

## Ghosts

Over the past few weeks we have discussed angels, demons, and aliens. It is now time to take a look at the last topic that we are going to cover in this series, and that is the topic of ghosts. I realize that this subject sounds a bit silly, but after watching a number of TV shows about ghosts I think there is a genuine need for a serious look at what the Bible has to say about them. This is yet another subject that the popular culture loves to discuss, but gets very wrong.

Ghosts are a popular topic in today's world – not quite as popular as aliens, perhaps, but still popular enough to drive multiple television shows. The subject peaks around Halloween each year, when the media starts bringing out ghost stories and people begin thinking about haunted houses and dead people coming out of their graves. Unfortunately, the Biblical view is rarely heard. Everything that I've seen on television about this topic has been completely wrong. If you want to learn the truth about ghosts and hauntings, you must go to the Bible.

The first point we need to address is something that I have taught before:

### When People Die, They Go To Heaven Or Hell

After you die your soul immediately goes to either Heaven or Hell. Those are the only two options. You do not have the option of lingering around on Earth as some sort of disembodied spirit.

Since I have already discussed this extensively elsewhere I will not repeat it all here. One passage in the Bible that clearly teaches this is the story Jesus told of the rich man and the beggar:

**Luke 16:22:** “And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;  
23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

As you can see, as soon as the beggar died he was immediately carried away into a place of comfort and peace, and as soon as the rich man died he found himself in Hell. The rich man asked Abraham to send the beggar to go warn his family about the reality of Hell, but his request was denied:

**Luke 16:27:** “Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:  
28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.  
29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.  
30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.  
31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

As you can see, the rich man very much wanted to leave Hell, but he could not. He also wanted

to warn his family about Hell, but he could not do that either. There was simply no way for anyone to leave Heaven *or* Hell and go warn people about the dangers of not being saved.

Think of it this way. If a dead person has the option of either going to Hell and being tormented, or else staying on Earth as a ghost, which do you think people would choose? Do you think *anyone* would want to go to Hell and be tormented in the flame, as the rich man was? Of course not! If people had that kind of choice then Hell would be empty – but as Jesus told us, they don't have that choice. When the lost die they lift up their eyes in Hell. They cannot linger on Earth.

We can find more evidence of this in the statement that Jesus made to the dying thief on the cross. The Lord made it clear that those who died knowing Him would be with Him that very day in paradise:

**Luke 23:42:** “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

The apostle Paul told us the very same thing:

**2 Corinthians 5:6:** “Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

When Christians die, they go to Heaven; they may be absent from their bodies but they are present with the Lord. They do *not* have the option of lingering around on Earth as some kind of disembodied spirit. Paul is quite clear about this: if you are absent from your body (in other words, if you have died) then you are present with the Lord.

That brings us to the next point:

## **Your Guardian Angels Are Angels, Not Dead People**

People like to think that their departed loved ones are in Heaven watching over them, but that is not a Biblical sentiment. Nowhere in the Bible will you find any indication that your dead relatives are in Heaven watching over you. Nowhere does it say that you should pray to them or ask them to do favors on your behalf. It simply doesn't.

What it *does* say is quite different. As we discussed in a previous lesson, the Bible tells us that *angels* are watching over us:

**Psalms 34:7:** “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.”

Since we already discussed this verse in our lesson on angels I'm not going to expand upon it here. The point is that *angels* are watching over us, not the dead spirits of our friends and relatives.

As far as prayer goes, the Bible tells us to pray to *God*, not to angels or to the dead:

**Philippians 4:6:** “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

If you are in trouble, cry out *to God* and He will help you. If you are in danger, ask God to save you. Do *not* pray to angels, or to your relatives, or to the dead. Pray to God and God alone.

