

ARE GHOSTS REAL? : PART 1

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Are Ghosts Real Or Just Demons?, The Danger Of Making Closed Statements, Jesus Meets Cleopas Walking To Emmaus, The Lord Vanishes, Apostles Thought They Had Seen A Spirit, Pneuma Can Mean A Human Soul Which Has Left A Body, Jesus Did Not Deny Existence Of Earthbound Spirits, Jesus Was The First Begotten Of The Dead With A New Type Of Body, A Supernatural Body For Believers, Spirit Of A Christian Immediately Returns To God, What Happens To The Spirits Of Unsaved Individuals Upon Their Death?, Situation Prior To Jesus' Resurrection, Multi-Tiered Abode Of The Dead, Jewish Understanding Of Paradise, Multiple Understanding Of Paradise, Enoch And Prophet Elijah, Paradise And Tree Of Life, Tree Of Life In New Jerusalem, Proper Time Frame For Book Of Revelation, Jesus Prophecies Destruction Of Jewish Temple, Revelation And Daniel's Seventy Weeks Prophecy, First Jewish-Roman War, Apostle Paul Had Met The Apostle John, Come Up Thither, Voices Of The Seven Thunders, Write Them Not, God Rejects Stubborn King Saul, An Evil Spirit Troubles Saul

While surfing my Facebook news feed, I came across a post where a particular person emphatically stated that there is no such thing as ghosts. Now, according to this individual's reasoning, because upon death a person's spirit is believed to either return to God in Heaven, or descend to Hell to be punished, ghosts simply cannot exist. This person concluded that ghosts must therefore be demonic spirits who are simply pretending to be ghosts in order to deceive people.

I have seen similar memes on Facebook before which convey this same basic message. To be honest, they make me uneasy, because they convey a belief which I personally am not one hundred per cent certain is true. In addition, when people make a closed statement such as that, and leave absolutely no room for any other possibility -- as if they've provided the definitive, indisputable answer -- it just bothers me. I am reminded of the following two verses:

"Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

1 Corinthians 8:1-2, KJV

In fact, when I see such posts where this belief is shared, the very first thing that comes to my mind is an incident we find in the Gospels where a Disciple named Cleopas and his companion are walking to the village of Emmaus. As they are walking along, the resurrected Christ joins them on the road and begins to expound the truth of the Scriptures to them, as they pertain to Jesus' suffering and resurrection. Later, after Jesus reveals Himself to them while they are breaking bread, before vanishing before their very eyes, those same two Disciples rush back to Jerusalem to inform the Apostles of the amazing things they have witnessed.

By the way, if you are doubting that this is exactly what occurred, consider that in that particular verse, according to Thayer's Greek English Lexicon, three of the Koine Greek words which are used are "ginomai" -- which means to become -- "apo" -- which concerns separation -- and "aphantos" -- which means to be taken out of sight or to become invisible. The last word is related to the Greek word "phantasma", from which we derive our English words "phantasm" and "phantom", which is an apparition or ghost.

It is while Cleopas and his companion are sharing their tale with the Apostles, that the Lord suddenly appears in their midst. It is how the Apostles react to Jesus' unexpected appearance which is relevant to our discussion regarding ghosts. The Apostles in fact mistake Jesus for a spirit, which is the same thing as a ghost. After all, we all know that Holy Ghost and Holy Spirit are referring to the same thing. At any rate, following is the story as found in the Gospel of Luke:

"And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of

them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

Luke 24:33-39, KJV

There are two interesting points regarding this story which I would like to draw to your attention. The first one is the following: The Apostles apparently believed in the existence of earthbound spirits. Please ask yourself: Why else would they react as they did? In fact, in verse thirty-seven, the word "spirit" is derived from the Koine Greek word "pneuma". According to Thayer's Greek English Lexicon, one of the meanings of this word is a human soul which has left a body. In other words, a disembodied spirit. Isn't that what many people refer to as a ghost? Furthermore, in the phrase "Holy Ghost", the word "Ghost" is derived from this very same Koine Greek word, "pneuma".

