

“What About the Witch of Endor Calling Up Samuel’s Spirit?”

I just read the [Animism](#) article. It states that Christianity specifically teaches against the existence of ghosts (spirits of dead people) in the world, and that dead people cannot communicate with the living and vice versa. What about the passage in I Samuel 28 with Saul and the witch of Endor? She calls up Samuel’s spirit to communicate with Saul.

The incidence in 1 Samuel 28 is one of two exceptions to the “no crossing over” boundaries in scripture, both highly supernatural miracles. The witch of Endor had no power to truly conjure up the spirits of dead people; that’s why she screamed in terror when Samuel actually appeared. It was God at work, not the witch or even the departed prophet responding to the summons. Samuel gave the word of the Lord to Saul, and his prophecy was fulfilled shortly thereafter.

The other miracle was when Moses and Elijah appeared along with a transfigured Christ to Peter, James and John (Matt. 17). The disciples did not summon the spirits of these dead saints; they were sent by the Father (probably to encourage the Lord Jesus).

The fact that there are two biblical exceptions, both of which required divine intervention to send departed spirits into this world, does not affect the truth that there is a “great gulf fixed” between the living and the dead (Luke 16:26). That’s the point of miracles: they are God-powered exceptions.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Is There a Specific Reference to Heaven or Hell in the OT?”

Is there any specific reference to Heaven or Hell in the Old Testament or did this notion emerge solely as a result of the Persians' Zoroastrian influence on the Jews?

The OT contains numerous references to heaven. Many of these refer to the physical heavens (Gen. 1:1, Psalm 19:1, etc.). Nevertheless, there do also seem to be a number of references to heaven as the dwelling place of God (1 Kings 8:30, Psalm 11:4, etc.).

As for the term “hell,” it depends on which English translation you consult. The KJV, for instance, translates the Hebrew term “Sheol” as “hell.” The NASB, on the other hand, simply renders this term “Sheol.” The NIV translates this term in a variety of ways: the grave, death, the depths, etc., depending on the context. Strictly speaking, sheol (the Hebrew term) does not refer to hell in my judgment. It might refer to Hades (i.e., a temporary place of punishment for the unrighteous dead between death and resurrection) in some contexts. But hell, as I understand it, is properly understood as the second death, the Lake of Fire, the place of eternal punishment. And this is not true of either Sheol or Hades (see Revelation 20:13-15). Thus, the Hebrew term Sheol can, in certain contexts, be used in a manner similar to the NT term Hades (e.g. Job 26:6; etc.), but I personally don't think it refers to hell (strictly speaking).

I do not think it's necessary to suppose that Zoroastrianism was solely responsible for the NT doctrines of heaven and

hell. In the first place, the OT does refer to heaven as the dwelling place of God, distinct from the physical universe. For another, the OT concept of Sheol is often used to refer to the place of the dead (i.e., the place of the dead between death and resurrection). This actually parallels the NT doctrines of Abraham's Bosom or Paradise and Hades (see Luke 16:19-31). In the OT, Sheol was apparently a place for both the righteous and unrighteous dead. It may have been a place of rest for the righteous and a place of torment for the unrighteous. However, in the course of progressive revelation, we have been given a clearer vision of the afterlife (including the eternal state) in the NT. Thus, I think this can be easily explained in terms of progressive revelation, rather than as borrowing from Zoroastrianism.

In case you're interested, I have written a [previous reply about Zoroastrianism](#). Although this reply is attempting to answer some questions other than what you've asked about, it may nonetheless be of benefit to you.

I hope this helps.

Sincerely in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“Trusting God a Joke Since Wicked Prosper, Godly Suffer”

I write to you feeling perturbed about God. At times I really wonder the question of His existence.

I would appreciate if you could enlighten me in the area of

trusting in God. I find it hard to trust Him nowadays. I trust in Him to provide financially, but instead I receive more financial problems. I see sinners who are ruthless and despicable earning tons of money, curse Him with the very breath He gave them. What a joke! His children suffered in hunger and He dared to claim that He will not allowed the righteous to suffer hunger. Sometimes when I see how He blessed those rogues, I told myself where is His logic? Of course He hopes that by showing mercy, these crooks will repent, then how about His children who are suffering hunger? You mean God enjoys people cursing Him so that He could bless them? Then I think His children will begin to curse and swear at Him.

