

Dr. Craig Keener, Matthew, Lecture 3, Miracles Part 2 and Exorcism

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Matthew. This is session 3, Miracles, Part 2 and Exorcism.

We've been talking about some of God's miracles that appear in the Gospels and they also appear today just as signs of God's faithfulness and God's love for us.

Now, I talked about Papa Besweswe and his wife, Julienne, and now I'm moving to another account and this one is from someone named Antoinette Malombe. Antoinette Malombe, I'd heard her story before but I hadn't heard it directly from her. So, when we visited Congo, I was able to interview her and she told me the story of her daughter.

One of her daughters was two years old. She cried out that she was bitten by a snake and by the time her mother got to her, she found her not breathing. And so, no medical help being available in the village, she strapped the child to her back and ran to a nearby village where a family friend, Koko Ngomo Moise, was doing ministry as an evangelist.

And Koko Moise prayed for the child, Therese, and Therese started breathing again. And the next day she was fine. So, I asked Madame Jacques, as she's locally known, how long was it before she started breathing again? How long was it that she wasn't breathing? She had to stop and think to get from one place to another, from this one village to the other.

She said, about three hours. Now, the interesting thing about this story is that Therese had no brain damage and she finished seminary in Cameroon and now she's doing ministry in Congo, back in Congo where she's from. And this is significant.

This wasn't the most dramatic account, but it was the one that impacted me most directly and opened me up more to the other accounts because Therese is my wife's sister, and Madame Jacques, Antoinette Molambe, is my wife's mother. So, it was a story from within the family. We also had another account of a raising from Sarah Spear, who's a Canadian nurse in Congo.

Now, besides raisings, and of course, if I were traveling more I could get a lot more of these. I have a lot more of them in the book and elsewhere. But moving on to the subject of nature miracles, because again, nature miracles are not something that would be considered psychosomatic.

Well, there are a number of these reported throughout history. We have them reported in 17th century Sri Lanka with a Roman Catholic priest. We have them in the 1800s with the Lutheran pastor that we mentioned before, Pastor Blumhart.

And we also have them reported in the 20th century. In fact, some reports from Indonesia of walking on water and so on come from earlier revivals as well, but especially in the revival of the 1960s. There were massive reports of miracles, and there was a previously doubtful Western researcher.

It wasn't that he didn't believe in miracles, but he certainly didn't believe the claims he was hearing from the Indonesian revival. Kurt Koch went to Indonesia himself and interviewed witnesses. And not only did he interview witnesses, but he saw a number of blind eyes opened and he saw water turned into wine.

Some of his detractors were people who came to Indonesia after the revival was actually over. But in the midst of the revival, he saw some of these things take place. And there are a number of other reports from Indonesia, including walking on water from a couple of eyewitnesses that I interviewed.

Now, we have other reports. Donna Urakua gave me a report from Papua New Guinea. But I'm going to go on to this report from Watchman Ni.

Now, actually, in China, there are other people who were much better known for miracles. One of them was particularly known for this. His name was John Sung.

But Watchman Ni was from the same generation, and Watchman Ni also had an account of a nature miracle. He and some of his friends were out doing evangelism in a village. And some of the people from the village were saying to members of the team, why should we believe in your God? You know, our God in this village has kept it from raining at this festival for well over 200 years.

Whenever the priests schedule the festival, it never rains. I don't know if it was dry season or what. But in any case, one of the members of the evangelistic team, he was off by himself, and he said to the crowd, this year, it's going to rain on that day.

And they laughed at him. He came back and told the rest of the team, and they said, you shouldn't have done that. Because now if it doesn't rain on that day, no one is going to listen to us.

No one was listening to them anyway. So, they just began to pray. On the scheduled day of the festival, the sun was out, looked like a normal day, a normal sunrise.

And as they were eating rice for their beginning meal of the day, suddenly they heard raindrops starting to fall on the roof. And pretty soon, it was the most torrential

downpour that they had in that village for quite a number of years. The priests said, oh, we made a mistake.

We need to reschedule the festival. The date for which they rescheduled the festival, this time the Christians said it was going to rain on that day too. And sure enough, on that day, it poured down rain.

The priests were swept off their feet by the water rushing through the streets. The statue of their God was broken. And many people turned to faith in Christ in that village.