One thing that people tend to overlook is that when people die and go to Heaven, they *rest*:

**Hebrews 4:9:** “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

As you can see, when the people of God die they enter into God's rest, and when they enter into that rest they cease from their own works. In other words, when they die they *rest*. The righteous dead really are “resting in peace”. They have stopped working and are off the clock. Their work is done and they are home. I repeat: they are *not* watching over you or intervening in your life to save you. They don't do that because *their work is done*.

This is not a bad thing. Who could possibly care more about us than God? Who could love us more than the One Who died for us? Who could be more aware of what is going on in our lives than the omniscience, omnipresent God? Why would we want anyone else to watch over us? Why would we ever pray to anyone else? If you are going to ask someone for something, who better to ask than the all-knowing, all-powerful God? How could your dead friends or relatives possibly compare to Him?

Speaking of praying to the dead:

## A Séance Is A Frightful Sin

There are many mediums who claim to have the ability to talk to the dead. They say that if you go to them and give them money, they will get you in touch with your dead friends and relatives.

Now, I realize that in this country mediums are something of a joke. People laugh at the idea that you can talk to the dead. In other countries that aren't as materialistic as ours, these mediums are taken more seriously. Either way, there really are people who believe that you can go to a medium and talk to your dead relatives. People may think that this is a joke, but the reality is that it is a fearful sin.

Most people dismiss mediums as hoaxes, and that is because most mediums really *are* hoaxes. However, not all mediums are frauds. In the Bible we can find the account of a medium that actually was able to bring up a spirit from the dead.

Before we get into that, we need a little background. There was a time near the end of King Saul's life when the king wanted guidance from God, but God refused to speak with him. Saul tried all of the methods that God had approved to use but God did not respond to any of them:

**I Samuel 28:5:** “And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.

6 And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.”

In the days of the Old Testament the Lord spoke to people through dreams, through the Urim and Thummim, and through prophets. Saul tried to hear from God through all of these methods but God refused to answer. The king therefore decided to use a method that God had strictly prohibited on pain of death:

**I Samuel 28:7:** “Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.

8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee.

9 And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?

10 And Saul sware to her by the Lord, saying, As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

11 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.”

As you can see, everyone who was involved in this activity knew that what they were doing was wrong. The reason King Saul had supposedly removed all witches and wizards from the land was because the Mosaic Law required him to do so. God was very clear that people who dealt in familiar spirits should be put to death:

**Exodus 22:18:** “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”

**Leviticus 20:27:** “A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.”

Witches and wizards were people who had a relationship with a “familiar spirit” and who used that relationship in order to perform supernatural feats. As we discussed in a previous lesson, “familiar spirits” are actually demons. God was very clear that people should *not* have relationships with demons. This was a very great and terrible sin, and all those who entered into a relationship with a demon in order to harness their supernatural power were to be put to death.

The reason people would commit such a great sin was because it actually worked. King Saul asked the woman to bring up Samuel, and that is exactly what she did:

**I Samuel 28:12:** “And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul.

13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

14 And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up;

and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.”

Now, every single commentary I have ever read on this passage says that the woman was intending to deceive Saul, and then freaked out when Samuel actually appeared. I understand where the commentators are coming from, but I think that they are wrong. What greatly upset the witch was not the appearance of Samuel, but the appearance of Saul. The very first thing the witch did after Samuel appeared was *criticize Saul for deceiving her*. She didn't say “Oh my goodness – it's Samuel!” Instead she said “Oh my goodness – you're King Saul!” *Saul* was what bothered her.

Another thing to think about is this: if you are going to deceive someone and lie, *you don't need to have a familiar spirit to do that*. The only reason you would need a familiar spirit is if you were going to use their services in some way.

It's also worth noting that Samuel was not happy about being there and had no idea what was going on:

**I Samuel 28:15:** “And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.”

Notice that Samuel blames *Saul* for bringing him up. Samuel doesn't say “God sent me to tell you something.” This is important because all throughout the Bible, whenever prophets spoke they always began by saying “Thus saith the Lord”. Prophets never, *ever* started by saying “What am I doing here, why are you bothering me, and what is going on?”

