

## Where Do You Go?

Saul and David – Life in HD (Soul and Spirit)

1 Samuel 28:1-14; 30:1-6

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October 30, 2011

### 1. Saul and the Witch of Endor

READ 1 SAMUEL 28:1-14

If you're a thinking person, as well as a believing person, this story generates all kinds of questions. Really good questions.

- Here's one question . . . is this stuff really for real? Witches? Spirits? People coming back from the dead? Here's a related question . . . are there people who are serious about this stuff? Who practice witchcraft? Who get results? Or who at least claim or appear to get results?
- Here's another question . . . What's the Bible have to say about this? Is there a serious doctrine of witchcraft and how would something so small fit into so large a doctrine as the doctrine of God? What's God think about this? Is this OK? Is it just another way that He works? Or is it not real . . . but harmlessly so? Or does the Almighty take a dimmer view?

I have to tell you that my frame of reference in life is that it's hard for me to believe that people would actually get into this stuff. At least on any wide-scale basis. Sure, there are always a few people who will believe in anything. But come on, witches and warlocks? Mediums and séances? Maybe back in the day of Saul when people were so prone so superstition, but not today.

If that's how you think about it . . . think again. Let me tell you about some excerpts from a nationally televised show I watched this week. It's a show about a medium. A person who talks to the dead . . . like the Witch of Endor. She's very nice. People relate to her well. She has—well, I can't call them prayers really—they're incantations in which she commands that bad things "go to the light." Doesn't sound so bad. And people respond to her warmth.

But I watched in dismay as she went into setting after setting and spontaneously this "medium" thing would start to operate in her life. She would tell people about their lives – apparently strangers – and they felt she was being pinpoint accurate. Most often she would then connect them to the dead and bring messages to them from their dear departed.

This picture is taken from a suburban home with a lot of average housewives. They were connecting with her. The second picture is from a beauty salon wherein the same kind of story takes place. She suddenly begins to speak to another hairdresser, asking him if he has just lost a friend to a tragic death. He is amazed and says "yes." She then brings a message from that dead person to him.

Here's what really got me. He responded. With amazement and real happiness he said, "nothing like that had ever happened to him before." That he felt touched. Singled out in a good way. He was on his way to the spiritual side of life he had heard so much about. He was wide open to whatever she had to offer.

I have to say that when I saw this my jaw dropped. Orlen, our media director, and I watched the video clips together. He turned to me in half-amazement and aptly said . . . "There they are, the new clergy."

Look, I'm not saying whether what's going on with this lady is real. As I look at Scripture, it assumes that some mediums are real . . . and I'm sure many are hoaxes. But here's what I saw that hadn't quite penetrated me until this moment . . . this stuff is increasingly becoming mainstream. That's the real point.

In fact, the statistics support that. Tom Horn, editor of a new book on the subject of the spread of witchcraft notes<sup>1</sup>:

- There are now more than 218,000 registered witches in the United States and as many as 8 million unregistered practitioners of "the craft." The math on that would be something like one in every 400 Americans you meet is a practicing witch.
- A recent press release announced that Wicca (modern day witchcraft) is America's fastest growing religion, and some religious experts believe it will soon be the third largest religion in the U.S. – ranking only behind Christianity and Islam.
- A representative from the Witch School stated: "There is such a rapid spiritual reorientation in America occurring, that the need for thousands of Wiccan teachers over the course of the next decade will be required to meet the demand for basic teachings."

You may be aware of a movement known as "neo-vampirism" . . . we talked about that about this time last year when I called your attention to the wild success of a series of books and movies entitled "Twilight."

In fact, not long ago I had a conversation with a Regent Divinity school student who believed in something called shape-shifting. That is, the ability of human beings to become various kinds of animals . . . such as werewolves. And that could be a good thing as well as a bad thing. That's a Regent Divinity School student.

Paganism is flooding into the America soul.

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<sup>1</sup> Horn, Tom. *God's Ghostbusters*

We're not going forward as a culture. We're going backwards.

And I think it's worth noting that the connection point for many people is grief. They have lost someone. And their sense of loss is so great that it makes them vulnerable to almost anything. After all, right here in 1 Samuel 28, Saul is at his wit's end. He'll do anything. And because his faith never really became grounded, that sense of desperation takes him to a desperate place.

Let's get to the second set of questions. What does God think about this? Is it misguided, but harmless? Let me read Deuteronomy 18:9-13 to you . . .

