

GLEANINGS — May 1, A.D. 2016
Ghosts, Part I

And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. (Matthew 14:26)

About two thousand years after Jesus walked on water, many people including Christian disciples can be afflicted with the fear of **GHOSTS**. Being a little more than six months past last Hallowe'en on the calendar is perhaps a good time to think Biblically and soberly about that eerie topic.

The materialist (*one who believes that only physical matter i.e. tangible "stuff" exists*) typically expresses contempt for even the mention of the unseen realm and anything that might be there. His sneering position is that ghosts don't exist, period. As Christians thinking Biblically, we can't establish a "theology of ghosts" based on the materialist's myopic presuppositions.

Against the materialist we insist that there is indeed an unseen realm (*what he might call the supernatural*) and that God has revealed all we need to know about it for our present good.

At the other end of the spectrum is the superstitious person. He acknowledges the unseen realm, but lacks discernment about it. Events in his life coincide in an unusual way. He sees or experiences something very strange. He might attribute these things to divine intervention, to demonic mischief, or to the visitations of aliens from the Andromeda galaxy. He has no difficulty believing that the spirits of human beings who have passed away can appear at will and interact with those still in the flesh.

To help guide that person out of fear and ignorance, we might ask questions like, "Why are the activities commonly attributed to ghosts done by those ghosts?" Or, "If all who depart this earthly life go to a better place as is commonly believed, why would they want to keep hanging around in this worse place, apparently with nothing better to do than frighten those who are still here?"

Simply declaring to a materialistic or superstitious friend that he is fundamentally wrong will likely accomplish little. Asking him probing questions might be a little more fruitful. But ultimately, the application of the word of God in the power of the Spirit of God is the only hope for one lost in either materialism or superstition.

So exactly what as Bible believers can we say about **GHOSTS**? Let's consider a few passages.

"There shall not be found among you anyone who [*among other things*] calls up the dead*. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD..." (condensed from Deuteronomy 18:10-12)

In Luke 16, Jesus tells of a rich man and Lazarus who begged at the rich man's gate. Both men died. Lazarus went to "Abraham's bosom" and the rich man to Hades. Much could be said about this passage, but for our purposes note this well: although the rich man desired that his brothers be warned about the misery that awaited them if they did not repent, he apparently was not able to warn them himself. He appealed to Abraham, asking him to send Lazarus to do the warning.

to be continued...

* Attempting to communicate with the dead by way of occult practices is called **NECROMANCY**