

GLEANINGS — May 8, A.D. 2016
Ghosts, Part II

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)

Part I of our little "theology of ghosts" concluded with a quick summary of Christ's account of the rich man and Lazarus. As a corollary to our main discussion, consider what we learn about both after they had departed this life.

Lazarus was taken by the angels to be with Abraham in heaven and the rich man was buried. Abraham's words to the rich man – no longer on Earth but in Hades and desiring to warn his brothers about that place of torment – underscores the truth that God's word is the most powerful persuader: "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead." (Luke 16:31)

The hope of believers who depart this earthly life is expressed at 2 Corinthians 5:8. "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." In Hebrews 12:23 departed saints are described as "the spirits of just men made perfect." Consider this: would a person perfected in holiness, enjoying unbroken and unhindered communion with God, the holy angels, and all the other saints in pure light have any interest in dealing with us who are as yet full of corruption and living in a fallen, corrupt realm? Would they even be able to do so?

In at least one extraordinary instance, two men who had departed this life appeared back on Earth for a very brief time. This was of course at the event known as the Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah appeared in glory on a mountain which Christ and three of His disciples had ascended. Matthew (ch. 17), Mark (ch. 9), and Luke (ch. 9) all record this amazing, singular event. It is very significant that all three inspired Gospel writers are careful to say that although Elijah and Moses were SEEN by the three sin-corrupted disciples, they SPOKE only with the sinless One, appearing temporarily in glory Himself.

So to sum up, the wicked dead cannot communicate with those on Earth. It is unlikely that the just, now perfected in spirit, have any desire to do so. Meanwhile God has commanded those on Earth not to make any attempt to communicate with the departed, and in at least one case we can read of the disastrous results of disobeying that command. (Cf. 1 Samuel 28:6ff and 1 Chronicles 10:13.)

Meanwhile, the word of God tells us that "...satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14). It is reasonable to infer that he and his fallen angels, all who hate God and mankind, have the ability to impersonate the dead in their arsenal of deceit. With their superhuman knowledge and faculties, they are probably able to do so effectively. Preying upon susceptible minds and perhaps even with some limited ability to manipulate matter (*as in the book of Job, strictly under God's control*) the evil one and his servants convince humans that they have seen, heard, or felt ghosts.

Jesus taught that the devil "...was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." (John 8:44). That ancient serpent, arch criminal that he is, only seeks to kill and destroy, and to supplant faith with terror and confusion...to frighten God's sheep.

Be a Christian ghostbuster. Cry it out loud with faith, "I ain't 'fraid o' no **GHOST!**"