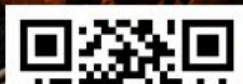


— WHAT —
CHRISTIANS
— KNOW —
— ABOUT —
HALLOWEEN



HALLOWEEN

AN AMERICAN HOLIDAY SOON COMING, OCTOBER 31.



What Every Christian Should Know About Halloween

<https://www.soencouragement.org/gt/images/halloween%20and%20the%20adventist%20christian.pdf>

By Gerhard Pfandl, former associate director, General Conference's Biblical Research Institute

Each year on Oct. 31, millions of people celebrate Halloween by dressing up as witches, devils, and demons.

Besides parties for adults, the day has become an occasion for children to go from house to house, often in costumes, demanding “trick or treat.”

The name Halloween derives from the Roman Catholic holiday All Saints' Day, The Feast of All Saints, or All Hallows' Day (hallow means “to make holy” or “consider something sacred”), celebrated on Nov. 1. All Saints' Day commemorates the saints who have not been assigned a special day in the calendar of the Roman Catholic Church. The day before All

Saints' Day was called All Hallows' Eve, from which Halloween is derived.

According to the [Encyclopedia Britannica](#), the origin of Halloween goes back to a festival of the Druids, an order of pagan priests in ancient Gaul and Britain, in pre-Christian times: "In ancient Britain and Ireland, the Celtic festival of Samhain was observed on Oct. 31, at the end of summer.

This date was also the eve of the new year in both Celtic and Anglo-Saxon times and was the occasion for one of the ancient fire festivals when huge bonfires were set on hilltops to frighten away evil spirits. The date was connected with the return of the herds from pasture, and laws and land tenures were renewed. The souls of the dead were supposed to revisit their homes on this day, and the autumnal festival acquired sinister significance, with ghosts, witches, hobgoblins, black cats, fairies, and demons of all kinds said to be roaming about. It was the time to placate the supernatural powers controlling the process of nature.

The Celtic festival of Samhain, which signaled the commencement of winter, consisted of the eve of the feast and the day itself (Oct. 31 and Nov. 1). It remained popular among the Celtic people even after the Christianization of Britain in the fifth century. The Christian church in Britain adapted the feast of Samhain by adding the Christian celebration of All Saints' Day to the festival. Until the eighth century, the Feast of All Saints was celebrated on May 13.

It seems that because the British custom to celebrate All Saints' Day on Nov. 1 had spread to other countries, Pope Gregory IV (827-844) transferred the feast of May 13 to Nov. 1.

The [New Catholic Encyclopedia](#) claims the reason was, "because provisions were inadequate for the numerous pilgrims coming to Rome in May," but it acknowledges that

some believe “the November feast originated in Gaul and was immediately adopted in Rome.”

The customs of Samhain survived in the Celtic areas of Great Britain: Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. In time they lost much of their religious significance and the eve of All Hallows’ Day became a secular festival, “although many traditionally Celtic ideas continued to be associated with the evening. Divination activities remained a popular practice. Adults, dressed in fantastic disguises and masks, imitated supernatural beings and visited homes where occupants would offer tributes of food and drink to them,” Leonard N. Primiano wrote in a section titled “Halloween” in [The Encyclopedia of Religion](#).

Irish and Scottish immigrants introduced All Hallows’ Eve observances to the United States, and after the massive immigration of the Irish during the potato famine (1845-1852), Halloween became a national festival.

The custom for children to go trick or treating from door to door also goes back to the ancient Druid priests, who would go from house to house demanding food for their own consumption as well as for offerings to their deities. If the people in a home would not provide them with food, they would speak a demonic curse over the home, and, history claims, someone in the family would die within the year.

The Druids would carry with them a large turnip, which they had hollowed out on the inside and carved a face on the front, to represent the demonic spirit they depended upon for their power and knowledge. The turnip lighted by a candle from within was used as a lantern for the Druids as they went from house to house at night. When this practice came to America in the 18th and 19th centuries, turnips weren’t that prominent, and the pumpkin was soon substituted for the turnips.

Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church has not taken an official position specifically against Halloween, the church's opposition to the occult and the demonic preclude any support for this type of festival.

Halloween and its customs have no roots in Scripture or in the Christian church. They are firmly rooted in the occult and in pagan practices. These connections, however, are today forgotten or made light of. Nevertheless, any practice derived from the occult is incompatible with the teachings of Scripture (Leviticus 20:6).

Since many people no longer believe in the existence of a personal devil and his demons, they feel there is no harm in making fun of these "religious relics of the past." The children are taught that there are no such beings as witches and evil spirits and that it is fun to dress up as ghosts or goblins. The modern denial of the existence of Satan and demonic forces is clearly contrary to Scripture. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible affirms the existence of Satan and demonic spirit beings (Genesis 3:1; Job 1:6; Matthew 8:31; Revelation 12:9).

In the education of children, it is important that we do not plant false ideas in their minds. The Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6, NKJV). To teach them that there is no harm in imitating evil spirits is contrary to God's will.

God in the Old Testament warned Israel not to dabble in the occult. "There shall not be found among you ... one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls upon the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord"

(Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Since the occult is today more active than ever, this counsel is still valid today.

Participation in Halloween customs may seem innocent fun for children and adults, but it is one more way Satan can use to deceive people into thinking there is no harm in playing a little bit with the world of spirits and demons.

While Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White never mentioned Halloween, she warned many times against dabbling in spiritualism. “There are many who shrink with horror from the thought of consulting spirit mediums, but who are attracted by more pleasing forms of spiritism,” she said in [Evangelism](#), p. 606.

Seventh-day Adventists recognize that spiritualism has many faces. Some of them may seem harmless and even fun. Nevertheless, they lead children and adults away from God’s truth, and can become stepping stones to further entanglement with the occult.

This commentary appeared in [Perspective Digest](#), the journal of the Adventist Theological Society.

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When something cute and “harmless” masks a deeper danger

What often appears cute, harmless, or simply “fun” can, in truth, be a kind of spiritual Trojan horse, a disguise for something far more dangerous. Halloween, and even its more “Christianized” counterpart, All Saints’ Day, are now celebrated with smiling pumpkins, playful costumes, and light-hearted talk of ghosts and spirits.

Yet beneath their innocent surface lies a legacy rooted in pagan ritual and spiritual practices that stand in direct opposition to the truth of God’s Word. Just as the enemy cloaks deception in charm and familiarity, these festivals can dull our sensitivity to the reality of evil and the seriousness of dabbling in the spiritual realm apart from Christ.

What begins as harmless cultural fun can, over time, open hearts and homes to influences that draw people away from the purity of biblical faith and toward a growing tolerance, even fascination, with the occult.

The Pagan Roots: Samhain

Long before Halloween, there was Samhain (pronounced SAH-win), an ancient Celtic festival whose name means “summer’s end.” It marked the transition from the light half of the year to the dark half, the beginning of winter. For the Celts, this was more than a seasonal shift; it was a deeply spiritual time when the boundary between the physical world and the Otherworld was believed to grow thin, allowing closer contact with spirits, deities, and ancestors.

Samhain was one of the major “cross-quarter” festivals, a threshold between seasons and between worlds, traditionally observed from sunset on October 31 to sunset on November 1. Celebrations included:

- Lighting great bonfires for protection and purification.
- Extinguishing and relighting hearth fires from the communal flame.
- Offering food and livestock to deities or spirits for protection.
- Honouring ancestors with feasts and open places at the table.
- Wearing disguises to confuse or ward off wandering spirits.

Because the veil between worlds was thought to be thin, Samhain also became a time for divination, using apples, nuts, bones, and

other objects to glimpse the future. These customs blended remembrance of the dead with an attempt to gain hidden knowledge.

The Return of the Dead and the Unseen

The Celts believed that during Samhain, the souls of the dead returned to their earthly homes. Families would leave out food and drink, set places at the table, and keep candles burning to welcome and appease departed loved ones. These gestures, known as the “feast of the dead,” were thought to ensure peace with the spirit world and protection from mischief in the year ahead.

But not all spirits were believed to be kind. The Aos Sí or Sidhe, “the people of the mounds,” were supernatural beings said to roam freely during Samhain, emerging from burial hills to interact with the living. To avoid offending them, people left offerings of milk or bread and avoided travelling after dark.

To hide from these beings, many wore masks or dark clothing, the early roots of today’s Halloween costumes.

Spirits, Divination, and Disguise

During Samhain, when the “veil” between the living and the dead was believed to be thinnest, people sought guidance from spirits through dreams, visions, or ritual offerings. Divination games were common, reading melted wax or lead in water, tossing apple peels to find the initials of a future spouse, or interpreting how nuts burned in the fire.

Disguises, or “guises,” were worn not for fun, but for protection. Masks made from animal hides, soot-blackened faces, or inverted clothing helped wearers blend in with wandering spirits. In some places, groups went house to house performing small acts or reciting verses in exchange for food, the ancestor of modern trick-or-treating.

These rituals combined superstition with community spirit, and laid the foundation for the Halloween customs we know today.

Bonfires, Sacrifices, and Symbolism

Bonfires were central to Samhain celebrations, symbolizing protection, purification, and the waning power of the sun. People and livestock often passed between two fires for blessing, and bones

from slaughtered animals (and sometimes human sacrifices) were cast into the flames, giving rise to the word “bonfire” (bone fire).

Ancient accounts and archaeological findings suggest that sacrifices, animal and human, were made to appease gods and ensure survival through the harsh winter. These were viewed not as cruelty but as sacred exchanges to maintain harmony between the human and divine worlds.

The ancient Celts believed the head was the seat of the soul, intellect, and spiritual power, so they sometimes decapitated notable enemies in battle and preserved the heads as trophies, displaying them for protection and prestige. Although this practice faded with Christianity, scholars suggest it influenced the Celtic Samhain tradition of carving turnips or gourds (later pumpkins) into jack-o'-lanterns. These grotesque vegetable lanterns symbolically echoed the fearsome, disembodied heads once displayed, serving to ward off wandering spirits during the festival.

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From Paganism to “Christianization”

As Christianity spread through Celtic lands, the Church sought to absorb or replace pagan festivals. In the 8th century, Pope Gregory III moved All Saints' Day from May 13 to November 1, aligning it with Samhain, and Pope Gregory IV made the change universal. The evening before became All Hallows' Eve, later shortened to Halloween.

Earlier, in 609 AD, All Saints' Day was first adopted from the pagan Roman festival Lemuria, which honoured and exorcised restless spirits, when Pope Boniface IV rededicated the Roman Pantheon, originally a temple to all gods, as a church dedicated to the Virgin

Mary and all martyrs. He chose May 13, the final day of Lemuria, for the celebration.

Yet despite the new names and meanings, many of the old customs persisted: offerings for the dead, disguises, and the belief that spirits roamed the earth. The outward form changed, but the underlying spiritual focus remained largely the same.

If any doubt remains about the true origin and spirit of these feast days, simply look at the imagery that surrounds them, symbols of death, demons, and darkness. Consider the fruit they bear: children taught to treat the occult lightly, people misled about the state of the dead, and door-to-door trick-or-treating for sugary, nutrient-poor treats from strangers. Older kids often engage in pranks, sometimes cruel or bordering on vandalism, all in the name of “fun.” Adults join in with parties featuring skimpy “sexy witch” or “sexy devil” costumes, often paired with heavy drinking or drug use. Even some animal shelters halt or restrict black cat adoptions during this season to prevent their use as props, or worse.

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The Bible’s Warning

God’s Word clearly warns His people not to imitate or blend pagan customs with the worship of the true God ([Deuteronomy 12:29–31](#); [Jeremiah 10:2](#)). Scripture reminds us that He is “the God of the living, not of the dead” ([Matthew 22:32](#)).

Practices such as divination, spiritism, and attempts to contact the dead are explicitly forbidden ([Deuteronomy 18:9–14](#); [Leviticus 19:26 & 31](#); [Isaiah 8:19](#)). The dead are silent and unaware of earthly matters ([Ecclesiastes 9:5–6](#)) and do not revisit their earthly homes ([Job 7:9-10](#)). We are told to “abstain from all appearance of evil” and to “expose the unfruitful works of darkness” ([1 Thessalonians 5:22](#); [Ephesians 5:11](#)).

When these warnings are ignored, people open themselves to deception. The Bible teaches that evil spirits can masquerade as the dead to exploit curiosity and longing, drawing hearts away from trust in God and toward spiritual confusion. For this reason, Christians are called to stay alert, reject occult influence, and keep their worship pure and centred on Christ alone.

A Better Focus: Reformation Day

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, the spark that ignited the Protestant Reformation. He chose that date intentionally, knowing that the next day was All Saints' Day, when many would come to venerate relics and seek indulgences.

Luther's goal was not division, but reformation, to call the Church back to the authority of Scripture and the truth that salvation comes by grace through faith in Christ alone.

Reformation Day marks the moment when light began to pierce centuries of spiritual darkness. Reformers like Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli championed the Bible as the sole foundation for faith and practice. For believers today, October 31 can be more than a celebration of fear and superstition, it can be a remembrance of truth restored, of the freedom found in God's Word, and of the unchanging hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ.



Key Sources:

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Spiritualism - What Is It?

Lesson Number Nineteen

The Spiritual World

Few will deny that there are spirits who communicate with people. Those who deny it have but to investigate the facts to find that there are supernatural agencies. Great miracles have been and are being performed by these mysterious beings. Through spiritualistic media messages are sometimes received that a certain catastrophe will take place, advising the traveler not to reserve or book a seat, or some miraculous appearance draws the attention of thousands of onlookers. Often such appearances are of a religious nature. Many who sorrow over deceased loved ones seek comfort in the semi-darkness of the séance, where at the bidding of the medium, the spirit of the departed one seems to appear. It speaks with the same voice and the appearance looks the same as the one so dear to them. Is the claim of spiritualists right? Are these appearances the spirits of the dead? Are they good or evil? The Bible is not silent on this point, so let us turn once again to God's Word.

Who Are the Spirits?

In Lesson Number Ten we already learned that there are two kinds of spirits, good and evil.

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Hebrews 1:14.

"For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles . . ." Revelation 16:14 (first part).

Yet how do we explain the existence of men who have departed from the living? We learned in Lesson Number Eighteen that people are totally unconscious in death and that they have no part in anything that transpires here on earth. *"For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun."* Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6.

Therefore the spirits that are contacted in séances can not be the spirits of dead people, as claimed by the spirits and those who communicate with them. Neither can they be the unfallen angels, because these spirits seek to deceive people by masquerading as the spirits of the dead. Holy angels of God would never deceive.

There is, therefore, but one conclusion. The spirits that convey messages through spiritualistic media are the spirits of devils. They are under the direction of their master, Satan, who by every possible means, seeks to deceive people and cause them to be lost, especially in these last days.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8.

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Revelation 12:9.

The Spirits Revealed

We are not left in darkness regarding this delusion. The Scriptures clearly show the way in which these evil spirits seek to deceive people. Many believe that spiritualism is merely a human deception, but when they are brought face to face with superhuman manifestations they cannot but regard them as supernatural. They will be deceived.

The apostle Paul warns us that before the second coming of Christ there will be many manifestations of Satanic power. The Lord's coming is preceded by *"... the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness."* 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10.

The apostle John also declares: *"And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do . . ."* Revelation 13:13, 14.

The miracles which these agents of Satan have power to do are real and many will be deceived by them. The only safeguard against the lying claims of spiritualism is the Holy Scriptures. God has given ample light to discover the snare.

Spiritualism in the Last Days

Today, just before the return of Christ, the Bible has prophesied a great revival of ancient witchcraft.

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” 1 Timothy 4:1.

This text gives us the time when evil spirits will stage their greatest work of deception. Their influence is seductive and disastrous, for they lead their followers away from “the faith.” The greatest apostasy of all times will manifest itself in the church before the second coming of Christ.

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. . . . And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 8-10.

Has witchcraft been introduced in a modern form in these last days? The modern style of spiritualism had its beginnings in the village of Hydesville, New York, with the Fox Family. On the night of March 31, 1848, two of the younger daughters, Margaretta and Katie, were awakened by a mysterious rapping, that could be heard all through the house. The children imitated the raps by clapping their hands, Katie calling out, “Mr. Splitfoot, do as I do.” For every clap there was an answering rap. She then held up her fingers—a different number each time—asking Splitfoot to tell the number, each time the correct number of rapping’s was received. They realized that the cause of the rappings was intelligent. From this beginning these two sisters became agents to the spirits, leading up to modern spiritualism. By the turn of the century, spiritualism had spread over the world at an alarming rate and in recent years spiritualism has declared itself a church.

The stage is set for the last great deception. The world has accepted spiritualism as a bona fide religion. It has influenced most denominational churches. Soon the arch deceiver, Satan, will stage his last great spiritualistic manifestation.

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.” 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

Testing the Spirits

How can we know if we have had anything to do with an angel of God or an evil angel? How will we be able to discern the difference in the future? The Bible gives us some clear Bible proofs: *“And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”* Isaiah 8:19, 20.

Are the teachings of spiritualism in harmony with the law of God and the testimony of His Word? On the contrary, spiritualism teaches that there is no sin, and no death; the same lie spoken by the serpent in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:4).

Séances are generally held indoors in semi-darkness. They always take some form of communicating with the unknown. Many speak with the dead, or conjure up an appearance of the dead. The spirits who appear are devils impersonating relatives, strangers or the saints who have died. Some have even claimed to be Christ himself. If you are invited to see these manifestations, remember the warning of Christ: *“Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.”* Matthew 24:26.

The apostle John admonishes us: *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”* 1 John 4:1.

To try the spirits mean to compare them with “the law and testimony.” If they do not match up with God’s Word, we are to have nothing to do with them. John also tells us how we can test the spirits: *“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”* 1 John 4:2, 3.

Spiritualism denies that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. It considers the Bible as any other book, and refuses to acknowledge it as the holy Word of God. The apostle Peter declares: *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”* 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

In the Bible witchcraft is condemned as an abomination. *“Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.”* Leviticus 19:31.

“When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.” Deuteronomy 18:9-13.

Another test is given in Matthew 7:20, *“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”*

What Are the Fruits of Evil Spirits

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in the past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Galatians 5:19-21.

Notice that among these works of the flesh are witchcraft, heresies, and drunkenness. These fruits were all manifested in the lives of the founders of modern spiritualism—the Fox sisters. They led thousands into the heresy of spiritualism which is called witchcraft in the Bible. They both ended their lives as alcoholics.

On the other hand, what are the fruits of the Holy Spirit of God?

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” Galatians 5:22, 23.

Our Only Safety

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Ephesians 6:10-12.

We are called to be on guard against these evil spirits who are not ordinary enemies. They are mighty spiritual agencies. In our own strength we are unable to withstand them, but God has made provision for us. By taking notice of what God says we may be fully protected against the attacks of Satan and his angels.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” Ephesians 6:13-16.

The armor is complete, and if we wear it, it will certainly protect us in time of danger. Notice that one part of the body is not protected, the back! That means we should never turn our back on the enemy! We are fully protected by the armor of God, as long as we face the battle against evil. When we are thus prepared for the warfare, we need never fear defeat.

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."
Romans 8:37.

Quiz For Lesson Number Nineteen

Please Fill in All the Answers

1. Please choose true or false for the following statements:

a. There are two kinds of spirits, and we need to discern God's angels from Satan's angels.

True

False

b. Satan's spirits are doing great wonders that help people, and we should be happy because of this.

True

False

c. Spiritualism will be accepted in some churches.

True

False

d. Being involved with spiritualism cannot hurt people if they understand all about it.

True

False

2. Complete this verse.

"And then shall that Wicked be, whom the Lord shall with the spirit of his mouth, and shall with the brightness of his : even him, whose coming is after the working of with all power and and wonders, and with all of in them that perish; because they received not the of the, that they might be." 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10.