The second point to consider here is that Jesus did not deny the existence of such spirits. He simply corrected them and stated that He was not one of them. In fact, as I explain in the article entitled "Sex, a Bowl of Soup and the Nature of Angels", being as Jesus was the first begotten of the dead, and the firstborn, He was resurrected with a new kind of body. It was indeed still flesh and bone, but apparently it possessed some very amazing powers, such as the ability to materialize and dematerialize, and walk through solid walls. Furthermore, as you may know, the Scriptures inform us that some day we will inherit supernatural bodies very similar to the Lord's body. Consider the following exciting verses as proof of these two points:

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and THE FIRST BEGOTTEN OF THE DEAD, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Revelation 1:5-6, KJV

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be THE

FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN."

Romans 8:29, KJV

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, THE FIRSTBORN OF EVERY CREATURE . . . And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

Colossians 1:13-15, 18, KJV

"To the general assembly and CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,"

Hebrews 12:23, KJV

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:"

Romans 6:4-5, KJV

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

2 Corinthians 5:1-4, KJV

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Philippians 3:21, KJV

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

1 John 3:2, KJV

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

1 Corinthians 15:40-52, KJV

As the Apostles John and Paul write above, "we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection", and also we shall "be conformed to the image of his Son", and the Lord "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" so that "we shall be like him." And last of all, "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." So indeed, we have some very exciting times to look forward to once we leave this old world and this old body of flesh and blood behind. Thank the Lord!

At any rate, this is the first story that comes to mind when I consider the possibility of earthbound spirits, or ghosts. Now, please understand that I do not claim to be any kind of expert regarding this particular subject. As such, I do not fully understand why any spirit would be earthbound, or why God would even allow such a thing to happen. Based on the

following group of verses, I have long believed that ever since Christ's own resurrection from the dead, when we as Christians die, our spirit immediately returns to God:

"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth THE SPIRIT OF MAN THAT GOETH UPWARD, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?"
Ecclesiastes 3:19-21, KJV

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and THE SPIRIT SHALL RETURN UNTO GOD WHO GAVE IT."
Ecclesiastes 12:7, KJV

"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and WE FLY AWAY." Psalms 90:10, KJV

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle [meaning our physical body] were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 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." 2 Corinthians 4:18-5:8, KJV

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two,

HAVING A DESIRE TO DEPART, AND TO BE WITH CHRIST; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again."

Philippians 1:21-26, KJV

Please notice carefully that the Apostle Paul writes "to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." as well as "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ." So it seems that apparently, for a saved, born-again Christian at least, physical death results in our immediate presence with the Lord. However, what about those individuals who have NOT accepted the Lord and who are thus NOT saved? Do the above verses apply to them as well? Or is it possible that this is where earthbound spirits -- or ghosts -- enter the picture? Quite honestly, I don't know for certain, so I will refrain from providing a definitive answer here.

At the same time, as I point out in other BBB articles, the situation may possibly have been rather different prior to Jesus' resurrection from the dead. In other words, the souls or spirits of deceased Saints and Prophets may not have gone directly to be with the Lord during that period, due to the simple fact that Jesus had not yet become the firstborn of the dead. Am I absolutely sure of this point? No. However, there is some Scriptural evidence which does suggest it, as I will now explain to you.

As I explain in the series entitled "Hell, the Lake of Fire and Universalism", based on the various Hebrew and Koine Greek words which underlie the KJV translation of the Bible, what most Christians view as a fiery Hell, may actually be a multi-tiered spiritual abode. Furthermore, it may not all necessarily be associated with fire and brimstone, or with the torment of the departed spirits. There may have been a place in the underworld which was reserved for such benign, believing spirits where they awaited resurrection. In fact, there is a centuries-old debate regarding exactly what Jesus meant by the following verse when He responded to the thief who hung dying next to Him:

"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Luke 23:43, KJV

The word "paradise" is only found three times in the entire King James Version of the Bible, and all three times, it is found in the New Testament. According to Thayer's Greek English Lexicon, in all three cases, it is derived from the Koine Greek word "paradeisos". What is interesting is the fact that even the lexicon does not provide a consensus on what this Greek word means. Instead, it informs us how the Persians understood it, how the Jews understood it, and how the early Church Fathers understood it. Consider then the following definitions which are provided by the lexicon:

----- Begin Quote -----

3857 παράδεισος paradeisos par-ad'-i-sos

1) among the Persians a grand enclosure or preserve, hunting ground, park, shady and well watered, in which wild animals, were kept for the hunt; it was enclosed by walls and furnished with towers for the hunters.

2) a garden, pleasure ground
2a) grove, park

3) the part of Hades which was thought by the later Jews to be the abode of the souls of pious until the resurrection: but some understand this to be a heavenly paradise.

