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"PREVIEW OF THE FUTURE"

I Samuel 28

INTRODUCTION:

First we want to look at the reason for looking into the future.
Second, we want to look at the methods used in discovering future information.

I. THE REASONS FOR LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

V. 1-7. It was a time of war. It was the eve of the battle of Gilboa.
And the moonlight streamed down over Mt. Tabor where the armies of King Saul
were encamped.

Three miles across this plain beyond - the camp of the Philistines. And
about the same distance was a little village by the name of Endor.

V. 5. In Israel the tides of battle had been running against the so-called
children of God. And as Saul leaned on the tent prop, he was trembling, the
Scripture says in the 5th verse. He was afraid. His heart greatly trembled.
All Israel's warriors were within. They did not have a great number as compared
to the enemy. Disaster seemed inevitable. And desperation was disabling this
once proud warrior.

V. 3. I can hear him say, "I am undone". The fate of God is against me. Even
eternal God is not with me. Samuel was dead. The real spirit of power and
of comfort had forsaken him.

David was still a fugitive.

The Philistines were growing in number.

And Saul's poor self-confident heart began to give way. What is there in us apart from the grace of God to sustain us, when the dark and cloudy day comes.

V. 6 - When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not. Neither by dreams nor by urim, nor by prophets.

Here was a fearful heart and a (silent Heaven). What a sorrowful plight for a man to be in. Who once has as a companion one of God's best prophets.

Suddenly a light seems to pass over Saul's face and he turns to an attendant. There must be one in all this place who has some kind of a gift - one who can tell you (something about tomorrow). Who can give me a preview of the future.

V. 7 - Saul said seek me a woman who hath a familiar spirit. That I may go into her and inquire of her. And the (servant) was ready with information. There was a witch - a woman at Endor who practices witchcraft.

V. 3 - Now we must remember that by a royal decree, witchcraft was crime of first degree and those who practiced this black art were out-lawed from the Kingdom. And Saul had given the order to put these people out of business--but now a war was on. And now he wanted information. And this was against the law of God and it was a contradiction to what he had faith in. Now had someone told Saul when he was destroying the witches that he would, himself, consult with one. He would have said that it would never happen.

But who knows what mischief those will run into - those that will forsake God, and or, forsake him.

We are told that during war, the Civil War, between the States - that this movement began to grow on the Eastern Seaboard. And after World War I - great groups of grief stricken parents frequently visited these people for seances - in quest of word from the other world. During World War II, those who had money - these mediums reaped a harvest. Spiritism is really what it is called. It flourishes among defeated folks. A bewildered people will scrape together needed cash and will flock to all sorts of seances. Child-like people who have lost their houses and all they have - will turn to fortune tellers and ask them to intercede.

Most people who consult these familiar spirits are in distress of somekind that may spring from within. And King Saul, for instance, had gone into battle after battle - he had lost his inner reserves. He began to fail. He was going down in defeat. And he could not stand the shame. And this was the reason why he sought to find something out about the future.

This man's distress sprang from his lack of religion. The King had not lived right in relation to God - if he had, he would have felt no impulse to consult the witch.

During his earlier years as King, he had been able to depend upon Samuel. His spiritual counselor. To go to his dear friend and pastor, but now he felt that he needed some other contact. He could not solve the problem as it arose. But when the man of God departed - the King was at his wit's end. Having no where else to turn, as in his earlier years, he had tried to drive the witches out of the land. To stop this folly. To shield his people. But now he feels God forsaken.

It is a bewildering moment when people stand in the midst of some great sorrow

and there is no pastor who stands ready to intercede for them. And there is no church to offer a friendly hand. They often reach out to the spiritualist. When burdened men and women fail to find and look to the church and to the minister - they cease to attend church. And that's when life crumbles in on them.

V. 1-7, tells us the reason for his seeking to know something about the future.

*War. + Disappointed
out of touch with God!*

II. THE METHOD USED IN DISCOVERING THE FUTURE

V. 8 - The servant quickly clothed the King in garments of a peasant. Saul and his two body guards go around the edge of the camp of the Philistines. And they go to the (cave of Endor). And there he makes his errand known. As he approaches this witch - (disguised).