I poured my hope on Him in several areas of my life. He said that whoever called upon the name of the Lord shall not be put to shame. I trusted Him time and time again in some areas of my life such as my career, my family problems etc. But none of them came true for me. Instead my feeling right now that He is a cheat and I feel more ashamed trusting Him. What a joke!

I thought to myself, if He cannot even keep up His promise as Jehovah Jireh, our providence, that can meet our needs on earth, how can we trust Him for our salvation?

My pastor emphasized a lot on His grace and prosperity. I believe wholeheartedly but now I feel very cheated by such messages. I felt worse than Job, he suffered but at least God restored him eventually. I felt like a fool believing in a book that was claimed to be written by Him.

Jesus came to give us life so that we can have life more abundantly. Now instead of having life more abundantly, I guess it should be read as a bums life. A life that is cheap and useless comparable to the fate of a bum.

I winced when I read that your pastor emphasizes prosperity. If it's the same kind of prosperity theology that some preach

here in the U.S. that God wants to lavish good stuff on His kids, including health and lots of money and whatever our hearts desire then no wonder you are disillusioned with Him. We believe this is a false gospel and it leads believers to stumble because it teaches a lie about God.

God is concerned about His glory, and about us having a close, intimate relationship with Him (the second produces the first). Making us or keeping us comfortable usually doesn't result in God getting the glory or in a close, dependent relationship with Him, because it's so easy to cherish the gifts instead of the giver.

So, because of false teaching, it is quite possible that you had unrealistic expectations of a God who is not the same God of the scriptures a God who is holy, just, righteous, sovereign, and not at all committed to jumping through our hoops. And then you blame God for not being faithful or good, correct?

But because God IS good and because He loves us so much, He only acts in our best interests. If our prayers are for things that are not in our best interest, He will not grant our requests (or our demands). Which is why I think Philippians 4:6-7 is so incredibly important: God wants us to let our requests be made known to Him *with thanksgiving*. However He chooses to answer, when we give thanks, we are relinquishing our illusion of control and expressing our belief that He is sovereign and He knows what He's doing.

I learned this important (and now precious to me) lesson the hard way when He kept saying "no" to the huge prayer of my heart for physical healing. I invite you to read my story, [How to Handle the Things You Hate But Can't Change](#).

Blessings,

Sue Bohlin

[Editor's Note: The inquirer shares the frustrations of the psalmists in seeing the rich and ruthless get off apparently scot-free, seemingly unnoticed by a God who promises justice and blessings. This quandary is nothing new, but it is significant that a sovereign God would allow it into the Scriptures it would make God look bad if there were no bigger, truer picture as explained briefly above. See for reference: Psalm 73: 2-12.

Regarding the inquirer's reference to Psalm 37: 25-2 about the righteous never being forsaken or their children begging for bread, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and others, explains, "David must surely have seen good people in great difficulties! But this misses the psalmist's point. He did not question that the righteous may be temporarily forsaken, needy and poor. Rather, he observed that nowhere can it be shown that the righteous have experienced continued desertion and destitution... The point is this: in the long haul, God does not forsake his own whether they have little or much; their children will be blessed! (pages 267-268)." *Hard Sayings of the Bible* also addresses the issues of why the godly so frequently suffer and the ungodly seem so prosperous related to Psalm 73. For another Probe perspective on how Psalm 73 helps us deal with the problem of evil, please see Dr. Ray Bohlin's article ["Where Was God on September 11?"](#)]

© 2008 Probe Ministries

"Spanish Language Immersion Programs in Public Schools?"

Should we be concerned about Spanish language immersion programs in public schools? Our system just started one,

offering Spanish-only kindergarten and first grade classes. Am I just an alarmist or is this just another ploy to undermine our sovereignty?

Thank you for your e-mail. I have noticed that some states (like North Carolina) are implementing a Spanish language immersion program like Los Puentes. On its face, it is probably a good idea since children learn language so much easier when they are younger. So I don't think there is anything to be concerned about English-speaking students learning Spanish at a young age.

