

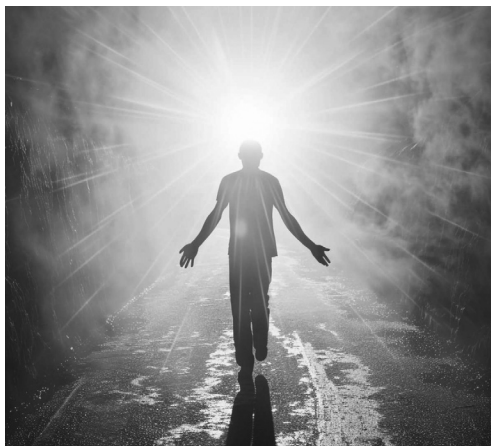


A BIBLICAL VIEW ON

The Supernatural and Paranormal



Kerby Anderson



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Lee Strobel has written many books about theology and apologetics. Last year, some of the people at Zondervan suggested he put together a book on the supernatural, *Seeing the Super-*

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natural. In this booklet, I want to summarize two of the chapters. One provides evidence of the supernatural, and the other warns of the dangers of tapping into the spiritual realm.

The first part can provide evidence for people you know who are skeptical about spiritual issues. That's why I have put together booklets on topics like *A Biblical Point of View on Arguments for the Existence of God*. The second part is necessary for people who might pursue paranormal or other spiritual issues. That's why I have put together books on topics like *A Biblical Point of View on False Spirituality*. I encourage you to use these resources and this booklet to witness to others.

Near-Death Experiences

Lee Strobel provides lots of evidence for the supernatural (miracles, deathbed visions), but one of the more compelling was his interview with John Burke on NDEs (near-death experiences). He previously discussed this in chapter 3 of his book, *The Case for Heaven*, but goes into more detail in chapter 8 of *Seeing the Supernatural*.

I have been looking at this same phenomenon. My book, *Life, Death & Beyond* came out in 1980. I wrote it because of the publicity of these experiences reported by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, Raymond Moody, and Kenneth Ring. Forty-five years later, we have so much more evidence as well as important

biblical evaluation.

Although it might be tempting to dismiss these reported experiences as dying brain functions or hallucinations, there are a core of experiences that do indicate these people have had an out-of-body experience that cannot be explained in any other way. Lee Strobel often tells the story of the woman at Memorial Hospital in London who floated out of her body and saw a red label on the top side of the blade on the ceiling fan. Later, the nurse got a tall ladder to inspect it and found the red sticker. He provides other similar examples (e.g., blind people who report visually seeing what was taking place around them).

Not only have I interviewed Lee

Strobel on his books documenting these spiritual experiences, but I have also interviewed Dr. Michael Egnor and Denyse O'Leary on their book, *The Immortal Mind*. They provide additional arguments for the existence of a mind apart from our brain and the existence of a soul apart from our body. They conclude that the immortality of the soul is a reasonable belief and document that the human mind and soul exists beyond death.

Lee Strobel then asked John Burke about the so-called divine presence that people sometimes see. They say they felt they were standing in the presence of Almighty God. Burke pointed to Matthew 17:2 in the account

of the Transfiguration where it says the face of Jesus shone like the sun and His clothes became white.

Many people experiencing NDEs report a life review that seems to be exposing their life. But this isn't the final judgment. Burke reminds us that Hebrews 9:27 says that "it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment." He says these may be a clarifying reminder that God knows everything about us, and that one day we will all give an account. No final judgment will take place until human history comes to its conclusion (Revelation 11:15-18).

As you might imagine, there are different NDE studies that also reveal experiences that

range from disturbing to terrifying. One involved an atheist professor at Northern Kentucky University that you may not want to read before going to bed because it may give you nightmares.

We should also be skeptical. Burke does acknowledge that some stories proved to be false. The book, *The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven*, had the story of young Alex Malarkey meeting Jesus. He later admitted that he made up the story to get attention.

Also, we should be skeptical and discerning about these claims. Just because a person saw a being of light doesn't necessarily mean they saw Jesus. For example, Paul warned the believers

in Corinth that “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). He goes on to explain that the demons even “disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:15). We should be aware that some people may have been deceived.

We should not base our belief in eternal life based on a resuscitation that took place after a few minutes. We base our belief in eternal life on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus after three days (1 Corinthians 15:3-11).

Nevertheless, Burke cites many researchers that have concluded that NDEs provide evidence for the soul and evidence for the existence of an afterlife. This growing body of evidence is what we

would expect since the Bible is true and provides a picture of life after death.

Dangers of Tapping into the Spiritual Realm

In the final chapter in his book, “Ghost Stories, Psychics, and the Paranormal,” Lee Strobel interviewed Ron Rhodes. He has been a frequent guest on *Point of View* and is the author of numerous books on cults and the occult. He explains that people are looking for the supernatural, but often in the wrong places, such as spiritism and paranormal phenomena.

Lee Strobel asked him about ghosts. Supposedly these are people who do not transverse a tunnel that leads them to a spiri-

tual realm but remain behind and linger on earth. Psychics say they are the easiest to contact since they haven't crossed over to the other side. Rhodes quickly adds that people will believe this because Satan "has blinded the minds of the unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan is the master of deception.

He explains that people may hear sounds and attribute them to ghosts. Electronic voice phenomenon is when a voice can supposedly be discerned amidst the white noise of a radio. Rhodes explains that many of these subjective experiences have natural explanations. Psychics also engage in cold readings or hot readings, essentially telling people what they want

to hear.

Unfortunately, many psychics promote heresy, even while claiming to be Christians or at least claiming to have such gifts given to them from God. That is why Paul warned Timothy that there were people teaching the doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1).

The Bible warns us about occult practices. It condemns all forms of psychic and occultic practices. Leviticus 19:26 commands, “You shall not interpret omens or tell fortunes.” It further adds, “Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:31). God commanded them in Deuteronomy

18:10-11 to not have among them “anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead.”

Ron Rhodes calls for us to “test the spirits” and provides seven principles we should apply. First, we should be immersing ourselves in Scripture. God’s Word should be our standard. Psalm 119:105 says, “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Second, we should pray for discernment. He says we should pray that God would give you a heart of wisdom and discernment so that we will “not be confused or deceived by the

events being reported in the media.”

Third, seek counsel when appropriate. Proverbs 15:22 says it is wise to consult counselors. If you see something troubling, seek out advice from trusted, mature Christians and from reputable Christian theologians and apologists.

Fourth, always consider the source of the report. Keep in mind the source’s track record for credibility and examine their beliefs and biases.

Fifth, remember there may be alternative explanations. There may be a better, more mundane explanation than a paranormal one.

Sixth, cross-examine the initial report of the event. Rhodes said, “Solomon, renowned as the wisest man who ever lived, observed, ‘The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him’ (Proverbs 18:17).”

Seventh, be aware of “fake news.” This not only comes from news programs but also from Satan as well. Scripture warns of deceitful spirits and teachings of demons (1 Timothy 4:1).

We live in a time when many people are skeptical of the supernatural and other people are seeking the supernatural but in the wrong places. That is why we need to be diligently teaching God’s Word (Deuteronomy 6:7) and rightly handling the

Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15).
We need wisdom and discernment as we present biblical truth to our culture.



Additional Resources

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