

Did Saul Call Back Samuel From the Dead?

In 1 Samuel 28, Saul had removed from the land of Israel all the mediums and those who tried to contact the dead. The Philistines were getting ready to attack Israel, which caused King Saul to be terribly afraid. He needed guidance, but the Lord wasn't speaking to him because he had rebelled against God and had disobeyed. Since he wasn't getting direction from God, he decided to contact the spirit of the prophet Samuel, who had been dead for about two years. Saul believed the only way to make contact with him was through a medium.

Since Saul had removed all mediums from the land, there weren't any around. However, he found out about a medium who was hiding in the town of En-dor. Saul went to see her, disguising himself so that she wouldn't recognize him. This shows the hypocrisy of Saul. He had contacted a medium in secret after he had publicly outlawed them. He convinced the medium to try to contact Samuel:

The woman said to him, "Whom shall I bring up for you?"
He said, "Bring up Samuel for me."
And the king said to her, "Do not be afraid, but what do you see?"
And the woman said to Saul, "I see a divine being coming up out of the earth."
And he said to her, "What is his form?"
And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe."
Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?"
(1 Samuel 28:11, 13-15)

Was this really the spirit of Samuel who came back from the dead or was it a demon imitating him?

Some people believe that this was the spirit of Samuel who had come back from the grave. According to this view, the medium didn't actually call him back, but God supernaturally brought Samuel back to inform Saul that he would soon die.

Even though this spiritual being is called Samuel, it is highly unlikely that this was Samuel's spirit because the Bible forbids trying to contact the dead through mediums (Deut. 18:10-12). Since God had rejected Saul and refused to answer him in any way, why would He communicate with him in this way, which contradicts Deuteronomy 18? The Lord does not communicate to people through mediums or the spirits of dead people. And why would God send a dead prophet to speak to Saul instead of a living one? If Samuel had a message to give him, it would be to repent and make peace with God and David. All these factors indicate that this spirit wasn't Samuel.

The Bible never says that Saul actually saw Samuel. The medium, who had probably never seen Samuel when he was alive, said she saw an old man wrapped in a robe. Based on her description, Saul jumped to the conclusion that it was Samuel. Saul carried on a conversation with this "spirit," which wasn't Samuel, but a demon that was impersonating him.

Demons that can impersonate dead people are called "familiar spirits" (1 Samuel 28:3, 9, Lev. 19:31 KJV). They are apparently familiar with the mannerisms, voice, and life history of the deceased, which makes it easy to imitate in order to deceive people who are trying to contact the dead. This spirit was familiar with Samuel and deceived King Saul. First Chronicles 10:13-14 tells us that Saul died because he committed this sin of necromancy.

Making Life Count Ministries
P.O. Box 680174
Prattville, Alabama 36068
www.makinglifecount.net