3. What verse tells us that evil angels will pretend to be God's messengers?

4. How can we avoid being caught up by the danger of spiritualism?

5. What counsel do we have from the Word of God warning against familiar spirits?

6. How shall we guard ourselves against the deceptive power of spiritualism?

What will be the final doom of Satan and his angels? "Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matthew 25:41. "And the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Mal. 4: 1. See Revelation 20: 9. 5. SPIRITUALISM 1. What is Spiritualism defined to be? "A belief that departed spirits hold intercourse with mortals by means of physical phenomena, as by rapping, or during abnormal mental states, as in trances, or the like, commonly manifested through a medium; spiritism."-Webster. Spiritism: "The theory that mediumistic phenomena are caused by spirits of the dead."-Webster. NOTE-"The very central truth of Spiritualism is the power and possibility of spirit return, under certain conditions, to communicate with those in the material form."-N. F. Ravlin, Spiritualistic lecturer, of California. 2. Did this doctrine exist in ancient times? "Regard not them that have familiar spirits,

neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.” Lev. 19: 31. NOTE - “The phenomenal aspect of modern Spiritualism reproduces all essential principles of the magic, witchcraft, and sorcery of the past. The same powers are involved, the same intelligences are operating.” - F. F. Morse, in “Practical Occultism,” page 85. 3. How does God regard sorcerers? “And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers.” Mal. 3: 5. 4. What does He say of the teachings of enchanter and sorcerers? “Therefore hearken not you to . . . your enchanter, nor to your sorcerers. . . . for they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land.” Jer. 27: 9, 10. NOTES - The late Revelation F. B. Meyer, of England, gave the following warning against dabbling in Spiritualism: “I have known several families that have been cursed by having recourse to clairvoyants and mediums. There are grave dangers in these things; and when occult powers are used for selfish ends, it is possible for men and women to be filled with evil spirits, as was the girl at Philippi. People are fools to play with the dregs of the spirit world. “-Present Truth, September 7, 1911. “I am perfectly certain that the whole movement known as modern Spiritualism is in the hands and under the direction of the father of evil spirits; in other words, is thoroughly and unmistakably diabolical.” - Dr. C. Williams, of London, England. 5. Before their entrance into Canaan, what instruction did Moses give Israel concerning these things? “When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God gives thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consultant with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God does drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.” Deuteronomy 18:9-13. NOTES - Those who consult or have to do with mediums' or any who profess to receive instruction or communications from the spirits of the dead, disregard this plain instruction and place themselves upon the enemy's ground. Ever since Satan told that first lie in Eden, when he denied that death would be the result of sin, in the very face of death itself, he, working upon man's natural dread of death and upon his distress at the thought of being separated from loved ones, has been endeavoring to persuade men to believe that the dead are not dead, and that men do not die. Idolatry, heathenism, Spiritualism, occultism, and the whole brood of false isms of this kind, it will be noticed, deal very largely with death. SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS BELIEVE 76 This, of itself, indicates their origin, and should be a warning to all

Spiritualism and Adventism

June 11, 2018 by John J. Grosboll

When we look at the parameters of the teaching of spiritualism outlined in the Spirit of Prophecy, it is shocking to see how

many of them are found in Adventism, dressed up. In *The Great Controversy*, 588, Ellen White makes it clear that in the end time, spiritualism will claim to be Christian. For many years Seventh-day Adventists have felt immune to spiritualism because we understand the state of the dead.

Seventh-day Adventists are protected, for instance, from apparitions of the Virgin Mary because we know who that is. However, Ellen White reveals that impersonating the dead is only one error of spiritualism. The primary tactic of spiritualism is calling evil good and darkness light. (See Isaiah 5.) God's curse is upon those guilty of this. As a consequence, the distinction between righteousness and sin is lost.

Someone objects, "Do not preach that. Someone will not like it." That happened in New Guinea and caused the rise of the historic Adventist movement in that country. There were people preaching the Third Angel's Message on the street and the structure administration said in effect, "Do not do that." They replied that they had to do this to have a clear conscience.

The New Testament teaches that we should separate sin from the church. Sin is darkness and truth is light. But the teachings of spiritualism cause people to separate the one who is against sin from the church. That is the reason for the historic Adventist movement in Hungary. The New Testament teaches that light and darkness are always to be separated. (See 2 Corinthians 6:14-17.)

Spiritualism advocates joining the darkness when the New Testament says that light and darkness have no fellowship. (See

II Corinthians 6:14.) The historic Seventh-day Adventist movement developed in Zaire because people said, "We must separate from darkness, and not become part of those who are breaking God's law." God said to the apostle Paul, I have called you to turn the Gentiles from the power of Satan to the power of God, to turn them from darkness to light. (See Acts 26:18.)

You must either separate from the darkness or become a part of it. That is happening today in Adventism. If you listen to error, it will take control of your mind and you will not know what has happened. (See Early Writings, 124-125.)

What do you do about open sin? In Russia many true-and-faithful Seventh-day Adventists were forced to act independently and separate from the structure because they were pressured by the state to send their children to school on Sabbath. Sadly large numbers of professed Adventists choose the easy way, the way of violating the law of God, in order to avoid persecution by the state. This is not a story of just an isolated person here or there, but of faithful Adventists who were saddened by the apostasy of the professed Adventists around them. Ellen White says. "How can fathers consent to their children attending school on the Sabbath, or any part of the Sabbath?" Manuscript Release, vol. 5, 79.

Spiritualism condones a life of sensual indulgence and involves a sensual religion. (See Medical Ministry, 101 and Testimonies, vol. 8, 295.)

Spiritualism makes gods out of men. This is one of the first teachings of spiritualism. In the Garden of Eden, the serpent told

Eve the forbidden fruit would make her like God. Heathen religions and spiritualism have taught that ever since. In heaven there is a King and He is God. The devil imitated that and men were made gods. That is the origin of human monarchies, kingly power, and the divine right of kings.

If a man, or a group of men become conscience for the whole group, you no longer have the individual conscience. Men becoming "god" is also a teaching of Romanism. They say you must be in harmony with the community of faith. Their leaders are so strong, they believe they can alter God's law. But no man or group of men, not even the General Conference in session has the authority to change anything God said. The idea that men can act as God and speak as the voice of God, even changing the Word of God is a teaching of spiritualism.

When wickedness is being done, and you are not protesting it, but, financially supporting it, what account of your stewardship will you give in the day of God? Do you know what is being done with many millions of dollars of tithe paid to the structure? They are using it to try to destroy truth. In Rogue River, Oregon, just recently, a letter was received from the General Conference warning them not to use the name "Seventh-day Adventist" anymore. This is also happening in New Guinea, Australia, and New Zealand. What will happen if they do? We know that in the past, with John Merrick, they spent many thousands of dollars and put him in jail for using the name.

It is a paradox that our close friends in the corporate structure pay their tithe money to destroy us. That is literally what is happening. Our friends are giving their money and that money

is being used to destroy historic Adventists all over the world. This is a form of making a god out of men. Men have decided to be conscience for their fellow men. The Spirit of Prophecy teaches that we should investigate what is being done with the tithes and offerings. These people who are being harassed believe all the historic doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists and are trying to live in harmony with those beliefs. They are opposed for standing up for truth and spreading the Third Angel's Message. If the true and faithful are harassed but the sinners in Zion are not, you have a classic situation of calling good evil and evil good, a classic identifying mark of spiritualism.

Another primary teaching of spiritualism is that what is, is right. This is a common teaching throughout academia and in society today. That means the natural state of man is good and therefore you develop the good within you. This came out of pantheism, which Ellen White said was the alpha of deadly heresies and a spiritualistic theory. If God is in all, then actually you are God. This philosophy is being used today in psychological counseling.

Another popular error of spiritualism has become a common teaching in Adventism today. It is that God will not condemn and therefore you should not reprove anyone reproof is unchristian. But reproof is so we can learn where we are in error. Its object is to show us how to put our lives in harmony with God's Word. Since God does not change, we must do the changing. If we stay out of harmony with God we cannot be saved. The Bible says God is going to condemn. (See Romans 2; 2 Peter 2, 3; Revelation 14:9-C12 and 2 Thessalonians 2.)

God's faithful servants, just before Jesus comes, are to give a straighter testimony than John the Baptist. Otherwise, God will not recognize them as His servants. (See Testimonies, vol. 1, 321.) I would rather be in trouble with men than with God. If what I say steps on someone's toes, I am sorry that you feel hurt, but I cannot apologize if it is from the Word of God.

Then there is the second chance theory. In the Catholic Church if you do not make it here, hopefully you will be able to make it in Purgatory after a while. Some Protestants believe in a millennium of peace when everyone will get a second chance. The Eastern Religions believe in reincarnation you can have many chances. In the religion of the Bible you are having your second chance right now. The first chance was lost in the Garden of Eden. If you are not saved before you die, you are not saved at all. God is going to condemn the wicked in the judgment.

The fruit of the teaching that "God will not condemn" is that it does not matter what you do, just live as you please, heaven is your home. You have probably heard that you will keep sinning until Jesus comes and then He will save you that is some of the same philosophy. We did not have this error in Adventism in the past. All this comes from spiritualism.

This is the same lie that the devil told Eve in the Garden of Eden. God said: You eat of this fruit, you will die. The devil said, You can sin and not die. And the devil is still telling that lie. That is spiritualism. One of the first effects of spiritualism is that people lose control of their mind, thoughts and imagination. Ellen White described this happening in her day. Some Seventh-day Adventist ministers were dissatisfied with their wives. They

did not know they were following spiritualism. They just thought they were unhappy. But the devil was in control of their minds. (See Medical Ministry, 101.) They imagined, when they saw an attractive woman, that they could have a relationship with her and even have children by her in heaven. Ellen White said there was no hope for them unless they were converted. She wrote to a minister who was involved in this thinking and said, "Stop, right where you are."

People think there is some secret going on in their mind and no one knows about it. Actually, the devil is in control of their minds and they do not even know it. They are under spiritualistic control and in the day of judgment, husbands and wives will find out things about each other they never knew before.

When a person is used by the Holy Spirit and is following Jesus, the Lord gives them the power to control their imagination. They are not imagining evil things. When evil imaginings are carried out, people think it happened all of a sudden. It was not sudden at all. Evil thoughts had been fostered for a long time. Satan will present enticing allurements and sensual thoughts to the followers of Christ in the last days. In Patriarchs and Prophets, 453-461, we are given approximately twenty different ways that the devil works so that people break the seventh commandment and their home will be destroyed.

If we want to be in the kingdom of heaven, by the grace of God, our imagination needs to be purified, or we are not going to be there. The devil works in many ways to make people lose control of their minds. (See Testimonies, vol. 8, 295.)

Another characteristic of spiritualistic religion is that the religion is sensational. It appeals to the senses, involving body movements of both preachers and parishioners, music, and the subject material for sermons. Ellen White reveals that we are going to have sensationalism in Adventist Churches just before the end of time. (See Selected Messages, vol. 2, 36.)

Another characteristic of spiritualism in religion is referred to in Medical Ministry, 97. It says, "restraint" is decreased and people lose their sense of obligation to others. Jesus Himself sensed His obligation to others. He even had pity on a wounded bird or a hurt animal. And His infinite compassion for the fallen race was so great that it led Him by choice to come to this world as a man to die on Calvary. Jesus said, "No man takes My life from Me. I lay it down of Myself."

When people lose their sense of obligation to others, they become self-centered and develop sensual minds. The temptations to sensuality are multitudinous today. Many pictures in store windows, tabloids, newspapers and magazines, on videos and television are abominable and sinister. There is a master intelligence trying to get control of your mind.

How does the devil get control?

Diet. Ellen White writes about flesh foods and dairy products. Animals have serious diseases today. But even if animal foods were healthful, they tend to stimulate the sensual, sexual passions. The devil is intense on creating every type of delectable, tasty and appetizing animal food, because that is one way he is trying to get control of your mind.

Through the eyes. What we see has a tremendous effect upon the mind. We must surrender our mind to God daily and ask that the Holy Spirit be in control of our eyes and our mind. What are you looking at? If you are deliberately looking at sensual and awful pictures, the Lord cannot protect you. That is the sin of presumption. What are you reading? A characteristic of spiritualistic pollution is a sensual bond through your eyes and ears to stimulate sensuality so that you will not be in a position to receive the Holy Spirit. (See Medical Ministry, 101.)

Through self-indulgence. What kind of life are you living? Are you just doing whatever you feel like? Eating whatever tastes good? Or are you in control of your life? Are you controlling your thoughts? Your appetites? Your passions? What was the sin of the antediluvians? Ellen White says their sin was in carrying to excess that which was not sin in itself.

The devil comes to the people of this generation through phrenology, psychology and mesmerism. (See Testimonies, vol. 1, 290.) This is another characteristic of spiritualistic religion. Our modern word is hypnotism. Psychology books that do not agree with the Bible or Spirit of Prophecy are wrong. Have you heard of Ericksonian hypnosis? This type of hypnosis does not necessarily put a person into a full trance. It is induced simply in casual conversation. By using suggestion, you exert a strong influence over their minds so they obey you. The newest development in Ericksonian hypnosis is called neurolinguistic programming. This has taken over our society. We cannot even go to a used car lot today without a salesman using NLP on us. We received advertising that was sent out to salesmen and business men and its message was, "Come to this seminar. We

will teach you how to do NLP to increase your sales, and show you how to be more successful in business.” It is also in the media. Today it is everywhere. Only the Lord can protect us from it.

Would you ever have thought that something like NLP could come into Adventism? But today we have pastors trained in NLP. People trained in NLP will not tell you what they are doing. They think you will not notice them practicing it. But when we find them using the techniques the hypnotists do, what are you supposed to believe? Our only protection is to stay close to the Lord and stay away from anyone who is practicing NLP.

Another characteristic of spiritualism is that people believe they have inherent power in themselves to accomplish good work. (See Testimonies, vol. 1, 294.)

Another characteristic of spiritualism is the lack of time for meditation and prayer. (See Testimonies, vol. 1, 295.) How much time do you spend in meditation and prayer? Are you talking to the Lord before you get up in the morning? As you go through the work day? Are you asking the Lord to control your mind through His Spirit?

A characteristic of spiritualistic religion is called free love. (See Testimonies, vol. 8, 292.)

God ordained love in the marriage relationship. There are parameters for our safety. But the devil wants to destroy these walls of protection. When I was a boy, a couple in our church was divorced. The men in the church were shocked that Seventh-day Adventists got a divorce. Things were different in

the Adventist Church then. We claimed not to believe in free love. What really is the difference between polygamy and marrying and divorcing and marrying and divorcing?

The Bible still says the same thing about divorce. In Malachi 2, God says He hates it. According to the Bible, there is only one reason anyone has a right to remarry. Some Adventists are not straight on this point. The only Biblical reason that allows remarriage after divorce, is if your spouse committed adultery. (See Testimonies, vol. 8, 292.)

“Man’s great danger is in being self-deceived, indulging self-sufficiency, and thus separating from God, the source of his strength. Our natural tendencies, unless corrected by the Holy Spirit of God, have in them the seeds of moral death. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we cannot resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin.” Testimonies, vol. 8, 315, 316. His Divine power helps us overcome. The difference is eternal life or eternal death. In Revelation 2 and 3 the promises to the Seven Churches are given to overcomers.

Another teaching of spiritualism is that each mind will judge itself. That destroys the First Angel’s Message and the Biblical doctrine of the judgment. Could this happen in Adventism? In the last few decades Adventist people have been disputing about the doctrine of the investigative judgment. People do not like it. The Bible says God is going to judge every person who has ever lived. (See John 5.)’

The argument that the devil gave to the angels in heaven was that true knowledge places men above law. Unbelievable! As a young pastor in a conference church in Adventism, if I showed a statement from inspiration, that was the end of the discussion. That is the way it used to be. But today some will argue with the Word of God. That is a teaching of spiritualism, placing your own mind above the Word of God and His law. (See Romans 3:19.)

The last teaching of spiritualism is similar to the devil's lie to Eve in the Garden of Eden. He said all sins committed are innocent. I was shocked some months ago when studying a book recommended by Seventh-day Adventist leaders and published by an SDA publishing house. This book said that when you sin under grace, this sin does not bring condemnation. What does this mean? Sin is sin. What is this idea that I am saved now and if I sin, I am going to be saved anyway? When you sin, you are lost unless that sin is repented of, confessed and forsaken. There is no such thing as salvation in sin.

The idea that you can be under grace and keep sinning, is one of spiritualism's most dangerous guises. Some preachers in Adventism are teaching this heresy today. Are you discouraged by the devil because it seems you cannot overcome some sin? Go to the Lord and say, Lord, I am surrendering everything to You: my mind, my will, my all. I am choosing to follow You. Lord, there is sin in my life. But I am willing to do anything, be anything, surrender anything to you. Please, work in my life and save me from my sins. He will answer your prayer. No matter what the sin is, the Lord will help you to overcome. He will take away your past guilt and give you power enough to overcome.

No sin is innocent. There is no such thing as sinning under grace and still having a relationship with the Lord.

Many of these teachings of spiritualism are coming into our church. What are we going to do? What has happened? "In His Word, the Lord declared what He would do for Israel if they would obey His voice. But the leaders of the people yielded to the temptations of Satan, and God could not give them the blessings He designed them to have, because they did not obey His voice but listened to the voice and policy of Lucifer. This experience will be repeated in the last years of the history of the people of God, who have been established by His grace and power." Manuscript Release vol. 13, 379.

Seventh-day Adventists are the people of God established by His grace and power in these last years. The above quotation says the experience ancient Israel went through is going to be repeated in the last years among God's people. Are we in the last years now?

We are living in that time. We have to pray, Lord Jesus, keep me free from all the doctrines, and teachings, and characteristics of spiritualism. I do not want anything to do with it. The devil will deceive and control as many as he can. God has promised to give us "eyesalve to recognize Satan's deceptions; power to become sons of God; deliverance from the bondage of sin; and freedom to have eternal life through Jesus Christ. "(See Revelation 3:18; John 1:12; James 4:7; John 8:32 and Hebrews 2:15.)

CategoriesChurchTagsAdventist, church, sensualism, spiritualism

Letter from Australia
Six Days Shalt Thou Labor



Spiritualism

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• By

Our Adventist Life and

These verses are about what is spiritualism and spirits based on a chain of verses that are referenced in a specific order to help give clarity and context.* It has very minimal commentary so that you can do your own self-reflection and discovery of the verses. Many times the Bible explains itself if you just know where to look.

With each group of verses, there are probing questions to help you consider what is being said. Each verse in the study is linked to an online Bible, should you want to check the context of the verses around it. Also, allowing verification of what scripture says, as well as purity of a study based only on the Bible.

1. Does the Bible teach that there are spirit beings?

- Hebrews 1:7 (KJV) — “”

2. Spirits being angels, how many classes are there of them?

- Two, the good and the evil.

3. Do both classes communicate with mankind?

- Yes, both.
- Good:
 - Hebrews 1:14 (KJV) — “(”)
 - Judges 13:3-21 (KJV) — “(”)
- Evil:
 - 2 Corinthians 11:14 (KJV) — “(”)
 - Matthew 25:41 (KJV) — “(”)
 - 1 Peter 5:8 (KJV) — “(”)

4. What is Spiritualism?

- “The belief that the spirits of the dead in various ways communicate with and manifest their presence to men, usually through the agency of a person called a medium.”
— Standard Dictionary.