This account is from a close friend of mine, very, very close friend of mine. Dr. Emanuel Etopson did his PhD in Hebrew Bible at Hebrew Union College. He's also an ECHWA minister.

Evangelical Church of West Africa. His father was planting churches in an unchurched region of Nigeria when Emanuel was a child. Emanuel had a lot of stories, but one of the stories he told in one of these villages, his father, this was around 1975, was just trying to get their home ready.

They just moved in. They didn't have a roof on the home yet. And rainy season had very clearly arrived.

You could see from the sky, you know, it's going to rain soon. People were making fun of him, saying everything you had was going to be ruined because it was going to take four more days to get a roof on his house. So, Anana Etop, Emanuel's father, just got angry.

He said it's not going to rain one drop of rain on this village until I have a roof on my house. Well, they laughed and they left. He fell on his face before God and he said, Oh God, what did I just do? But for the next four days, it didn't rain a single drop in that village, even though it was raining all around that village.

And for that local community that knew what the rainy season was supposed to look like, this was so dramatic that at the end of those four days, there was only one person in that community who had not become a Christian. To this day, they still talk about that as the precipitating event that brought them to become a Christian village. Scholars who claim that eyewitnesses could not report experiences such as these simply reveal their own very limited exposure to the world.

Now, some will grant that these things happen, but they'll deny that they're miracles because, they argue, true miracles can't happen. Usually, they're starting from a non-theistic, often an atheistic, starting point. And this problem goes back to David Hume.

People just kind of take for granted that miracles don't happen in many circles because they say David Hume proved that, which you might think until you go back and read his essay. His basic argument is that miracles are not part of human experience, which is not consistent with what we've been seeing. They may not happen every day in our lives, or we wouldn't call them miracles.

We think they were just the natural course of nature. But in any case, David Hume regarded miracles as violations of natural law, as if God would be breaking some law to do them, even though God was the one who would have established these laws. Now, he did so in contradiction to earlier thinkers.

He was the first one, apparently, to define miracles that way, although he took a lot of his teaching from the deists regarding miracles. A lot of his essay on miracles is from that. Most early Enlightenment scientists were Christians.

Isaac Newton, on whom he particularly would have depended for his idea of natural law, Isaac Newton believed in miracles, particularly the miracles in the Bible, and so did the early Newtonians. So, this wasn't a matter of science. This was a matter of the philosophy of science.

This was something that came from David Hume. The way that Hume argued was this. Miracles violate natural law.

Natural law cannot be violated. Therefore, miracles don't happen. Well, who made up that kind of rule, saying that God can't act upon, change, or violate, if you want to use that language, natural law if he wills, which is what earlier Enlightenment thinkers argued?

Hume simply presupposes this without admitting that that's what he's doing. Hume is simply stating his opinion, not offering an argument. Much of Hume's argument from natural law, the first half of his essay, much of his argument depends on miracles violating natural law, but modern physics undermines Hume's prescriptive conception of natural law.

It's normally used descriptively today, and so his argument wouldn't work with modern physics. Also, his argument is supposedly inductive, but as is often noted, it's actually circular. This is particularly true, particularly obvious in the second half of his essay, where he argues that human experience shows no miracles, or at least we could never believe that miracles happen because human experience teaches us not to expect that.

Therefore, he says, well-supported eyewitness claims for miracles must be rejected because miracles don't happen, or at least can't be shown to happen. Well, what

happens if you do have reliable eyewitness testimony for miracles? Well, Hume would say if you do have testimony, then it must not be reliable because we know that miracles don't happen or can't be shown to happen. In other words, it's a completely circular argument.

He cites as an example the healing of Blaise Pascal's niece. Blaise Pascal was a very committed Christian, part of the Jansenist movement of his day, and yet the Jansenists were not really well-liked and not treated too credibly by this period. They were too Augustinian for other Catholics, especially the Jesuits at the time, and they were too Catholic for the Protestants.

So, everybody said, no, we don't believe in this. But Pascal's niece had a running eyesore, and she was touched. It smelled really bad.

It was something everybody knew about who was around her. She was touched with a holy thorn from Jesus' crown from his crucifixion. Now, personally, I don't believe it was really a thorn from Jesus' crown.

