

## DO SPIRITS OF THE DEAD HAUNT THE LIVING TODAY?

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When a young child watches a movie or television show about evil spirits, haunted houses, ghost hunters, or other creepy paranormal occurrences, they will often be so frightened that they cannot sleep. Even older folks can be intimidated by the idea that ghosts (spirits) of the dead come back to haunt, frighten, and even kill the living.

Hollywood has produced movies such as *The Amityville Horror*, *The Sixth Sense*, *The Shining*, and *Poltergeist*, along with milder films such as *Ghostbusters*, *Field of Dreams*, *Ghost*, and *Casper, the Friendly Ghost*. Television has explored this topic with such programs as the Travel Channel series *A Haunting* and a reality show *Ghost Hunters*. These are only a few examples of the films and programs suggesting that spirits of the dead exist among the living today. We have not mentioned the many books that have been written about the subject. For some folks, this is not just entertainment – they believe ghosts *are* real and make things go *bump* in the night.

There are those who believe that they can communicate with the dead. Modern day *mediums* will, for a price, set up a *séance* where they will attempt to contact your dearly departed loved ones. Modern day “ghost hunters” enter “haunted” structures and set up sensors, recorders, and cameras to detect what they claim is paranormal activity.

How is a Christian to react and respond to such things? Do spirits of the dead move among the living today? Will they haunt and scare us, or even help us? Or is all of this utterly false and deceptive? God has revealed helpful information on such matters in the pages of His word. We need to learn from Him and beware of the imaginations of men.

### **THE DEAD GO TO THE REALM OF THE DEAD.**

In olden times, the phrase “gathered to his people” was used when one died (cf. Gen. 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33; Deut. 32:50). This phrase indicates that those who died lived on after death and went to join others who had preceded them in death. They did not come back after death to hover around as ghosts to hurt or help the living. When the child he conceived with Bathsheba died, David said, “But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (2 Sam. 12:23). David did not contemplate setting up a *séance* and contacting the spirit of his dead child. He only anticipated eventually entering the realm of death and joining his child there. The living cannot bring back the dead, whether in spirit or body. Modern *séances* use trickery and mind games. Do not be deceived by frauds.

Solomon said of the dead, “Nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun” (Eccl. 9:6). “Under the sun” refers to life here on earth. The dead have nothing more to do in the realm of physical life. The spirit returns to God who gave it (12:7). In the account of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man wanted Lazarus sent back from the dead to warn his brothers (Lk. 16:19-31). Neither he nor Lazarus was free as a disembodied spirit to contact his loved ones to haunt or help them.

### **WHEN THE DEAD DID APPEAR TO THE LIVING, THEY WERE NOT UNSEEN SPIRITS OR VAPOROUS GHOSTS.**

Only on certain occasions did God allow the spirit of a dead person to be seen or contacted by the living. King Saul consulted a medium at En-Dor to bring the spirit of Samuel back (1 Sam. 28:3-20). The medium

had no power to produce such a thing, but to her shock, God permitted it to happen. Samuel appeared in a manner recognizable to Saul (v. 14), and he was perturbed that Saul had disturbed him (v. 15).

On another occasion, Peter, James, and John were permitted to see Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus when He was transfigured (Lk. 9:28-31; though Elijah did not physically die, he passed into the realm beyond this earthly life [2 Kgs. 2:1-11]). Once again, God allowed the spirits of these two great men to be seen and recognized. These were special occasions, not everyday occurrences. Modern-day ghost hunters allow their imaginations to assume without proof that “ghosts” are causing noises and sensor readings that could have entirely different explanations if they cared to investigate further.

**DEMONS DO NOT POSSESS PEOPLE TODAY.**

We cannot be certain as to the exact identity of demons in the Bible. Some believe that they were departed spirits of evil men, while others contend that they were fallen angels. Whether one of these, or another explanation, is correct, demons served Satan in possessing and troubling people in New Testament times. Christ and the apostles cast these demons out to exhibit the superior power of God and confirm His word (Matt. 12:28-29; Mk. 16:17-20). Demon possession was a *temporary* phenomenon which ceased with the passing away of the miraculous power to cast them out (Zech. 13:1-2; 1 Cor. 13:8-10). Demons are *not* able to possess, haunt, or hurt anyone today. We conquer Satan now with faith and truth!

In the end, we must face the fact that the hysteria about ghosts, haunted houses, and the paranormal is a deception of Satan to distract us from hearing and understanding the truth of God revealed in His word. It may make for scary entertainment, but it is fictional through and through. Make sure you and your family know the truth!