Think about it: Saul had tried to talk to God through all the means God had approved of, and God refused to talk to him. Are we really supposed to believe that God would refuse to talk to Saul through a prophet and would instead talk to him *through a witch*, when God had commanded that all witches be put to death? On top of that, are we supposed to believe that God sent Samuel to talk to Saul without bothering to explain the situation or give him something to say? Does that really make any sense?

It is far more likely that the witch did exactly what King Saul asked her to do: she brought up the spirit of Samuel so that the king could talk to him. Now, that doesn't mean that what Saul did was a good idea. Samuel's message was not encouraging:

**I Samuel 28:19:** “Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.”

Samuel told the king that the following day he would lose the battle, and he and his sons would be killed. Saul's grand attempt to find comfort and help by talking to the dead did not work out as he had hoped. Instead of finding encouragement he was met with despair and fear:

**I Samuel 28:20:** “Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.”

As we can see, in this case the medium actually *was* able to bring up the spirit of Samuel so that Saul could talk to him. She had a “familiar spirit” and they got the job done. However, *this was a terrible sin*, and it ended very badly for King Saul. He did not get what he wanted; instead he found death.

Now, does that mean that when people go to mediums and talk to their Uncle Bob, that the mediums really are bringing up Uncle Bob? Absolutely not. First of all, most mediums are hoaxes. There are very few around who actually have familiar spirits. Second, according to researchers who have spent time with real mediums that really *do* have familiar spirits, the spirits spend their time lying. They have gone around to different mediums and cross-checked the claims of these spirits, and it turns out the spirits lie and contradict each other. You see, it is much easier for the spirits to lie than it is for them to actually *do* something – and we know that demons are liars because their ruler is the father of lies. The Bible calls them *deceitful* spirits for a reason.

In the case of King Saul we know that Samuel really was brought up because the Bible tells us he was. There is no question about what happened. In modern times, though, it is a very different situation. The medium may well be lying to you – and if the medium isn't, then the demon may be lying to you. Demons love to manipulate and destroy people, and this is a very effective way of doing exactly that. Why would you trust an evil spirit to be honest with you and tell you the truth?

The bottom line is this: there are mediums who are *not* frauds and who really do have a relationship with a demon that they use to perform supernatural feats. However, *this is a great sin*, and it is extremely dangerous. Christians should never, ever go down that road. God has commanded us to have no relationship with darkness:

**2 Corinthians 6:14:** “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”

The Bible commands us to not be yoked together with unbelievers. Given that, do you really think that it is a good idea to be yoked together with *demons*? Do you really think that is something God would approve of?

## Ghosts Are Deceitful Spirits

As we discussed earlier, when the lost die they go to Hell and cannot escape. They do not have the option of roaming around the Earth; if they did then Hell would be empty. Likewise, when the righteous die they go to Heaven. Like the lost, they do not have the option of roaming around the Earth. When Samuel was brought up from his place of rest he was quite unhappy about it. He had no intention of roaming around as a ghost, and he was upset with Saul for bothering him.

What we can learn from all of this is that ghosts are *not* the departed spirits of the dead. They are also not angels, because angels don't parade around as ghosts. Since ghosts have supernatural power, since they are not angels, and since they are not the departed dead, that means that they must be demons. That is the only option that is left.

Now, just as most mediums are phony, most tales of hauntings and ghost stories are also phony. However, there are real ghost stories. Most of these stories are pretty harmless – people feel a presence

that they can't see, or lights go on and off, or they hear noises that they can't explain, or something rearranges objects around the house, or they might briefly see a ghostly figure of some kind. There are other times when the ghost is actually helpful and gives a warning that ends up saving a life or stopping a disaster.

Now, I realize it seems rather bizarre to accuse demons of switching lights on and off. After all, why would they bother? What's in it for them? It becomes even more puzzling when the ghost does something that is actually *helpful*. Why would they ever do such a thing?

