**Lesson: Can Spirits Be Dead?**

Nowadays, there are countless television and movie shows about demon possession, paranormal activity, and haunted locations which lead one to think that such phenomena are commonplace. They are not actually, and they also are not associated with spirits of the dead. Evil spiritual activity exists on this planet, and these incidents are evidence of fallen angels not the return of dead people or roaming ghosts from lives past.

The Bible tells us that Lucifer, once the anointed cherub, rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven to the earth (LUK 10:18); taking one third of the angels with him I might add (REV 12:3–12; REV 16:14). Fallen angels are referred to as demons in order to distinguish them from friendly angels doing the Lord’s bidding, who also appear from time to time to help us out or relay God’s messages (GEN 22:11–17; NUM 22:22–35; JOS 5:13–15; DAN 8:16–17; LUK 1:11–38; ACT 12:7–23). However, demons will disguise themselves as angels to trick people into believing things that are untrue (2 CO 11:4–15; 2 TH 2:3–12); in fact, deception is Lucifer’s favorite tactic (GEN 3:1–15; JOH 8:44). Satan and his cronies have had a lot of practice at deception and temptation. Like us, angels know right from wrong, and many choose the latter. Unlike us, demons are condemned whereas we can be forgiven and saved.

* ISA 14:12–15 ~ How have you fallen from heaven, Lucifer the morning star, cut down to the ground, weakening the nations? You said in your heart, “I will ascend into heaven and exalt my throne above all of God’s stars (referring to angels); I will lead the congregation of the north and ascend to the clouds. I will be like the Most High.” But you will be brought down to the lowest pit of hell.
* EZE 28:14–19 ~ You were the anointed cherub; you lived upon the holy mountain of God. You were perfect from the day you were created until evil was found in you. Your great wealth made you violent inside and you became sinful. That is why you were thrown off the holy mountain, to be destroyed. You exalted yourself because of your beauty, corrupting yourself. You defiled the sanctuaries with your abominations. Eventually, you will be consumed by the fire within you and your terrible deeds will come to an end.

Angels and demons have been around since before carnal man, so they obviously know their history. A haunted house may have demons impersonating the dead, but they are far from dead. Of course, they will be condemned with fallen humans, ending up in the lake of fire (REV 20:10–15), after which they will be dead forever as far as the saints are concerned. For true believers, our spirits and souls will reside with our triune God forever, from the time we chose His Son and followed Him into the light, through our Sabbath rest, and beyond when we are reunited with our bodies and glorified by the Light of God (JOH 8:12; ROM 8:16–18), which we will wear as a garment to protect and sustain us forever (ROM 13:14; GAL 3:27; EPH 6:10–18).

Those summoning the dead or desiring to commune with the spirit world are deliberately inviting demons. Simply put, you cannot rouse spirits of the dead via occultist activity; what you’ll get are demons instead. People allow themselves to be influenced by these demons as if what they relate is true or empowers them. The Bible warns against dabbling in the occult or consorting with demons; such practices are an atrocity to God. If you need spiritual guidance and truth, it is stupid and dangerous to go to any source other than the Holy Spirit.

* LEV 19:26–28.31 ~ Do not eat anything containing blood; do not use enchantments or align with sorcerers. Do not shave your head or trim your beards to single yourselves out. Do not cut, pierce, or tattoo your body on behalf of the dead. For only God is Lord. Avoid those with familiar spirits and avoid wizardry; do not be defiled by them. I AM the Lord your God.
* DEU 18:10–12 ~ Nobody is to sacrifice his or her child in the fire; or employ divinations, witchcraft, call spirits of the dead, cast spells, or summon demons. All of these things are an abomination to the Lord; He will drive such people away from His presence (also 2 KI 21:6).
* ISA 8:19 ~ If anyone suggests consulting demons (familiar spirits), or listening to sorcerers who search for paranormal visions and murmurings, answer them saying, “Shouldn’t we be consulting with the Lord God; shouldn’t we be seeking the living not the dead?”
* ISA 47:10–15 ~ You trusted in your wickedness, thinking that nobody sees you; but your wisdom and knowledge have perverted you. You told yourself that your power was superior and you needed no other. But disaster will befall you; you will not see it coming and you cannot put it off. Utter desolation will be swift and unexpected. Stand by your enchantments, charms, and visions, which you practiced since your youth for profit and advantage. You will become weary of your astrologers and their monthly forecasts. Let’s see if they can save you. They will burn as stubble in the fire; nobody will come to deliver them from the powerful flame. This is not a fire for providing warmth or to gather around. But it is the only thing they gave you ever since childhood, those you promoted and depended upon. All of you have erred and wandered into the fire together, with nobody to pull you out.
* MAR 12:27 ~ [Regarding a trick question about the resurrection] Jesus asked in reply, “Have you not read the story of Moses and the burning bush when God said, ‘I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?’ He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.”
* 1 TI 4:1-2 ~ The Holy Spirit explicitly states that in the latter days some will depart from the faith, conferring with seducing spirits and following the doctrine of devils; speaking lies of hypocrisy, and possessing a conscience seared by a hot iron.