That being said, there are concerns people have raised about bilingual education that does not put Spanish speaking kids into the mainstream. Recently I had a guest on [my radio program](#) who was responsible for some of this (in particular he was the reason all ballots are in both English and Spanish).

Also, the Rand Corporation released a study that documented the costs for language assistance instruction programs. They found that the total per pupil costs was estimated to be in the range of \$460 to \$1,600 in 2007 dollars. The total cost was \$3.9 billion.

Bilingual education has been expensive, and it doesn't seem to help Spanish-speaking students. It tends to isolate them rather than integrate them.

Thanks for writing.

Kerby Anderson

© 2008 Probe Ministries

“Why Isn’t Jesus Called Joshua?”

I was born of Jewish parents, but never confirmed in the Jewish faith. I was baptized at a Billy Graham rally in 1952.

I have questioned why writings about Jesus in the first century have not used his correct name (“Joshua” in English). He would have been known as “Joshua ben Joseph.” He was a teacher (Rabbi) who taught a reformed Judaism, later to be called Christianity. He is believed to be the Messiah (Christ in Greek).

I believe that the omission of these facts in most writings about him have influenced many minds in the wrong direction, such as anti Jewish sentiments.

What say you?

As you probably know, first century accounts of Jesus were written in Greek using the term Ἰησοῦς [*Iesous*] which in fact does translate back to the Hebrew name Joshua meaning Yahweh is salvation. We get the English name Jesus from the Latin translation of the Greek manuscripts by Jerome in the early 5th century. The typical Jewish naming convention Jesus (Joshua) son of Joseph is used in Luke 4:22 and in John, but the Greek-speaking gentiles preferred titles with theological implications and moved quickly towards Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus. Since Jesus and Joseph were common names in the first century, early Christians sought to differentiate their Jesus by using Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus, son of David, and of course Jesus, Son of God.

As to whether or not this contributed to anti-Jewish sentiments is difficult to say. Anti-Semitism, like most social phenomena, is probably the result of a combination of causes. However I admit that if more people understood and

appreciated the Jewishness of Jesus it might serve to ameliorate hostility towards Jews.

Sincerely,

Don Closson

© 2008 Probe Ministries

Spanish Feedback: “I Regret My Abortion, We Must Fight It”

Translated Spanish Q & A:

Dear Sirs:

I support the points you make in your [article about abortion](#). It is true...I'm telling you this because I had one. The abortion happened when I was 21 years old and now I really regret doing this. I have 2 children that show me how beautiful it is to be a mother. When I think of what I did, I feel very sad.

We definitely have to fight against abortion. (“Definitivamente hay que luchar contra el aborto.”)

Dear friend,

I am so sorry to hear of your pain over your abortion. Do you know that Jesus Christ offers you forgiveness and cleansing for your sin? He cannot take away your choice, but He can take away the guilt and the pain. The Bible tells us, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and

to cleanse us of all unrighteousness. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for all of your sins, including abortion, and then God raised Him from the dead. He is alive today and wants to have a warm, love-filled relationship with you. For more information, please see this article on The Most Important Decision of Your Life at www.ministeriosprobe.org/docs/decision_mas_importante.html

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin

© 2008 Probe Ministries

“Did Jesus Preach Immortality?”

Dear Probe, I have studied the Gospels. My question is: Did Jesus Christ preach Immortality? If so for certain ones or for all?

Thanks for your letter. Jesus taught that salvation (including eternal life) was freely available to all men through faith in Him alone (see John 3:16; 14:6). Technically, Jesus did not preach the Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Rather, he taught that all men would be raised bodily from the dead, some to glory and everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting death in the lake of fire (See John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:11-15). Of course, there is an intermediate state between death and resurrection in which the physically dead experience personal, conscious existence (presumably in a disembodied state), but this is not man's final state of

existence. The final state is the resurrection of the body.

I personally believe that Christ died for all men and that all men are offered eternal life through faith in Him (See 1 Tim. 2:4-6; 2 Pet. 3:9). Unfortunately, not all men will avail themselves of this gift. Therefore, some will be condemned to eternal separation from God in the lake of fire (the second death).

I hope this is helpful.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

© 2008 Probe Ministries

“What Caused Lucifer (Satan) to Fall?”

