

ARE THERE GHOSTS AMONG THE LIVING?

June 2, 2013

Most young people and many adults are intrigued with the idea of ghosts. Movies, books, and TV programs have been devoted to the “undead” that live among us. In order to understand whether or not ghosts are real, we must first define what a ghost is. Merriam Webster’s definition of “ghost” is “a disembodied soul; *especially*: the soul of a dead person believed to be an inhabitant of the unseen world or to appear to the living in bodily likeness” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ghost>). This is the favored definition that most people agree with concerning ghosts.

The belief in the existence of ghosts is not a new phenomenon, but goes back hundreds and thousands of years into the past. The earliest forms of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* are dated from 2750 - 2500 B.C., wherein Gilgamesh converses with his dead friend Enkidu. Other famous authors such as Homer, Dickens, and Shakespeare have all incorporated ghosts or spirits into the story lines of their works, as well. The spirits of the departed have been known by various names throughout time and culture, such as, the Scottish wraith, the French phantom, the Latin specter, the Old English shade, the Gaelic banshee, and the German poltergeist (<http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v5/n3/ghosts>).

No doubt many people believe the spirits of dead people walk about the earth today. There are countless people that call themselves “psychics” who claim to communicate with the dead, but do ghosts really exist? The only reliable answer to this question can be found in the Word of God.

King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived second only to the Lord Himself, said, “For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any *thing* that is done under the sun” (Ecc. 9:5-6). Solomon did not intend for the reader to think that the souls of the dead become unconscious or non-existent, but that they know nothing about what happens “under the sun,” or upon the earth. Isaiah wrote, “*They are* dead, they shall not live; *they are* deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish” (Isa. 26:14). Again, Isaiah was speaking about interaction between the dead and the living because we know from Luke’s account of the rich man and Lazarus that the soul lives on after death but is not allowed to interact with the living (Lk. 16:27-31). When Job was suffering at the hand of Satan he said, “As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up *no more*. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more” (Job 7:9-10). The wise man also said, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7). David also knew that he would never see his dead son on this side of eternity again (2 Sam. 12:23).

However, during the miraculous period of the Christian dispensation, demons or the departed spirits of wicked men were allowed to inhabit the bodies of people and act upon them. The whole purpose of this was to show the power of Jesus and His followers when they cast them out of the one afflicted. Such was the case when Jesus cleansed the possessed man of the Gadarenes (Mk. 5:1-13). This came to an end, though, when the age of miracles ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-10) because, without the ability to cast out a demon, the one possessed would have no hope of recovery; and more importantly there was no need for miracles once the completed Word of God was given and preserved.

No matter what many claim, ghosts or the spirits of the dead do not interact with the living in any way. There are many that profess to have seen ghosts of all kinds, but according to the revealed Word of God, that is not possible today.