You may recall King Saul seeking an audience with Samuel the prophet, who had died and left him without a spiritual advisor. Traveling incognito, Saul visited the witch of Endor herself possessed by a demon (1 SA 28:1:7–11). When she summoned Samuel, she had a vision and cried out (1 SA 28:12–13). Saul asked what she saw and she told him, “I saw spirits rise from the ground” and “an old man wearing a robe.” Both were convinced it was Samuel (1 SA 28:14–15), especially when they heard the entity say, “Why have you summoned me?” Since Saul perceived it to be Samuel, he sought counsel from the spirit; but this spelled very bad news for Saul (1 SA 28:16–20).

An argument can be made that old Saul had a bona fide visit from a dead person, and this may be an exception to the rule. But was it really Samuel without a body, Samuel in a glorified body, or a demon in disguise? Did the witch use her demon to summon its demonic friend in order to trick Saul, and imprison him? Then again, the witch was frightened to death herself. Either way, Saul understood the message, and the curse that came with it (1 CH 10:13-14). Let us carefully examine the text in 1st Samuel 28. The conclusion that the apparition was Samuel is debatable if not dismissible; the evidence is in the scripture itself. The witch saw a robed man arise out of the ground, not descend from heaven. If it was Samuel, I would think he would descend from heaven, not in a disembodied spirit but in a glorified state. Further, it remains unclear if Saul actually saw the vision because he asked the witch what she saw. But he probably heard the words loud and clear. Could the appearance of Samuel have been an angel, or perhaps a devil disguised as a man? Well, it could have been Lucifer himself and it still would’ve had the same effect. But if an evil spirit, why tell the truth, don’t they usually lie? Not if God makes them tell the truth. That’s right, God sometimes will use evil spirits and dishonest men to do His bidding in order to make His truth be known (see NUM 22; MAR 5:1–13).

Demons have been around as long as angels, and they are privy to the truth. Satan quotes scripture then twists it, like he did with Jesus in the wilderness. Fallen demons are not altogether ignorant of God’s Word, for they recognize Christ’s dominion over them and it terrifies them immensely (LUK 4:31–41; LUK 26:33). Satan and his underlings will use the truth against you, but they can’t handle the truth, the whole lot of them (JAM 2:19).

It must have served God’s purpose to communicate to Saul his errors, especially the engaging in witchcraft to garner God’s favor. Saul’s kingship was already in shambles and he was doomed by his indulgences. Saul had impatiently disregarded Samuel’s instructions and was rebuked for it (1 SA 13:9-14); only after Samuel was long gone was Saul eager to listen, wishing he could turn back the hands of time. The experience literally scared the hell out of both the witch and Saul, possibly also the demon living in the witch. Enough to change their ways? The Bible doesn’t say. But this certainly provides a poignant lesson for the rest of us. Once you get the hell scared out of you, don’t let it back in. Instead, let the Holy Spirit in and you will remain alive in the image of Christ forever.

