

DEATH AND AFTER

The False Teaching of Contacting the Dead (Spiritism)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The practice of contacting the dead is sometimes called necromancy or spiritism and is found in the modern day cult of Spiritualism. Spiritism is a religion that is totally anti-Christian and has approximately 70 million followers. Most of the non-Christian religions are to a large extent spiritistically oriented and true Christianity is the only antidote to spiritism.
- B. In the 20th century, spiritism has become a threat to both the Christian church and the Christian message, for many spiritists (professing non-Christians) are in churches and are accepted as religiously sincere people. Many people who call themselves Christians have come under the spell of spiritism and have been deceived by it.
- C. It has become quite popular today for people to openly speak of attending a séance or having their own private medium. The late Bishop Pile did much to popularize spiritism in so-called Christian circles when he wrote his book The Other Side in which he claimed to communicate with his dead son. NOTE: Today in America, Britain and Brazil there are many spiritist churches but they are not Christian.

II. DEFINITION: Spiritism is an attempt to communicate with the dead in the spirit world usually through a medium who is susceptible to their influences.

“The thing that gives Spiritualism its strongest appeal is its professed ability to secure messages from departed loved ones and, to a lesser extent, its professed ability to foretell future events. It is rather closely related to fortune telling, palmistry, astrology, etc. Its chief patrons are grief-stricken relatives and those who are in distress of one kind or another, often those who are worried about what the future may bring.” (L. Beottner, Immortality)

III. MANIFESTATIONS OF SPIRITISM

- A. Spiritism may be manifested in spiritistic visions, table-lifting, glass moving, automatic writing, speaking in trance, materializations (alleged appearances of the dead), excusion of the soul (the wandering of the souls of the living), telekinesis (the moving of objects with no physical means), levitation (lifting of people and objects – an imitation of the ascension), apports (the appearance and disappearance of objects in closed rooms, etc.), and also magic defense and magic persecution which also exist in the spiritistical realm.
- B. The appearing of apparitions and ghosts must be put into the category of spiritism. NOTE: These things do happen when people begin to contact the spirit world and it does not suffice just to scratch it off as psychic phenomena or the work of mentally unbalanced people.

IV. SUPPORT FOR SPIRITISM

- A. History: Spiritists can go as far back as recorded history of religion for support to prove that people have been able to contact the spiritual world. This was a definite part of all the ancient religions and most of the modern religions (Shintoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, etc.).
- B. Actual Accounts: While there are many frauds in spiritism, there are many well documented cases that show that some kind of contact with the spirit world has been made by living men.
- C. Biblical Support: Spiritists go to the case of Saul and the witch of Endor to show that the Bible does teach that it is possible to contact the dead (I Sam. 28:1-20; I Chron. 10:13, 14). They claim that this medium (witch) contacted the prophet Samuel who spoke to Saul.

OBJECTIONS:

1. Background: King Saul had fallen into apostasy. Samuel the prophet was dead. Saul had spiritually and mentally deteriorated and was a God-forsaken man. The Philistines were ready to march on Israel. All the ordinary channels of revelation were closed to him because of his willful disobedience (28:6). He was filled with fear and did not know where to turn. He needed to communicate with Samuel, and even though he had outlawed any form of necromancy, he, in desperation, sought out a witch (medium) to contact Samuel (28:3). Saul disguised himself and promised the woman that no harm would come to her if she made contact. She asked him who he wanted her to contact and he said, "Bring up Samuel for me." The woman was greatly startled when Samuel appeared and at the same time she discovered the identity of Saul (28:11-15). Samuel gave a message of doom – Saul's armies would be defeated and Saul and his sons would die (28:16-20).
2. Who Appeared?
 - a. Some commentators feel that it was not Samuel who appeared but this was demonic activity, for the devil can disguise himself as an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14).
OBJECTIONS:
 1. There is no hint in this whole passage that this was an evil spirit or that the woman somehow impersonated Samuel.
 2. Both the witch and Saul knew that it was Samuel.
 3. Saul spoke directly to Samuel and Samuel rebuked Saul without the aid of the medium.
 4. Samuel's predictions came to pass with detailed accuracy.
 - b. It is better to say that in this particular case Samuel did come back from the dead by God's sovereign will and power. Scripture does allow for appearances of those who have died to the living such as Elijah and Moses (Matt. 17:1-3)
3. Did the Witch Have Powers? It seems that the witch in herself did not have the power to contact the dead, for this would be contrary to the total teaching on necromancy in the Bible (cf. V). It is clear from the text that the woman herself was greatly surprised and did not really expect this thing to happen (28:12). If she did expect a contact, this was a different kind of phenomena than she had ever experienced before. NOTE: The witch had no power to

raise dead spirits but God in His sovereignty did use this occasion to have Samuel appear.