*When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in<sup>a</sup> the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you.<sup>2</sup>*

How serious is God about mediums, witches, sorcery, magic? Note two things in the above Scripture. First of all, divination, witchcraft, mediums . . . the Bible places this on the same level of and in the same sentence with *"sacrificing his son or daughter in the fire."* That is, this is as evil as burning your own child alive. Secondly, it is described with the word "detestable." God is generous and kind . . . there are not many things that He elevates to a level like that.

What's included in the above list? Well . . . tarot cards, palm reading, horoscopes, Ouija boards, neo-paganism, etc, etc, etc. And . . . what's included is exactly what we saw happening on that TV show that I just described to you . . . and other shows like it.

And here's what hard to for some to get their mind around . . . she seemed like a nice lady. She probably is. And those people seemed to be touched. They probably were.

But there is something very deep going on here. Maybe we can start with the starting point. An absolute fundamental of Scripture, life, and sanity:

*<sup>17</sup> Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>a</sup> Or who makes his son or daughter pass through

<sup>2</sup>*The Holy Bible : New International Version.* 1996, c1984 (Dt 18:9-12). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

<sup>3</sup>*The Holy Bible : New International Version.* 1996, c1984 (1 Ti 1:17). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

In fact, we can get it even more basic than that. The first commandment:

<sup>3</sup> *“You shall have no other gods before me.*

It’s about that simple. There is one God and He will share his glory with no one else. That’s the beginning point of everything. Get that wrong . . . and everything else collapses. And that’s why God is so serious about this.

Think of it this way . . . let’s talk about counterfeit money. Did you know that there is evidence that the North Koreans and perhaps also the Chinese have in the past flooded our markets with counterfeit dollars? Why would they do that? It’s simple. The existence of all those other dollars - counterfeit dollars – have the effect of driving down the value of the real dollar.

That’s just like our modern culture . . . a modern culture that is now widely characterized by something known as “postmodernism.” What’s post-modernism? You run into every day. It’s the belief that there is no absolute, overarching Truth. It’s the doctrine – yes, it is a doctrine and all people hold doctrinal beliefs of one kind or another – it’s the doctrine that you cannot claim that any one set of beliefs is any more valid than another. Everything has validity to the degree that it is valid for the person who believes it.

In other words . . . we increasingly live in a culture wherein there is no such thing as the counterfeit. It’s all real . . . if it’s real to the person who believes it. The medium on TV and many others like her – well, she has as legitimate a truth claim as Billy Graham.

Getting that fixed in your head, and remembering what the North Koreans and perhaps the Chinese have attempted to do to the American dollar, helps you to understand why God takes this stuff so seriously.

I have in my hands a real \$20 bill. I have given my friend two Monopoly money \$10 bills. Notice our exchange. He gives me the Monopoly money. I give him the real \$20. What am I doing? I am treating the Monopoly money as though it were real. Right?

But notice something critical. Really, I have done two things simultaneously. First, I increased the perceived value of the play money. It now can buy a real \$20. But secondly, and maybe you can guess this . . . I have also reduced the perceived value of the real money. It’s now being treated as if it were worth only what play money is worth.

So here’s my question . . . what if that same transaction were to happen on a widespread basis throughout our culture? If play money or counterfeit money were absolutely interchangeable with real money? We would have no currency, right? No economic system. You cannot even imagine the world of hurt we would be in.

What I am here to tell you today is that what’s true in the world of dollars is equally true – if not more so – in the world of ideas, belief, and faith.

Let us say, for the sake of argument, that this real \$20 bill is belief in God. The One True God. The "only God." The "thou shalt have no other Gods before Me" God. The God of Moses . . . and of Jesus.

And, for the sake of argument, let's say that the play money represents the medium . . . and all that she represents. Let's put it loosely under the heading of counterfeit faiths and belief systems.

Now, think about this transaction. If I can take mediums, witchcraft . . . and every other counterfeit ideology under the sun and make it as equally legitimate as faith in the One True God . . . interchangeable, you might say . . . what have I done?

First of all, I have said there really is no such thing as the counterfeit. Right? All things are equally valid. You're probably already making the connection that this is the doctrine of post-modernism.

But I've also said two more things. One: I have the medium as significant as Moses. Right? I increased her value because I said she's as legit as faith in the One True God of the Bible. It's like the money transaction wherein I said, by implication, if play money is interchangeable as real money then it's as valuable as real money. Think about that, long and hard, America, before you want to go there.