You will notice that it was by (night) that this took place. Spiritism works this way. There is gross deception. It takes place at night. And in the case of Saul, the interview called for a disguise. And preferred darkness rather than light. He had one request - I want you to bring up a spirit from below. Where did she suppose that the man of God made his home in the unseen world.

I pray thee, bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee.

In V. 9-10, We have a promise of safety given. He tells her of his errand - that he desires to bring up the dead. And this she knows is especially forbidden. And she signifies her fear of the law. But this man orders it to be done. And he insists that this will not endanger her life. There is no mention of a (fee).

No doubt, she demanded a large one.

But she felt that this was a sneer laid for her life. Saul promises with an oath, that he will not betray her. And it was his duty as King to punish her. And he knew it. But he swears not to do it.

In V. 11 - The woman asked the question, whom shall I bring up from thee.

Bring me up Samuel. Saul desires to speak to Samuel. Samuel had anointed him to the Kingdom. He had been a faithful friend, counselor, and had given him wise advice.

While Samuel was living at Ramah - not far from Gibeah. He presided over the school of the prophets. We never read of Saul going him to consult him in any of the difficulties that he was in. But now that he is dead, oh, for Samuel again. By all means, bring him up.

Many that despise and persecute God's saints and ministers, when they are living, would be glad to have them again when they are gone.

Send Lazarus to me and to my father's house. Luke 16:24.

So here was a great desire. Bring him up. And this is a drama taking place in the Old Testament. The quest of the King - under cover at night. What he learned availed him little.

His cry is not unlike that of multitudes of men and women who find their own hearts failing them. As they tremble at the gates of better yesterdays.

This is a good scene to relate in ourselves. About the events of the ¹⁹⁷²
New Year. We would like to crystal gazing - it is unattractive. And we
must look in a different way to see what the coming year may hold for us.

V. 12 - What did the woman see. What did this fortune teller profess
to see. Oh, she said, she cried with a loud voice - when she saw Samuel."
It scared the daylights out of her. *like getting an afro wig for Christmas -
Her Hair stood straight up on her head!*

Then remember, when he said, bring me up Samuel - this is very emphatic
in the Hebrew. It expresses tremendous anxiety, and determination - his soul
longs for a short interview. To get a preview of the future.

But the re-appearance of Samuel brought no relief or comfort. And it
frightened this witch out of her wits.

The witch looked upon this sight - and of course, he asked her what she
saw - Verse 13. I saw God descending out of the earth. And what form was he
in.

V. 14 - an old man coming up. He is covered with a mantle. At this
point Saul stooped to the ground. Nothing more than an old man - covered with
a robe.

Now Saul himself appears to have seen nothing. He had depended on the word
of a law breaking woman. We are told that in 1926 in New York City - people paid
5 million dollars - today to take the rake off must be vastly more. Wherefore,
do you spend money for that which is not bread - and labor for that which
satisfieth not. Harken unto me, thus saith the Lord.

The old witch recognized Saul and wanted to know why he had deceived her. We may suppose that Saul was kept at a distance in the next room. He bid her not to be afraid but to go on with the operation. And to inquire of him. She saw God. Now Saul thought it was necessary to have this conversation with Samuel. That he might call him out of the grave. And God permitted the Devil to answer the desire, of Samuel, in shape with a robe. I think it was all a lie. But Saul being told of God's descending was eager to know, about it, and he must take the woman's word for it. That she saw an old man.

V. 15 - He said why has thou quieted me - to bring me up.

Saul makes his complaint - but this is cold comfort. He is not told about repentance - but he is told that in V. 18 + he disobeyed God.

V. 19 - He foretells the approaching ruin of his army - his life - and the deaths of his sons.

V. 20 - He sank under the load. He had not eaten anything all day and all night. And he was without strength. There was no strength in him to bear up under such tidings for the future.

Saul is finally persuaded to eat some bread and to partake of some meat, of a fat calf, which provided him strength enough to return back to his camp. The midnight is settling down thick and fast. And this is the sure course of a backslider.

3,000 years have gone by since the King went to call on the witch at Endor. And in all that time what has spiritism contributed to our knowledge of God, and the unseen world. The light about him, and the way everlasting. We must

still turn to the Scriptures in the spirit of prayer. Why then, do we insist in learning on what the Heavenly Father does not wish us to know. We want to go into the mysteries. We would like to know. We would like to get a preview about the future. But here is the tragedy.