“From the time that Samuel appeared, the woman had no further part in the affair except as a spectator. It seems clear that in this instance God actually sent back the prophet Samuel, that he superseded the séance and used this as an occasion to pronounce judgment upon the willfully disobedient King Saul.” (Beottner)

4. What Price did Saul Pay for Contacting the Dead? (I Chron. 10:13, 14): For his disobedience and involvement in necromancy, Saul was killed. We do not know for sure whether Saul was a disobedient believer who experienced the sin unto death or an apostate, but the important thing to note is the serious consequences of contacting the dead.

V. BIBLICAL OBJECTIONS TO SPIRITISM

- A. The General Biblical Teaching is that Spirits Cannot Return: Death causes a complete break with this world and if a spirit could return it would only be by God’s sovereignty (Job 10:21; 7:9, 10; II Sam. 12:23; II Cor. 5:8). In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man stated he could not communicate with his living brothers (Lk. 16).

“Nowhere in the Bible is there anything to indicate that the dead do return to this earth, either in spirit or in physical bodies except by a miracle when God himself sends them back on a special mission.” (Beottner)

- B. The Bible Commands God’s People to Avoid Necromancy: Any attempt to contact the dead is strictly forbidden by God (Deut. 18:9-12; Exo. 22:18; Lev. 20:6, 27; Isa. 8:19, 20). It is a sin to contact the dead in any way.

VI. EXPLANATIONS FOR SPIRITISM

- A. Fraud: Much of the so-called spiritism is a fraud and can be explained by the use of magic which is not supernatural at all. NOTE: Spiritism has drained millions of dollars from gullible people.
- B. Psychic Phenomena: Some forms of spiritism could be due to psychic processes because there is still much we do not know about the capacities of the human mind. This, of course, is not supernatural phenomenon but natural powers of the mind.

“Psychology too has drawn certain conclusions on the matter, and Professor Bender, a psychologist of the University of Freiburg in his booklet entitled “Parapsychology – Its Results and Problems,” has warned people in these words: “Thousands of people base their hopes on the deceptive statements of spiritistic practitioners and subsequently become dependent upon the advice they receive from the ‘other side’. I have quite a number of patients who have suffered serious psychic disturbances through the misuse of such practices. Their personalities have been split and they have been utterly confused by the spirits on which they have called. People, therefore, who try to discover what life after death is like through spiritism and superstition are

in danger of falling prey to the dark and hidden side of their own minds and souls.” (Kurt Koch, “Spiritism”, Between Christ and Satan.)

- C. Demonic Activity: The reason that necromancy is so dangerous is that it is possible to contact demonic spirits through mediums, séances, etc.

“All of these cults, ventures into spiritualism, fortune-telling, and psychic avenues, have a common danger: they open the mind to associate with the spiritual realm and to seek contact with the world beyond. The will is made available to any experience which is beyond the senses. Whether it is realized or not, the person exposed in this manner can be brought under the direct influence of powerful spiritual personalities who are dedicated to enslaving his life.

There are phenomena beyond the realm of the senses. They are beginning to be accepted in scientific circles, and we may scoff or laugh at our own peril. They are not related to the true God, but to the one whom Jesus Christ called “the god of this world.”

I believe that people are being given superhuman powers from Satan in order that they may promote his work on earth. We are only at the beginning of the explosion. There will be inventions which will come from the spirit world and fantastic displays of miracles and wonders that the ancient Scriptures predicted would occur in the days just before this present civilization would end.” (Hal Lindsey, Satan Is Alive and Well on Planet Earth)