4) the upper regions of the heavens. According to the early church Fathers, the paradise in which our first parents dwelt before the fall still exists, neither on the earth or in the heavens, but above and beyond the world.

5) heaven

----- End Quote -----

So, as you can see, there really isn't a consensus regarding exactly what the word "paradise" means. Paradise was either a way station underneath the Earth for the departed souls of God's people before Jesus' resurrection -- because they could not be resurrected until He was resurrected first -- or else it is located somewhere between the Earth and Heaven, or else it is Heaven itself. Let me interject here that there are two

exceptions where the way station explanation does not seem to apply. We're told that Enoch walked with God and was not, and the Prophet Elijah was taken up to Heaven in a fiery chariot. So, it seems that these two bypassed the way station step. Consider the following group of verses as evidence of these two points:

"And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."
Genesis 5:22-24, KJV

"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces."
2 Kings 2:11-12, KJV

Following are the other two verses where the word "paradise" is found in the New Testament:

"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."
2 Corinthians 12:2-4, KJV

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."
Revelation 2:7, KJV

Allow me to offer a few comments here, beginning with the verse from Revelation first, being as it requires a much shorter comment. As you can see, this verse states that the tree of life "is in the midst of the paradise of God." If we assume that this is the same Tree of Life that we find

mentioned in the Book of Genesis, this verse then directly connects to the early Church Father's belief that Paradise is located somewhere in the region between the Earth and Heaven, and that it's not the actual Heavenly Headquarters where Jesus and God the Father reside. Please refer again to the fourth definition above.

Please also notice that just as Revelation 2:7 states that the Tree of Life is located "in the midst of the paradise of God", Genesis 2:9 states that the Tree of Life is located "in the midst of the garden", as we see by the verse below:

"And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil."

Genesis 2:9, KJV

I'm still not sure I understand why the early Church Fathers believed that Paradise was between the Earth and Heaven, but was not actually Heaven itself. Based on the verses we find in the Book of Revelation, my understanding is that the Tree of Life actually resides in the Heavenly City itself, as we can determine by these two verses:

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations . . .

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Revelation 22:2, 14, KJV

At any rate, let's move on and discuss 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. As I point out in a few other articles, I believe that the Apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation a lot earlier than the widely accepted view of about 90-100 AD. I am convinced that he wrote his book possibly around 55-65 AD and BEFORE the actual destruction of Jerusalem and the temple compound by General Titus and his Roman legions. That being the case, I believe that the temple which is mentioned in the Book of Revelation is in fact Herod's temple which Jesus prophesied would ultimately be destroyed in Matthew 24 and elsewhere in the Gospels. Consider the following group of verses:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, YOUR HOUSE IS LEFT UNTO YOU DESOLATE."

Matthew 23:7-8, KJV

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Matthew 24:1-3, KJV

"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."

Revelation 11:1-2, KJV

Please note that as I explain in other articles, forty-two months equates to three and a half Jewish years, or 1,260 days. For those of you who may not be aware of it, what is written in the previous set of verses perfectly matches the prophecies of Daniel regarding the Seventy Weeks -- or 490 years -- prophecy. In fact, it was during the Seventieth Week -- or the final prophetic seven-year period -- that the First Jewish-Roman War occurred from 66 AD to 73 AD. It was in the middle of that "week" -- or "in the midst of the week" as Daniel refers to it -- that is to say, after three and a half years or forty-two months, that Titus and the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple compound in 70 AD.

Titus and the Romans were in fact "the people of the prince that shall come" that Daniel writes about. That the books of Daniel and Revelation match so perfectly in their details is clear proof to me that the Book of Revelation was written a lot earlier than what has been claimed. In other words, as I said earlier, before the destruction of Jerusalem. For those of my readers who may not be familiar with Daniel's amazing prophecy, consider the following group of verses:

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

Daniel 9:25-27, KJV

Having now shared all of the previous information with you, I believe that in his Epistle to the Corinthian brethren, the Apostle Paul is actually referring to the Apostle John. Please notice that not only does Paul say that this unnamed man was caught up to Paradise, but he also gives us a very big clue when he writes "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Now consider this group of verses:

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, COME UP HITHER, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter."

Revelation 4:1, KJV

"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and WRITE THEM NOT."