I think Luther was right when he complained about all these relics that were circulating, that Luther said there were enough nails left over from the Holy Cross to shoe every horse in Saxony. But in any case, it probably wasn't really a relic, but it was a contact point for faith. She was touched by this.

She was instantly and publicly healed in the sight of many witnesses. As a result of this, the Queen Mother of France sent her own physician to check it out so it was medically documented. Well, Hume looks at this miracle report, and he says, well, look at this.

It's medically documented. It's attested by respectable witnesses. Basically, it's everything Hume said that he would believe if he got an example like this.

And Hume said, and we know this isn't believable, so why would we believe anything else? And then he moves on. That is his argument. It's the presupposition that drives his case.

His argument only works if you presuppose atheism or the non-active kind of deity that you have in deism. Hume explicitly framed his argument against contemporary Christian science and apologetics. But there have been a number of recent philosophic challenges to Hume on miracles published by Cambridge, Cornell, Oxford, and elsewhere.

One person critiqued the Oxford account by John Ehrman, the book called Hume's Abject Failure, and said, you just don't like Hume because you're a Christian. And the author said, well, actually, in fact, I'm not anything that could be compared with an

Orthodox Christian, but I just thought it was a bad argument, and that's why I argued against it. Part of Hume's argument is very ethnocentric.

Hume said that only ignorant and barbarous peoples affirm miracles. If somebody said that today, we'd definitely call them ethnocentric. Not everybody who holds this view is necessarily ethnocentric, but certainly, Hume was.

Hume's racism is very well known. Hume said, look, we've had slaves in the British Empire for generations, and yet never a single one of them has ever achieved any major level of education. Why is that? They didn't allow them to do that.

Hume said, well, there is this one Jamaican whom they say recites poetry, but any parrot can repeat what it hears. The Jamaican to whom he refers was Francis Williams, who composed his own poetry in English and in Latin. But Hume was exceedingly prejudiced.

The Christian abolitionists in the British Empire had to argue against his case because Hume was so pro-slavery, and others were saying, well, Hume's a brilliant intellectual. If he's pro-slavery, then slavery must be right. He said, there's never been any great civilization, any great inventions, any great artwork, other than from white civilizations.

Was he completely ignorant of the Chinese kingdoms before? Was he completely ignorant of the empires in India or the empires in Africa? Well, I assume he probably was ignorant of the empires in South America, but in any case, Hume was well-known for his racism. Rudolf Bultmann was not, I have no reason to believe he was directly racist, but Bultmann said that mature modern people don't believe in miracles. He said, it's impossible to use the electric light and the wireless, meaning I think the telegraph machine, and to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles.

But what Bultmann defines as the modern world excludes from the modern world all traditional Jews, Christians, Muslims, traditional tribal religionists, spiritists, basically everybody except his mid-20th century Western academic elite, deists, atheists, and so on. Justo Gonzales, citing Latino churches, says that what Bultmann declares to be impossible is not just possible, but even frequent. Hua Yung, a recently retired Methodist Bishop of Malaysia, Bultmann's issue is a Western issue.

These are not things that we have problems within Asia, believing in spirits or believing in spiritual things. Philip Jenkins, in his books published by Oxford, points out that Christianity in the global South is quite interested in the immediate workings of the supernatural, and many other scholars have pointed this out. It's not appropriate to start with an ethnocentric limit of whose kinds of testimonies we'll believe, saying, well, only testimonies from this part of the world are believable.

How widespread are healing claims? Well, if we start with some churches known for that emphasis, there have been major academic studies, and this is a good example of a place to start, with global Pentecostal and charismatic healing. This particular book was published by Oxford. In 2006, a Pew survey of Pentecostals and charismatics in just ten countries, called Spirit and Power, if you look at the ten countries, they happen from each of the major continents except Antarctica, and they take samples from there.

For each of these countries, or for the total of these ten countries, and only these ten countries, and for Pentecostals and Protestant charismatics in these countries alone, the estimated total of these people who claim to have witnessed divine healing comes out to somewhere around 200 million people. Now, keep in mind this is just ten countries. This is just Pentecostals and charismatics.