What caused Lucifer to sin? He didn't eat of any tree so he would inherit sin nature or knowledge of evil. Did Lucifer have knowledge of good and evil when God created him, unlike Adam who got the knowledge after eating the fruit? And one more thing: Did Adam sin after eating the fruit or by eating the fruit?

Thanks for your letter. The question about what caused the fall of Satan is a difficult one. In 1 Timothy 3:6, Paul seems to indicate that the sin of the devil was pride or conceit. Although the passage is debated, some conservative scholars believe that Ezekiel 28:11-19 may describe the fall of the devil. The section is addressed to the “king” of Tyre. Notice some of the things which are said in this passage. This “king”

is said to have been "in Eden" (v. 13). He is called a "cherub" (a type of angel) in vv. 14, 16. He is described as "blameless" from the day of his creation, until he sinned (vv. 15-16). His sin seems to have been that of pride or conceit (v. 17). All of these descriptions are consistent with the "king" being Satan.

However, other scholars believe that Ezekiel is just using hyperbolic language to describe the arrogance of the human ruler of Tyre. Everyone agrees that the human ruler is in view in vv. 1-10. The question concerns the referent in vv. 11-19.

We are simply not told whether Satan had any knowledge of good and evil before his fall into sin. However, until his sin, he could not have had any experiential knowledge of evil because he was created perfect and holy.

God's prohibition against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil occurs in Genesis 2:16-17. There Adam is told "in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (v. 17). As we read chapter 3, the sin seems to take place upon eating from the tree. It is this act which violated God's prohibition. This seems clear to me from verses like 3:7, 11, 17.

Hope this is helpful.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

© 2008 Probe Ministries

“Do You Have Articles on Losing Your Salvation?”

My friend believes it is possible to lose your salvation. He believes if you are in sin or sinning at the point of your death and have not had a chance to repent you will not go to heaven. Do you have any articles on this?

We cover that issue in several answers to email:

- [“Can a True Believer Commit the Unforgiveable Sin?”](#)
- [“Is God Punishing Me Because I Committed the Unforgiveable Sin?”](#)
- [“I Fear I Have Committed the Unforgivable Sin!”](#)
- [“I Don’t Know How to Answer this Biblical Argument Against Eternal Security”](#)
- [“What is the ‘Sin Unto Death’?”](#) [Jimmy Williams]
- [“What is the ‘Sin Unto Death’?”](#) [Michael Gleghorn]
- [“How Can I Know I’m Going to Heaven?”](#)
- [“Were Those Who Fell Away Ever Saved or Did They Lose Their Salvation?”](#)
- [“Can a Christian Lose His Salvation?”](#)

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

© 2008 Probe Ministries

“Wicca is Not a False

Religion!"

You sound like a very knowledgeable person but when I was searching the web and came upon your website I was not angry but I wanted to email you and explain something about [the young girl someone took in](#). Well when you said that Wicca is a false religion you are quite mistaken. Wicca is another word or newer version of Paganism which is actually a very old and sacred religion. Paganism was even hundreds of years before Christianity. I am not sending this to you as hate mail but as a young pagan teen who is very tired of religious people saying that we need help. I would very much appreciate if you refrain from speaking about or making false accusations about other religions who do not agree with you.

Thank you for the respectful, gentle way in which you disagreed. I appreciate that so very much!! That says something lovely about you.

My statement about Wicca being a false religion is from a perspective that believes it is opposed to the one true religion. I do realize that may sound arrogant and foolish, and it absolutely would be if Christianity (with its roots in Judaism) were a man-made religion. But it is the one way of connecting with God that originates with Him. All man-made religions, including paganism and Wicca, are the result of man trying to find his way to God, or to various kinds of spirituality. The Judeo-Christian story is God reaching down to and communicating with us, and actually becoming one of us. I do know that Wiccans and pagans worship the creation. But how did that creation get here? It makes sense to worship the one who created it! (And us.)

I do understand that this is a time for you to search out what you believe and how you want to live your life. You are obviously a smart, thoughtful young lady; I hope you are wise enough to receive this piece of wisdom. As you work your way

through this very important part of growing up, don't merely look for *what works*; look for *what is true*.

Blessings to you,

Sue Bohlin

© 2008 Probe Ministries