Revelation 10:1-4, KJV

So the Apostle Paul speaks of a man who was caught up to the third heaven -- just as John is told to "Come up hither -- and says that this unidentified man heard words which were "not lawful for a man to utter". Then John is ordered not to write down the words which the seven thunders had uttered. The connection seems obvious to me. What do you think?

Returning to our primary discussion regarding the potential reality of earthbound ghosts and disembodied spirits, the second Biblical account which comes to mind which seems to cast doubt on the aforementioned person's claim that all ghosts are really demons pretending to be ghosts, concerns stubborn King Saul and the witch -- or necromancer -- of Endor.

As you may know, due to his rather stubborn rebellion in not obeying the Prophet Samuel's orders, God rejected King Saul as Israel's first king. While the Lord allowed Saul to rule for forty years until David was ready to rule, Saul did NOT have God's anointing. In fact, the Scriptures inform us that Saul was troubled by an evil, jealous spirit. Consider the following group of Bible verses:

"And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

1 Samuel 15:22-23, KJV

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah. But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee."

1 Samuel 16:13-15, KJV

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

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ARE GHOSTS REAL? : PART 2

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Foolish King Saul Seeks Out Witch Of Endor Contrary To The Levitical Law, Necromancer Raises Spirit Of Prophet Samuel, Samuel Prophesies Saul's Death In Battle, A Sign Of A True Prophet, Merit Of An Underworld As Way Station For The Dead, Saved Christians Immediate Ascension To Heaven Upon Death, Resurrection Of Old Testament Saints Following Christ's Own Resurrection, The First Resurrection In Book Of Revelation, Matthew's Resurrection Account May Have Influenced Apostle's Reaction When Resurrected Jesus Appeared, Christ Preaches To Spirits In Prison, Multi-Tiered Underworld, Are Demons Really Disembodied Spirits Of The Nephilim?, Supernatural Strength Of Demon-Possessed People, Jesus And The Demoniak, Under The Earth Verses, Summation Of The Scriptural Evidence, Remaining Question: What Happens To The Spirits Of Unsaved People?, Are Earthbound Spirits Real?, Closing Remarks, Suggested Reading

Continuing our discussion from part one, towards the very end of his reign, King Saul engaged in battle against the Philistines. As the Scriptures relate, Saul was very worried about the potential outcome of the coming battle. Thus, he did something wicked which no Israelite king should ever do, and which was in fact strictly prohibited by the Mosaic Law. Consider the following group of verses:

"Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God."

Leviticus 19:31, KJV

"And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar

spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people."

Leviticus 20:6, KJV

"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer."

Deuteronomy 18:10-11, KJV

"And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?"

Isaiah 8:19, KJV

Yet that was exactly what foolish King Saul did. He defied the Lord and what was clearly forbidden by the Levitical Law, and he sought out the witch at Endor, in order to determine what the outcome of the war against the Philistines would be. This was due to the fact that the Prophet Samuel had already died. As a result, Saul could no longer seek counsel from the Prophet. But then, to make matters worse, Saul requested that the necromancer raise up the spirit of the Prophet Samuel. Consider the following group of verses:

"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. 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 swore 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. 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. 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. Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. 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." 1 Samuel 28:5-19, KJV

Now, I have seen certain Christians erroneously claim that this witch did not really raise up the spirit of the Prophet Samuel. Supposedly, she just pretended to do so. However, I do not agree with their conjecture. There are two reasons why I hold this particular position. For one thing, notice how surprised the necromancer was when Samuel's spirit was actually raised, and she was informed that the mysterious man was really King Saul. Someone who was simply faking it would not have reacted in this way, because they would have had complete control of the situation.

But there's an even more important reason why I'm personally convinced that the witch really did raise the spirit of the Prophet Samuel from the abode of the dead, and that Samuel really did speak to King Saul. The reason is found in the following verse:

"And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them."
Ezekiel 33:33, KJV

As we read above, the Prophet Samuel very specifically told Saul that he and his sons would die in battle the very next day, and join Samuel in the underworld. As we know from the Scriptures, that is exactly what happened. In my view, there is simply no possible way that that evil woman could have known that, particularly if she was faking it. So it had to be the disembodied spirit of the real Prophet Samuel. You may disagree if you like.