More surprisingly, other Christians, who are also included in the survey, somewhere around 39% of other Christians in these countries claim to have witnessed divine healings. So, we may be talking about something like one-third of Christians worldwide who don't consider themselves Pentecostal or charismatic, who also claim to have witnessed divine healings, many of them presumably more than once, although some others may have witnessed it only once in their lifetime. Even in the United States, in a Western country, a 2008 Pew Forum survey, 34% of Americans claim to have witnessed or experienced divine or supernatural healing.

Those claims are not limited to Christians. There are some other movements that also claim it, although it seems to be most common in the U.S. among Christians, where we have more Christians than most other groups. The point in all this, though, is not what proportion of these claims actually involve divine activity or genuine miracles.

The point is whether Hume can legitimately start from the premise that uniform human experience excludes miracles. How can you possibly say uniform human experience excludes miracles when you have at least 200 million counter-testimonies? You don't have to accept that they're all true, but unless you start with the premise that they're all false, you can't speak of human experience being uniform against miracles. That can't be your starting place.

Moreover, it's not just people starting with Christian premises. Millions of non-Christians have been convinced and changed centuries of ancestral beliefs because of extraordinary healings. China was not in the above survey.

It wasn't one of the 10 countries surveyed. But around the year 2000, a source from within the China Christian Council, which is affiliated with the Three-Self Church, estimated that roughly 50% of all new conversions in the previous 20 years, and

there were a lot of conversions in those years, millions of conversions, roughly 50% of those were caused by what they called faith healing experiences. Some estimates from within rural house churches go higher, closer to 90%.

Now, I can't verify whether it's 50% or 90% or which part of the country had a higher percentage or whatever. But whatever the exact percentage was, we're probably talking about millions of people starting with non-Christian premises who were so convinced that what they had witnessed was something out of the ordinary, not just something that normally got better, not just something that got better with their traditional ways of doing things, that they were willing to change centuries of beliefs. In a 1981 study, 10% of non-Christians in Madras, now called Chennai, reported that they had been healed when prayed for in Jesus' name.

Now, again, with surveys, there's no way to... go back and re-interview all these people again. But we're talking about a large number of people who claimed that they were healed when somebody prayed for them in Jesus' name. And these were not just the people who became Christians when it happened.

There were also some people who hadn't become Christians but had experienced this when somebody prayed for them in Jesus' name. One of my students at a seminary where I taught before, through prayer for the sick, his Baptist church grew from a handful to about 600 people, mostly converts from another faith. J.P. Moreland, who is a well-known evangelical scholar, pointed out that of the rapid evangelical growth in the past three decades, up to 70% of it was intimately connected with signs and wonders.

And even before three decades ago, there was a very extensive thesis that was done at Fuller Seminary in 1981 by Christian DeWitt that I found just... He surveyed over 350 other theses and dissertations and found more than he could possibly use about miracles contributing to church growth around the world. Not exclusively, but most often, this seems to happen in dramatic ways in groundbreaking evangelism in relatively new areas. Now God may answer prayer anywhere.

When we read in James chapter 5 about praying the prayer of faith for the sick, it doesn't have to be dramatic to be healing. God can answer our prayers through medicine. God can answer our prayers gradually.

It doesn't have to be something that's visible to count. And yet, it seems in areas of groundbreaking evangelism, the case is very similar to what you have in the Gospels and Acts, where you have miracles happening as signs. These are things that get people's attention to consider the claims of Christ.

Sometimes they actually lead to persecution because people have no other way to shut you down. In the Bible, miracles sometimes did that. You could have different kinds of responses.

But God especially does these dramatic signs, not exclusively, but especially in areas of groundbreaking evangelism. So we tend to see more of them where we go to share the Gospel for the first time, which will fit a major theme in Matthew's Gospel. This is also true in the past.

Many church fathers claimed to have been eyewitnesses of healings and exorcisms that were converting many polytheists. This was the leading cause of conversion in the third and fourth centuries. You find it throughout history.

I won't give many other examples. I'll just give this one. In the Korean revival, this was a prominent feature, especially in the Korean revival of the early 1900s, mainly among Presbyterians.

Many miracles, many healings, and exorcisms were taking place. Many of the Western missionaries who were in Korea at the time, said, well, we don't really believe this. This is just the local Korean believers.

We don't even believe in spirits. But we'll commission a study and that will solve it. To their surprise, the study concluded that the miracles had actually taken place.