Now we’ll address another interesting vision, this one from the New Testament: the transfiguration of Jesus. Remember when Jesus appeared in the sky with Moses and Elijah in front of three witnesses (DEU 17:6)? Moses and Elijah were already dead, right? Well, let’s look into the text. Jesus went up the mountain to pray with Peter, James, and John. The three apostles fell asleep and awakened to see Jesus speaking with Moses and Elijah. [These two prophets might be the two witnesses who testify in the final days: ZEC 4:12–14; MAL 4:5; MAT 17:10-13; LUK 1:17; REV 11:3-12.] How did the apostles know it was Moses and Elijah, whom they’d never met? But here they were alive (see MAR 12:26–27). Imagine, witnessing Jesus in His glorious splendor, and Moses and Elijah glorified with Him. No, the apostles were not seeing dead people, but a vision of the future, a premonition of things to come when all God’s witnesses will be glorified with Jesus. Every true witness (including you and me) will see the same thing: the magnificence of God and the radiant bodies of saints; for we will converse with them in our own glorified bodies (1 CO 15:44; PHP 3:21). This preview of the Good Shepherd bringing His sheep home is an image worth keeping in mind.

* JOB 19:25–26 ~ I know my Redeemer lives, and He will stand upon the earth on the last day. And though my body may be destroyed by worms, yet in my flesh I will see God.
* LUK 9:28–36 ~ Eight days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the mountaintop to pray. While Jesus prayed, His countenance changed and His clothes shined as lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared with Jesus in glorious splendor; they were conversing about Jesus’s departure from this earth which would occur upon His return to Jerusalem. The apostles had been in a deep sleep and awakened to witness this. The two prophets were preparing to leave Jesus when Peter interrupted, “Master, it is good to be here; let us build three shelters for you.” Peter had no idea what he was talking about, but while he spoke, a cloud surrounded the place and the apostles became afraid as it enveloped them. A voice spoke from the cloud saying, “This is my beloved Son; listen to Him.” Then the fog cleared and Jesus stood alone. The apostles kept this secret until after Jesus’s resurrection. (Read also MAT 17:1–9; MAR 9:2–10).
* HEB 3:4–6 ~ Every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. Moses was a faithful servant in God’s house, testifying of things to be repeated in the future. Christ is the faithful Son who governs over God’s house.
* 2 PE 1:16-18 ~ We did not follow cunningly devised fables when we testified of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we were eyewitnesses to His majesty. He received honor directly from God the Father, when a voice from heaven announced gloriously, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.” (also MAT 3:16–17; MAR 1:9–11; LUK 3:21–22)

Moses and Elijah came down from heaven, not up out of the ground. They came to meet with Jesus atop the mountain, not to hang around (though Peter was ready to build tents to coax them into staying). From the cloud God proclaimed, “This is my beloved Son, listen to Him” (see EXO 40:38; NUM 9:15; 1 KI 8:10-11; 2 CH 5:13-14). What an experience that must have been. Talk about sending shivers up your spine. It is a message for everyone. Yes, you will see Christ in His glory with your own eyes, and you can meet all the saints who are glorified with Him if you happen to become a saint yourself. Recall when God brought Moses to the mountaintop where he could see the Promised Land, knowing he would not enter with the rest of the Israelites (DEU 34:1–12). The apostles saw the Promised Land too but would not cross into it just yet. But they got a glimpse of it; we all do. Jesus invites you to the mountaintop to witness His glory, to witness for Him, and to become an adopted brother or sister (GAL 4:4–5; EPH 1:5; HEB 2:11).

There really is only one exception to the rule about people returning from death in a disembodied spirit: Jesus Christ. Jesus was technically dead three days (MAT 12:40). Upon death He commended His Spirit to the Father, and at the resurrection He arose fully restored, but for the scars on His body. Yes, Jesus was alive and well; He was seen, heard, and touched. At the ascension Jesus departed in the body; but He left His Spirit behind to comfort us and teach us (JOH 14:16,26; JOH 15:26; JOH 16:4–28). Jesus is still alive and well, and will prove it when He returns again in the flesh (ACT 1:9–11). Christ arrived in a body, was assassinated and retuned alive in the body, and will come again in glory in His flesh. He died once He arrives thrice. Next time Jesus comes He will greet us in our bodies, the living and the dead, after which Christians will never die again having received an incorruptible body, while the rest will die the second death cursed with degenerate bodies (REV 2:11; REV 20:14; REV 21:8). This is why you need to be born again, or you will die again for the last time.

* LUK 24:39 ~ Jesus said, “Behold my hands and my feet that it is me; touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as I do.”