Two . . . and this is perhaps the deeper thing: If I say that the medium is as meaningful as Moses . . . then I am also saying that Moses is as meaningful as the medium. I've done more than raise the value of the witch. I have denigrated the value of real faith.

It works like this . . . and it's very simple . . . in the currency of ideas and beliefs, if the counterfeit now has the value of the real . . . I also saying the opposite . . . the real is now has the value of the counterfeit.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>If the counterfeit faith – the play ideology becomes interchangeable with the real faith . . . what happens to the currency of ideas and beliefs? Are you starting to get it? Notice the things that are assumed in such a transaction. First of all, we are saying, by implication, that there really is no such things as the counterfeit. In fact, that's pretty much what you have to believe to make a transaction like this in the first place.

Now, back to post-modernism. Remember the belief it espouses . . . it's the essential doctrine that there is no doctrine in any absolute sense. No gold standard. No fundamental difference between the real and the counterfeit. In fact, it's all real. Equally interchangeable. You just choose what works for you.

Now, notice two things that happen by implication. One thing that's troubling. A second thing that is profoundly wrong. First of all, in the world of ideas, if I say things like witchcraft, or divination, or the worship of nature, or whatever is equally interchangeable with this historic, Biblical belief in the One True God, then I am elevating all these other beliefs, right? In other words, I am saying that the medium on TV is as legit as Moses. Really?

But here's the deeper thing. Couldn't you just as easily say that rather than valuing up the currency of things like witchcraft, the worship of nature, etc., that what a transaction of beliefs such as this really does is to value down the worship of God Almighty? When we say that belief in God is no more consequential or serious or valid than witchcraft . . . what we've really done is value down faith in this One True God.

For some of you the wheels are now really spinning. You see the real issue . . . the real danger . . . the real agenda of the Evil One. (Yes, there is an Evil One. After all, there is such a thing as evil.) You see, Satan doesn't love the counterfeits in and of themselves. He's like the North Koreans. He floods our culture with counterfeit faiths not so much so as to elevate the counterfeit but rather to devalue the Real.

It's a course of logic. If you can get a culture to believe that the counterfeit is real . . . then you really have them already believing (whether they know it yet or not) that the real is counterfeit. If you believe that witchcraft is as legitimate as faith in God, you'll soon be believing that faith in God has no more value than witchcraft.

That, my friends, is the real goal. Satan all along has been jealous of the worship of God. He does not want the Almighty honored as the immortal, invisible, only God.

And, as a corollary, what happens to a culture in which the real and the counterfeit are increasingly confused? In that most important arena of all . . . the arena of ideas. Of faith. Yes, of belief in the One True God. Well, rather than ruining the economic system as the North Koreans or Chinese have apparently attempted to do . . . you ruin the beliefs of a culture. If you do it on a widespread enough basis . . . they start burning their children in the fire.

Or . . . maybe . . . about 50,000,000 of them.

Now do you see it?

Like North Korean counterfeit dollars . . . the American soul is being flooded with counterfeit spirituality.

That's why the church is vital. We are the voice to point people not to spirituality in general but to a simple truth . . . "thou shalt have no other gods before Him." And that's why the Gospel is vital. People have been enslaved in all kind of counterfeit beliefs. Some simplistic and brutal . . . some complex and elegant. But, they are counterfeit beliefs all the same. They need to hear about Jesus Christ.

And, that is why we do Harvest Hoedown on Halloween. We are intentionally bringing a counter message to our culture. Tomorrow night we will have hundreds of people here from the surrounding neighborhoods. Many will be church folks. Many will not. We will have lots of fun for kids and their parents . . . but we will also point them towards faith in Jesus Christ and His Father God. If we are going to enact Fountainhead to the world – which we must – we must also enact it in our own neighborhoods and the neighborhoods around KPC.

Two more things need to be said. First of all, some of you just saw Deuteronomy 18 for the first time in your life. And you're worried. You have been involved in some of this stuff, at least to some degree. You're asking the question . . . will God forgive me?

Yes. Decidedly, yes. Unambiguously, yes. You go to God through Christ, you confess it as sin, you tell God you don't want to have anything to do with it again, and you ask Him to cleanse and purge you of it and its effect completely. Here's what the Bible says

... *“as far as the east is from the west, so far will I move your transgressions from you.”*

Here’s the second thing. Look, it doesn’t matter how many times you trade a real \$20 for two Monopoly tens. Even though people may begin to think of it as play money, it’s still real money. The other stuff is still counterfeit.