Some of the Western missionaries were converted to the views of the Korean Christians. Science as science pronounces unrepeatable events. Science is very good.

Science is very important. But with each discipline, you have to use the epistemic approach that is appropriate to that discipline. Science isn't meant to deal with unique events in history, such as miracles by definition are.

Science won't tell you that Craig Keener was born on a certain date. You may have other evidence for that, but you can't tell that by scientific observation and experimentation unless you were there at the time. You can't have me be born multiple times just to experiment and see if it always happens on the same date.

Journal articles usually treat what's replicable, so we don't have as much of this in scientific journals. So, when somebody comes along and says, well, if it doesn't happen all the time when you pray, it doesn't count. That is absurd because it doesn't have to happen every time to show you that God is working.

God isn't obligated to follow our formula or to do it just the way that we want it to. What we see, the miracles are in the Gospels, they're signs of the kingdom. They're a

promise of a better world where there'll be no more suffering, where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

The signs, Jesus said, these are foretastes. These are signs of the kingdom of God. These are letting you know what's going to come.

They're just a sample. Any healing we have in this world is temporary because sooner or later we'll die unless the Lord comes back first. So, the point of the miracle is not to say, I bless this person, I don't care about that person.

The point of the miracle is to say, this is a reminder. It's a promise of hope to all of you who believe that I'm going to heal this broken world. And right now, I'm already at work in the world just to remind you of that coming day.

For each subject, we use the appropriate method. Science often involves experiments. Events in history, including miracles, are not subject to experiments, but they are subject to other things like checking with eyewitnesses and so on.

I'm moving now from the subject of miracles to the subject of exorcisms, which we also have a lot of in the Gospels. Jesus' authority over demons, Matthew 8:28-34. Tombs were considered unclean and considered a special haunt of demons and magic. So, it's not surprising that this demoniac is hanging out in the tombs.

But we find out that even demons recognize who their judge is. In the narrative in Matthew, Mark, and in Luke, only supernatural beings immediately recognize Jesus' identity. You have the Father speaking from heaven.

You also have demons recognizing Jesus' identity. And these demons sometimes say, what is there between us, which is a way of putting distance. They're afraid of Jesus.

In Matthew 8:28, the demons say, why have you come to torment us before the time? In Mark, it just says, why have you come to torment us? Matthew has a bit more wording there. Why have you come to torment us before the time? They recognize that someday their day is coming. Someday the day of judgment will catch up with them.

But Jesus, just like he does miracles and is already not yet, it's a foretaste of the future. He also is casting out demons as a foretaste of the future. That's why he says, if I, by the Spirit of God, cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

In Matthew 12. We also see in this narrative, Jesus values people more than property. And these demons make a big scene when they come out.

They go into the pigs and the pigs drown. I joke with my students, this is where we get the expression, deviled ham. But in any case, the pigs drown and everybody is very upset with Jesus.

So, Jesus sends the man to go back and tell them what God has done for him. Jesus is not a magician, a sorcerer, somebody malevolent like the local Gentiles think. But Jesus is representing God.

Jesus is a servant of God. Of course, we know he's God in the flesh also, but he's speaking for God in these passages. So, looking at spirits and spirit possession.

I got interested in this because somebody I was very close to who is not a Christian was making fun of my idea that when believing in the Gospels when they talk about demons being cast out or people having spirits in them. And I said, well, anthropologists who don't even believe these are spirits have often documented the same kinds of activity in different parts of the world. He just scoffed at me.

So I went ahead and documented it, and went through just scores and scores of anthropological sources to show this. Anthropologists documented so widely that the denial of possession trance is regarded as the anthropological equivalent of being a flat earther. Already in the 1970s, Erika Bergwijnan, if I'm pronouncing her name correctly, pulling together various anthropological reports showed that 74% of societies had spirit possession beliefs.

It's greater in some parts of the world than in others, but it happens around the world. There are some spirit possession activities that vary from one culture to another. They take on particular cultural forms, but there are others that are consistent throughout spirit possession reports pretty much everywhere, including psychophysically.

Anthropologists typically define spirit possession as any altered state of consciousness indigenously or locally interpreted in terms of the influence of an evil spirit. So, the anthropologists are not committing themselves to believing that these are spirits, but these are things that are locally believed to be spirits. Some of them may simply be people working themselves up into a frenzy.