5. Can the dead return to communicate with the living?

- Job 7:10 (KJV) — “(”)
- Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 (KJV) — “(”)
- Psalms 146:4 (KJV) — “(”)

6. Does the Bible recognize that there are lying spirits?

- 1 Kings 22:22 (KJV) — “”

7. To whom do all lying spirits belong?

- John 8:44 (KJV) — “”

8. What power do Satan and his angels possess?

- 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 (KJV) — “”

9. What comes to those who give heed to these lying spirits?

- Leviticus 19:31 (KJV) — “”

“In a sermon on ‘Spiritualism an Imposture,’ Rev. T. De Witt Talmage said: ‘Spiritualism takes advantage of those who are weak and morbid with trouble. We lose a friend. The house is dark, the world is dark, the future seems dark. If we had, in our

rebellion and weakness, the power to marshal a host and recapture our loved one, we should marshal the host. Spiritualism comes in at that moment, when we are all worn out by watching, — all worn out, body, mind, and soul, — and says: “Now I will open that door; you shall hear the voices. Take your places around the table; all be quiet now.” ... O, I hate Spiritualism, because it takes advantage of people when they are weak, and worn out, and morbid under life's bereavements and sorrows! . . . If Spiritualism had its way, it would turn the world into a pandemonium

of carnality. It is an unclean and adulterous system.”

— “Bible Readings for the Home Circle,” pp. 534, 535.

10. What phases of spirit work are named?

- Deuteronomy 18:10-11 (KJV) — “”

“The phenomenal aspect of modern Spiritualism reproduces all essential principles of the magic, witchcraft, and sorcery of the past. The same powers are involved, the same intelligences are operating.”

— F. F. Morse, in ” Practical Occultism,” p. 85.

11. How does the Lord regard all these things?

- Deuteronomy 18:12 (KJV) — “”

12. Whose children are they who use sorcery?

- Acts 13:8-10 (KJV) — “”

13. Will any such go into the kingdom?

- Revelation 21:8 (KJV) — “”
- Revelation 22:14-15 (KJV) — “”

14. Have people been saved from these deceptions?

- Acts 8:9-11 (KJV) — “”
- Acts 16:16-18 (KJV) — “”

15. What promise may be ours?

- 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 (KJV) — “”

“Ques. — Have you ever seen Confucius or Zoroaster?”

“Ans. — Yes, many times.”

“Ques. — In the order of degree, which stands the higher in moral excellence — Jesus Christ, Confucius, or Zoroaster?”

“Ans. — Confucius stands in morality higher than the other two. . . . Jesus Himself claims to have been inspired, to a large extent, by this same Confucius. And if we are to place reliance upon the records concerning each individual, we shall find that Jesus spoke the truth when He tells us that He was inspired by Confucius.”

— Banner of Light, June 4, 1864.

“That Spiritualism is a doctrine of the devil is admitted by some of its own advocates. In the Banner of Light, Nov. 4, 1865, is the following question and answer, the answer being given

by a controlling spirit through a Mrs. Conant, at that time a well-known medium.

“Ques.— Do you know of any such spirit as a person we call the devil?”

“Ans.— We certainly do. And yet this same devil is our god, our father.

“Dr. A. B. Childs, in a work entitled, ‘Christ and the People,’ says that what is called the devil is the Spirit of God in nature.’ And in another work entitled, ‘Better Views of Living,’ the same author says, ‘It is the mission of the devil, yet unthought of by men,

to carry them through the hell of earth, and prepare them for the heaven of the spiritual world.' That the spirits who speak through modern mediums are deceptive is also admitted by leading authorities. Thus Dr. Childs, in the Banner of Light, Oct. 26, 1864, said:

"Nor can we doubt, I think, that there are a diverse host of badly misdirected spirits. The lower spirits seek to undo the good work of the higher, and to harass and to annoy and subject to suffering, medium and sitter. They will deceive vs for their amusement. Where is the medium but what has

either seen or felt this? I have both. But wise spirits, who are to us the revelators and executors of the divine will, designedly deceive us for our good.'

— “Bible & indents Library,” No. 112, p. 11.

This study guide was based on Reading No. 18, pages 116-117 from *Brief Bible Readings for Busy People*, prepared by the Home Missionary Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Review and Herald Publishing. Published originally in 1930.

View the [original study guide](#), which this guide is based on, as a scanned PDF. Full credit to them.

*A Bible chain reference is a system of cross-referencing between different passages or verses of the Bible to connect and relate different concepts, themes, or topics mentioned in different parts of the Bible. It helps readers gain a deeper understanding of the overall message and meaning of the text. To use it, readers start with a particular topic or theme and then look up the

corresponding list of verses, paying attention to the connections and relationships between them. Studying them in a particular order, helps one understand the topic from beginning to end. Just like peeling the layers off of an onion. It's a useful tool for anyone looking to deepen their understanding of the Bible and its teachings.

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The Great Controversy – Teachers

Comments

Spiritualism Exposed

Teachers Comments

Jun 01 - Jun 07

Key Text: [1 Thessalonians 4:16-17](#)

Study Focus: [Matthew 10:28](#); [Ecclesiastes 9:5](#); [Isaiah 8:19-20](#); [John 11:21-25](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:16-17](#); [Matthew 24:23-27](#); [Revelation 16:13-14](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:9-12](#).

Introduction: Spiritualism is part of the devil's scheme to promote the diabolical theory that we are gods and can live without God. Thus, spiritualism is the devil's device to keep humanity on his side of the great controversy. To maintain any form of spiritualism is to be stuck on the side of the devil. To promote spiritualism, the devil changed the biblical definition of death and the Bible teaching about the nature of humanity. These false doctrines lay the groundwork for the spurious teaching that we are eternal and indestructible and that we continue to exist even beyond death. As a consequence, this deception opens the door to the dangerous belief that after we die we can continue to communicate with other people and even angelic beings.

The movement of the European Enlightenment embarked on a long, hard battle to eradicate all medieval forms of spiritualism, including communication with the dead. However, the Enlightenment failed in this

endeavor. According to biblical prophecy, spiritualism will strike humanity with full force in the end times, preparing humanity for the last great deception in the great controversy. That is why God's people are called to proclaim to humanity the true nature, and intentions, of spiritualism, as well as the biblical teachings on human nature, the nature of death, and the true hope of humanity. Our hope is not based on the erroneous notion of an immortal soul but on the assurance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and on an eternal relationship with Him.

Lesson Themes: This study focused on three major themes:

1. The true essence, and intentions, of spiritualism in the context of the great controversy is to deceive humanity into entering a direct relationship with demonic forces.
2. The Bible teaches that humans are unitary, integrated beings; that the first death is a temporary sleep; and that the second death is total annihilation, which is also the biblical depiction of hell.
3. The true hope that the Word of God gives us is the resurrection of the entire human being and an eternal relationship with God.

Part II: Commentary

Designations and Historical Background

Modern spiritualism refers to the religious and/or philosophical belief that death is not the end of human existence. Rather, spiritualism contends that the spirit survives as an ethereal, immaterial, eternal, immortal soul. After death, these souls or spirits continue to develop and evolve, rapidly advancing to other dimensions and levels of existence and knowledge. Humans who are still in their bodies can contact these departed spirits, asking for help and guidance. These contacts could be done through specialists, such as mediums. Or one could personally contact these spirits through study and practice.

Generally, modern spiritualism is believed to have originated in Hydesville, New York, on March 31, 1848, with the Fox sisters, who claimed that a spirit communicated with them through a rapping code. In 1888, one of the sisters disclosed that all the rapping had been a hoax, but in 1889, she retracted her confession. Despite huge scandals of fraud, spiritualism spread in North America. By the end of the nineteenth century, several million middle- and upper-class Americans considered themselves spiritualists.

In the meantime, in the 1850s, Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, a French teacher known by the pseudonym Allan Kardec, developed spiritism. Spiritism teaches that humans are incarnations and reincarnations of immortal spirits that populate a transcendent sphere. Thus, while spiritism believes in the reincarnation of the eternal soul, spiritualism believes in the eternity of the soul without accepting the concept of reincarnation. While all spiritists are spiritualists, not all spiritualists are spiritists. Although there is some disagreement between these spiritualistic movements, they are all united by one belief: the immortality of the soul and the possibility of communicating with spirits after their death. In the second half of the nineteenth century, an increasing number of the educated elites of Europe embraced either spiritualism or spiritism, developing modern Western occultism. They organized themselves in numerous societies and associations, publishing an enormous quantity of books and articles on esoteric knowledge and magic.

The Immortality of the Soul

Modern Western spiritualists do not claim their belief in the immortality of the soul is new. Rather, they readily concede that this “knowledge” comes from the “ancients.” Indeed, the concept of the immortality of the soul can be traced back to the serpent’s temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden. Afterward, this false theology spread throughout the world, permeating entire cultures and creating entire religions, such as shamanism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, voodoo, and other local and regional pagan religions.

The immortality of the soul was the foundation of Greek philosophy, especially Pythagoreanism, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Middle Platonism, and Neoplatonism. Manichaeism and Gnosticism also built on the same concept. Tragically, through a syncretism with Greek philosophy, Christianity was also infused with the concept of the immortality of the soul. For this reason, even if many Christian denominations today have condemned spiritism, any Christian church that continues to hold fast to the concept of the immortality of the soul is especially vulnerable to spiritualism and occultism. As a result, some churches, such as the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, have developed an entire cult of saints, who allegedly can hear prayers and respond by protecting and guiding the ones who appeal to them. The Protestant Reformers rejected the cult of the saints; however, the concept of the immortality of the soul is entrenched in most Protestant denominations, potentially opening them to spiritualist influences.

Two additional observations are important here. First, it is noteworthy that modern spiritualism emerged exactly during the same period, and in the same area, in which Millerite Adventism originated: in the northeastern United States during the 1840s. This emergence was the devil's attempt to anticipate, and discredit, God's work of proclaiming the second coming of Jesus and the three angels' messages. God proclaimed these messages through the remnant church, which was confirmed through the gift of the Spirit of prophecy. One of the foundational teachings of the Adventist Church was to call people to reject the pagan belief of the immortality of the soul. The Adventist Church also called the world to return to the biblical teaching of the unitary human being. Adventists also urged humanity to hang its hope for the afterlife, not on surviving death as an immortal soul but on the resurrection that Jesus would bring at His second coming.

Second, the European Enlightenment or modernism, with its emphasis on science and scientific education and technology, promised humanity the extermination of superstitions, magic, witchcraft, and any contact with the supernatural. Perhaps the only success of modernism in this regard was to undermine the belief in the Christian God among Westerners. Otherwise, modernism never succeeded in uprooting the supernatural from Western society. As a result, Western society became secular and atheistic, without being free of spiritualism. On the contrary, the second half of the nineteenth century is known as one of the greatest revivals in the history of spiritualism, spiritism, occultism, witchcraft, and magic. By the end of the twentieth century, modernism itself struggled for survival, as postmodernist children were inundated with occultic stories—in the form of books, cartoons, and movies—replete with supernatural powers, magic, witchcraft, and communications with the dead.

Today, too, what are known as near-death experiences are now another manifestation of this same principle. And, unfortunately, even many Christians see them as proof that the dead immediately live on in another realm of existence.

Spiritualism and the Great Controversy

What is the role of spiritualism in the devil's strategy amid the great controversy? By promoting spiritualism, the devil wants to explain, and confirm, his foundational deception that started the great controversy, namely:

- that God is not the only God, but that we are all gods;

- that we have life in and of ourselves;
- that we have a component (the soul) of our beings that is spiritual (immaterial, ethereal), indestructible, immortal, and eternal; and
- that we are morally autonomous.

Humanity's fall into sin brought incommensurable suffering, destruction, and death, empirically proving the devil wrong. In this situation, humans would rightly doubt Satan's thesis in which he stated that rebelling against God would not lead to death but to another divine level of existence and consciousness. Spiritualism in various forms, then, is the devil's attempt to redefine death and affirm that only the body dies and that the soul transitions to a superior form of life.

The devil also uses spiritualism to lure or drive people to a direct, personal encounter with himself and his demons. The Bible clearly teaches that behind spiritualistic phenomena, as in the case of idolatry, stand demons themselves ([1 Corinthians 10:20](#)). These encounters are dangerous, not only because they are deceptive ([John 8:44](#)) and generate impurity ([Mark 5:2](#)) but also because, many times, they lead toward demon possession, a situation in which demons control, and enslave, humans. For various reasons and as part of their strategy, demons cannot possess or control everyone in the same way. However, demonic forces are in the constant business of devising a large variety of snares to capture as many people as possible to side with them in the great controversy. The apostle Peter warns us that our "enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" ([1 Peter 5:8](#)).

Christ's Power

Despite the devil's efforts, Christ's healing of people possessed with demons (e.g., [Luke 8:26-33](#); [Matthew 12:45](#)) demonstrated His power to deliver us from Satan's control. Seventh-day Adventists proclaim Christ's victory, not only at the end of the great controversy but here and now, in the midst of it. For this reason, at the 2005 General Conference Session, in St. Louis, Missouri, the Seventh-day Adventist Church voted an additional fundamental belief, number 11, that precisely highlights this point:

By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace,

joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. We are also called to follow Christ's example by compassionately ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience." — Fundamental Belief Number 11, "Growing in Christ," <https://www.adventist.org/growing-in-christ>.

Initially, this fundamental belief was necessitated by the situation in some parts of the world, such as Asia and Africa, in which Christians, in general, and even some Adventists, were not clear that Scripture rejects all occult practices. In addition, even if Adventists in those areas did understand that the Bible opposes all spiritualistic practices, they were hesitant to break free of those practices and teachings because they were afraid of the retaliation of the spirits. Moreover, spiritualism, spiritism, and occultism are all pervasive realities, not only in Africa and Asia but throughout the world. Thus, fundamental belief 11 is for all people. Regardless of our cultural and social backgrounds, all people need the same message of the gospel: " 'My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand' " ([John 10:27-29](#)).



23 HALLOWEEN *Funny* COSTUMES FOR KIDS



Part III: Life Application

1. What do people in your particular culture think about human nature and death? How can you share with them the truth about death, as taught in the Word of God?
2. What do people in your culture think about hell? What can you and your church do in your society to promote the biblical understanding of hell?

Spiritualism

Exposed

Reflections on The Great Controversy chapters 31-34

by

Clinton Wahlen

Listen to the audio version

Here I was, a sixteen-year-old atheist listening to a radio interview with someone claiming to help people revisit their past lives. I was intrigued and decided to try it out. So I wrote down the address and drove to where this interesting

opportunity awaited. I quickly realized I had gotten into something much deeper than I had anticipated. I walked up to the door of an impressive-looking Victorian mansion and, after explaining the purpose of my visit, was warmly greeted by a middle-aged woman and welcomed inside. After a brief orientation, the excursion to my past lives began. I closed my eyes and soon was supposedly led back to a time before I was born. I felt myself entering a dark, icy location and suddenly began shivering uncontrollably. My guide tried to assist me, but I told her I felt paralyzed, unable to open my eyes, and so frozen I could no longer move my arms or legs. It seemed to me the lady guiding me began to feel a little nervous too and immediately sought to retrieve me back to “the present.” The experience lasted far too long for me, but I politely thanked the woman and quickly left.

That was my first experience with spiritualism and the world of the supernatural. Later, after my conversion to Christ and the Seventh-day Adventist message, I realized how dangerous that first encounter with the forces of darkness really was. Note this vivid description in [The Great Controversy](#):

“There are few who have any just conception of the deceptive power of spiritualism and the danger of coming under its influence. Many tamper with it merely to gratify their curiosity. [That was me!] They have no real faith in it and would be filled with horror at the thought of yielding themselves to the spirits’ control. But they venture upon the forbidden ground, and the mighty destroyer exercises his power upon them against their will. Let them once be induced to submit their minds to his direction, and he [Satan] holds them captive” (p. 558).

*I firmly believe
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know Him.*

I firmly believe God rescued me, even though, at the time, I did not know Him. He protected me in my ignorance and preserved me through this harrowing experience so I would be able to serve Him with a healthy awareness of the unseen spiritual powers battling for the control of every human heart. Truly, “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

The devil’s deceptions have been perfected over the course of thousands of years of practice with human beings. His arsenal has tailor-made tools for different types of people. Some will be dissuaded from religion with sneers and ridicule, while others are met with sophisticated objections to the existence of God and faith in the Bible. Here are some of the most common ways in which Satan seeks to derail a vibrant walk with God:

Occupy the Mind with Less Important Things. Sometimes we're just so busy we hardly have time to pray, let alone read the Bible, listen for His voice, and wait on God's direction. Complicating matters is the deluge of information constantly coming our way through news channels, social media, and a myriad of voices clamoring for our attention.

Convince People that Doctrine Does Not Matter. Satan is always ready to suggest doubts and questions about the teachings of the Bible because he knows that the more confusion he can create in the church, the less people are inclined to seek to know the truth which sets us free from the fables and falsehoods that enslave our minds.

Enlist False Teachers. The apostles and prophets frequently had to contend with those who were causing division by turning people away from Bible truth. Peter speaks of them as "wells without water" (2 Pet. 2:17) and Paul warns against "giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). Sometimes the most winsome and persuasive speakers are actually the devil's deceivers in disguise.

Exalt Supposed "Facts" of Science. While many wonderful scientific discoveries in the natural world, in medicine, and many other fields have enriched our lives, "the greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God in their research, become bewildered in their attempts to investigate the relations of science and revelation" (p. 522).

Encourage People to Doubt God's Word. From the beginning, this approach has been one of Satan's most successful strategies. In Eden, the serpent raised the question, "Has God really said . . . ?" (Gen. 3:1, NASB2020), which led to strange new thoughts flooding Eve's mind. God never removes all reasons for doubt or unbelief. "Those who refuse to accept and obey God's word until every objection has been removed,

and there is no longer an opportunity for doubt, will never come to the light” (p. 527).

Counterfeits Closely Resembling the Truth. Without careful study of the Bible, it will be difficult to discern truth from error. All who are willing to be deceived will be. It is important not to rely on what sounds right or what a person’s pastor or teacher says is right. We must search the Scriptures for ourselves, “test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

It’s surprising to consider how many faithful Christians are derailed and deceived by one or more of these strategies. Consider, for example, what most Christians believe about death. Frequently we hear someone say a dear friend or relative is now in heaven. There’s even a television series called “Going Home” about Christian nurses who help their patients along what they call “the ultimate journey” to their “forever home.” It sounds nice, at first. On the other hand, how many of us would like our dead relatives looking down on us from heaven, aware of all our sorrows and struggles, but apparently helpless to intervene?

Understanding the Bible’s description of what constitutes human life, the nature of death and the spirit world is a powerful safeguard from Satan’s deceptions.

The Equation of Life

First, the Bible teaches we are all made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28) as whole persons. [\[i\] In Genesis 2:7 we read, “the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” This is the equation of life: dust + the breath of life = a living being. Physical, mental, and spiritual aspects are combined to form a whole person.](#)

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The Hebrew word for “being” is [nephesh](#) and the Greek word is [psychē](#), words generally translated “soul” throughout the Scriptures. But the Bible never speaks of humans having an immortal soul that can exist independently from the body. In fact, it teaches quite the opposite, that God “alone has immortality” (1 Tim. 6:16). Separate the spiritual or life-giving aspect (“the breath of life”) from the material aspect (“the dust of the ground”) and human life ceases. In a similar way, the Bible describes the “spirit” or life leaving a person at the moment of death (Gen. 35:18; Ps. 31:6; 146:4). According to James 2:26, “the body without the spirit is dead.” Resurrection is the moment when God imparts life to the person again (1 Kings 17:21; Luke 8:55). So the biblical understanding of death is closely associated with the resurrection.

[An Unconscious Sleep](#)

Scripture “consistently depicts human death as an unconscious sleep” until the resurrection. [\[ii\]](#) Many passages

in both the Old and New Testaments call death a sleep (e.g., 1 Kings 2:10; 2 Chron. 14:1; Job 14:10-12; Ps. 13:3; Jer. 51:57; Matt. 9:24; 2 Pet. 3:3, 4). Notice how much like sleep is the Bible's description of death:

There Is No Conscious Awareness and No Feelings. "For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing. . . . their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished" (Eccl. 9:5).