But returning to our main discussion, this Biblical example of King Saul, the witch of Endor and the Prophet Samuel offers the perfect example regarding why the Jews believed that Paradise was actually a part of the underworld -- or Hades in Greek mythology -- where the spirits of the dead abode. As I explained earlier, until Jesus was resurrected from the dead and became the firstborn of the dead, it was not possible for others to be fully raised from the dead. So the idea of a holding place or way station for departed spirits within the bowels of the Earth as both the Jews and Greeks believed seems to have merit in my view.

However, as I likewise explained previously, once the Lord was resurrected from the dead, my understanding -- which the Apostle Paul seems to confirm -- is that there is no longer the need for any kind of holding place or way station beneath the Earth for those people who have placed their faith in the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Upon our physical death, our spirits immediately ascend to Heaven to be with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. As the Apostle Paul wrote in his Epistles, "to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." as well as "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ."

Another incident which is related to this same subject, and which I have discussed before is found in the twenty-seventh chapter of Matthew's Gospel. Please consider the following group of Bible verses:

"And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks

rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves AFTER HIS RESURRECTION, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

Matthew 27:51-53, KJV

The previous group of verses sounds like an actual physical resurrection of the dead, similar to what happened with the Lord's dear friend, Lazarus, in Bethany. Please carefully notice that this amazing resurrection occurred AFTER Jesus Himself had risen from the dead, thus clearly proving once again that Jesus had to rise first before all others, thus truly making Him the firstborn of the dead. It was Jesus' resurrection which made it possible for others to arise as well.

For this reason, I have sometimes wondered if this event which is mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew might possibly be the First Resurrection event which is mentioned in the Book of Revelation, as we see by the following two verses:

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Revelation 20:5-6, KJV

Please notice that in his Gospel, Matthew does not provide us with a specific number of how many of the Saints were raised from the dead. He simply states "many". That being the case, is it possible that said resurrection could have included ALL of the Old Testament Saints whose disembodied spirits had been in safe keeping in that place beneath the Earth's surface which was known as Paradise to the ancient Jews?

Now, regardless of whether this event was an actual physical resurrection of the bodies of the Saints, or a resurrection of just their spiritual bodies only, given the magnitude of this event, the Apostles must have certainly at least heard about it. On the other hand, maybe they actually encountered some of these risen Saints themselves. Whatever the case may be, it does add a little background information and helps to

explain why they thought they had seen a spirit when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst.

As I point out in the eight-part series "Hell, the Lake of Fire and Universalism", we find additional support for a multi-layered spiritual underworld in the following verses which are found in the Apostle Peter's first Epistle:

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also HE WENT AND PREACHED UNTO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited IN THE DAYS OF NOAH, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

1 Peter 3:18-20, KJV

As I explain in the series "Nephilim: The Giants of Genesis", it is my personal belief that these spirits in prison to whom Jesus went to preach were actually the Fallen Angels who had rebelled against the Lord, and who had wreaked so much havoc on the Earth prior to the Genesis Flood. So what these verses again seem to demonstrate is that the underworld, Hell, Hades or whatever you wish to call it, was actually a multi-tiered world. Some parts of it were apparently reserved for the disembodied spirits of those people who had believed in the coming Savior -- meaning Paradise -- while other parts were reserved for violent, wicked, unbelieving spirits. At least that seems to be what the ancient Jews believed.

Something else which I mention in the aforementioned series is that according to the Book of Enoch, demons are actually the violent, wicked spirits of the Nephilim giants. While their physical bodies were destroyed in the Genesis Flood, that was not the only judgment that God passed upon them according to Enoch. He informs us that upon departing from the bodies of the giants, those same spirits became evil demons which the Lord condemned to wander throughout the Earth, causing war, destruction, and other evil acts, until the day of the Great Judgment.

While some Christians don't accept the Book of Enoch as being divinely inspired text, Enoch's account does offer us a clear explanation regarding why demon-possessed people appear to be

so strong. It simply isn't their own natural strength. A good example of this is the demoniac who Jesus encountered in the Gospels. We are informed that this demon-possessed man was even able to break his own chains and fetters. Here then are verses from both the Book of Enoch, and the Gospels of Mark and Luke:

"And now, the giants, who are produced from the spirits and flesh, shall be called evil spirits upon the earth, and on the earth shall be their dwelling. Evil spirits have proceeded from their bodies; because they are born from men, and from the holy Watchers is their beginning and primal origin; they shall be evil spirits on earth, and evil spirits shall they be called. As for the spirits of heaven, in heaven shall be their dwelling, but as for the spirits of the earth which were born upon the earth, on the earth shall be their dwelling. And the spirits of the giants afflict, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction on the earth, and cause trouble: they take no food, but nevertheless hunger and thirst, and cause offences. And these spirits shall rise up against the children of men and against the women, because they have proceeded from them. From the days of the slaughter and destruction and death of the giants, from the souls of whose flesh the spirits, having gone forth, shall destroy without incurring judgement -- thus shall they destroy until the day of the consummation, the great judgement in which the age shall be consummated, over the Watchers and the godless, yea, shall be wholly consummated."

