

Ghosts

Ghosts are a popular topic in today's world. The subject seems to peak 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 on this subject is rarely heard. What the world has to say about ghosts is completely wrong. If you want to learn the truth about ghosts and hauntings then you must go to the Bible.

Let's take some time and see what the Scriptures have to say about ghosts.

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 possibilities. You don't have the option of lingering around on Earth as some sort of disembodied spirit.

One passage in the Bible that clearly teaches this is the story Jesus told of the rich man and the beggar:

Luke 16:22-23: “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; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

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

The rich man desperately wanted to leave Hell but he couldn't. He also wanted to warn his family about Hell but he couldn't do that either. There was no way for anyone to leave Hell and 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 go to Hell and be tormented in the flame, as the rich man was? Of course not! If people were offered that 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 aren't allowed to linger on Earth.

We can find more evidence of this in the statement 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 23:42-43: “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

The apostle Paul told us the same thing:

2 Corinthians 5:6-8: “Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 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're 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're absent from your body (in other words, if you've died) then you're present with the Lord.

Your Guardian Angels Are Angels, Not Dead People

Some people think that their departed loved ones are in Heaven watching over them. However, that's not what the Bible teaches. Nowhere in the Bible will you find any indication that your dead relatives are in Heaven watching over you. The Scriptures also never teach that you should pray to them or ask them to do favors on your behalf.

What it *does* say is quite different. The Bible tells us that *angels* are watching over us:

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

We are being watched over by *angels*, not the dead spirits

of our friends and relatives. The Bible also 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're in trouble then cry out to *God* and He will help you. If you're in danger then ask God to save you. Don't pray to angels, or to your relatives, or to the dead. Pray to God and God alone.

One thing some people overlook is that those who die and go to Heaven *rest*:

Hebrews 4:9-11: “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

When the people of God die they enter into His rest, and when they enter into that rest they cease from their own works. This means that when they die they *rest*. The righteous dead really are “resting in peace”. They've stopped working and are off the clock. Their work is done and they're finally home. This means they're *not* watching over you and intervening in your life to save you! They don't do that because *their work is done*.

This isn't 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's going on in our lives than the all-knowing, all-powerful God? Why would we want anyone else to watch over us? Why would we ever pray to anyone else? If you're going to ask someone for something then who better to ask than the Lord? How could your dead friends or relatives possibly

compare to Him?

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'll get you in touch with your dead friends and relatives.

I realize that in this country mediums are something of a joke. Many people laugh at the idea that you can talk to the dead. In other countries these mediums are taken more seriously. Either way, there really are people who believe you can go to a medium and talk to your dead relatives.

A lot of people dismiss mediums as hoaxes, and that's because many mediums really *are* hoaxes. However, not all mediums are frauds. In the Bible we can find the account of a medium who actually was able to bring up a spirit from the dead (which was a very wicked thing to do).

Before we get into that we need a little background. There was a time near the end of King Saul's life when he wanted guidance from God but the Lord refused to speak with him. Saul tried every method God had given him but He didn't respond to any of them:

I Samuel 28:5-6: “And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.”

In those days 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 He refused to answer. The king therefore decided to use a method that God had strictly prohibited on pain of death:

I Samuel 28:7-11: “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. 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. 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? And Saul sware to her by the Lord, saying, As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.”

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 were to 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 to perform supernatural feats. The Bible teaches that “familiar spirits” are actually demons. God commanded us to *never* have a relationship with a demon. This was a terrible sin, and all those who did such a thing to harness their supernatural power were to be put to death.

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

I Samuel 28:12-14: “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. 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. 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.”

Many commentaries that I've read on this passage teach that the woman was intending to deceive Saul and was surprised when Samuel appeared. I understand why they teach this but I think they're wrong. What upset the witch wasn't the appearance of Samuel, but the appearance of Saul. The 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're going to deceive someone and lie then *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 wasn't 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 blamed *Saul* for bringing him up. Samuel didn't say “God sent me to tell you something.” This is important because whenever prophets spoke throughout the Bible they always began by saying “Thus saith the Lord”. Prophets *never* started by saying “What am I doing here, why are you bothering me, and what's going on?”