There Is No Activity. ". . . there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave" (Eccl. 9:10).

Death Is a Realm of Silence. "The dead do not praise the Lord, nor any who go down into silence" (Ps. 115:17).

There Is a Separation from Those Who Are Alive. "Nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun" (Eccl. 9:6).

There Will Be an Awakening. "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). [\[iii\]](#)

As John Peckham beautifully points out in his newly released textbook, **God With Us**,

"The fact that death is a sleep (an unconscious state) is good news, for it means saved persons who die are not aware of the struggles and suffering of loved ones here on earth. They are not consciously waiting for ages to reunite with loved ones. . . . Instead, they rest in perfect, unconscious peace (spared from awareness of this world's ongoing evils), and the very next thing they know, they will see Jesus in the resurrection." [\[iv\]](#)

After Lazarus died, Jesus spoke of him as being asleep and that He was going to “wake him up” (John 11:11). Clearly, Lazarus didn’t go anywhere at the moment of death, nor did he know anything more about the afterlife once he was raised from the dead (see John 11:41-44), except that he had died and was now alive again—like waking from a dreamless sleep. Because Jesus conquered sin and death as shown by His own resurrection from the dead, He could assure John on Patmos, “I hold the keys of death and the grave” (Rev. 1:18, NLT).

If death is an unconscious sleep, then it is impossible to communicate with those who have died. Spiritualism teaches just the opposite, that it is possible to communicate with the spirits or souls of those who have died. God wants to protect us from deception, which is why He prohibited such attempts in the strongest possible way (Lev. 20:6), commanding that mediums and spiritists be stoned to death (verse 27). Note also Isaiah’s counsel in this regard: “And when they say to you, ‘Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,’ should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:19, 20).

End-time Deceptions

Jesus specifically warns that, in the future, there would be “signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matt. 24:24). Similarly, Paul speaks of an end-time deception that “is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9). If confronted with supernatural manifestations, how would we relate to them? Ellen White warns that “many will be confronted by the spirits of devils personating beloved relatives or friends and declaring the most dangerous heresies. These visitants will appeal to our tenderest sympathies and will work miracles to sustain their pretensions.” How would you feel if a being who

appeared to be a deceased loved one, such as a parent or child, came to you, spoke words of love, and described in beautiful and vivid detail the heavenly world they now enjoy? What would you think if they added that it was not necessary for you to keep the Sabbath holy? We are not left in doubt as to what our reaction should be to spiritualistic manifestations like these: “We must be prepared to withstand them with the Bible truth that the dead know not anything and that they who thus appear are the spirits of devils” (p. 560).

Ellen White goes on to describe that “fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens, in token of the power of miracle-working demons. . . . Persons will arise pretending to be Christ Himself, and claiming the title and worship which belong to the world’s Redeemer. They will perform wonderful miracles of healing and will profess to have revelations from heaven contradicting the testimony of the Scriptures. . . . As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ.” She goes on to say he will appear “as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation” (p. 560; cf. Rev. 13-15). Millions will proclaim, “Christ has come!” and bow before him as he pronounces a blessing on them and heals the sick. “But the people of God will not be misled,” because “the teachings of this false Christ are not in accordance with the Scriptures” (pp. 624, 625).

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When I was an atheist, one huge obstacle preventing me from believing in God was the idea of an eternally burning hell. I could never imagine wishing on anyone such a punishment that made even the horrors of the holocaust seem tame and merciful by comparison. Although I knew almost nothing about the Bible at that time, I had some well-meaning Christian friends who told me that I should believe in Jesus or else I would be forever tormented in hell. Imagine my surprise when I discovered what Jesus actually said about hell: “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). What? I had been told the soul was immortal. But if that were true, how could it be destroyed?

The idea of an immortal soul is a pagan idea that seeped into the church as Christians sought “bridges” for outreach to the wider Greco-Roman world. It is “one of those false doctrines that Rome, borrowing from paganism, incorporated into the religion of Christendom” (p. 549). But it has no basis in

Scripture. Paul says human beings “seek for glory, honor, and immortality” (Rom. 2:7). If immortality is something we seek, then it cannot be inherent. In fact, he also says God “alone has immortality” (1 Tim. 6:16). I came to realize that the idea of the soul’s immortality goes back to the devil himself when he told Eve, “You will certainly not die!” (Gen. 3:5, CSB).

This false doctrine of an eternally burning hell has done incalculable harm to people’s view of God and the Bible. “When we consider in what false colors Satan has painted the character of God, can we wonder that our merciful Creator is feared, dreaded, and even hated?” (p. 536). If “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16), how could He instigate such monstrous suffering? What just basis could there possibly be for eternal torment? God Himself says, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die. . . ?” (Eze. 33:11). The alternative to eternal life is not eternal torment but eternal death: “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

Death Cannot Separate Us From God

When Jesus met with His disciples just before His crucifixion, He told them, “I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). Paul elaborates on this in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” Death cannot separate us from God because He has an intimate knowledge of every aspect of our individual human nature. As Jesus said, “the very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matt. 10:30). God is able to restore us in the resurrection morning: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall

not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal **must** put on immortality. . . . Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’” (1 Cor. 15:51-55).

Paul also points out that “the natural body” (which is mortal and subject to death because of sin) will put on “the spiritual body,” using an agricultural metaphor: “The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:42-44). As his analogy clearly shows, this happens not at death but at the resurrection.

“Never Have to Say Goodbye Again”

Despite what might be considered a somewhat theoretical explanation of death, our hope as Christians is, ultimately, very personal. When my wife’s grandfather was diagnosed with cancer many years ago, she was devastated. He had been like a father to her, rock solid. He was her foundation growing up. So, when the time came to say goodbye to him, she wept. With tears pouring down her cheeks, she said, “Grandpa, when Jesus comes, you’re going to be the first person that I find, and I’m going to give you a great big hug!” And her grandfather replied, “Yes. And we’ll never have to say goodbye again!”

No doubt many of you have had similar experiences—perhaps it was a parent, a child, or other family member, or a close friend. And what a wonderful hope we have of seeing them again when Jesus comes! What a comfort it is to know they’re simply asleep, waiting peacefully for Jesus to come and

awaken them and clothe them with immortality. Not looking down on us with pity or worry, but peacefully sleeping in hope, awaiting the moment when we will all see Jesus face to face and can be with Him and with each other, forever!

“Even so, come Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:30).

[i] A portion of what follows was previously published in Clinton Wahlen, “What Happens When We Die? State of the Dead,” in [Committed to Our Identity: Message, Mission, Unity](#), ed. Artur Stele (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute/Review and Herald, 2024), p. 63-68.

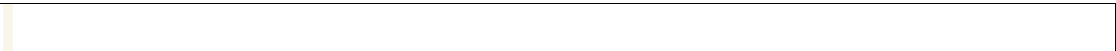
[ii] John Peckham, [God With Us: An Introduction to Adventist Theology](#), (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2023), p. 399.

[iii] See also [Seventh-day Adventists Believe](#) (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 2018),p. 394-395.

[iv] Peckham, p. 405.

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CULTURE VIEWS	
Immanence and Ethics, Part 1: What’s “Spiritualism” Got to Do with It?	
William C. DeMary June 18, 2023 Spirituality27 min. read	



And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."^[1]

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it or you shall die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."^[2]

These passages in Genesis 2–3 have long been cited by Adventists in support of the argument that spiritualism consists of two main teachings, both of which originated with the lie that the serpent told Eve at the Tree of Knowledge. The first teaching derives from the first half of the serpent's response to the woman: "You will not die." The Adventist Church teaches that with this statement, the serpent, who was Satan in disguise, first introduced the idea that the disembodied spirits of the dead are still alive or conscious. The second spiritualist teaching may be found in the second half of the serpent's response: "You will be like God." Adventism teaches that this element of Satan's initial deception is also foundational to spiritualism. Only God is immortal, so to claim that human beings are innately immortal is to contradict God's condition that we can only attain immortality if we obey his commandments. As the Adventist theologian Le Roy Froom explains, "according to inspiration, absolute and inalienable immortality is characteristic of, and only belongs to, God (1 Tim. 6:16; cf. 1:17). Man's immortality can be but relative and conditional, for it will be conferred, acquired, received." Because "Innate Immortality cannot be an inherent quality in any created or derived being," Froom concludes that "any creature's arrogant claim to equality with God and His exclusive immortality is as groundless as it is presumptuous."^[3]

This claim to equality with God is, according to Froom, present in doctrines like pantheism, which he defines as “the belief or theory that God and the universe are identical” or “that there is no God but the combined forces and laws that are manifested in the existing universe as a whole.”^[4] Pantheism suggests that we are not merely like God, but rather that we are God. This error, Froom argues, is similar to the claim that we are immortal, because if we are part of God, then to that extent, we have no beginning or end. Moreover, it is similar to polytheism, in that it maintains that there are multiple divine beings. He quotes the religious philosopher Charles Secrétan in support of this view: “The idea of an immortality essential to spirit substance, making it impossible to assign to the existence of the creature either beginning or end, is a very near approach to pantheism, or else to polytheism.”^[5]

“Spiritualism” as Progressivism and Universal Reconciliation

Conservative Adventists have applied this interpretation of the serpent’s second lie to other doctrines or ideas. In a seminar for Secrets Unsealed in 2014, Laurel Damsteegt, a proponent of headship theology, contends that there are two types of spiritualism, based on each of the serpent’s two lies. She argues that “type two spiritualism,” based on the serpent’s statement “You will be like God,” applies not only to the idea that we are immortal like God, but to any situation in which we decide for ourselves how we ought to live. Damsteegt also refers to “type two spiritualism” as “philosophical spiritualism,” following Ellen White in *The Great Controversy*.^[6]

Drawing on the chapter in *The Great Controversy* entitled “Can Our Dead Speak to Us?,” Damsteegt describes several elements of “philosophical spiritualism.” First, she argues, philosophical spiritualism endorses the idea of spiritual progress in history. She quotes White, saying, “Spiritualism teaches ‘that man is the creature of progression; that it is his destiny from his birth to progress, even to eternity, toward the Godhead.’”^[7] Although White does not cite her source in this chapter, she is quoting from J. H. Waggoner’s book *The Nature and Tendency of Modern Spiritualism* (as Damsteegt also acknowledges). Waggoner, in turn, is quoting a work by John W. Edmonds, a New York judge and Spiritualist.

While Damsteegt regards the idea that humanity can progress towards divinity as blasphemous, Waggoner's concern is with the implications of this idea on the doctrine of the investigative judgment. He states, "The attribute of Justice and character of Judge are entirely ignored by Spiritualism, which denies probation, and substitutes fatalism in an eternal and necessary progression."^[8] Early Adventists believed the Spiritualists' promotion of the idea of spiritual progress in history threatened not only Christ's unique status as God, but the doctrine of the investigative judgment, which teaches that God's judgment of the human race is not inevitable, but rather is contingent on believers' perfect obedience.

The second characteristic of philosophical spiritualism, according to Damsteegt, is the idea that God's law is immanent within us, which Damsteegt considers no different than the claim that we are above God's law and that therefore all behaviors are permissible. Again, she quotes White: "[The spiritualist] declares, through the spirits that 'true knowledge places man above all law;' that 'whatever is, is right;' that 'God doth not condemn;' and 'that all sins which are committed are innocent.'"^[9] These excerpts were also compiled by Waggoner, who criticizes the Spiritualists for denying God's law and trusting "intuition" or "mental views for which they are not dependent."^[10] He states, "The difference between them and the teachings of the Bible is this: The Bible presents to us a system or code of morality as emanating from God, the Supreme moral Governor; that it is of course of absolute authority; that man is subject to it in his actions, and subject to a penalty (punishment) for its violation."^[11] By contrast, he argues, the Spiritualists' claims about God's laws "are ultra-pantheistic. So, though they speak of laws, they rob them of every characteristic of laws: of authority, the first great essential of law; of penalty, without which a law is mere advice; besides this, they deny free-agency, or probation, without which a law is a nullity, though in itself possessed of every essential attribute."^[12] Waggoner's comment indicates another set of concerns that Spiritualism presented to Adventism, namely that its pantheistic conception of God, which entailed the immanence of his law, contradicted the Adventist emphasis on God's transcendence and the heteronomy of his law.^[13]

Waggoner's own conception of God is highly relevant to this issue since he consistently resisted the idea of God's immanence. He rejected Trinitarianism because, in his view, it undermines the Adventist doctrine of the atonement, which involves a wholly transcendent conception of God's law. According to Denis Fortin, Waggoner argued in a series of articles for the *Review and Herald* that "atonement is more than a sacrifice and involves more than the salvation of mankind; it 'is a vindication of justice by an offering to a broken law.'" Jesus' death itself did not constitute the atonement but was rather the precondition for the atonement, which Waggoner argued was now taking place in the heavenly sanctuary. As Fortin notes, Waggoner "feared that confusing Christ's substitutionary death on Calvary with a completed atonement would lead irrevocably to antinomianism, immorality, and universalism. If the atonement is complete at the cross, [he] argued, then Christ died for all men and their sins have been atoned for, so consequently, all will be saved. Such a view leads to a depreciation of the law of God and to immorality." The only alternative to this conclusion, in Waggoner's view, was to believe that God had only predestined some to be saved, as in Calvinism.^[14]

To avoid antinomianism and universalism, Waggoner found it necessary to reject Trinitarianism by suggesting that the faith of both Unitarianism and Trinitarianism amount to a form of Socinianism, a doctrine named after the sixteenth-century theologian Faustus Socinus which rejected the pre-existence of Christ. Waggoner argued that the Trinitarian distinction between the divine and human natures of Christ results in the position that it was only the human nature of Christ that suffered and died. This undermines the doctrine of the incarnation (and thus Christ's pre-existence) because Jesus' divine nature plays no part in the atonement. Consequently, he argued, Trinitarians are left with no way to distinguish between the Father and the Son, since the Son can only be distinguished from the Father because he was incarnated. Waggoner maintained that Jesus' sacrifice could only atone for our sins if the entirety of the Godhead was involved in his suffering and death; otherwise, Jesus was merely human, and his death was no different than that of others.^[15]

Of course, Waggoner's conclusions can be avoided by accepting that rather than Christ's sacrifice being the prerequisite for atonement, atonement was inherent in his sacrifice. Then there would be no need for Trinitarianism to account for which of Christ's two "natures" suffered death. Christ, as the unity of divinity and humanity, suffered death to overcome our existential alienation from our essential goodness. He could not have accomplished this as a human being alone; rather, only because his human will was identical with his divine will could he absorb temptation and death entirely within himself without succumbing to it.^[16] But to accept this understanding of the atonement and the corresponding notion of the Trinity would have required Waggoner to abandon the legalistic conception of the atonement, in which the purpose of atonement was to vindicate God's law, which he regarded as entirely heteronomous.

When conservative Adventists like Damsteegt characterize the idea of God's immanence as an element of philosophical spiritualism, they are implicitly attacking the notion of universal reconciliation that results from this view. Like Waggoner, they believe that people cannot be induced to obey God's law without the threat of punishment in hell. They reject the doctrine of universal reconciliation because, in their view, it undermines the law's ability to induce people to obedience.

"Spiritualism" as Higher Criticism and Moral Autonomy

The two remaining elements of philosophical spiritualism that Damsteegt identifies in *The Great Controversy* are also related to the issue of divine authority and law. The third element of philosophical spiritualism, according to Damsteegt, is that it "voids scriptural authority" by using critical methods of interpreting the Bible. She argues that higher criticism aims to cause doubt by attempting to explain the Bible according to its original cultural context, rather than as "the voice of God with universal norms that transcends all cultures." She states, "If we read the plain Scripture and make it read something completely opposite to what it really says, because of interpretation, tradition, or cultural background—or for whatever reason—we have made of none effect the Word of God."^[17]

In other words, Damsteegt considers higher criticism an element of philosophical spiritualism because, in her view, it instills doubt in traditional ways of interpreting the Bible. Specifically, higher criticism threatens what Damsteegt recognizes as the basis of Adventist authority: the method of interpretation that yields the church's traditional understanding of God's law and the investigative judgment. This amounts to philosophical spiritualism because it substitutes human reason for God's will, which in her view is perfectly articulated in Adventist doctrine.

The final element of philosophical spiritualism, according to Damsteegt, is that "it fosters the seeds of rebellion" by promoting moral autonomy. It is on this basis that she associates feminism with Spiritualism. She misleadingly alleges that just as Lucifer desired supremacy over Christ, which led to his rebellion against God, so feminists desire supremacy over men, which is also effectively rebellion against God. (In fact, what the early feminists desired was not supremacy over men, but autonomy over themselves. Unfortunately, Damsteegt regards these as one and the same.) Damsteegt draws on Waggoner to support her view that early feminism was identical to Spiritualism. Quoting his description of a speech delivered by the early feminist and Spiritualist Victoria C. Woodhull, she states, "After having blasphemed religion, laughed at the decencies of social life, scoffed at marriage, and advocated universal prostitution, this notorious woman concluded by stating that it was the sublime mission of spiritualism to free the human race from the thralldom of matrimony and to establish social emancipation."¹⁸ For Damsteegt and Waggoner, Woodhull's criticism of traditional gender and sexual norms reflects the rebellious attitude endorsed by philosophical spiritualism.

None of the elements of "philosophical spiritualism" that Damsteegt outlines in her presentation—the idea of spiritual progress; the conception of God's law as immanent; critical methods of scriptural interpretation; and moral autonomy—necessarily entail the belief that it is possible to communicate with dead spirits. However, conservative Adventists must portray these ideas as part of the serpent's original lie at the Tree of Knowledge because they recognize that they threaten the unique eschatological status of the church as the

vindicator of God's law. Unless Satan, in the form of the serpent, had called God's law into question from the outset of temptation, there is little reason for Adventists to suppose that the law is what is at stake in the Great Controversy, and that Adventists are the special remnant who will vindicate God by keeping his law.

Conservative Adventists reject the idea of spiritual progress in history because they do not believe that history has any inherent value. The Great Controversy doctrine (Fundamental Belief 8) teaches that history is simply "the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated." God's vindication is history's only purpose, after which the earth will be discarded and a new earth created.^[19] Ultimately, the Great Controversy doctrine treats human history and life with indifference by stating that disposing of the earth and the lives of many people was necessary for God to demonstrate that he is loving, which would have been impossible unless he had created Lucifer with the ability to cause suffering.

Additionally, conservative Adventists reject the other ideas they associate with philosophical spiritualism because they threaten the church's moral and religious authority. They argue that if people are permitted the autonomy to decide their moral responsibilities for themselves, such as by utilizing critical hermeneutical methods, then there is no need for them to defer to an extrinsic law like the Ten Commandments. Damsteegt and her colleagues reject the idea that God makes our moral responsibilities known to us through his immanent self-revelation in history because they insist that those responsibilities are already fully revealed in the Ten Commandments. Consequently, they find it necessary to defame this understanding of God as "philosophical spiritualism," although Spiritualists were by no means the first to appropriate it and although it has nothing to do with believing that spirits remain conscious after death.

Interpreting the Knowledge of Good and Evil

The traditional Adventist interpretation of the serpent's statement "You will be like God" consistently fails to consider its full context. The serpent's statement does not end at "you will be like God." Instead, it is followed by a qualifier: "you will be like God, knowing good and

evil.” This phrase indicates that what it means to be “like God” is not to be immortal like God, as Fromm suggests, nor does it mean to assert one’s moral autonomy, as Damsteegt suggests. Rather, to be “like God” is to have a certain kind of knowledge concerning good and evil. The correct interpretation of these verses therefore depends on our understanding of what the knowledge of good and evil is.