Some of them may be mental illness. Some of them may be culturally defined, but we have other things, which I'll talk about later, that are pretty clearly something more than that, at least in my opinion. You have altered neurophysiology.

Sometimes when people have been in a possession trance, they have tested their brain activity, and they're experiencing something quite unusual. It's not something that they're just faking. Possession behaviors often include sudden changes in voice and behavior, so much so that one anthropologist reports that sometimes it's been

hard for the anthropologist to persuade himself, or we would say today also herself, that it's really the same person as before whom he's watching or confronting, so marked as the personality change.

I have some testimonies of this from around the world. One is from Joram Mugari from Africa, who's now, at the time that I'm speaking, working on his Ph.D. or just finished with his Ph.D. Joram is a Christian. I met him at Gordon-Conwell Seminary.

But Joram, before he was converted to faith in Christ, was an exorcist in traditional African religion. So, he had lots of stories to tell me about the activity of spirits that he witnessed both before he was a Christian and after he was a Christian. In various sources, spirit possession doesn't always express itself this way, but sometimes it expresses itself in violent behavior, including banging one's head jumping into the fire, and cutting oneself.

Some places, like Indonesia, sometimes fire-walking or immunity to pain. Sometimes it can be violent towards others, just like we see the man named Legion in Mark 5, 1-20, or the parallel passage in Matthew 8. Sometimes there are occult phenomena linked with it, and this is one of the places where we can see it really presumably involves spirits. Sometimes it's just a personality disorder.

It's not really a spirit. But sometimes it's more extreme. You have objects moving around the room without being touched, flying through the room.

I have a friend who's a very well-known Christian scholar. And if I mentioned his name, some of you would know his name, but since I didn't ask his permission beforehand, I'm just saying he's a well-known Christian scholar. He was telling me that when he was young, growing up in a pastor's house, there were some people in the congregation who really had problems with their family.

And one time he saw a towel float up into the air and start spinning around. These are not things that are due to personality disorders unless you say he was just hallucinating. But we have a lot of accounts of these kinds of things.

A crucifix on the wall is another case. A crucifix on the wall fell hot to the touch. Exorcism also appears in anthropological literature, most often in traditional religions, which anthropologists have tended to study in more detail.

In some cultures, that's the only cure for possession illness. And so psychologists, counselors, and psychiatrists who don't believe in spirits debate whether to accommodate local beliefs if that will actually help people get free or not. Among Christians, we have a lot of Christians in many parts of the world.

Around 74% of Christians in Ethiopia claim to have witnessed exorcisms. My student Paul Mokake talked about a woman writhing like a serpent as sea spirits were cast out. Now, sea spirits is what they're called locally.

I don't know if they actually have anything to do with the sea, although local beliefs are that they do. In another case, Nepali pastor Mina K.C. Now, being unable to speak is not always caused by a demon. It can be caused by all sorts of things.

Probably usually it's caused by physical problems. But in this case, there were three different sisters who'd all become mute at one time and had remained unable to speak for three years. When Mina K.C. cast out a spirit, they were all immediately healed.

Robin Snelger, the head of the Department of Industrial Psychology at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, recounts his own former experience of an alien personality controlling him. He tried everything to get rid of it, psychiatry, drugs, other things. Nothing was effective until it was spontaneously exercised through a Christian.

I interviewed Yusmarina Acosta Estevez in Cuba, and she told me about her conversion back in 1988. She had been dealing with spirits. I don't know if she was in Santeria, but she was dealing with spirits, invoking spirits.

She was too sick to walk because of her heart and kidney malfunctions. Some pastors prayed for her. She was instantly healed of everything, and she became a follower of Jesus.

Are these real spirits, or is this psychosomatic recovery? Edith Turner is a lecturer in anthropology at the University of Virginia. She's the editor of the journal *Anthropology and Humanism*. She's also the widow of famous anthropologist Victor Turner.

Edith Turner claims that when she was present during a traditional African ritual, she witnessed spirit substance ejecting. This was during a Zambian spirit ritual. It was not Christian, and she's not stating this from a Christian perspective.

