

ISSUE

18.16

BULLETIN OF  
THE OLSEN  
PARK CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

# Faithful Sayings

April 17,  
2016

## Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

### Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Jeff Nunn

### Deacons:

Steve Dixon

Ryan Ferguson

Arend Gressley

Ben Hight

Jack Langley

Blake McAlister

Brady McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Rusty Scott

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

### Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



## Do Ghosts and Demons Operate Today?

By Kyle Pope

**T**he Israelites were told in Deuteronomy 29:29, “**The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law**” (NKJV).

This indicates to us that while God has revealed many things to mankind, there are some things that He has chosen not to disclose to human beings. God has not revealed much to us about the subject of ghosts and demons, but a few things have been revealed that form the limits of our understanding of these subject.



### Demons and Evil Spirits

Let's first consider the subject of demons and what we are told about their nature and identity. Concerning demons, we are told:

1. There are beings higher in nature than humans that are called **“angels”** (Psa. 8:5; Heb. 2:7, 9).
2. At some point some of these angels sinned (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). These angels appear to be the same group identified as the devil’s angels (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:7, 9).
3. These may be referred to as **“demons”** (Luke 11:15), **“evil spirits”** (Acts 19:12-13), **“unclean spirits”** (Matthew 10:1), or Satan’s angels (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:7, 9).

Little is said about demons in the Old Testament. Idolatry was called the worship of demons (Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17; 2 Chron. 11:15; Psa. 106:37), yet demon possession does not appear to have been very common. An exception to this was the **“distressing spirit”** that came upon Saul (1 Sam.16:14-16, 23; 18:10; 19:9). In the New Testament there was apparently a surge in demonic activity. Both Jesus and His disciples frequently cast out evil spirits (Mark 1:39; 6:13). Jesus likely described the success of His disciples in this activity, declaring, **“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven”** (Luke 10:18-20). While some often apply this statement to some ancient fall of Satan, in the context it is connected with His disciples’ power over evil spirits—thus weakening Satan’s power and influence.

This may have been a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Zechariah 13:2 promised during the age of the Messiah that God would **“cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land.”** In some of the later New Testament books reference is made to sinful angels being **“bound”** awaiting final judgment (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). This is probably the same thing Revelation described as Satan being **“bound”** during the time in which Christ reigns over His kingdom—which is the church (Rev. 20:2). All of this suggests to us that demonic activity (such as was seen in the New Testament) does not happen today, because these demons have been caused to **“depart from the land”** being **“bound”** awaiting final judgment.



## Ghosts and the Spirits of the Dead

On the question of ghosts, we are also looking at something about which God has revealed very little. Some of what is said appears to rest in the record of speculations on the part of people, rather than accounts of actual occurrences. For example, when Jesus walked on the water His disciples first reacted by saying **“It is a ghost!”** (Matt. 14:26; cf. Mark 6:49). The word they used in the Greek was the word *phantasma* (φάντασμα) from which we get our word “phantom.” We should note that this does not necessarily confirm that ghosts truly did appear to people—His frightened disciples mistakenly imagined that Jesus was a ghost. In a similar passage, after Peter was miraculously freed from prison and the young woman named Rhoda reported that he was at the front door, the disciples assumed **“It is his angel”** (Acts 12:12-15). This doesn’t appear to be talking about an angelic being associated with Peter, but rather they assumed that Peter was dead and his spirit (or **“angel”**) had appeared to the young woman. This illustrates that sometimes the term **“angel”** can be used as a synonym for one’s own spirit. We should note, however, that the spirits of the dead are not the same as angelic beings or demons. Even the spirits of the dead are still **“lower than the angels”** (Psa. 8:5; Heb. 2:7, 9). It is not until after the resurrection that the righteous dead are promised that they will be made **“equal to the angels”** (Luke 20:36). Once



again, however, we must note that the mere speculation that it was Peter’s **“angel”** knocking at the door does not confirm that spirits of the dead were actually allowed to have contact with the living.

What we are told is where the spirits of the dead go when one dies. All of the dead go to a place of the dead called either Sheol in the Old Testament or Hades in the New Testament (see Luke 16:19-30; Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:27). All of the dead go to Hades (Rev. 20:13) and sinful angels are



bound in a part of Hades called “**Tartarus**” (2 Pet. 2:4). It is clear that the spirits of the dead are not allowed to roam free. In Jesus’ account of the rich man and Lazarus, although the rich man in Hades begged that one from the dead be allowed to return and warn his living brothers, his request is not granted (cf. Luke 16:27-29). So, in general the dead do not appear to be allowed to have any return or

contact with the living. Exceptions to this were when the departed spirit of Samuel was allowed to speak to Saul (1 Sam. 28:15-19) and at the transfiguration when the spirits of Moses and Elijah were allowed to speak to Jesus (Luke 9:30-31). These appear, however, to be unusual events and not something that is allowed on a regular basis. Because of this, it would not appear that modern claims to see or have experiences with ghosts have any support from Scripture.

With that said, once again, we must be content to let the “**secret things**” belong to God and trust in what He has revealed. If there was some situation in which demons or spirits of the dead were allowed to have contact with the living, the child of God (as in the days of the apostles) could be confident that God would grant to him or her all that would be needed to overcome such things. The Christian need not fear (or speculate) about these things (cf. Col. 2:18-19).



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● **Let us know if you have any questions.**