In Western tradition, the knowledge of good and evil has been interpreted as meaning the knowledge of evil and imperfection resulting from our corruption by sin. According to this interpretation, Adam and Eve did not know evil prior to the fall, and because they had nothing with which to contrast it, they also did not know good. The world as they knew it was perfect. Only by eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge was this perfection disrupted. This is the interpretation endorsed in the seventh Fundamental Belief.^[20]

However, there are other possible interpretations of this account. One view, promoted by the Hebrew scholar Ziony Zevit, maintains that the knowledge of good and bad refers specifically to carnal knowledge, an interpretation for which there is ample support in the text. Zevit argues that the story is structured around Adam and Eve’s knowledge of their nakedness. Prior to their consumption of the fruit, they were naked, but they were not ashamed (Genesis 2:25). After eating the fruit, they saw their nakedness and fashioned clothes for themselves out of fig leaves (Genesis 3:7). Then, when God confronted Adam, he told God that he hid because he was naked (Genesis 3:10). Zevit suggests that the carnal knowledge to which Adam and Eve were awakened after eating the fruit was not merely a deceptive substitute for the knowledge that the serpent had promised them, but it was the promised knowledge itself. This knowledge was good insofar as it initiated the process by which Adam and Eve became civilized beings, starting with their invention of clothing. However, this knowledge was bad because it caused shame.^[21]

According to Zevit, although the second part of the serpent’s statement, “you will be like God, knowing good and evil,” involved a deception, it was not strictly a lie. Genesis teaches that God had created human beings in his own image (Genesis 1:27), so that Adam and Eve were already “like God.”^[22] Moreover, God himself had given

the tree of knowledge of good and evil its name (Genesis 2:17), so it was not wrong for the serpent to suggest that the first couple would gain knowledge from eating its fruit. Rather, the serpent's sophistry consisted of his convincing Eve that God's prohibition against eating the fruit applied only to Adam acting alone.

As Zevit explains, the serpent (who is never identified as Satan) began his conversation with Eve by insinuating that God had prohibited consumption of the fruit from every tree in the garden. Eve then corrects him by stating that God had only prohibited their consumption of the fruit from the tree of knowledge. However, in her response to the serpent, she modified God's command in two significant ways. First, she changed the Hebrew word for "you" in God's command—"You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree"—from its singular to its plural form, a nuance that is not easily translated into English due to its lack of a second-person plural pronoun. When God commanded Adam not to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge, he addressed Adam using a singular "you," because Eve had not yet been formed (see Genesis 2:16–18). However, Eve portrayed God's command as having been addressed to herself, as well. Second, she embellished God's command by emphasizing the certainty of the death that would result from disobedience. Rather than correctly quoting God as saying, "You shall die," she states, "You shall surely die." This additional emphasis occurred when Eve added a suffix to the Hebrew word for "die" that was missing from God's original command.

The serpent demonstrates his rhetorical cunning in his reply to Eve in verse 4. He does not respond by accusing God of lying when he threatened death as the consequence for disobedience. Rather, the literal translation of the serpent's reply to Eve from the Hebrew is "No dying you [plural] shall surely die." Rather than overtly contradicting God, he introduces a more subtle deception by correcting Eve. He effectively states, "God did not say, 'You (in the plural) shall surely die.'" By denying that God's command had been addressed to a plural "you" and that God had said Eve would surely die, the serpent raises the possibility that Eve, to whom the original command was not addressed, may not certainly die. In this way, the serpent convinces her to risk eating the fruit.^[23]

If Zevit's interpretation of the original Hebrew grammar is correct, then the Adventist interpretation of the serpent's lie as the initial introduction of spiritualism is unfounded. The serpent's deception did not consist of convincing Adam and Eve that they would **never** die, but in convincing Eve that **she** would not **surely** die. It was not a lie about the immortality of the soul. Moreover, when the serpent told Eve she would be "like God," he did not mean that she would be immortal like God. Rather, he meant that she would be like God in possessing the knowledge of good and evil. This part of the serpent's statement was not a lie because the knowledge of good and evil (in the form of carnal knowledge) is precisely what she obtained as the result of her disobedience.

But even supposing that the knowledge of good and evil refers to moral knowledge rather than carnal knowledge, what does it mean for the Tree of Knowledge to be contrasted with the Tree of Life? Does this suggest that moral knowledge is antithetical to life? If so, what does this imply concerning God's law, which conveys moral knowledge? These are questions that the seventeenth-century philosopher Benedict de Spinoza answers in his own interpretation of the Genesis 3 account. In his book **Ethics**, Spinoza interprets this story as a biblical endorsement of his view that "**if** human beings were born free, they would form no concept of good and bad as long as they were free."^[24]

Spinoza defines **good** as "that which we certainly know to be useful to us," and **bad** as "that which we certainly know hinders us from becoming possessed of any good thing."^[25] In other words, good and bad involve **certain** or **adequate** knowledge. He argues that if we have adequate knowledge of how to avoid behaviors that harm ourselves and others, we will have no need for the concept of bad, and accordingly we will have no need for the concept of good. He states that this is "signified by Moses in the famous story of the first human being. For in that story . . . it is said that God prohibited the first man from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that as soon as he ate of it, he immediately feared to die rather than desired to live."^[26]

Here Spinoza contrasts the knowledge of good and evil, which produces a negative fear of what is bad, with the desire to live, which is, according to Spinoza, the ultimate good. He states, "We do not endeavor anything, we do not will anything, we do not seek or desire anything, because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge a thing to be good because we endeavor it, will it, seek it and desire it."^[27] Provided we have adequate knowledge of reality, which is perfect because it follows necessarily from God's perfect nature, our autonomous judgment of what is good or bad is correct. We may be assured of the correctness of our judgments because adequate knowledge enables us to achieve what is beneficial to ourselves and others.^[28] In other words, because our essential nature, which consists of our endeavor to persevere in existing,^[29] follows necessarily from God's infinite nature, it is perfect and good that we should engage in that endeavor.^[30]

Insofar as we have adequate knowledge, we have no reason to fear. Spinoza argues that Adam and Eve began to lose their freedom when they chose negative fear over positive desire. "But," he states, "the Patriarchs later recovered it, led by the spirit of Christ, i.e. by the idea of God, on which alone it depends that a human being is free and that he desires for other human beings the good that he desires for himself."^[31] Since notions like good and evil would be unnecessary if we had an adequate understanding of God's perfect self-expression in reality, the moral law is unnecessary if we have the spirit of Christ, by which adequate understanding is possible.

Spinoza's interpretation of Genesis is worth noting because he is frequently considered a pantheist, although in my view he is more accurately described as a panentheist (that is, although he believes that all things are in God and God is in all things, he does not believe that God is coterminous with his creation).^[32] In defining God as the ontological substance that causes and sustains the existence of all finite things, he affirms a doctrine of creation *ex Deo* (out of God) over the traditional doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). He thereby avoids what I believe is a nihilistic element implicit within traditional Christian theology, which regards our this-worldly existence as deriving from a meaningless nothingness.

However, although Spinoza affirmed God's immanence within his creation, it would be not only anachronistic but inaccurate to describe him as a Spiritualist, because he did not believe in the immortality of the soul. Rather, he believed that God had determined all finite things, including the human mind, to exist for a limited duration. The only sense in which a finite thing can be considered immortal is because its essence has always existed in God, since it follows necessarily from his infinite nature.^[33] But this is consistent with the Bible's statement that after death, the unconscious spirit returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The possibility of the spirit "returning" to God presumes that its essence has always existed in God's mind. But this does not mean that a human being can exist as a conscious being except as the unity of body and spirit, as Spinoza affirms.^[34] This demonstrates that it is possible for a person to believe in God's immanence without becoming a Spiritualist.

Adventists' Anthropological Monism and Metaphysical Dualism

When conservative Adventists characterize certain ideas as "philosophical spiritualism," they are not rejecting teachings that actually amount to Spiritualism (belief that dead spirits are conscious). Rather, they are rejecting the idea that things exist in God or that God is immanent in his creation. We have already seen this concern reflected in Waggoner's analysis of Spiritualistic teachings. For Waggoner, the idea of God's immanence undermines the conception of God's law as wholly transcendent—a concern that also undergirds his rejection of Trinitarianism.

In my view, the Adventist anxiety over "spiritualism" is not merely a concern about the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Many secular people in contemporary society deny that spirits remain conscious after death, since they regard this teaching to be superstitious. However, because Adventism teaches that dead spirits are actually demons in disguise, it must affirm that spiritual beings (fallen angels) exist and can interact with material beings (humans).^[35]

The Adventist anxiety over spiritualism seems to reflect a deeper recognition of the inconsistency between its monist anthropology, which affirms the unity of body and spirit, and its dualist metaphysics,

which maintains a distinction between the spiritual substance of our minds and the material substance of our bodies. This dualism consists of ascribing free will to the mind or spirit while acknowledging that the body is subject to causal necessity (for example, believing that eating certain foods will cause a person to become physically and spiritually unclean). The inconsistency lies in the fact that although Adventists must admit that the body is subject to internal and external conditions that cause it to act in certain ways, and although they believe that the mind is inseparable from the body, they deny that the mind or consciousness is subject to the same deterministic factors as the body. Conservative Adventists (especially those who accept Last Generation Theology) argue that if our ability to obey the Ten Commandments is limited in any way by causal necessity, then we cannot vindicate God's law by perfect obedience. Although they insist that it is necessary to live healthy lives so that we can be receptive to the Holy Spirit, they refuse to acknowledge that sin involves a set of conditions that limit our choices because if this is the case, then God's law either cannot be obeyed or it cannot be wholly impartial and universal in its demand. Consequently, they maintain that although previous decisions to obey God (such as eating a proper diet) can make our subsequent moral decisions easier, there is nothing that can entirely prevent a person from obeying God.

However, this implicitly supposes that the mind, which has free will, consists of a different ontological substance than the body, which is subject to causality. The neurological constitution of the brain, which is the material substance of the mind, can therefore have no effect on its ultimate choices. Rather, there must be some underlying source of consciousness, such as a spirit, that controls the brain but exists outside it. This source of consciousness might be capable of consciousness only in conjunction with the brain, but it is nonetheless a different substance than the brain. This was the position promoted by the philosopher René Descartes, who maintained that the soul controls the brain through the pineal gland. However, as Spinoza notes, this position is not only speculative but absurd.^[36] He disputes the possibility of two different metaphysical substances interacting with each other, suggesting that if they have anything in common that enables interaction, then they must be the same substance.^[37] Additionally, he argues that if one part of a substance is subject to

causal necessity, then all parts must be subject to causal necessity, inasmuch as they are the same substance. For Spinoza, there is nothing a substance does that does not necessarily produce an effect. In other words, nothing ever happens without being caused or conditioned by something else. The only unconditioned being is God, who must be the single substance constituting all things.^[38]

Even God, Spinoza suggests, can only be understood through the laws of causal necessity, inasmuch as he is the first cause of all things.^[39] A Christian might object to this suggestion by saying that we can know about God through a supernatural intervention, such as a divine revelation or miracle. But Spinoza criticizes the idea that miracles can give us certain knowledge about God. He argues, "Since the existence of God is not known of itself, it must necessarily be deduced from concepts whose truth is so firm and unquestionable that no power capable of changing them can exist, or be conceived. . . . Therefore if we could conceive that anything in nature could be brought about by any power . . . which conflicts with nature, it would be in conflict with those primary principles and therefore would have to be rejected as absurd." Among these axioms is the law of causal necessity, by which all things can be traced to God as its first cause. He concludes, "It is far from true, therefore, that miracles—in so far as the word is used for a phenomenon that conflicts with the order of nature—prove for us the existence of God."^[40] Even if a miracle is determined to be valid because it produces good effects, there is no guarantee that it came from God, because the conception of good involved in this judgment is purely subjective, inasmuch as it precedes any special revelation of what God deems to be good.

Spinoza's analysis, which reflects his commitment to a thoroughly monistic metaphysics and anthropology, illuminates several difficulties with Adventist doctrine. First, the idea that we have free will introduces a metaphysical dualism between the substance of God's infinite nature, which necessarily causes all things, including our bodies, to exist, and the substance of our free will, which enables us to act contrary to God's will. This dualism fails to account for how it is possible for our minds to control our bodies if they are different substances. Moreover, it seems to posit the existence of a substance

entirely distinct from God—namely a substance that constitutes free will—for which God could not be responsible without contradicting his own divine will, since it enables us to violate his will. This dualism resembles Manichaeism, an ancient rival to Christianity that posited an eternal struggle between light and dark.

Second, traditional Adventism denies that God's general self-revelation in nature is a sufficient basis for knowing what is good. Because it maintains that creation is corrupted by sin, we cannot suppose, as Spinoza does, that natural reason can teach us what is ultimately good or beneficial to ourselves.^[41] For this reason, Adventism teaches that it was necessary for us to receive a special revelation of God's will. Although the apostle Paul affirms the need for a special revelation due to our tendency to idolatry in Romans 1:21–23, the view that nature inadequately expresses God's will because it is corrupt contradicts Romans 1:19–20, where he states that "what can be known about God" is already revealed in the natural world.

Finally, traditional Adventism depends on a monarchical conception of God, who promulgates laws as a sovereign figure. It teaches that because nature is corrupt, we cannot use our natural reason to arrive at an intrinsic understanding of our moral obligations. Rather, we must rely on a transcendent law revealed to us supernaturally through a special revelation. Traditional Adventism agrees with Waggoner that the idea of obedience to God is only meaningful if God is conceived as a monarch; if his law is conceived as wholly extrinsic; and if the incentive for obedience is an external reward or punishment. Because conservative Adventists are concerned to induce people to obey traditional moral authorities and norms (specifically those of the Adventist Church), they must affirm these views even at the risk of introducing the inconsistency between their anthropological monism and their metaphysical dualism. The ethical problem with this position is that it does not seem to reflect genuine sanctification or virtue if a person can only be induced to good behavior by the threat of punishment.

If Adventism will resolve these problems, it must adopt a conception of God that affirms God's immanence as well as his transcendence. In

Part 2, I will discuss the theologian John Macquarrie's proposal for "dialectical theism," which attempts a synthesis of these two properties of God. I will then discuss the ethical implications of dialectical theism with the aim of resolving the tension between Adventism's anthropological monism and metaphysical dualism.

Notes and References:

[1] Gen. 2:16–17 NRSV.

[2] Gen. 3:1–5 NRSV.

[3] Le Roy Edwin Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers* (volume 1) (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1965a), 55.

[4] Froom (1965a), 537 (footnote 10); Froom, vol. 2 (1965b), 652.

[5] Froom (1965b), 598; quoting Charles Secrétan, "Letter," in E. Petavel (tran. Frederick Ash Freer), *The Problem of Immortality* (London: Elliot Stock, 1892), ix.

[6] See Jared Wright, "Male Headship Symposium Day Two: Satan Is Behind Feminism," *Spectrum* (October 2, 2014), <https://spectrummagazine.org/article/jared-wright/2014/10/02/male-headship-symposium-day-two-satan-behind-feminism>.

[7] Laurel Damsteegt, "The Impact of Spiritualism on Feminism and Gender Issues Today," (October 2, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=weRrvv1J4Sg>; quoting Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 554.

[8] J. H. Waggoner, *The Nature and Tendency of Modern Spiritualism* (4th ed.) (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1872), 43.

[9] Damsteegt (2014); quoting White (1911), 555.

[10] See Waggoner (1872), 63, 75, 70, 146. The first and third excerpts in White's quotation are from Charles Linton's "Healing of the

Nations.” The second excerpt is from A.P. Combs. The fourth excerpt is from A.B. Child’s Banner of Light, 175.

[11] Waggoner (1872), 62.

[12] Waggoner (1872), 62–3.

[13] For my use of the word “heteronomy,” which I have borrowed from Paul Tillich, see my article “Faith, Salvation, and Adventist Identity” (part 3), Spectrum (December 10, 2022), <https://spectrummagazine.org/views/2022/faith-salvation-and-adventist-identity-pt-3>.

[14] Denis Fortin, “The Cross of Christ: Theological Differences Between Joseph H. Waggoner and Ellen G. White,” Journal of the Adventist Theological Society 14:2 (autumn 2003), 131–40, available online at <https://www.andrews.edu/~fortind/Waggoner&White.htm>; quoting J.H. Waggoner, The Atonement: An Examination of a Remedial System in the Light of Nature and Revelation (Oakland: Pacific Press, 1884), 180.

[15] Waggoner (1884), 165–74.

[16] I explain this further in my article, [“Faith, Salvation, and Adventist Identity” \(part 3\)](#).

[17] Damsteegt (2014). Damsteegt makes a similar remark at the beginning of her article “Headship Matters,” Adventist Review (May 20, 2022), <https://adventistreview.org/commentary/head-matters/>.

[18] J. H. Waggoner, “Present Standing of Spiritualism,” Review and Herald (November 18, 1893); as quoted by Damsteegt (2014).

[19] Seventh-day Adventist Church, “What Adventists Believe About the Great Controversy” (n.d.), <https://www.adventist.org/the-great-controversy/>.

^[20] Seventh-day Adventist Church, "What Adventists Believe About the Nature of Humanity" (n.d.), <https://www.adventist.org/nature-of-humanity/>.



[21] Ziony Zevit, *What Really Happened in the Garden of Eden?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 173.

[22] Of course, the documentary hypothesis states that the creation account of Genesis 2–3 was composed by a different author (the Elohist) than the creation account of Genesis 1 (which was written by the Yahwist), meaning that it might have been the Elohist's intention to suggest that human beings were already like God. Nonetheless, in my view, there can be no doubt that the redactor of Genesis would have recognized that Adam and Eve were already like God, and that the serpent was denying this by suggesting that God had withheld the knowledge of good and evil from them.

[23] Zevit (2013), 166–8.

[24] Benedict de Spinoza (ed. Matthew J. Kisner, trans. Michael Silverthorne and Matthew J. Kisner), *Ethics Proved in Geometrical Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 210 (ch. 4, proposition 68).

[25] Spinoza (2018), 160 (ch. 4, definitions 2 and 3).

[26] Spinoza (2018), 210 (ch. 4, scholium of proposition 68).

[27] Spinoza (2018), 103 (ch. 3, scholium of proposition 9).

[28] Spinoza (2018), 44 (ch. 2, definition 6) and 158–9 (ch. 4, preface).

[29] Spinoza (2018), 102 (ch. 3, proposition 7).

[30] Spinoza (2018), 175 (ch. 4, proposition 22).

[31] Spinoza (2018), 210 (ch. 4, scholium of proposition 68).

[32] See Clare Carlisle, *Spinoza's Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 62–70.

[33] See Spinoza (2018), 26–8 (ch. 1, propositions 28 and 29).

[34] See Spinoza (2018), 55 (ch. 2, scholium of proposition 13).

[35] See the eleventh Fundamental Belief at Seventh-day Adventist Church, “What Adventists Believe about Growing in Christ” (n.d.), <https://www.adventist.org/growing-in-christ/>.

[36] Spinoza (2018), 222–4 (ch. 5, preface).

[37] Spinoza (2018), 5 (ch. 1, proposition 5).

[38] Spinoza (2018), 4, 26 (ch. 1, axiom 3 and proposition 26).

[39] See Spinoza (2018), 18 (ch. 1, proposition 16 and its third corollary).

[40] Benedict de Spinoza (ed. Jonathan Israel, trans. Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel), *Theological-Political Treatise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 84–5.

[41] See Spinoza (2018), 102 (ch. 3, proposition 7).

William C. DeMary is a software engineer living in Texas.

Image Credit: Revival of the Second Great Awakening, c. 1840s.
Library of Congress.