God forsaken, God is departed from me and answered me no more. The poor man, might rather of said, I have forsaken the God of my Fathers - and I know not how to pray.

Now when he talked about his unanswered prayers - God's answer may have been "no".

His method was to get in touch with God.) But he sought out a fortune teller - and that visit marked the beginning of the end. If he had not gone to see the witch - he might not have met death the next day. But he went to that cave.

What a sorrow way to prepare for the battle on the morrow. And for the life beyond this earth.

✓ The following day, we see how King Saul lost his sons, laid down his life, forfeited his Kingdom.

✓ Would you know about the New Year. Would you like a preview? Where would you go? To some dark cave and see a fortune teller. Or would you go to the house of prayer.

Do we not believe that God is waiting to give heed and that he answers the call of faith.

When have you ever known him to ignore any saint or sinner who really prayed.

✓ Instead of going to fortune tellers - a man needs to seek the church and the sanctuary, and the preacher - where the Gospel is given. People need to come to the house of the Lord to find out the message for the life beyond.

The glory of God streams from every page in the New Testament. The center of gravity lies beyond the grave.

✓ Remember this - Saul had possessed Samuel. For many years, Samuel had offered him his counsel. He had been his friend. The old prophet had crowned him. And all through the years Saul felt that the prophet, the old man, was a hindrance. He dropped him. He felt that he could travel faster without the preacher.

✓ Then, this proud, self-sufficient man encountered a major crisis. He longs for the help of Samuel - but Samuel is dead. He wishes that he had the old opportunity. He sought to re-create it by bringing Samuel back to the world again.

✓ This is an all familiar experience in personal relationships. There are people who abuse, disuse, and misuse some of the best of God's prophets. And it often causes heartache and heart-break.

Here is the folly of faithless neglect. Have you hated instruction. Has you heart despised reproof. Have you not obeyed the voice of teachers and inclined your ear to those who instructed you. Prov. 5:12-13.

How many who have despised the advice of a father or a mother - and grieved their parents by opposition and disobedience, long bitterly to bring them back. When they have gone down to the grave. That they might benefit from their counsel.

Bring me up the companion who cheered me in my gay days, in the day of sin, - oh no, but bring me up the father with his gray hairs that told me that the way of the transgressor was hard. Bring me up the mother who with weeping eyes, and broken voice, admonished me against sinful indulgences. And yet, if you neglect the Lord, and continue to resist the striving of his spirit - so at length he departs from you, as he departed from Saul - what would it avail. That the grave could give up it's inhabitant. If the parent could return, if the old man of God could come back, and speak with you again.

There are many men and women who have started out with everything - a good education, a Christian home, proven friends, but somewhere the football of success has been fumbled. And they have turned to easy living, wasting money, energy and talents. But how often in old age - his face looks just like Saul. In that sad hour, bring me up Samuel.

Thomas Carlyle was a great genius. Success came to him - but there was one element of tragedy in his life. And it did not come until late in life. Jane Welsh Carlyle, his wife, he took for granted. When high honors came from Edinburgh University, Jane had slipped beyond his power to bring her back. He mourned her death sincerely. But as you know, if you have read any of her correspondence - he might better have mourned his lack of consideration. The thoughtful affection she yearned for, when she shared the house with him and his name. They were lonely years for Carlyle and he cried, bring me up Samuel. The Samuel of lost opportunity of love and appreciation.

No preacher should have to pressure a Christian to keep him attending church
+ performing his duty for God -
If you are a Christian - why should he have to beg you to worship the living God?

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If you have any love and kindness to show someone - show it now.

Modern men and women who want to find something out about the new year
- we have a chance at Christian character. And how sad it will be if suddenly
you discover that you threw out the baby with the bath water. Bring me up
Samuel. The very fact that some of you feel like that - perhaps today may be
hopeful. You haven't altogether lost the Samuel of your faith. Appreciate
it, live by it, be known by your fruits.

Do not have to end at the cave of Endor. And be a God-forsaken man.
For a preview into the future - place your life into the hands of the one who
controls it.