She's stating this from the perspective of an anthropologist who happened to be present and actually saw something visible happen. That she's not saying this from a Christian standpoint can, I think, be verified by the fact that she teaches her students to experience spirits as well, which is, from a Christian perspective, probably not a good thing, but they don't always agree with us. We don't always agree with them, but we're called to love our neighbor, whether we agree with them or not.

So, just to illustrate that people have witnessed these things even when they're not part of the worldview originally. Anthropologist Solon Kimball, during fieldwork in Ireland, an apparition began moving towards him. His hand went through it.

He discovered that many others had seen the same figure in the area at times independently of him. And he said, well, maybe it's something cultural in the air. Globally, most majority world Christians accept the reality of spirits, and they've convinced an increasing number of Westerners who have been open to it.

And I could give a number of examples of that. But there was one Bible translator in a rural region in South America, and he was saying, well, actually, you shouldn't believe in these spirits that you talk about. And they say, oh, they're all around us.

Everybody can see them except you. And they're in this Bible that you translate. I mean, you may not take them literally, but they're right there.

In any case, in the West, with the Enlightenment, we had a proper reaction to superstition. And there is often a lot of superstition surrounding spirits and other things. But in our reaction to superstition, we threw out the possibility of spirits altogether.

Maybe a more critical approach would be to look at the evidence for individual cases. Psychiatrist Scott Peck, a very well-known psychiatrist, said that most supposed demons, most things that people thought were demons, he thought were just psychological problems. But he encountered two cases that couldn't be explained in any other way except these had to be real demons.

William Wilson, a professor emeritus of psychiatry at Duke University, and many others have noticed these things. Not to say that everybody has experienced them, but enough people have experienced them and laid their own academic credibility on the line, even, by saying it. Some people don't like to do that.

But there's a very well-known New Testament scholar today, David Instone Brewer, who originally worked as a... he was planning to be a psychiatrist, and he was making his rounds in the hospital. And he went to this... he works at Tyndall House at Cambridge. But back then, he was making his rounds with psychiatry.

He was beside the bed of this person who was... just appeared to be asleep. And quietly, the person couldn't hear him. Quietly, David was just in himself, praying, you know, God, please help this person.

The person suddenly sat up, stuck his finger in his face, and said, let him alone. He's mine. Encounters like that tend to make a person more apt to believe that they're actually spirits.

Well, this next one is from David Van Gelder. He's a professor of counseling. This was published in a counseling journal.

There was a 16-year-old who was acting like an animal. There was a crucifix on the wall. It fell from the wall.

The nails actually melted. That is not a personality disorder. And David Van Gelder and some of his colleagues, counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, came to try to help this person.

Their professional diagnosis, this is not epilepsy. This is not psychosis. There's not anything else that we can explain in these other ways.

But they were Christians, and they said to him, well, try this. Say Jesus is Lord. And instead, something came out in a very different voice.

You fools, he can't say that. Well, finally, they cast it out in Jesus' name. But again, there are spirits.

At least, I believe that there are spirits, and I think there are good reasons to believe so. My, one of my brothers-in-law, this is my brother-in-law who lives in Brazzaville. He's a professor of chemistry at the University of Brazzaville, and has a Ph.D. from France, just like my wife does, Emanuel Masunga.

He told me about various accounts as well. One of them was an account of three boys who attended the Sunday school class that Emanuel taught. Emanuel, again, is a scientist.

He's not somebody who's easily gullible. He's a believer in Jesus, but he also knows things when he sees them. In this case, there were these three boys.

They were members of a Sunday school class. And one boy, the eldest, got sick, and after a couple of months, he died. As soon as he died, the second one got sick, and after about a month, he died.

Immediately, the third one got sick, and at that point, the third one came to Emanuel and the other Sunday school teachers and said, please pray for me. This was supposed to be a secret. If we let it be known, then the spell wasn't going to work.

But obviously, it's not working anyway. We met this man on the street who told us that we would have the supernatural ability to become government ministers. We would become very prosperous people if we would just give him a little bit of our blood.

And he took the blood from each of us with a knife. The youngest one didn't want to let it happen, but he said they forced him to. And soon after that, the three boys could talk among themselves.

The oldest one had a nightmare where the same man came and stabbed him with the same knife. Immediately, he fell sick. The night that he died, the second one had the same nightmare.

