

## Can the Living Communicate With the Dead? (Part 1)

Wayne Jackson

[www.christiancourier.com/articles/1503-can-the-living-communicate-with-the-dead](http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1503-can-the-living-communicate-with-the-dead)

(Editor's Note: The proliferation of television shows suggesting haunted houses and communication with the dearly departed is simply amazing in our "educated" society. Recently I watched the opening of one of these programs and saw the hosts bringing out all kinds of equipment designed to locate the specters in the house. I checked to be sure I wasn't tuned in to a movie channel because I thought I was watching "Ghostbusters." Sure enough, this was a "reality" show. Isn't it strange how so many people can sit and watch and fork over money to charlatans like those who hosted this show and still reject God? Wayne Jackson's article is to the point and well-written. Because of its length it will be presented in two issues of the bulletin. – Mike Gifford)

In his informative book, *Understanding the New Age*, Russell Chandler notes that nearly half (42%) of America's adult population believe they have been in contact with someone who has died (1988). This was up 15% from a survey conducted in 1977. Of course there is nothing new about necromancy (attempting to communicate with the dead); it is almost as old as death itself. It has, however, received a resurgence of interest lately with the advent of "New Age" philosophy under the influence of such notables as Shirley MacLaine (1983).

### Ancient Spiritism

Necromancy was practiced in ancient Babylon and also in Egypt (which was known as the "mother of the occult"). There is considerable evidence in the Old Testament that even the Hebrews became involved in the practice. During the time of the wicked Manasseh's reign over Judah, it is said that the king "practiced augury, and used enchantments, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards" (2 Kings 21:6).

One who sought to communicate with the dead was called a necromancer; hence, the term refers to one who attempts to obtain supernatural knowledge from beyond the grave. Such a person was said to have a "familiar spirit" (modern spirit mediums call them "controls") who could convey the desired information. Thus, Moses wrote: "There shall not be found with you . . . a consulter with a familiar spirit, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto Jehovah" (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Again: "Turn you not unto them that have familiar spirits" (Leviticus 19:31), for "the soul that turns unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards, to play the harlot after them, I will set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among the people" (20:6). That, of course, implied the death penalty (v. 27).

Could certain perverse persons actually communicate with the dead in those ancient times? And what of today? Some contend that during the Mosaic economy there were actually people who could contact the dead and thus, by supernatural knowledge obtained from them, they could predict the future. They argue that capital punishment would hardly have been legislated against mere pretenders.

We feel, however, that his argument is invalid. Baal and the other gods of ancient heathenism actually were "no gods" (Galatians 4:8; cf. 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6), yet there were laws (buttressed by capital punishment) against worshipping such. Even some today, who are strongly opposed to the practice of necromancy, feel that messages are being conveyed from the realm of the dead. Chandler remarks:

There seems to be convincing evidence that some accurate information has been transmitted from beyond the grave, and that the mediums through which it was communicated could not have otherwise known about it (84).

Others, who deny that anyone today can contact the dead, nevertheless believe that through spiritist "mediums" occultic forces (e.g., demons) are at work.

This writer believes that the best evidence indicates that no one, either in the past (unless by the interposition of God) or present can talk with the dead, and that demons are not manifesting themselves in today's world.

It is interesting to note that the term "familiar spirit," as employed in the Old Testament, was in the Septuagint (Greek Version of the Old Testament) rendered by the term *eggastri-muthos*, meaning "to prophesy from the belly"—thus suggesting ventriloquism rather than actual conversation from the dead.

Continued next week...