Book of Enoch 15:8-16:1

"And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him."

Mark 5:1-4, KJV

"And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but

in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)"

Luke 8:26-29, KJV

The final group of verses I wish to share with you concerns those which are found in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, and in the Book of Revelation, and which contain the phrase "under the earth". As you can see below, there are actually three instances where this interesting phrase is found:

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and THINGS UNDER THE EARTH; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Philippians 2:9-11, KJV

"And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And NO MAN in heaven, nor in earth, neither UNDER THE EARTH, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon . . . And EVERY CREATURE which is in heaven, and on the earth, and UNDER THE EARTH, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Revelation 5:2-4, 13, KJV

I have always been intrigued by the previous verses, and in particular, not only by the phrase "under the earth", but also by who or what the phrase is referring to. The Apostle Paul uses the word "things", while the Book of Revelation uses the phrase "no man", followed later by "every creature". The fact that Paul is writing about how every knee shall bow seems to be a confirmation that all of these verses are in fact referring to human beings, or at least the disembodied

spirits of human beings -- and perhaps demons and the Fallen Angels as well -- who exist in the underworld beneath the Earth's surface.

So, what we have seen from all of the Scriptural evidence I have shared with you in this article is that departed or disembodied spirits are real, and also that a multi-tiered spiritual underworld exists as well. We have likewise seen that the ancient Jews apparently believed in disembodied spirits walking amongst human beings, as evidenced by the Apostle's reaction when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst. Please understand that this article does NOT include every single Bible verse where the underworld is mentioned. Neither does it endeavor to explain the various Hebrew and Koine Greek words which are used when this underworld is mentioned in the Scriptures. For that, allow me to again refer you to my lengthy series "Hell, the Lake of Fire and Universalism".

Having said all of the above, that just leaves us with one unanswered question which I asked earlier in this article; and that is the following: What happens to the spirits of unsaved individuals who do not accept the Lord during their physical lifetime? Do they also return to God as we read in the Book of Ecclesiastes? Or are they bound to the Earth or even under the Earth in Paradise or Hades? If the spirits of the Nephilim now wander the Earth as demons, according to the Book of Enoch, is it likewise possible that for reasons which are only known to God, the spirits of these deceased, unsaved human beings may also wander the Earth as earthbound spirits, or perhaps even be restricted to a certain location or maybe even be tied to a particular object? I honestly do not know for sure, so I am not about to fully embrace such a doctrine.

All I know for certain is what we read in the Scriptures; and that is that the witch of Endor raised the spirit of the Prophet Samuel from the dead, and the Apostles thought that they had seen a spirit when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst. I have opened the Scriptures to you. Now you decide what you want to believe. For my part, let me just say that in my seven plus decades of life, I have never personally seen a ghost, apparition, phantasm, phantom, disembodied spirit, departed spirit, or whatever you choose to call it. Actually, considering my age, I honestly hope that I never

do see such an entity, because I would probably drop dead on the spot!

With these thoughts, I will bring this article to a close. It is my hope that you have found it informative, enlightening, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life as well. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would really appreciate if you'd take the time to click or tap on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information and further study, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were either mentioned in this article, or which contain topics which are related to this article. All of these articles are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server. To read these articles, simply click or tap on any link you see below.

A Temple Veil, an Earthquake and a Centurion
Demonic Possession and Sickness: A Biblical Perspective
Hell, the Lake of Fire and Universalism
Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word
Judgment of Azazel: Scapegoat of the High Priest
Nephilim: The Giants of Genesis
Origin of Demons: Spirits of the Nephilim?
Sex, a Bowl of Soup and the Nature of Angels
The Book of Enoch: Truth or Heresy?
The Judgment of Angels, Demons and Men
What Happened to the Evil Spirits Known as Legion?

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