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What is Halloween and should Christians celebrate it?

What is Halloween and should Christians celebrate it?

Posted on 28/10/2021 Posted By: Croydon SDA Categories: Articles, Living Word



What is it about Halloween that makes October 31 so popular? Perhaps it's the mystery—or just the candy? Perhaps the excitement of a new costume?

Whatever the draw, Halloween is here to stay. But what does the Bible say about it? Is Halloween wrong or evil? Are there any clues in the Bible as to whether a Christian should celebrate Halloween?

What does the Bible say about Halloween?

First of all, understand that Halloween is mostly a western custom and it has no direct reference in the Bible. However, there are

several Biblical principles that directly relate to the celebration of Halloween. Perhaps the best way to understand how Halloween relates to the Bible is to look at the meaning of Halloween and its history.

What does Halloween mean?

The word Halloween literally means the evening before All Hallows Day (or All Saint's Day) celebrated on November 1. Halloween is also the shortened name of All-halloween, All Hallows' Evening and All Saint's Eve which is celebrated on October 31. The origin and meaning of Halloween are derived from ancient Celtic harvest festivals, but more recently we think of Halloween as a night filled with candy, trick-or-treating, pumpkins, ghosts and death.

The history of Halloween

The origin of Halloween as we know it, began over 1900 years ago in England, Ireland, and Northern France. It was a Celtic celebration of the new year, called Samhain which occurred on November 1. The Celtic druids revered it as the biggest holiday of the year and emphasized that day as the time when the souls of the dead supposedly could mingle with the living. Bonfires were a large aspect of this holiday as well.

Samhain remained popular until St. Patrick and other Christian missionaries arrived in the area. As the population began to convert to Christianity the holiday began to lose its popularity. However, instead of eradicating pagan practices such as "Halloween" or Samhain, the church used these holidays with a Christian twist to bring paganism and Christianity together, making it easier for local populations to convert to the state religion.

Another tradition is the druidic belief that during the night of November 1, demons, witches, and evil spirits freely roamed the earth with joy to greet the arrival of “their season”—the long nights and early dark of the winter months. The demons had their fun with poor mortals that night, frightening, harming, and even playing all kinds of mean tricks on them. The only way, it seemed, for scared humans to escape the persecution of the demons was to offer them things they liked, especially fancy foods and sweets. Or, in order to escape the fury of these horrible creatures, a human could disguise himself as one of them and join in their roaming. In this way, they would recognize the human as a demon or witch and the human would not be bothered that night.

During the time of the Roman empire, there was the custom of eating or giving away fruit, especially apples, on Halloween. It spread to neighbouring countries; to Ireland and Scotland from Britain, and to the Slavic countries from Austria. It is probably based upon a celebration of the Roman goddess Pomona, to whom gardens and orchards were dedicated. Since the annual Feast of Pomona was held on November 1, the relics of that observance became part of our modern-day Halloween celebrations, for instance, the familiar tradition of “dunking” for apples.

Today costumes take the place of disguises and candy has replaced fruits and other fancy foods as children go door-to-door trick-or-treating. Originally trick-or-treating began as “souling,” when children would go door-to-door on Halloween, with soul cakes, singing and saying prayers for the dead. Over the course of history Halloween’s visible practices have morphed and merged with the culture of the day, but the purpose of honouring the dead, veiled in fun and festivities, has remained the same. The question remains, is celebrating Halloween bad or unbiblical?

Should Christians celebrate Halloween?

As a logical thinking person, consider for a moment what you are celebrating and what Halloween is all about. Is the holiday uplifting? Is Halloween pure? Is it lovely, praiseworthy, or of good report?

Philippians 4:8 says, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

Is Halloween based on godly themes such as the idea of peace, freedom and salvation or does the holiday bring to mind feelings of fear, oppression and bondage?

Additionally, does the Bible sanction witchcraft, witches, and sorcery? On the contrary, the Bible makes it clear that these practices are an abomination to the Lord. The Bible goes on to say in Leviticus 20:27 that anyone who practiced witchcraft, soothsaying, sorcery should be killed. Deuteronomy 18:9-13 adds, “When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you ... one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord.”

Is it wrong to celebrate Halloween?

Let's look at what the Bible adds to this topic in Ephesians 5:11, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.” This text is calling us to not only have no association with any type of dark activity BUT ALSO to shed light on this topic to those around us. As stated earlier in this article, Halloween was not exposed by the church for what it was, but

rather was incorporated into church holy days. Are Christians responding in the same way today?

As you think about Halloween—its origins and what it stands for—would it be best to spend time dwelling upon its themes or to shed light upon what lies below the surface of this holiday’s celebration? God is calling humanity to follow Him and to “come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you” ([2 Corinthians 6:17](#)).

From Treat to Trick: How Adventists Once Celebrated Halloween

When Adventists Celebrated Halloween

“I don’t want to hear another word from them, after what they did.”

As I entered the classroom a few minutes before that day’s lecture, my student was sitting in her usual spot. She was agitated as she looked through the college’s yearbook archives, and when I asked what was wrong, she explained that she had received some pushback about the harvest festival the night before. In addition to a costume contest, there was a funhouse that was a little too fun for some people’s tastes, focusing on scary—but not grotesque—elements.

As the yearbook editor, my student had been looking back at various fall activities in past yearbooks and stumbled across a picture from the late 60s of a Halloween party. It openly talked about a Halloween celebration and included an image of a disturbing decoration. She was rightfully incensed that her fellow student leaders had been called out by members of the same generation who had openly celebrated the season in a much darker fashion.

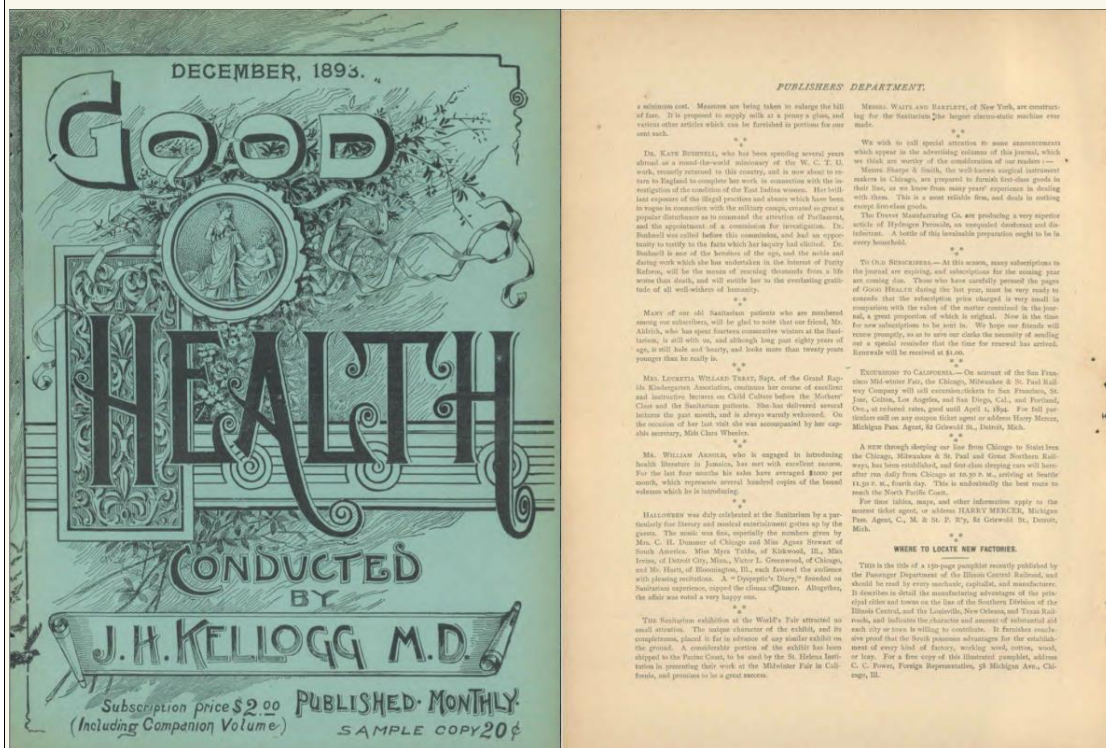
This experience led me to do a little digging in the Adventist archives; I wanted to see how the church once approached what is now an annual

controversy among Christians. And what I discovered surprised me. The following is a brief survey of Adventism's historic approach to Halloween.

The first mention of Halloween in official Adventist publications occurs on May 14, 1889 in the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald. In a short piece called "The Alphabet of Church Socials," reprinted from Homiletic Review, Halloween is listed between "harvest-home" and "ice-cream and instrumental" as an example of a church social starting with the letter "H."¹

The second time Halloween is mentioned is December 23, 1889, in Signs of the Times. A short entry called "This is All-Halloween"—which may remind some readers of the iconic song from the 1993 movie The Nightmare Before Christmas—reprinted from Detroit Commercial Advertiser, gives a brief, uncritical history of Halloween. It does not even mention the word "pagan."

Things get stranger when we look at the issue of Good Health from that same December, which states, "Halloween was duly celebrated at the [Battle Creek] Sanitarium by a particularly fine literary and musical entertainment gotten up by the guests." It concludes, "altogether the affair was voted a very happy one."



Good Health, 1893 – Battle Creek Sanitarium's Halloween celebration described as "a very happy one."

This occurred several years before White fell out with the sanitarium's chief medical officer, John Harvey Kellogg.

Years later, on November 5th, 1901, the [Advent Review and Sabbath Herald](#) included a tiny note about the holiday stating, "Halloween was celebrated in riotous fashion throughout the country, Thursday night, the 31st, ult. This yearly celebration does not savor the actions that might be expected on a hallowed even." Throughout the broader history of Halloween in the US, a major concern was that pranks might turn into vandalism. Communities began devising ways to embrace the holiday while controlling some of the rowdy behavior. My hometown of Anoka, Minnesota, was the first to make Halloween a formal community event; they even went to D.C. to acquire the official label "Halloween capital of the world." Even with these dynamics present, Adventist publications did not write of the holiday as a spiritual threat—yet.

In October 1909, the Adventist periodical magazine [The Youth's Instructor](#) published a poem called "A Thought for Halloween" by St. Nicholas. The short poem reads:

"Who's afraid of a pumpkin
Ripening in the field?
Who to fear of a candle
High on the shelf would yield?
Each by itself is harmless,
Terror it has for none;
But just put the two together,
And then see the people run."²

This seasonal, humorous piece contains no other commentary that would suggest those celebrating this holiday belong to Satan.

Things become even more peculiar in 1914, when [Christian Education: A Magazine for Home and School](#) provided instructions on how to celebrate Halloween. Readers are told to "tell the story of a pumpkin" and make jack-o-lanterns. They are told to look up the definition of the holiday so they can understand these "foolish traditions" rather than "imbibe the popular notions."³ Rather than fearing the holiday, children learn about it, participate in select ways, and move on.

Adventist universities openly celebrated the holiday as well. On November 4, 1920, the [NPUC Gleaner](#) reported that Walla Walla University "enjoyed a delightful Halloween party Saturday evening." This gymnasium was decorated accordingly "in orange and black[...]with corn stalks and pumpkins and the

witches in the dark corners.”⁴ Union College—now Union Adventist University—also participated in the Halloween festivities.

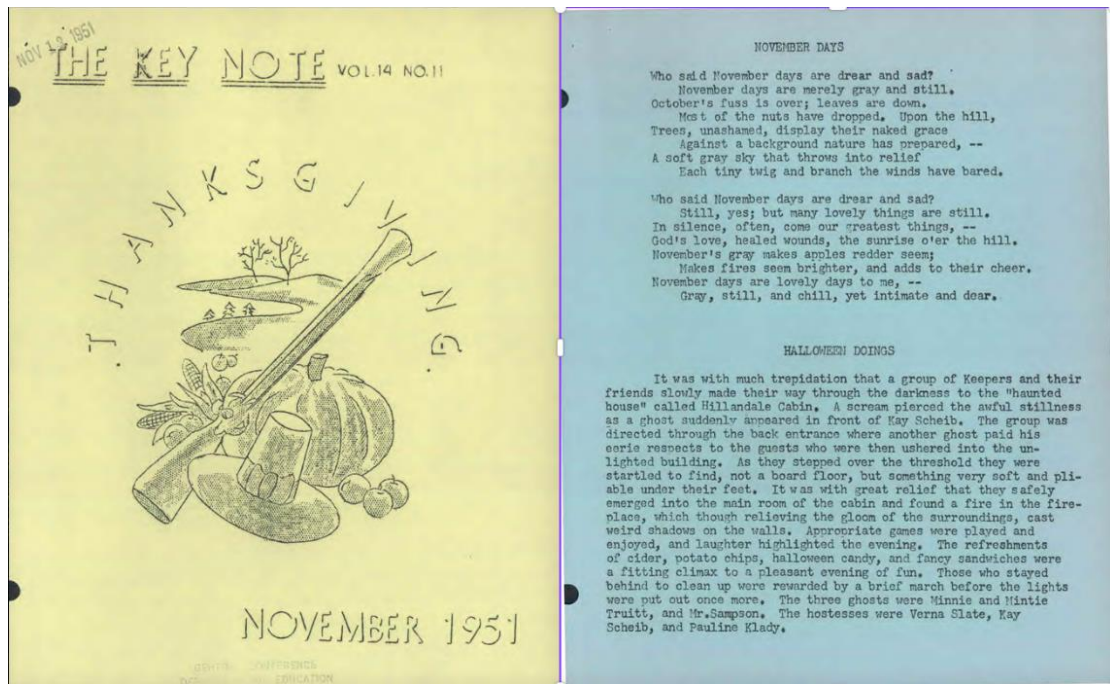
In 1921, the [Educational Messenger](#) reported that “a clever Halloween supper was prepared by the matron, Mrs. Van Gorder, on October 31.”⁵ The article observes how the dining room was “lighted by candles” and “revealed a somewhat spooky appearance.” Additionally, “the tables were not arranged in order and the chairs were reversed.” Finally, “cats, witches, and pumpkins gave the finishing touches.”

In March 1923, [The Youth’s Instructor](#) gave a more formal warning about Halloween. It alludes to the alleged “supernatural influence” of the holiday that was said to prevail in a historical context, but the main drive of the paragraph is warning Christians not to engage in “rowdyism and nocturnal hoodlumism.”⁶ In October of that same year, the magazine included another Halloween poem, this time gently warning people to avoid vandalism and be good neighbors.⁷

In 1924–25, the [Educational Messenger](#), on the same page stating the enrollment report for Union College, contained a seasonal advertisement for Lincoln Photo Supply Co. The ad said in big letters, “FOR that HALLOWEEN PARTY.”

Which, apparently, Adventist universities were having, as were some people who worked at the General Conference.

In November 1951, an edition of [The Key Note](#) was published by a mysterious group called [The Keepers](#). While this may sound like a secret society, [The Keepers](#) were the administrative and technical staff at the GC. The term “keepers” was chosen because they, presumably, kept all the keys. And as their newsletter records, they also loved haunted houses:



The Keynote, November 1951 - "Haunted house" write-up from The Keepers newsletter.

It was with much trepidation that a group of Keepers and their friends slowly made their way through the darkness to the "haunted house" called Hillandale Cabin. A scream pierced the awful stillness as a ghost appeared in front of Kay Scheib. The group was directed through the back entrance where another ghost paid his eerie respects to the guests who were then ushered into the unlighted building.

The section goes on to describe all the sensory details of the haunted house and the refreshments afterward that made the experience "a pleasant evening of fun."

In The Golden Cords yearbooks, published from 1969–1970, Union College dedicates a page to "Sadie Hawkins Halloween Adventure," in which there is a striking image of a dummy hanging from the barn rafters by a noose.⁸

SADIE HAWKINS HALLOWEEN ADVENTURE

Patience—that's what it took to wait for the bus to come pick up the students. It took two busloads and one truckload.

One mile of mud, mud, and more mud. Ever walk in lead shoes?—that's what it felt like.

Old, tumbledown barn decorated in the old tradition—pumpkins; dummy hanging from the ceiling, bales of hay. . .

The film—"Ghost and Mr. Chicken," funny . . .??

Halloween songs for a halloween occasion.

Hot apple cider felt good—warmed the inside but not the outside. Donuts to satisfy one's hunger after the "long" walk and film.

Muddy walk back, crowded ride home, but fun anyway!



Union College, Golden Cords, 1969 - 1970, p. 34 - "Sadie Hawkins Halloween Adventure" photo.

Over the next two decades, Halloween appears infrequently, and when it does, it is in the context of Pathfinders using the occasion to collect canned goods. In July 1971, Southern Tidings featured an article noting how Southern Missionary College students put on a "Halloween party" for the "juvenile

inmates of the Chattanooga Detention Home."⁹ Southwestern—S.U.C. at the time—also had a student association-sponsored Halloween party.¹⁰

Perhaps beginning with a sermon by Amazing Facts founder Joe Crews in 1970,¹¹ independent ministries began drawing pagan connections to holidays and warning of various infiltrations in the church. The book *Baptized Paganism* (2010) by Dennis Crews¹² gently observes the pagan origin of Halloween but does not dwell on it.¹³ Since then, Amazing Facts has been a leading voice on the dangers of Halloween, and *It Is Written* has also recently published warnings that Halloween "is a ghastly celebration of spiritualism."¹⁴

The first official church publication to express spiritual concern over Halloween was the *Collegiate Quarterly*, January–March 1989. Caroline Cameron, a sophomore English major from Southwestern Adventist University, wrote, "Halloween is a day for witches, no doubt. This is a day Satan can rejoice in because we dress as he does and 'trick' people into giving us what we want."¹⁵

Friday, February 24

Holiday Religion

OPINION

Key Text: Colossians 2:16, 17

The majority of Adventists who are reared in the church celebrate Christmas, Halloween, Easter, Columbus Day, Labor Day, etc. You may say that there is a difference between Halloween and Labor Day, and maybe there is. But maybe it's all in your head.

To some people, a holiday is just a chance to stop working. For others the holidays are something traditional; they carry an aura of being sacrosanct. I think it depends on the beliefs you had when you were growing up.

The Jews celebrate Hanukkah to give thanks to God for the restoration of their Temple in 164 B.C. They do not celebrate the birth of Christ in any way or form. However, Christians have many different views on the authenticity of Christmas.

Many people believe that Jesus was born during the autumn of the year. To them Christmas is not a time to rejoice in His birth necessarily, but to express the love for friends and family members that God has given them. By exchanging gifts and being together, these people capture the spirit of loving kindness that God wants us to have all year.

On the other side of the coin are those who believe Christmas is a pagan holiday, and an excuse for people to see family and

friends who won't take time during the rest of the year. Perhaps your view of Christmas is similar to this one. Attitude has a big part to play in how we celebrate any holiday.

Halloween is a day for witches, no doubt. This is a day that Satan can rejoice in because we dress as he does and "trick" people into giving us what we want. We costume ourselves to hide our true identity. That is the light side. Actually, many witches and spiritualists have a heyday on the thirty-first. Are we helping Satan's work?

The days of the week are named after pagan gods. Easter is a celebration of Christ's resurrection. Communion is our reenacting of Jesus' suffering for us. For someone of another faith it would be eating, drinking, and clean feet.

By imposing our beliefs on one another are we helping or hindering our spiritual growth? Is every day a time to worship Christ and His love, or do we only remember Him during vacation? If the holidays are your excuse for remembering the blessings of the Lord, then try to make every day a holiday. Satan knows how to get to us, and by keeping our minds on material things the spirit of love is forgotten.