Think about it. Saul had tried to talk to God through all the means He had approved of but He refused to talk to him. Is it really likely 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 were to be put to death? Is it likely that God would send Samuel to talk to Saul without first explaining the situation to him or giving him something to say? That doesn't really make any sense.

It's 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 what Saul did was a good idea. Samuel's message wasn't 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 attempt to find comfort and help by talking to the dead didn't 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.”

In this case the medium actually *was* able to bring up the spirit of Samuel so Saul could talk to him. She had a “familiar spirit” and got the job done. However, *this was a terrible sin* and it ended badly for King Saul. He didn't get what he wanted! Instead he found death.

Does that mean when people go to mediums and talk to their uncle, the mediums really are bringing up their uncle? Absolutely not. First of all, most mediums are hoaxes. There are very few who actually have familiar spirits. Second, researchers who've spent time with mediums that really *do* have familiar spirits tell us that those spirits spend their time lying. It turns out that if you go to different mediums and cross-checked the claims of these spirits you'll discover that the spirits lie and contradict one other. It's much easier for the spirits to lie than for them to actually *do* something – and we know that demons are liars because the devil 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 so. There's no question about what happened. In modern times, though, it's a very different situation. The medium is probably lying to you – and if the medium isn't, then the demon is probably lying to you.

Demons love to manipulate and destroy people and this is a very effective way of doing 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 uses a relationship with a demon to perform supernatural feats. However, *this is a terrible sin* and it's extremely dangerous. Christians must *never* 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. Since that's the case, do you really think it's a good idea to be yoked together with *demons*? That's something God would never approve of.

Ghosts Are Deceitful Spirits

When the lost die they go to Hell and can't escape. They don't 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 don't have the option of roaming around this world. 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're also not angels because angels don't parade around as ghosts. Since ghosts have supernatural power, and aren't angels, and aren't the departed dead, that means that they must be demons. That's the only option 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. Some people feel a presence they can't see. Sometimes lights go on and off. Some people hear noises they can't explain. In a few cases something rearranges objects around the house. Perhaps someone briefly glimpses 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.

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

The reason is simple: it's because it *profoundly shakes up a person's views on religion and the afterlife*. Some people who have those kind of low-key, “harmless” experiences start wondering if what the Bible says about death is really true. They wonder if perhaps the 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 – and it seems to contradict what the church teaches.

This means when some people encounter this type of experience they'll trust *what they saw* over *what the Bible says*. They'll 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 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 some people who never even thought about the supernatural until they encountered a ghost, but then were so shaken up by that the encounter that they went straight into mysticism and the occult. There are others who started

questioning their faith after having this type of experience. These events can have a profound effect which leads people *away* from God and *away* from the truth of the Bible. This means that even the “harmless” hauntings *are not harmless at all*.

It makes sense that a lot of ghostly behavior would fall into that category. If ghosts exhibited violent and dangerous behavior then people would run to their nearest pastor. They would be terrified! Those kinds of experiences wouldn't interest them in the occult; instead 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 few ghost encounters that *aren't* harmless. I've known people who were haunted by “ghosts” which were actually dangerous and physically attacked them. When that started happening the deception was gone and the truth was obvious: they were being attacked by demons, not by the departed spirits of loved ones.

Places Can Be Haunted

The Bible tells us it's 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. This means the ruins of Babylon will be *haunted*.

The Bible teaches us that demons can possess *places*. This passage from Revelation gives us one example of this. In the

future demons will possess the ruins of Babylon. This means it really *is* possible for a place to be haunted. However, haunted houses (or haunted cities, in this case) aren't haunted by the spirits of the dead. Instead they're haunted by unclean spirits.

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

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

Conclusion

I urge you to be very careful when dealing with the supernatural – with ghosts, mediums, seances, and so forth. Demons are real and will try very hard to deceive you – and there are a lot of supernatural tricks they can use to make you doubt the teachings of the Bible. You must remain well grounded in the Word of God. When dealing with the supernatural, don't believe your eyes because *demons are powerful and deceptive*. Instead

believe the Scriptures. You can be deceived, but the Bible can't be broken! The Word of God God's gives us solid ground to stand on that can be trusted through all the storms of life.