And the night that he died, the third one had the same nightmare. So, he came to the Sunday school teacher and said, please pray for me. They prayed and fasted during the day for nine days.

Then they came and they laid hands on him. They prayed for him. And he was healed.

And I talked with my brother-in-law more recently. And the young man is still fine. But that is something that wouldn't easily be explained other than there really are demons at work.

And these things were uncomfortable to me. They didn't fit my own worldview. I didn't actually think demons had the power to do anything outside of a person's head.

I mean, I believed in spirits as a Christian. I saw them in the Bible, but I didn't think they could do anything else until a couple of years ago, actually. I was reading the book of Job and realized, oh, yes, Satan did blow that house down on top of Job's children.

But anyway, the point of all this is not to make us afraid of demons or afraid of spirits. The point is that we do have enemies out there, a spiritual dimension that is hostile to us, but we don't have to be afraid because God really has more power, as we see in these accounts. Well, this particular account happened and left me confused until I saw that in the book of Job, because one day for two days in a row, I was experiencing the most intense spiritual attack that I'd faced ever to that point.

Different spiritual attack on Friday, different one on Saturday. I was just fighting it off based on Scripture. I didn't understand what was going on.

But the third day, my wife and I went out for a walk, and our son went out for a walk, and we stopped under this tree that was about three stories tall, very wide at the bottom, but also fairly high. And we were deciding which way to go. Our son said, let's go this way.

No sooner had we stepped out from under the tree than it split at the bottom. It didn't uproot. It just split at the bottom, and the tree came crashing down exactly where we had been standing.

We would have been crushed to death. Now if you see in the picture, there is a hospital in the background, and that means they could have pronounced us dead very quickly. But anyway, we would have been crushed to death.

So, we were kind of excited. We came back, and I got a camera and took pictures and so on, but we didn't understand what was happening until my wife contacted her brother in Brazzaville. He was with somebody who was praying.

She said, well, I feel like this demon was trying to attack Craig in these different ways, and if that wasn't going to work, she said, no, I don't understand. Now in my heart, I see this spirit going up to the top of this tree, trying to twist it around, and that's when he explained what had actually happened. And she said, oh, that makes sense.

And then there were some other things that came after that, but it let us know a few things. But one of the things it let us know is these things are really real, but God did protect us. One of the things we learned was it helps to be in unity together because that was one of the problems we had at that moment.

But anyway, Dr. Rodney Ragwan, a friend of mine, he's an Indian Baptist from South Africa. He told me about his grandfather, and he had this story directly from his father, so he put me in touch with his father to get the story exactly from his father. But a man had come to his grandfather and said, you know, tonight I'm going to send a spirit to your house, and you're going to see that this is more powerful than you are.

And so, Rodney's grandfather and grandmother and their children just started praying together. The man had said he was going to send a spirit around midnight. So the family was praying and fasting, and around 1145, and for about 20 minutes, they heard these massive footsteps around the house.

Rodney's father remembers it well. The next day, the man came to Rodney's grandfather and admitted that his spirits couldn't get in, that this man's God was, the true God stronger than this other man's spirits. Many spirit practitioners have been converted through power encounters in Indonesia, the Philippines, Southern Africa, and so forth.

Thandi Randa, who did his Doctor of Ministry degree at Asbury Seminary, where I teach, is from Indonesia, and he reports a number of things, including many witchcraft workers being converted. Now witchcraft, well, some of them actually do call themselves that, and some people say, no, you shouldn't call them that. But

anyway, that's what some of them call themselves, the ones who send curses and so on, and we know people who actually use that language for themselves.

But in any case, this was a picture of them burning some of the witchcraft items. In 2011 alone, 28 witch doctors were converted during Thandi's revival meetings in a mountain region, and here they're being baptized. Jesus spoke of the kingdom as a secret to outsiders, but demons knew his identity, so he always silenced them.

Other kinds of exorcists in Jesus' day, used stinky roots to try to gag the demons out. Sometimes they used magic rings or names, magic formulas invoking higher spirits to get rid of lower spirits. But Jesus simply expelled them with a word, as we see in Matthew 8:16. We could go on, but I think that's enough on exorcism and spirits as a background.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Matthew. This is session 3, Miracles, Part 2 and Exorcism.