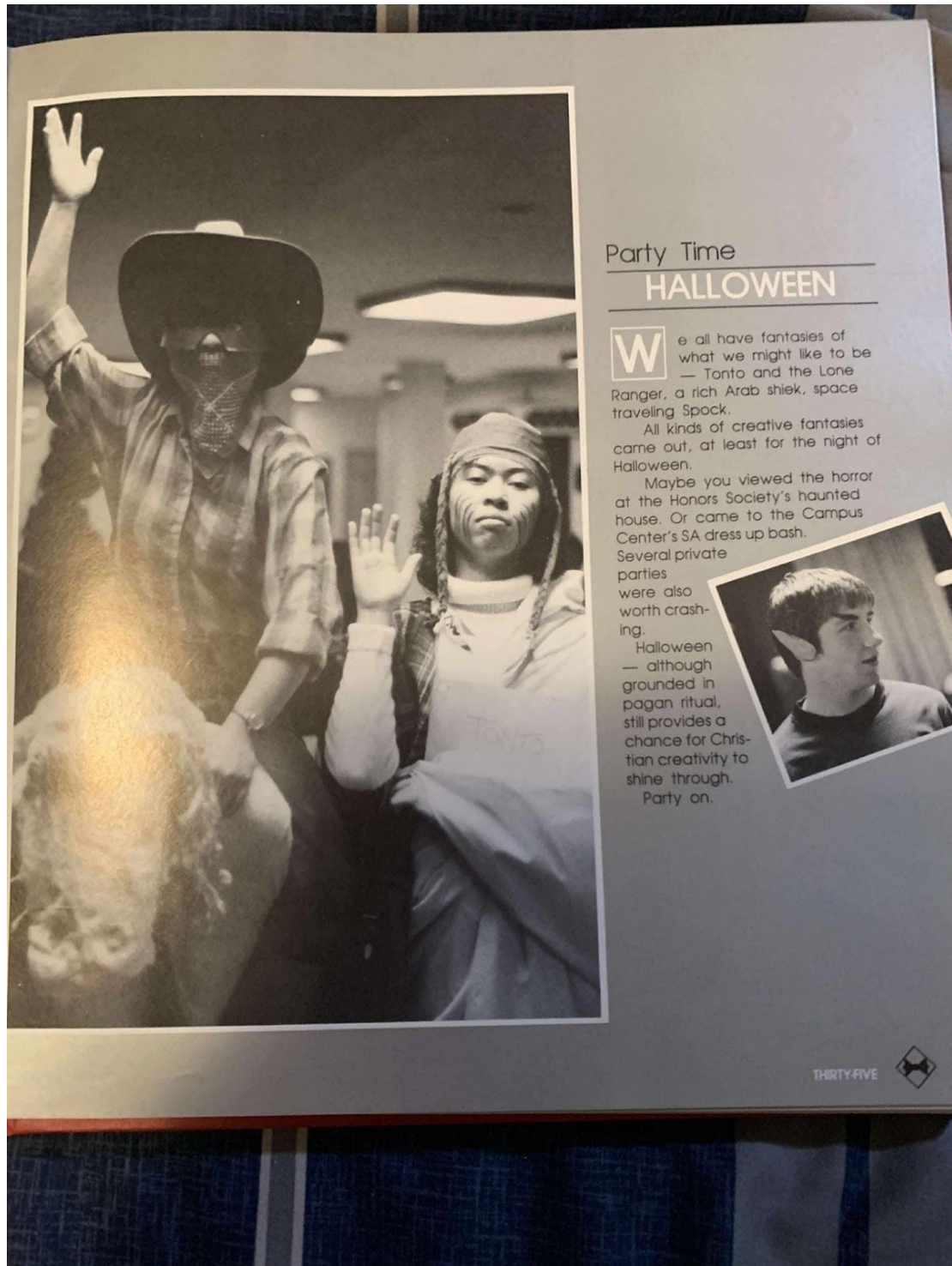
REACT

Is it possible to overreact to the occult and see Satan in everything?

by Caroline Cameron

Caroline Cameron is a sophomore English major at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.

Finally, The Andrews University Cardinal, 1984–1985, also features a Halloween party in its pages. Next to pictures of student costumes, and under the heading “Party Time Halloween,” it reflects, “Halloween—although grounded in pagan ritual, still provides a chance for Christian creativity to shine through. Party on.”¹⁶



Andrews University Cardinal 1984 – 1985 – “Party Time Halloween” spread.



Andrews University Cardinal, p. 34 - Additional page of costumes and decorations.

What Happened?

In the late 60s and 70s, several cultural shifts in America began to sour the sweetness of Halloween. One new development was the spate of supernatural horror movies centered on children. Films like Rosemary's Baby (1968), The Omen (1976), and The Exorcist (1973) elevated concerns that demonic forces

were targeting children. In 1978, John Carpenter's famous horror film Halloween framed the holiday in more sinister tones than Disney's cartoonish Witch Hazel in the 50s.

A second development was the mainstreaming of charismatic theology that often promoted a series of sensationalist narratives by fraudulent ex-Satanists such as John Todd—who claimed a great war would take place on Halloween between witches and Christians—Mike Warnke, and Lawrence Pazdar. These narratives spread like wildfire in Christian communities and helped create the Satanic Panic of the 80s, where people saw evidence of secret satanic plots everywhere. Cartoonists like Jack Chick capitalized on this, producing comic book tracts about Halloween with visceral artwork alongside baseless claims such as Halloween being the devil's birthday.¹⁷



Jack Chick's Halloween Tract Cover - "Boo!"



Jack Chick, “Boo!” Comic Interior Panel - depiction of Halloween as satanic.

Then came 1982—the Chicago Tylenol Murders. The murders, a result of cyanide being found in Tylenol bottles that had been tampered with, were front-page news on October 1st of that year.

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The Daily Pantagraph

30 pages, 3 sections

Bloomington-Normal, Ill., Friday, October 1, 1982

Twin Cities Final 25

Cyanide in Tylenol causes deaths

'Possible homicides'

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS (AP) — Five people in suburban Chicago died after swallowing capsules of Extra-Strength Tylenol, and at least three of them were poisoned by cyanide that had been put into the medicine, authorities said yesterday.

A sixth person was near death, and two others were hospitalized with possible cyanide poisoning symptoms.

The manufacturer recalled nearly 4.7 million of the capsules and the medical examiner said the case was being investigated as "possible homicide."

Authorities said the cyanide — one of the deadliest poisons, capable of killing in minutes — was probably introduced sometime after the capsules left the plant in Fort Washington, Pa., where they are manufactured by McNeil Consumer Prod-

ucts Co. The poison is not used in production of the medicine.

The series began with the deaths Wednesday of two brothers in the western suburb of Arlington Heights and a 12-year-old girl in the neighboring community of Elk Grove Village.

The wife of one of the brothers was hospitalized in extremely critical condition after taking a capsule of the medication, which is the nation's best-selling over-the-counter pain reliever. Doctors said her brain had suffered "a great deal of damage" and she was not expected to live.

To the southwest in the suburb of Winfield, Mimi Stewart, a spokeswoman at Central DuPage Hospital, said Mary Reiner, 27, who had taken Extra-Strength Tylenol, died yesterday of symptoms resembling cyanide poisoning. She said a definite cause would have to await the coroner's report.

Robert Kniffen, a spokesman for McNeil, said the company had been notified that two bottles "have been tampered with and cyanide poison added to some of the capsules."

Suspicious capsules purchased in B-N

A bottle of Extra-Strength Tylenol was purchased two weeks ago at Haag Drug Store, 509 W. Washington St., Bloomington police reported early today. The bottle had the same lot number as that on bottles containing capsules suspected in the deaths of five people from the Chicago area.

Two capsules were taken by a Bloomington resident, who reported no ill effects, police said. All bottles of Extra-Strength Tylenol have been removed from Haag shelves, police said.

The bottle was purchased by David Davis of Hilltop Mobile Homes Court, police said.

Police early today said the bottle will be shipped to Elk Grove for analysis. The capsules were not opened by Bloomington police.



Extra-Strength Tylenol capsules with the control number MC2880 should not be used.

Nationwide recall

Stores around the nation moved quickly to strip their shelves of recalled Extra-Strength Tylenol yesterday after cyanide-tainted capsules were blamed for at least three and as many as five deaths.

A survey of Twin City retailers by The Pantagraph showed the retailers began voluntarily taking the pills off the shelves yesterday as word spread about the Cook County tragedies.

Poison centers nationwide were swamped with thousands of calls from distressed consumers, including many who took Tylenol capsules from the recalled lot and apparently suffered no ill effects.

"We've had questions ranging from 'Do you know anything about Tylenol being contaminated?' to 'Oh, my God, I just took Extra-Strength Tylenol, am I going to die?'" said Cathy Piccillo at the

Indiana Poison Center, which reported some 50 calls yesterday afternoon.

"People just don't know where to turn. They need reassurance," said Dr. James Eason of the Massachusetts Poison Information Center.

There were no confirmed reports of any poisoning in addition to the cases in suburban Chicago.

Cyanide is not used in manufacturing Tylenol in any way.

Cyanide is one of the most lethal toxins known, says Dr. Richard Weisman, director of the Poison Control Center at the New York City Department of Health.

It will kill if an antidote is not given at a hospital within 15 minutes to an hour, says Weisman, director of the Poison Control Center at the New York City Department of Public Health.

The first symptoms of cyanide poisoning, he said, can occur within minutes, and include headache, dizziness, confusion and agitation. It can also cause seizures.

Associated Press

Headline, October 1, 1982 - Chicago Tylenol murders front page.

Along with two previously well-known acts of Halloween sadism—one an ill-conceived prank by a housewife and another by a father trying to collect life insurance¹⁸—these realities cemented the trope of nefarious plots against children with the holiday.

Conclusion

Though I am not a Halloween apologist, I try to be a moral panic preventionist. The fear over Halloween, along with some of the more visceral narratives around it, is relatively recent. So let me offer what I hope is helpful pastoral advice as this holiday approaches.

First, this historical survey is not about dragging skeletons—literal or metaphorical—out of the closet, but a reminder of how easy it is to accuse college-aged kids of pioneering some new form of evil, when in fact—in this case—their celebrations were far milder than what their parents, or grandparents, did and promoted in print! Second, Adventists in past generations seemed able to distinguish between people having fun and those intentionally engaging in the occult; this discernment should still apply. Finally, it has been said that fear is the devil’s best evangelist. Let us keep our critiques measured so we do not manufacture more fear than already exists this time of year.

About the author

Seth Pierce, PhD, is a scholar, writer, and pastor with over 16 years of experience leading faith-based nonprofits. After completing a doctorate in Communication, Seth turned his passion for exploring how communication shapes human experience into a robust academic and writing career. His research spans cultural studies, monster theory, and religion, and his recent book, *A Theory of Spectral Rhetoric: The Word Between the Worlds* (Palgrave Macmillan), explores the fascinating intersections between language and the unseen. In 2023, Seth returned to pastoral ministry in Oregon while continuing to teach as an adjunct professor in communication and religion. [More from Seth Pierce.](#)

Footnotes

1. "The Alphabet of Church Socials." *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 14, 1889, 316. Reprinted from *Homiletic Review*. [↩](#)
2. St. Nicholas. "A Thought for Halloween." *The Youth's Instructor*, October 27, 1909, 10. [↩](#)
3. "Hallowe'en." *Christian Education: A Magazine for Home and School* 4, no. 1 (October 1914): 34. [↩](#)
4. "College Notes." *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, November 4, 1920, 7. [↩](#)
5. "Academy Notes." *Educational Messenger* 9, no. 11 (November 1921): 8. [↩](#)
6. "Hallowe'en." *The Youth's Instructor*, March 6, 1923, 3. [↩](#)

7. "A Hallowe'en Reminder." The Youth's Instructor, October 30, 1923, 10. [↵](#)
8. "Sadie Hawkins Halloween Adventure." Golden Cords (Lincoln, NE: Union College, 1970), 87. [↵](#)
9. Southern Tidings, Vol. 65, No. 7, July 1971, 3. [↵](#)
10. Southwestern Union Record, Vo. 68, No. 20, October 25, 1969, 5. [↵](#)
11. Joe Crews. "Baptized Paganism." Amazing Facts Radio Sermons. Accessed October 30, 2025. <https://www.amazingfacts.org/listen/joe-crews-radio-sermons/baptized-paganism/>. [↵](#)
12. Though it is marketed as written by Joe Crews on the Amazing Facts website. [↵](#)
13. Dennis Crews. Baptized Paganism. Roseville, CA: Amazing Facts, Inc., 2010, 17. Originally published in 1986. [↵](#)
14. Jim Bradshaw. "Can the Dead Be in Two Places?" It Is Written Blog, October 31, 2022. <https://blog.itiswritten.com/blog/tag/halloween/>. [↵](#)
15. Caroline Cameron, "Holiday Religion," College Quarterly, January-March 1989, Vol. 12, No. 1, 89. [↵](#)
16. AU Cardinal, 1984-1985, p. 35. [↵](#)
17. Jack Chick, "Boo!", 1991. [↵](#)
18. "The Nightmare Before Halloween." Beast and Bible (podcast), October 28, 2023. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-nightmare-before-halloween/id1649609278?i=10>

Southern Accent

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Should Seventh-day Adventists

celebrate Halloween? The innocence of simple traditions

the Adventist Church. Sunday, October 8, 2017. (Photo from: Nicole Sabot)

Written by Katelynn Webster

As Adventists, we have always been taught that Halloween should be avoided and ignored at all costs. But as I've grown up, I've started to become more and more frustrated by that teaching.

I grew up celebrating Halloween; and, yes, I was born and raised Adventist and so were my parents. My parents would dress my sibling and me up every year, and when we were old enough, we picked our own costumes. We would go trick-or-treating in my grandparents' neighborhood, decorate our lawn with spider webs in the trees and watch

fun Halloween movies like “Scooby-Doo” and “Ghostbusters.”

Although I’ve had so many people tell me that all things Halloween are bad, I’ve always believed that the ways I’ve celebrated it aren’t. One point to consider is that, yes, there is evil in this world, but some traditions should be taken with a grain of salt. I do believe that many people in this world observe Halloween to invite evil and demonic spirits into their lives. I’m not ignorant to that. But I don’t believe that everyone who celebrates this holiday has the same intent.

Halloween is a time for many to spend an evening with their family or express their love for a special character by dressing up as him or her. Everyone has his or her own way of celebrating different holidays, which means that not everyone has the same values or traditions. I think this concept is something that our church struggles with at times.

I believe Halloween has a different meaning to each person. For me, it’s a chance to play pretend for a night, watch fun movies and eat way too much sugar while surrounded by people I love being around. I don’t think that should be diminished just because other people take advantage of the negative connotations surrounding it.

Response

Dev, no offense intended, but the history you present is quite scanty. According to Britannica: “Halloween had its origins in the festival of Samhain among the Celts of ancient Britain and Ireland. On the day corresponding to November 1 on contemporary calendars, the new year was believed to begin.”

It's darker than that, though. The secret priestly cult of the Druids was the power behind the Celtic kings. They ruled by terror, sorcery and witchcraft. Even the various Celtic kings feared their black powers. The most important religious day for the Druids was the celebration of Samhain, Lord of the Dead. The eve of Celtic New Year, October 31st, was the night to reverence Samhain. It was the time of the falling of leaves and general seasonal decay—so the appropriate time to celebrate the Lord of the Dead. People believed that dead relatives came back to their homes to be entertained by the living, which was ancestor worship. It was considered a time when demonic and evil spirits also came out of their shadowy nether world. If proper food, shelter and provision were not provided, these evil spirits would cast spells, wreak havoc on man and beast, and generally torment the living. If the proper “treat” was not awaiting to appease them, then they would respond with an appropriate “trick”—thus our custom of “trick or treating.” In order to fool and

evade the invading spirits, people would themselves dress up and masquerade as evil spirits, witches, ghosts, and ghouls. That's the origin of the Halloween custom of dressing up as fiendish characters and creatures.

The perverted climax of this dark night was animal and human sacrifice to placate this Lord of the Dead. It was carried out by the priestly Druids who would rip the hearts out of their victims and use the blood for religious rites. They would also use the entrails and other body parts to divine the future and forecast the New Year. The remains were then burned in "bone fires," from which we get the popular "bonfire." It's not quite the sedate celebration of the dearly departed that you've made it out to be.

Be advised that the Catholic Church incorporated, repurposed and renamed the festival, changing it from Allhallow-even to All Saints Day. The Papacy did nothing to remove the superstitions out of which the festival arose. And it hasn't shaken its cultic origins. It remains a Satanic holiday, which is celebrated by modern-day Satanists and witches/wiccans. Witch and Wiccan high priestess, Doreen Valiente, who authored "The Witches' Rune" and helped pen a significant amount of the occult content that is foundational to modern day Wicca, stated that Halloween is a special holiday for witches. Valiente, said of Halloween: "Halloween is one of the four Great Sabbats of the witches that everyone has heard about. To witches, Halloween is a serious occasion, however merrily celebrated. It is the old Celtic Eve of Samhain." According to Anton LaVey, who

founded the Church of Satan in 1966 and authored The Satanic Bible in 1969, Halloween is the third highest day on the satanic calendar for Satanists.

You certainly can't seriously claim that people in this day and age gather together to commemorate their dead relatives on Halloween. Evil is closely associated with the "celebration" of Halloween. The vast majority of secular celebrations are focused on witches, devils, and malicious spirits, dressing up in costumes, eating lots of candy, and for adults, partying and getting drunk and other sins. According to a 2023 poll by Pure, the ironically named sex-positive dating app, 58% of adults are likely to wear a sexy costume, and 19% hope their disguise helps them end the night with a sweet treat — under the sheets. Results show that women are putting in more work to look the part and lock in a potential boo because 72% of women are likely to wear a sexy outfit this year — compared to just 43% of men.

To Katelynn Webster, just because you grew up keeping the tradition of Halloween a little differently than is customary doesn't mean you aren't celebrating unholy practices. You concluded, "I believe Halloween has a different meaning to each person. For me, it's a chance to play pretend for a night, watch fun movies and eat way too much sugar while surrounded by people I love being around. I don't think that should be diminished just because other people take advantage of the negative connotations surrounding it." I'd be happy to unpack all that rationalizing for you, but it's

been 2 years since you wrote that, so maybe you can see that you went to a lot of effort to justify something you want to do just because you like it. You confess there are “negative connotations surrounding” Halloween, but you dismiss the idea it can affect you. And that’s exactly where Satan wants you. I have a question for you: instead of joining in a well-known celebration of evil, why not host a themed Harvest costume party, that doesn’t involve wicked characters, a different night? If it’s the socializing and remembering the dearly departed you desire, you can do it just as easily on a night devoted to all things evil. Just a thought.

Most Seventh-day Adventists avoid Halloween because its themes—death, spirits, and the occult—conflict with biblical teachings about the state of the dead and warnings against spiritualism. Many Adventists instead choose alternative, wholesome activities that align with Scripture and personal conviction.

Core Reasons Adventists Are Cautious About Halloween

1. Biblical Teaching on the Dead

- Adventists believe the dead are unconscious until the resurrection (Ecclesiastes 9:5).
- Halloween’s imagery—ghosts, spirits, wandering souls—contradicts this belief.

2. Warnings Against Occult Practices

- Scripture strongly forbids divination, witchcraft, and attempts to contact the dead (Deuteronomy 18:10–12).

- Because Halloween historically includes themes of witches, spirits, and supernatural beings, many Adventists avoid participating.

3. Pagan Historical Roots

- Halloween traces back to the Celtic festival of Samhain, involving rituals to appease spirits.
- Adventist writers often highlight these pagan origins as incompatible with Christian faith.

4. Desire to Avoid Fear-Based or Harmful Themes

- Horror, gore, pranks, and frightening imagery are seen as spiritually unhealthy.
- Adventists emphasize uplifting, Christ-centered living rather than celebrating fear.

