

Templates of Truth with Rick Smith  
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A fascination with the paranormal has gripped the world today. Television series such as “Medium,” “Ghost Whisperer,” and “Ghost Hunters” capture large viewing audiences. The recent motion picture “Paranormal Activity” gained \$107 million dollars in its first two months at the box office. There are scores of ghost hunters across the country, but what exactly are they hunting? We discover a sobering answer in today’s Templates of Truth.

Paranormal activity is nothing new. Jesus confronted it often in His earthly ministry. Mark reported in his Gospel that as Jesus entered the synagogue in Capernaum to teach, *there was...a man with an unclean spirit* (Mark 1:23). In this encounter, we see that there is a supernatural (or paranormal) world that can be tapped into from this side of reality. Paul referenced this unseen realm in his letter to the church at Ephesus: *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against...the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places* (Ephesians 6:12). The *heavenly places* Paul mentioned refers to the paranormal world.

But what are the *spiritual forces* in that world? Modern enthusiasts deceptively believe that these are human souls (ghosts) that inhabit earthly dwellings. The Bible makes it clear, however, that this is not possible. Since the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the human souls of those who are Christians advance immediately into the presence of God in heaven at the point of physical death. Paul explained that when believers are *absent from the body, (we are) at home with the Lord* (II Corinthians 5:8). That is where we remain until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We are not wandering around in the paranormal world inhabiting places we once dwelled. Even if we could, why would a Christian want to leave the beauty and perfection of heaven and stay in some dusty earthly house!

What about those who die and are not believers in Christ? Scripture teaches that these human souls are kept in Hades, the holding place of the evil dead. Jesus explained this difference when he taught about a certain rich man and a poor man in Luke 16:19-26. In this account, the poor man *died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom (heaven)...the rich man...(to) Hades* (Luke 16:22-23). Jesus further explained that those in Hades cannot leave: *there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over...may not be able* (Luke 16:26). So again, the human souls of dead non-Christians are being held in Hades and cannot leave there until the final Great White Throne Judgment described in the book of Revelation where they will be permanently sentenced to the eternal Lake of Fire (Hell). They cannot wander around in the paranormal world to places where they once dwelled. They are imprisoned in Hades awaiting trial and final sentencing.

So if ghost hunters are encountering spiritual forces in earthly dwelling places today, who exactly are they encountering? It is Biblically clear – they are encountering the same spiritual forces that Jesus encountered at Capernaum – unclean spirits! What are unclean spirits? Pure and simple, they are Satan’s demons! Paranormal activity is demonic activity. The ghost hunters of cable television would challenge, “Oh no! We have safe, friendly and often beneficial encounters in our investigations.” Of course they do. Paul declared, *no wonder, for even Satan*

*disguises himself as an angel of light* (II Corinthians 11:14). Note that the demon-possessed man Jesus encountered at Capernaum was in the synagogue (in the church). He often appeared to be a good, Christian person just like all the other church members. Satan and his demons will take on various forms of goodness & innocence so that their activity always appears to be safe and fun. But make no mistake - their purpose is evil and deadly! If you play with the fire of hell, eventually you WILL be burned by it! Some will become demon possessed, while others will come under demonic oppression and develop demonic strongholds in their life.

Peter warned us: *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour* (I Peter 5:8). He does it deceptively, in disguise, appearing like people and looking legitimate rather than evil. He fascinates you with, and entices you into his activity; then he pounces on you and devours you! Your only defense is to *resist the devil* (James 5:7). Turn your back on paranormal activity, run as fast as you can away from it and never look back. Then, *draw near to God and He will draw near to you* (James 5:7). Rather than searching for ghosts, God will give you the desire to search His Word for truth, strength, wisdom and insight. Rather than searching for dead wandering spirits, God will give you a desire to search for lost living people who need Christ and empower you to share the Gospel with them in an effort to bring them to salvation. You will find yourself investing your time serving God's kingdom rather than exploring the paranormal domain of Satan's kingdom.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.