

THE WITCH OF ENDOR... and her cry in the night
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(1 SAMUEL 28:11-12)

The house was eerie and still, as the witch awaited the arrival of her visitors. She was unhappy and uncertain; her life was in danger. People had heard that she dabbled in the unknown, and the fact that a mysterious personage had sought her help filled her with fear. She listened intently for the sounds of footsteps. She had been assured that this was no trap, and her clients had appeared to be men of honour. "The times were hard, or she would have resisted this temptation to earn money. Suddenly she heard people stealthily approaching her door, and her lips quivered. They were coming! It was to be hoped they had preserved the secret of their mission.

A Witch in Danger

Her art was unpopular and unlawful in Israel. Each time the reigning monarch rededicated his life to God, his zeal was manifested in a new witch-hunt. The law of Moses condemned spiritist mediums, and necromancers were obliged to flee from the hands of justice. The divine commandment had been clearly given: "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his 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 necromancer (one who seeks to commune with the dead). For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord" (Deut. 18:10-12). "And the soul that turneth after such . . . I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people" (Lev. 20: 6). "A man also or a woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be on them" (Lev. 20:27). No spiritist medium was safe when Israel turned to God.

A Witch in Demand

"And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Then Saul said unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor" (1 Sam. 28: 6-7). Saul's sin had raised a barrier between his soul and God. True repentance would have removed that hindrance, but the fear which filled the king's heart was not repentance. That the witch-hunter could seek the co-operation of a condemned woman seems to testify that God was not indispensable. He would seek elsewhere what the Lord would not give. Disguised, he came to the witch and asked her to bring up Samuel. It may be true that a great deal of psychic phenomena has been placed at the disposal of men, but nothing can alter the fact that the word of the Highest repeatedly denounces the practice of seeking to communicate with the dead. Every Christian will know that the saints are "absent from the body and at home with the Lord."

A Witch in Distress

It is most remarkable that the witch was undismayed when Saul asked her to bring up Samuel. Calmly, she

THE WITCH OF ENDOR... and her cry in the night received the request, and there is no doubt that had she been given a little time, she would have proceeded with her usual incantations. However, the sudden, unannounced appearance of the prophet took her completely by surprise, and her loud startled cry echoed through the house. Obviously she had nothing to do with the return of the prophet, and was most unhappy in his presence. "She cried with a loud voice" (v. 12). If any further denunciation of the practice of spiritism were necessary, it would be supplied by Samuel's message to Saul. The man of God spoke of divine wrath, the hatefulness of sin, and the emptiness of a life from which God withdraws Himself. Do spiritist mediums deliver messages of that calibre? Does any messenger from the other world turn a seance into an evangelistic meeting where men and women are reminded of the necessity to repent of sin and turn to God? "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it" (1 Chron. 10:13). It is far better to seek the guidance of a prophet while he is still alive. than to wait until he is dead. Be in time!

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