Can you fathom the masses choosing death? Greater than those choosing life I’m afraid. The sheep will welcome Christ with open arms, like He welcomed us when we were called to be a member of His flock. The goats will rue the day they cast their eyes upon the living Lord Jesus. How could they not want to meet Him? But they had strayed from the Good Shepherd, and that condition will persist for perpetuity.

* ISA 40:5 ~ The glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all human flesh will see it together, for the Lord has said so.

Interestingly, when Jesus arose from the dead, He was accompanied by people who had come out of their graves (MAT 27:52–53). They were seen in their bodies, implying that they were not dead spirits wandering around the city but living souls. Isn’t this an exception to the rule? Not if they were alive in the flesh. The description has more in common with Jesus raising His friend Lazarus, who was dead four days (JOH 11:18–44). Lazarus was restored to life in the body, but not a glorified body because he would eventually die and be buried again; in fact, the Jewish leaders sought to hasten that end by placing a “hit” on Lazarus (JOH 11:53; JOH 12:10). Remember a young boy (son of Nain) whom Jesus revived (LUK 7:11–15); and the daughter of Jairus who Jesus revived after everyone said it was too late (LUK 8:49–56)? Old Testament prophets also revived the dead (1 KI 17:21–22; 2 KI 4:17–37) as did New Testament apostles (ACT 9:36–41; ACT 20:7–12). Reviving the dead is not similar in any way to dead spirits roaming the Earth; nor is it associated with the first or second resurrection.

None of the aforementioned examples were dead people wandering around without a body. Neither is the Holy Spirit a wandering or aimless soul, seeing how Jesus is God and so is the Holy Spirit, and God does not wander for He is omnipresent. Though the Bible does not elaborate about those arising with Christ on the day of His resurrection, it is likely they lived a bit longer and then died, like Lazarus and the others who were revived. These are portents of the upcoming resurrection of the first fruits of Christ (1 CO 15:12-58), not examples of it. Incidentally, the alternate theory that Jesus brought the risen dead home with Him when he joined His Father lacks biblical support; it is more likely they were left behind to witness. Jesus too would be sticking around to witness forty more days, in His glorified body. Certainly, seeing lost loved ones come back alive was Christ’s doing; they were awarded more time to further proclaim Jesus’s power and glory. No doubt it was particularly special for their inner circles.

It is fair to ask, where is the biblical proof that the dead do not return, do not haunt us, or otherwise cannot visit the living? Read the following passages if you please.

* JOB 7:7–10 ~ Remember, life is like the wind; after death, my eyes can no longer look for the good. Those who have seen me will see me no more for I will not exist. Like a cloud at the mercy of the wind, life vanishes. Those who go to their grave shall rise up no more. They will not return to their houses and nobody will know them any longer.
* ECC 9:5–6 ~ The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, neither can they receive any reward for they have been forgotten. Their love, hate, and envy have perished with them; they have no involvement forever with anything under the sun.
* PSA 115:17 ~ The dead do not praise the Lord, nor any who have gone down into silence.
* PSA 146:4 ~ His breath leaves, and he returns to the ground; in that day his thoughts also perish.
* ECC 12:7 ~ The dust will return to the ground; and the spirit will return to God who gave it.
* ISA 26:14 ~ They are dead; they will not live; they are deceased, they will not rise. God has visited them and destroyed them, and caused all memory to perish with them.
* HEB 4:10 ~ A person who has entered into his or her rest has also ceased from their own works, as God did from His.

Do you think your spirit dies with you? If not, where does it go after your body is interred? Well, Jesus’s Spirit didn’t die; and He promised the Holy Spirit would stay behind once He was reunited with God the Father. The Holy Spirit will dwell with you forever if you ask. And if you trust in this promise your spirit will not die either; plus, you will keep your soul (MAT 25:31–40; LUK 21:19). With respect to the condemned, they perish (JOH 3:16); their spirits return to God (DEU 12:7), for they have forfeited their souls to the fire (MAT 10:28).

When Jesus gave up the ghost, the Spirit left Him. Absolutely He felt the separation which disconnects sinful humans from the Father (MAT 27:45–47). But it is the convicted who have separated themselves, possessing not the Spirit (JDE 1:18–19). Jesus knew the feeling of being forsaken, and allowed Himself to experience it so you won’t have to. Christ offers His Spirit to you and me so we can live forever with our heavenly Father. Notice once again how all three persons of the trinity are present in this elaborate plan.