The reason is simple: it is because it *profoundly shakes up a person's views on religion and the afterlife*. People who have these kind of low-key, “harmless” experiences start wondering if what the Bible says about death is really true. They start to wonder if maybe their church doesn't have all the answers. Maybe there's more to life-after-death than it seems. After all, their experience was real and tangible. When many people encounter this type of experience they will trust *what they saw* over *what the Bible says*. They will ignore the clear teaching of the word of God and instead believe what they think just happened.

Demons are deceitful spirits. The Bible tells us that they come to destroy us, not to help us:

**John 10:10:** “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

There are many people who never even thought about the supernatural until they encountered a ghost, but then that one encounter led them straight into mysticism and the occult. There are others who started questioning their faith after encountering this sort of thing. These events have a profound effect that lead people *away* from God and *away* from the truth of the Bible. *They are not harmless*.

If you think about it, it makes sense that a lot of ghostly behavior would fall into that category. After all, if ghosts exhibited violent and dangerous behavior then people would run to their nearest pastor. They would be terrified. It wouldn't interest them in the occult; it would frighten them out of their wits. At that point it would be obvious that something dangerous and demonic was going on.

That being said, there are a number of ghost stories that are *not* harmless. I have known people who were haunted by ghosts which were actually dangerous, and who were physically attacked by invisible spirits. Of course, when that started happening then the deception was gone and the truth was obvious. In those cases it was very clear that they were being plagued by demonic activity. That brings us to the second point:

## Places Can Be Haunted

As shocking as it may seem, the Bible actually tells us that it is possible for places to be haunted. Take a look and see for yourself:

**Revelation 18:2:** “And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”

This verse is talking about the future destruction of Babylon. When that city is destroyed, it will remain ruined forever and will never be rebuilt. Its ruins will be inhabited by devils and evil spirits.

In other words, the ruins of Babylon will be haunted.

When we took a look at demons we discussed the fact that demons can possess both people and animals. One thing we did not mention is that demons can also possess *places*. Revelation gives us an example of this: one day in the future demons will possess the ruins of Babylon. What this means is that it really *is* possible for a place to be haunted. However, haunted houses (or haunted cities, in this case) are not haunted by the spirits of the dead; instead they are haunted by unclean spirits.

Now, there are a lot of places in this world that are supposedly haunted that aren't really haunted at all. Just because something odd happens or people see something that they can't explain, does *not* mean that the building is haunted. However, just as demons are real and just as demon possession is real, so hauntings can be real as well. There really are demons who pose as ghosts, and there are also demons who can haunt buildings.

We have already discussed ghosts and ghostly activity, and since this falls into the same category there is no need to repeat everything that was just said. What I can say is that I have encountered two buildings that were genuinely haunted by evil, malevolent spirits who physically attacked people. Both of them were nasty situations. People may think that haunted houses are fun and exciting, but I assure you that they are dangerous and terrifying. If you ever found a house that was genuinely haunted you would *not* think that it was fun. I strongly urge you to avoid such places. Do not seek them out, do not visit them, and do not get involved with them. If the place is truly haunted then what you are really doing is getting involved with demons, and that is a *very bad thing to do*. Do not spend time in places where demons take up their residence. The only exception to this is if you are an exorcist who is attempting to fight them, but the odds are very good that you do not fall into that category.

In conclusion, I urge you to be very careful when dealing with the supernatural – with ghosts, mediums, seances, and so forth. Demons are very real and they will try very hard to deceive you – and there are a lot of supernatural tricks that they can use to make you doubt the teachings of the Bible. I urge you to stay well grounded in the Word of God. When dealing with the supernatural, don't believe your eyes; instead believe the Scriptures. You can be deceived, but the Bible cannot be broken. God's Word offers solid ground that can be trusted through all the storms of life.