That’s the way it is with God. It doesn’t matter how many times our culture tries to proclaim Him as just one more option among many. Putting Him on the level of the counterfeits. He’s still God. The One True God. The God of supreme and unchanging value. At the end of the day, He will share His glory with no one despite the vain attempts of man and Satan. He’s real. Forever.

Praise Him.

## II. David Finds Strength in God

READ 1 SAMUEL 30:1-6

These stories seem very different. Saul goes to a witch. David goes to God. But there’s a huge connection between the two of them . . . both were facing death.

Here’s the bottom-line issue . . . when life is at its most challenging, where do you go? Do you go to God? Do you know how to go to God? Or, do you choose what Saul chose . . . the non-God option? (And there are many of them.)

I was really struck by the precise wording of 1 Samuel 30:6 . . . *But David found strength in the Lord his God.*

Sure, it’s important to point out that David went to God . . . unlike Saul. And maybe that’s exactly where you are in life. You’ve been pursuing false gods of one kind or another and you’re ready to make a change. You’re ready to become like David. You want to check the “God” box. I’ll give you a chance to do that in a moment.

But for those of us who are already followers of Christ, I want you to see two words in this verse . . . *“in”* and *“his.”* Those are big words.

First of all, *“in.”* You might have expected the verse to read, *“David found strength from the Lord his God.”* But that’s not the wording . . . it’s *“in”* the Lord his God. I think many of us tend to have a *“from”* relationship with God. We ask for stuff *from* God. He’s generous . . . He generally gives it. We get stuff from Him. Frankly, a lot of stuff.

But if you want what’s of greatest value, you have to change your relationship with Him from *“from”* to *“in.”* There are many passages wherein David does just this . . .

<sup>1</sup> *My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge. Selah*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *I love you, O LORD, my strength.* <sup>2</sup> *The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my Rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*<sup>7</sup>

*In* is a relationship word. I heard it summed beautifully by one person who wrote,

*"Think about repentance as a way of trading earthly ways of feeling strong and confident for so much of God's presence that you can't help but trust Him. That way, you can say along with King David, "I love You, O Lord, my strength" (Ps. 18:1)." (Barry Hall)*

What an incredible statement . . . "trading earthly ways of feeling strong and confident for so much of God's Presence that you cannot help but trust in Him." That's what David did . . . time and again in life.

And that's what he did here in 1 Samuel 30:6. He connected with the Lord on such a deep and personal level that he couldn't help but put his trust in Him.

Wow. Here are, once again, back to the doctrine of the Presence of God. As I think about it, I think that we tend to live so much out of our own souls . . . our own ideas, our own feelings, our own wills . . . that we have further to go in our relationship with God than we might ordinarily grasp.

The second word I want you to see is *"his."* It's profound because in 1 Samuel 15:30 Saul says to Samuel the prophet, ***"Come back with me so that I may worship the Lord your God."*** Did you catch that? ***"your God."*** For Saul, God was always someone else's God. For David, God was *his* God. As I heard someone say a long time ago, I forget who, "It is a mighty big a hold for man to have on God to say that He is *his* God."

Yes. Here's the Gospel Truth. It's not only true that you are God's . . . but it's also true that God is yours. He will serve you, love you, protect you, heal you, strengthen you, comfort you, help you . . . through the covenant of Jesus Christ, He has made Himself your

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<sup>5</sup>*The Holy Bible : New International Version.* 1996, c1984 (Ps 62:1). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

<sup>6</sup>*The Holy Bible : New International Version.* 1996, c1984 (Ps 62:8). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

<sup>7</sup>*The Holy Bible : New International Version.* 1996, c1984 (Ps 18:1-2). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

covenant Partner. *Your* God. Think of it this way . . . Helen and I are in covenant with each other. We are married. She belongs to me. And I belong to her. She can make any request.

Incredible.

So . . . how do you find strength in God? That's the real question for many of us. Most of us aren't doing the Saul thing . . . heading down to the Edgar Casey Enlightenment Center this afternoon for an extra shot of spirituality.

Friends, to find strength in God you have to make a distinction. That is, you don't just believe in God. Saul did that. You don't just know people who are in vital relationship with God. Saul did that, too. You don't just have family members who are in real relationship with God . . . Saul's son Jonathan clearly walked closely with the Lord. You don't just go to church. Saul did that. Or observe worship . . . Saul did that. Or own a Bible . . . or have Facebook Christian friends.

