

Ghosts



Ghosts. We've all heard about them. Ghost stories have been around for millennia. Movies, books, television... even whispered around campfires late at night. Webster's says a ghost is "[noun], the soul of a dead person, a disembodied spirit imagined, usually as a vague, shadowy or evanescent form, as wandering among or haunting living persons." Ghosts have been called by a myriad of names: apparition, phantom, wraith, shade, spook, spectre, spirit. The question is, do they really exist? Or



more importantly, what does the Bible say about them? Many people, Christians especially, believe that the Bible teaches that ghosts do *not* exist, and that the subject is either not worth discussing, or from the devil.

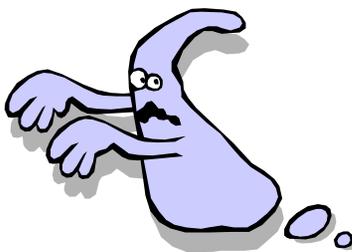
This belief most likely came from passages in the Old Testament such as Deuteronomy 18:10-11, "Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead." In which God clearly denounces those who "consult the dead" or, "ghosts". However, when reading the passage, we often miss a very important point. It is obviously *possible* to

"consult the dead" or else God wouldn't have told the Israelites *not* to.

Arguably the most well-known mention of ghosts in scripture is King Saul's infamous visit to the Witch of Endor in 1st Samuel 28. King Saul, after getting no answer from God or prophets, decided to visit a medium for advice.

1 Samuel 28: 11-15, "Then the woman asked, 'Whom shall I bring up for you?' 'Bring up Samuel,' he said. When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, 'Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!' The king said to her, 'Don't be afraid. What do you see?' The woman said, 'I see a spirit coming up out of the ground.' 'What does he look like?' he asked. 'An old man wearing a robe is coming up,' she said. Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?'"

We can learn much from this passage. Apparently the medium was the only one who could see (and possibly hear) Samuel's ghost. It definitely *was* Samuel, as the writer refers to it once as a "spirit" and from then on as "Samuel". Not "Samuel's ghost" or "the spirit", but "Samuel" as if there was *no* doubt of the apparition's identity. Later on, in verse 19, Samuel says, "Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me." We can only assume that he



meant, "will be as I am." That is, with the dead. Above all, it is apparent that the medium actually *did* bring up a ghost, or the spirit of a dead person, to communicate with the living. It has been conjectured that this was a one-

time event permitted by God to happen, but scripture does not say for sure.

Other passages evidence the existence of ghosts as well, Such as Matthew 14:26-27, "When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. 'It's a ghost!' they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'" Jesus could have said, "Don't be silly, ghosts don't exist." But he did not. Although it is possible that the disciples simply heard stories of ghosts in their lifetime, and assumed the worst, it is obvious that they believed in their existence.



What did Jesus himself have to say on the matter? In Luke 24:36-39, "While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.'"

Not only does Jesus acknowledge their existence, but He even describes some of their traits! Keep in mind that this passage was written by Luke, who was *not* an uneducated fisherman; Luke had been a doctor, and he had a scientific mind. If any of the apostles would have questioned this event, it would have been Luke; but he is the only one to include it in his account.

Also, in Luke 16, we find the story of the rich man who was in agony in the flames. He asked Abraham to send Lazarus back to his brothers so they would not share his fate.

Abraham refused, saying in Luke 16:31, “*He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’*”

This tells us that a “ghost” or “spirit” cannot come back from the grave without permission to do so, and if one was not allowed to come back to warn of the coming wrath, one certainly would not be allowed for trivial reasons, either.



Some have said that ghosts cannot exist because a person’s soul receives judgment after death and their fate (and eternal destiny) are sealed. Hebrews 9:27 But the dead are not truly

judged until the end of the age, as we see in Revelation 20:12, “*And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.*” Therefore it is possible that a spirit could come back from the grave, provided it had permission, or reason to do so, from God.

Some have said that the Transfiguration in Mark 9 & Matthew 17 is evidence of spirits coming back to earth, but it could very easily have been Moses and Elijah themselves supernaturally transported to the mountain where Jesus and his disciples were.

Also, when Jesus appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Mark 16:12 “*Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country.*” Luke 24:16 simply says they didn’t recognize Him. It is hard to believe, however, that they would not recognize someone they followed and believed in for the better part of three years, without something supernatural inter-

vening. There is no indication that this was a spirit, however, and it is generally believed that it was Jesus in the flesh. Even discounting these instances as unsupportive of the existence of other-worldly beings, ghosts are mentioned in the book of Proverbs, Isaiah, and other Old Testament books numerous times.

In closing, yes, ghosts and spirits *do* exist, and at times have even interacted with humans for various reasons. But they only ever have done so when it serves the purpose of Almighty God. They are nothing to fear, but serve only to remind us that there *is* more to this world than we can see, hear, touch, or explain. Such is the nature of God Himself.



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