn't tell people more often He was the Son of God. The answer is quite simple. Son of God became obvious to those who paid attention. Son of Man was new information that no one knew was possible. God Himself had come to save us from our sin. The realization that there is a God was world-wide. The knowledge that He is Savior was something only the greatest and wisest of Bible scholars had in mind. You do not need the Son of God far off in some unreachable heaven. You need the Son of Man, Savior who brings you the forgiveness of sin and eternal life. You need Son of Man who has been tempted in every way as you have, but without sin. You need Son of Man who has suffered death and is now alive. The Big Idea is tough to grasp if you have no love of God but for those who believe in heaven and God and the destructive force of Sin, it is the most natural of all determinations. Fall in love with the Son of Man. Live this week with great joy that in all you face, you have a Savior who has come to save you forever.