

Ghosts

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It's almost Halloween, the season of ghosts and ghouls and scary noises at night. While there might be a time and place for a little bit of fun, such as telling scary stories around a campfire or kids dressing up in silly ghost costumes, we need to have level heads about ghosts and not let our imaginations trump simple Bible truths.

The first thing we need to realize about ghosts is that anybody who claims to have seen one must instantly forget any thoughts of atheism or evolution. We need to point this out, since the existence of ghosts would automatically prove that man survives the death of the physical body – evolution is completely opposed to anything supernatural, since it cannot be explained by science or worldly reason. There are, however, a few problems with stories about ghosts, ghouls, and specters:

- Most of the ghost sightings in the world take place at locations already imbued with myth and legend. If we are told that a particular house is haunted, we become apprehensive and are more apt to let our minds play tricks on us. It is no surprise that a creaky, dank, dark house in the middle of the night is going to be scary, and it may take nothing more than a gust of wind, a creaking floor board, or a cat exploring the yard to send us into a panic.
- Ghost sightings are often coincidental, and based on nothing more than obvious information. People claim to see disembodied spirits in a house, and then learn later that an old lady died there one hundred years ago. Should it surprise us that people in the nineteenth century died in their homes when access to hospitals and care facilities was hard to come by then? Probably, every one hundred year old house in America has had somebody die in or near it at some point.
- The mind is a funny thing when it comes to believing something. Should we really trust the human mind when it comes to ghost sightings? The same mind also suffers from amnesia, phantom injuries, psychosomaticism, suggestion in advertisement, forgetfulness, and even things as simple as believing that we have run an errand when, in fact, the task is left undone.
- Many situations may make our minds play tricks on us – kids at summer camp who hear ghost stories around the camp fire, old houses that make funny noises, being alone in large buildings at night, walking past graveyards, etc. Being aware of our own imaginative tendencies might help us rationally approach situations that seems scary at first.
- In that odd phase between sleep and being awake, we see many things that we mistake for being real. We wake up from vivid nightmares believing them to be real, but does that make them valid?

Beyond all of the practical observations, we need to remember what the Bible says about death. The cessation of physical life completely cuts us off from this world. *“And they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun,”* states Ecclesiastes 9:5-6. Some say that ghosts are just spirits that have unfinished business to take care of in this life, but the Bible makes it clear that death is a time when nothing worldly can be accomplished (Ecclesiastes 9:10). We also need to remember the story

of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. In death, the rich man was not allowed to do anything about his unfinished business, which poses a problem with most ghost stories. If God would not let the rich man haunt the world for the purpose of preaching the Gospel, then why would the Father release spirits to haunt for revenge, anger, or anything else negative that most ghosts are said to desire. Ecclesiastes 12:7 says, furthermore, *“And the spirit shall return to God who gave it,”* which means that God has control of the spirits in the afterlife. He decides who comes and goes, and no ghost has the ability to elude God or get lost in the hustle and bustle of the universe.

2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 make it clear that God has the power to imprison and confine powerful angelic beings. With this in mind, we need to realize that it is no difficult task for the Lord to imprison the souls of humans. God has the power to *“keep the unrighteous dead under punishment for the day of judgment”* (2 Peter 2:9). This reveals that God does not punish wicked people by making them wander the earth and haunt houses and grave yards. Their punishment is hell, and there is no escaping it. No soul gets misplaced, forgotten, or set free. *“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment...”* (Hebrews 9:27).