5. Personal Conviction, Not a Strict Church Rule

- The Adventist Church does **not** have an official ban on Halloween.
- Romans 14:5 (“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind”) guides families to make personal, prayerful decisions.
- Some Adventists avoid Halloween entirely; others participate only in non-occult, community-friendly aspects.

Common Adventist Alternatives

- **Harvest festivals** at church
- **Community outreach** (sharing healthy treats or literature)
- **Family nights** focused on positive activities
- **Service projects** to bless neighbors

These options allow participation in community life without embracing Halloween’s spiritual themes.

Summary

Seventh-day Adventists typically avoid Halloween because its focus on spirits, death, and occult symbolism conflicts with biblical teachings and Adventist values. However, the choice is ultimately personal, guided by Scripture, conscience, and a desire to honor God. Teach your children so that they don’t play with things they do not know, some of you who are coming from Africa, you know you can’t play with ghosts, witchcrafts and satan tools.

The Celts believed something unique happened on the night before their new year. They thought the boundary between the **world of the living and the dead became thin**, allowing ghosts to return to earth. These weren't friendly ghost stories – the Celts genuinely feared these spirits could damage their crops, cause trouble, or even possess the living.

During Samhain, Celtic priests called Druids performed special rituals. They built huge bonfires where people burned crops and animals as **sacrifices to their gods**. The Celts wore costumes, typically made from animal skins, and tried to tell each other's fortunes. When the celebration was over, they lit their hearth fires from the sacred bonfire to protect them during the coming winter.

As Christianity spread through Celtic lands, the church tried to provide an alternative to this pagan festival. In 835 AD, Pope Gregory IV established **All Saints' Day** on November 1st. The night before became known as "**All Hallows' Eve**," which eventually became "Halloween." However, many of the old pagan practices continued, merely taking on new forms.

Now, let's examine the 6 biblical reasons why Christians should not participate in Halloween celebrations:

1. God Explicitly Forbids Pagan Practices and Occult Involvement

In **Deuteronomy 18:10-11**, God speaks very clearly about practices associated with the supernatural realm: *"There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead."*

This isn't just an Old Testament concept. The Apostle Paul reinforces this teaching in **Ephesians 5:11**, telling believers to *"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them."*

Modern Halloween celebrations might seem innocent, but they still incorporate many elements God specifically forbids. Consider the popularity of **fortune-telling games** at Halloween parties, the fascination with communicating with the dead through séances or ghost stories, and the widespread use of witch and sorcerer **costumes**. These aren't just playful traditions – they represent real spiritual practices that God commands His people to avoid.

When we participate in Halloween, even in seemingly harmless ways, we risk normalizing these occult practices. **Children** especially may become confused about why certain activities are acceptable on Halloween but wrong at other times. God's commands aren't seasonal – they apply year-round.

The Bible repeatedly emphasizes that God's people should be distinct from the world around them. In **2 Corinthians 6:17**, we read, *"Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you."*

This call to separation isn't about being superior or isolating ourselves from society. Instead, it's about living in a way that honors God and demonstrates His holiness to the world. Peter reminds us in **1 Peter 2:9** that we are *"a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people."*

When we participate in Halloween celebrations, **we blur the line between holy and unholy**, sacred and secular. While the world sees nothing wrong with celebrating darkness, death, and

the occult for one night, believers are called to a higher standard. Our lives should consistently reflect our identity as children of light.

This doesn't mean we need to be harsh or judgmental toward those who celebrate Halloween. However, we should be willing to explain our convictions lovingly and stand firm in our commitment to holiness, even when it makes us different from our neighbors, colleagues, or even family members.

3. Halloween Glorifies Fear, Death, and Evil

Scripture teaches us that God's character and purposes stand in direct opposition to what Halloween celebrates. In **2 Timothy 1:7**, we read, *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."* Yet Halloween intentionally promotes fear through haunted houses, scary movies, and frightening costumes.

Jesus tells us in **John 10:10**, *"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."*

This verse presents a stark contrast between **Satan's purposes (death and destruction)** and **Christ's purposes (life and abundance)**. Halloween, with its focus on death, ghosts, zombies, and gore, celebrates exactly what Jesus came to defeat.

Think about the decorations commonly used for Halloween: **tombstones, skeletons, and scenes of violence**. Consider the costumes that glorify evil characters, demons, and monsters. These aren't just harmless fun – they **represent a fascination with darkness that Christians should avoid**.

We serve a God of life, light, and victory over death. Our celebrations should reflect these truths rather than glorify their opposites.

4. It Can Open Doors to Spiritual Influence

Many Christians underestimate the reality of spiritual warfare. The Bible clearly states in **Ephesians 6:12**, *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."* This isn't mere symbolism – it's a description of actual spiritual conflict.

Halloween often treats these spiritual realities as entertaining fiction. People dress up as demons, play with Ouija boards, and tell ghost stories, not realizing they might be opening themselves to spiritual influences. In **1 Thessalonians 5:22**, Scripture instructs us to *"abstain from all appearance of evil."* This includes seemingly innocent activities that make light of serious spiritual matters.

Consider this: if a recovering alcoholic wouldn't be wise to spend time in a bar "just for fun," why should Christians expose themselves to practices that God has forbidden, even in play? The spiritual realm is real, and our choices about engaging with it matter. Many missionaries and spiritual leaders can testify to the **dangerous consequences of treating the occult casually**, even in culturally accepted ways.

5. Our Children Need Clear Spiritual Direction

Parents carry a sacred responsibility to guide their children in God's truth. **Proverbs 22:6** reminds us to *"train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."*

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 emphasizes this further, instructing parents to teach God's commands diligently to their children.

When we allow our children to participate in Halloween, we often send mixed messages about spiritual truth. How do we explain that witchcraft and sorcery are wrong throughout the year, but it's okay to dress up as a witch on Halloween? How do we **teach them to trust God and not fear** when we participate in activities designed to scare them?

Children need consistent examples of following Christ. When **parents compromise biblical principles for the sake of cultural celebration**, it can create confusion about other spiritual matters. Young minds might struggle to understand why some aspects of the supernatural realm are dangerous while others are treated as entertainment.

Many parents worry their children will feel left out if they don't participate in Halloween. However, this presents an excellent opportunity to teach children about standing firm in their faith, even when it means being different from their peers. We can help them understand that **following Jesus sometimes requires choosing God's way over popular activities**.

6. We Are Called to Walk in the Light



Many Christians avoid Halloween because of its associations with pagan origins (such as the Celtic festival Samhain), occult themes, and biblical warnings against witchcraft and darkness, as seen in passages like Deuteronomy 18:10–12 and Ephesians 5:11.

Overview

Christian responses to Halloween vary widely. Some abstain completely, while others participate in limited or alternative ways. The reasons for

avoiding the holiday generally fall into three categories: biblical concerns, historical origins, and spiritual discernment.

1. Biblical Concerns

Many Christians point to Scripture that warns against:

- **Witchcraft, divination, and contacting the dead** (Deuteronomy 18:10–12).
- **Participating in “deeds of darkness”** (Ephesians 5:11).
- **Associating with practices tied to evil or spiritual darkness** (1 Thessalonians 5:5)

Because Halloween imagery often includes ghosts, witches, demons, and death, some Christians believe participation conflicts with these teachings.

2. Pagan and Occult Origins

Halloween’s roots trace back to **Samhain**, a Celtic festival involving beliefs about spirits and the dead people

Although modern Halloween is largely secular, some Christians feel its origins and symbols remain incompatible with their faith.

3. Desire for Spiritual Separation

Some Christians prefer to avoid anything that might:

- Normalize evil or occult themes
- Blur the line between Christian light and cultural darkness
- Create confusion about their spiritual commitments

These concerns lead some families and churches to abstain entirely or replace Halloween with alternatives like **harvest festivals** or **All Saints’ Day observances**.

4. Differences in Christian Conviction

Not all Christians reject Halloween. Many view it as:

- A **cultural** rather than spiritual event
- An opportunity for **community engagement**
- Harmless when stripped of occult elements (e.g., costumes, candy)

Romans 14:5–6 is often cited to support differing personal convictions.

Summary

Christians who do not celebrate Halloween typically avoid it because of its pagan roots, occult associations, and biblical warnings against darkness.

Others participate in limited or alternative ways based on personal conviction and discernment.

Ephesians 5:8 declares, *"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light."* This verse doesn't suggest we should sometimes walk in light and sometimes in darkness. It calls for a consistent lifestyle that reflects Christ's light.

Halloween celebrates darkness – literally and spiritually. While some argue that modern Halloween celebrations have lost their spiritual significance, the imagery, themes, and activities still focus on darkness, fear, and death. As children of light, we're called to *"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them"* (**Ephesians 5:11**).

This means making conscious choices about what we celebrate and participate in. Just as we wouldn't celebrate other pagan religious festivals, we should carefully consider whether Halloween participation aligns with our call to walk in the light.

Alternatives to Halloween for Christians

Instead of feeling restricted by not celebrating Halloween, Christians can create meaningful alternatives that honor God and build faith:

1. Harvest Celebrations

- Host fall festivals celebrating God's provision
- Organize community gatherings with games and activities
- Focus on thanksgiving for God's blessings

2. Family Ministry Opportunities

- Use the evening for family Bible study
- Create new traditions that honor God

- Serve others through community service projects

3. Educational Events

- Learn about saints and heroes of the faith
- Study biblical teachings about light and darkness
- Discuss spiritual warfare and God's protection

While choosing not to celebrate Halloween might seem difficult in our culture, Scripture calls us to make choices based on God's standards rather than cultural acceptance. As believers, we must remember that our decisions impact not only our own spiritual lives but also our witness to others and our children's understanding of faith.

Romans 12:2 encourages us: *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* This transformation includes carefully evaluating our participation in cultural celebrations through the lens of Scripture.

Instead of feeling deprived by not celebrating Halloween, we can embrace the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to Christ and create meaningful alternatives that honor Him. Let's choose celebrations that reflect our identity as children of light and our commitment to walking in God's truth.

Remember, our goal isn't to judge those who make different choices, but to faithfully follow God's leading in our own lives. As we do this with grace and love, we can help others understand the importance of making choices that honor God in every aspect of life.

May we have the courage to stand firm in our convictions, the wisdom to explain our choices lovingly, and the creativity to develop alternatives that celebrate God's goodness and light.

If you've ever felt a chill down your spine in a dark room, wondered about that strange sound in the hallway, or watched someone on TV talk to the dead, you've probably asked yourself: Are ghosts real? And more importantly, Are ghosts real according to the Bible?

It's a fair question. Because while pop culture floods us with haunted houses and ghost-hunters, the Bible paints a very different picture one that's more sobering, but also more comforting.

In this article, we're going to look honestly at what **Scripture says** (and doesn't say) about ghosts, spirits, hauntings, and the afterlife. Whether you're feeling curious, skeptical, or just a little spooked, I hope this will bring you clarity and peace.

[Find Bibles](#)

What Does the Bible Mean by "Ghosts"?

Let's start with something important: when we say "ghosts," we need to define what we mean.

Most people today think of ghosts as:

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The spirits of dead people who haven't "moved on."

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Souls stuck on Earth, haunting the living.

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Entities that can appear, speak, or even scare people.

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But the Bible doesn't really describe anything like this. In Scripture, the word **"ghost"** is often just an old translation for **"spirit"** like when Jesus "gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46, KJV), meaning He died. It doesn't mean a spooky apparition.

Instead, the Bible speaks clearly about:

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The human soul leaving the body at death.

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Evil spirits or demons that deceive and torment.

God's control over the spiritual realm.

So while Hollywood may thrive on ghost stories, the Bible gives us a more serious, focused understanding of the unseen world.

What Does God Say About Ghosts?

When you open your Bible, you won't find a verse that says, "Ghosts are real," or "Ghosts don't exist." But you will find strong clues about what happens after death and how God **views spiritual** contact.

1. The Dead Do Not Linger

*"PEOPLE ARE DESTINED
TO DIE ONCE, AND AFTER
THAT TO FACE
JUDGMENT."*

HEBREWS 9:27 (NIV)

This is huge. The **Bible teaches that when someone dies**, their soul doesn't hang around haunting houses or visiting the living. Instead, they face God's judgment either going to be with Him or separated from Him.

There's no mention of humans roaming the earth in ghost form.

2. God Forbids Speaking to the Dead

*“LET NO ONE BE FOUND
AMONG YOU... WHO
PRACTICES DIVINATION
OR SORCERY... OR WHO
CONSULTS THE DEAD.”
DEUTERONOMY 18:10-12
(NIV)*

Trying to communicate with spirits or the dead what we'd call **necromancy** was a serious offense in the Old Testament. God didn't just frown upon it; He **detested** it.

his tells us something important: even if people think they're talking to a ghost, they may actually be interacting with something much darker.

Do Evil Spirits Exist in the Bible?

Yes. And this is where the conversation shifts from “Are ghosts real?” to “What kind of spirits are real?”

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Scripture makes it clear that **evil spirits** also called **unclean spirits** or **demons** exist and operate in the world.

Examples from Scripture:

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Jesus cast out demons from many people, including the man possessed by a “Legion” of spirits (Mark 5:1–20).

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Evil spirits could **cause sickness**, madness, or violent behavior (Luke 9:37–43).

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These spirits were **terrified of Jesus**, recognizing His authority.

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So while the Bible doesn't teach that the spirits of dead humans wander the earth, it absolutely affirms the reality of **non-human spirits** some good (angels), and some evil (demons).

What's the takeaway?

Many so-called "ghost" encounters could be demonic in nature not harmless or friendly, but deceptive and dangerous.

Explore Faiths

What About the Witch of Endor? (1 Samuel 28)

If you've read this far, you might be thinking, "But wait didn't Saul talk to a ghost in the Bible?"

Yes, the story in **1 Samuel 28** is often brought up in this conversation.

The Story in Brief:

King Saul, desperate and afraid, seeks out a **medium** a woman who communicates with the dead even

though he knows God forbids it. He asks her to summon the prophet **Samuel**, who had already died.

And then... Samuel appears. Or at least something that looked like him.

But here's the thing: **the** Bible never calls it a ghost. And scholars debate whether this was:

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Really Samuel (allowed by God for a specific reason),

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A demonic spirit impersonating him,

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Or just a vision conjured through the woman's dark arts.

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The event was **rare, forbidden**, and **condemned**. It's not a green light for ghost-chasing it's a red flag warning.

What Does the New Testament Say?

There's a fascinating moment after Jesus rose from the dead. When He appeared to His disciples, they were terrified.

*“THEY WERE STARTLED
AND FRIGHTENED,
THINKING THEY SAW A
GHOST.”*

LUKE 24:37 (NIV)

Here, we see that people in the first century **believed in ghosts** or at least some version of spirits appearing after death.

But what does Jesus do?

He reassures them:

*“LOOK AT MY HANDS
AND MY FEET. IT IS I
MYSELF! TOUCH ME AND
SEE; A GHOST DOES NOT*

*HAVE FLESH AND
BONES.”*

LUKE 24:39

He's not confirming that ghosts are real. He's saying, **“I'm not one of them.”** He proves His physical resurrection, not a ghostly presence.

So... Is There Any Proof That Ghosts Exist?

From a biblical standpoint, no.

There is no proof that the **spirits of dead humans** appear and interact with the living.

Find Bibles

However, people around the world both [Christian](#) and not report paranormal experiences, haunted places, and ghost sightings.

So how do we explain this?

Three Possible Explanations:

1.

Natural Causes

2.

1.

Sleep paralysis, stress, grief, or hallucinations can make people feel like they saw something.

2.

3.

Deception by Evil Spirits

4.

1.

Demons can mimic the dead to confuse and mislead.

2.

3.

Paul warned in 2 Corinthians 11:14, "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."

4.

5.

Psychological Influence

6.

1.

Cultural expectations and fear can shape experiences. If you expect ghosts, your mind may "fill in the blanks."

2.

Bottom line? The Bible doesn't give room for ghosts of the dead wandering among us but it warns us clearly about deception and spiritual warfare.

What Does God Say About “Ghosting”?

This might sound off-topic, but since it's one of our LSI keywords, let's touch on it briefly.

Explore Faiths

“Ghosting” today usually means **cutting someone off without explanation** vanishing from their life, especially in relationships.

While the Bible doesn't use the term “ghosting,” it speaks volumes about how we should treat others:

*“DO TO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD
HAVE THEM DO TO YOU.” LUKE
6:31*

*“LOVE IS PATIENT, LOVE IS
KIND... IT IS NOT RUDE, IT IS
NOT SELF-SEEKING.” 1
CORINTHIANS 13:4–5*

In other words, **respect, honesty, and kindness** are the standard. If we're in a situation where we need to

step away from someone, it should be done with grace not silence.

Should Christians Be Afraid of Ghosts?

Fear sells. That's why every October, Hollywood lines up new horror movies and haunted house attractions. But Scripture gives a radically different response to fear.

***"GOD HAS NOT GIVEN US A
SPIRIT OF FEAR, BUT OF
POWER, LOVE, AND A SOUND
MIND."
2 TIMOTHY 1:7***

You don't have to fear ghosts. You don't have to live in anxiety over hauntings or spiritual threats. If you belong to Christ, **you are protected.**

***"THE ONE WHO IS IN YOU IS
GREATER THAN THE ONE WHO
IS IN THE WORLD."
1 JOHN 4:4***

Instead of fear, we're invited to walk in trust. Instead of superstition, we hold to truth.

Are Ghosts Real According to the Bible?

If you're still wondering, "Are ghosts real according to the Bible?" here's a summary:

Find Bibles

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No, the Bible does not teach that the souls of the dead linger as ghosts.

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Yes, the Bible warns of **evil spirits** that can deceive, harm, or pretend to be the dead.

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Yes, God forbids contacting the dead or playing with the spiritual realm outside of Him.

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No, Christians don't need to live in fear we are secure in Christ.

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What the world calls a “ghost” may just be fear, imagination, or something darker pretending to be light. But you don’t have to figure it all out on your own for Ghosts are demons that are evil angels, read Genesis 3, Job 1 and 2, Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28 and Revelation 12. God’s Word gives us everything we need to walk wisely, with peace not panic.



Seventh-day Adventist View on Spiritualism

Seventh-day Adventists teach that spiritualism is a deceptive system led by Satan, not a legitimate way to communicate with the dead, and they warn believers to avoid it entirely.

Definition and Biblical Basis

According to the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, spiritualism is “a belief that departed spirits hold intercourse with mortals by means of physical phenomena... commonly manifested through a medium” The Bible

explicitly forbids seeking such contact: “Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards... I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:31)

The State of the Dead

SDA teaching holds that when a person dies, they are **completely unconscious** and have no part in events on earth (Ecclesiastes 9:5–6). Therefore, any “spirits” contacted in séances cannot be the souls of the departed.

Who Are the Spirits Contacted?

SDA sources conclude that the spirits in spiritualistic mediums are **not the dead, nor holy angels**, but **spirits of devils under Satan’s direction**. These deceptive beings may impersonate the dead or other figures to mislead people, as warned in 2 Corinthians 11:14–15 and 1 Peter 5:8.

Ellen White and Adventist Writings

Ellen G. White, a key SDA leader, warned that modern spiritualism is “thoroughly and unmistakably diabolical” and that it “calls evil good and darkness light.” She urged Adventists to “separate from darkness” and avoid any practice that blurs the distinction between righteousness and sin.

Practical Warning

SDA materials caution that spiritualism exploits the grieving and weak, offering false comfort and leading people away from truth. They stress that the only true “spirit world” communication is through God’s Word and the Holy Spirit, not through mediums or séances.

In summary: Seventh-day Adventists reject spiritualism as a dangerous, deceptive system. They teach that the dead are unconscious, that any “spirit” contact is demonic, and that believers should avoid it to remain in the light of God’s truth.