* PSA 31:5 ~ “Into your hand, oh Lord, I commit my spirit,” prayed King David.
* LUK 23:46 ~ Jesus cried in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit.”
* JOH 16:12–14 ~ Jesus informed them, “I have many things to tell you but you are not ready for them yet. Nevertheless, the Spirit of Truth comes; He will guide you into all truth. He does not draw attention to Himself but to me. He hears and He speaks, and He will show you things to come.”

In summary, when you die your spirit and soul enter the presence of the Lord, well if you exhibited a persistent faith. If not, you’ll wait in Hades for the judgment (MAT 25:41–46; LUK 16:19–31). Neither the spirit nor the soul lingers in the grave, only the body. Do you think some spirits stick around, like in haunted houses? Do you think your spirit will lag behind; maybe it goes somewhere else, or does it just die? I don’t want any part of death or hanging around here after my spirit leaves this body. Because I know I’m going to a better place. Are you? One thing I can guarantee, you won’t be moseying around Earth after you die.

Besides, there will come a time when there will be nothing left of this place. Even if you could choose to be sentenced to Earth, you wouldn’t be able to stay indefinitely because this place is going to burn (2 PE 3:10). Either way, you won’t make it. You can opt to be destroyed along with this world, in which case you’ve waived the invitation to go home to God and experience a new world (REV 21:1–3).

Fallen angels are not disembodied spirits, but they are looking for a host (MAT 12:43–45). Are you interested in being influenced by any spirit other than God’s? You can but it will be a bad decision. If that is your penchant, you can expect the same message and curse King Saul received. I recommend strongly against it. If anyone calls you to attend a séance, or observe a channeling, or study spiritism, or engage in occultist behavior—tell them where they can go.

Few people are aware when friendly angels are ministering to them, because they can look and act like people if it suits God’s purpose (HEB 13:2). Maybe you thought you saw your grandmother after she died and it was a comforting experience; maybe someone helped you out of a jam and then suddenly he or she was gone; maybe you received news about something very important just in the nick of time. God’s Holy Spirit talks to us, and sometimes He sends angels to talk to us or show us how. The Bible names two particular angels, likely cherubim. Michael is signified the archangel; he helped Joseph and Daniel (JOS 5:13–15; DAN 10:13–21). Gabriel also helped Daniel (DAN 8:16; 9:21) as well as Zacharias, Mary and Joseph (MAT 1:18–25; MAT 2:19–23; LUK 1:5–32). Lucifer was a cherub too, who fell from heaven to the earth; familiar spirits are those who were tossed out of heaven with him. It is evident in the Bible there are good and bad spirits, oftentimes difficult to detect or even differentiate. Though they may possess a spirit body, they are not physical beings.

In the last days there will be a great falling away from the faith prior to the revealing of the son of perdition, who will seek worship and exaltation just as Lucifer did before he got kicked out of heaven. In fact, that human host will be possessed by Lucifer, still on a mission to replace God as the object of your worship. Be assured: Satan, dragged a third of the angels down, and now they are here trying to drag you down, and if you follow any of them or their followers you will go where they are going—down.

* ISA 66:4 ~ I also will choose their delusions and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called nobody answered and when I spoke nobody listened. But they did evil before my eyes and chose that which I did not appreciate.
* 2 TH 2:2–5 ~ Do not be deceived, for the day of the Lord will not come until there occurs a falling away from the faith. Then the son of perdition will be revealed who opposes God and exalts himself as an object of worship, sitting in the temple of God as if he is to be adored. Remember, I (Paul) have spoken of this repeatedly.
* 2 TH 2:8–11 ~ After the wicked one is revealed the Lord will consume him with the spirit of His mouth, and will destroy him with the brightness of His coming. Not only the one who acts on behalf of Satan, with power, signs, and wonders, but also followers who likewise possess deceptiveness and unrighteousness, hating the truth that could save them. For this reason, God will send them a strong delusion, and allow them to believe that lie.

By Andrew Barber (Posted 10/31/21)