If you are going to get strength from God, you must figure out what it is to be "in" God. Let's remember a few moments in Scripture:

- Think about Moses on the mountain, so much in God's Presence that God hid him in His hand as His glory passed by.
- Think about Isaiah in the Temple, God's Presence around him like the incense the priests had been burning.
- Think about Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration wherein He, Peter, James, and John were suddenly enveloped in the cloud of God's glory.

In Samuel 16 we read about the Holy Spirit coming upon David . . . and then an evil spirit coming upon Saul. Hey, here's the Bible reality. You can be in the middle of the presence of fear. Or evil.

But there's another truth. You can be in the middle of God. If Satan can surround, how much more can God surround you? . . . and you know it . . . like Barry Hall wrote, you trade whatever is going on in your life for so much of God's Presence that you can't help but trust Him. And it's in trusting Him that we find our strength.

In some ways this is a daily thing. Learning what it is to wait upon the Lord in prayer and Bible reading. Finding yourself soaking in the Presence of God as you sit in your living room, alone with Him. I also want you to note that what happened with Saul and David was really the culmination of a lifetime. You see, all those little decisions that you and I make right now do so much to determine where and to whom we will go in our hours of greatest need.

Many of us look at Saul and we cannot imagine ourselves doing what he did. Rightly so. But I want you to think about Saul's decision in a larger context. Yes, he went to a witch. A medium. There's no pulling of punches on that one. But another way of saying what Saul did was that he took the "non-God" option. Sure, you and I may not go and get

our palms read . . . but what about finding comfort in ESPN? Or the Shopping Network? Or gossip? Or looking at other people's lives on Facebook and wishing that your life was like theirs? (By the way, statistics reveal that Americans spend on average 5 hours a day in leisure "screen time" . . . that is either the computer or the TV . . . and that's leisure time.<sup>8</sup>) Or chronically addictive behavior? Or . . . wallowing in self-pity? Those are non-God options, right?

And here's the deal . . . if you can wallow in self-pity, you can wallow in God. Which do you think is a more empowering option in life?

One more thing. While putting ourselves in God's Presence is a daily thing, it's also a church thing. I love this statement:

*<sup>15</sup> While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. <sup>16</sup> And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. <sup>9</sup> (1 Samuel 23:15-16)*

Today, some of us are like David. You love the Lord. You really do. But you feel tired, or pursued, or afraid in life, and you need a Jonathan. Someone who will help you find strength in God. Today. In just a moment we're going to open the altar for ministry. The altar ministers and I will be down front. There's no shame in saying I need someone to help me find God's strength today. David did that . . . so can you.

First, we are going to sing the wonderful hymn, "The Solid Rock." Let that hymn build faith and anticipation in you. At the conclusion of the hymn, I will do two things. First of all, I will pronounce a benediction. A benediction, actually, that I have pulled together out of Scripture specifically to connect with the message today. And then, I will open the altar for ministry. Some of you will need to go . . . some of you will want to stay and come forward for prayer and ministry.

We will pray with you, anoint you with oil, lift up your burdens to God, and, more than anything, pray the Presence of God around you. We will stay here as long as it takes. It does not matter. Hours. Days. I believe that in some particular and prophetic way, we will see God's strength poured into you as you put yourself in God's Presence.

This weekend we will be a church of David and Jonathan. David, in that it's okay to be weak. Jonathan, in that's important to pray with one another and, in every way imaginable, help each person who requests to find strength in God.

So where do you go when you're in a time of need? That says so much about how you really are. Here's a moment – perhaps a key moment for some of you. You're facing something big. You need help. Strength. Whatever. Right now, I invite you to be like David rather than Saul.

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<sup>8</sup> 2003 US government survey on how Americans, on average, spend their time on a daily basis.

<sup>9</sup>*The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996, c1984 (1 Sa 23:15-16). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Find your strength *in* the Lord *your* God.

Benediction

*<sup>17</sup> Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.<sup>10</sup>*

Yes. And now that that same King is your Lord and so:

*<sup>24</sup> **“The Lord bless you and keep you; <sup>25</sup> the LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup> the LORD turn His face toward you and give you peace.”***

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<sup>10</sup>*The Holy Bible : New International Version.* 1996, c1984 (1 Ti 1:17). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.