



# Adventures in Bible Study

## Saul and the Witch of Endor

Saul, son of Kish, was the first king of Israel. At the beginning of his reign he was very humble and obedient, he even hid from those who chose him to be king because he did not feel he was good enough (1 Samuel 10:21-23). It appears that Saul was chosen because of his physical stature, for that is the only thing the Bible mentions about his qualifications. The people wanted a king like the other nations so that is what God gave them.

It is said that power corrupts, and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. This is certainly true in Saul's case. After a series of disobedience acts, and his refusal to repent, God removed His Spirit from Saul, and from that moment onward Saul's life disintegrated (1 Samuel 16:14).

Things went from bad to worse when Saul understood that God had chosen David to be king in his place. When the prophet Samuel died there was no one left he could trust. In his desperate and wicked frame of mind Saul went to see the witch of Endor to ask her to call up the spirit of Samuel from the dead. Saul's heart, once so tender toward God, became dark by the presence of evil spirits, to whom he had surrendered.



The story of king Saul illustrates how the devil will pretend to be a dead person who has come back as a ghost. In 1 Samuel 28 king Saul asked his servants to find a medium, or spiritist who could "bring up" Samuel the prophet so that Saul might inquire of him for guidance. Saul knew that God had commanded: "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord." In fact, all such persons were to be put to death (Leviticus 20:27).

Unfortunately, Saul had departed from serving the Lord long before and was under the influence of demonic powers (1 Samuel 16:14). So Saul visited the medium at Endor. In response to Saul's request the medium called up a being who pretended to be Samuel, which only deepened Saul in his depression and hopelessness. It was not long after this that Saul's sons were all killed in battle, and Saul committed suicide (1 Samuel 31:1-4). Satan is constantly trying to discourage people from seeking the Lord telling them it is too late for them and that they are hopelessly lost. But nothing could be further from the truth. God declares, "'Come now, and let us reason together,' says the Lord, 'though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'" Isaiah 1:18. No one is too sinful for Jesus to forgive. No one is so lost that Jesus can't save them.

On my thirteenth birthday my oldest sister and her family were in a serious car accident on their way to my birthday party. A drunk, recklessly driving at a high rate of speed crashed into them and spun their vehicle like a top throwing my nieces and nephews out of the windows. My youngest niece, Laurie, struck a wooden fence post with her head. She died in the hospital three days later. My sister mourned Laurie's death for many days and was inconsolable until one day she understood what the Bible taught about death and the resurrection. It is my hope that this Bible study will bring you the same hope and comfort it brought to my sister.

The Bible speaks of a time when the dead will be rescued from their grave. It is called the resurrection. Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." John 5:28-29. To Jesus death was not permanent. He referred to death as a sleep from which one could be awakened. Referring to a friend of His who had died Jesus said, "'Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.' Then His disciples said, 'Lord, if he sleeps he will get well. . . Then Jesus said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead.'" John 11:11-14. Jesus then proceeded to the grave of Lazarus and brought him back to life (John 11:43-44).

All through the Bible death is described in terms having

to do with sleep and unconsciousness. Solomon said, “For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun.” **Ecclesiastes 9:5-6**. Job said, “So man lies down and does not rise till the heavens are not more, they will not awake nor be roused from their sleep. . . His sons come to honor, and he does not know it.” **Job 14:12 & 21**. So it is clear that even though the drunk in our story was frightened because he thought he had seen a ghost in reality the dead are unaware of anything happening in this world and they do not come back to life again until the end of time. Notice, however, that I did not say people have not seen ghosts.

The Bible teaches us that there are supernatural powers at work in this world masquerading themselves for the purpose of deception. Remember, Eve was deceived by the devil pretending to be a serpent (**Genesis 3:1**). “For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.” **2 Corinthians 11:14**.



When we accept Jesus as our Savior we have eternal life (**John 3:16**). Even though we may die Jesus will resurrect us when He comes again. At the tomb of Lazarus Jesus promised, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” **John 11:25-26**. Through Jesus we no longer need to live in fear of death and the grave because He holds the keys to the tomb (**Revelation 1:18**).

The second coming of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead is called the blessed hope (**Titus 2:13**) because it is then that the people of God who have died will live again forever without sin and suffering. Jesus promised He would come again to rescue His followers and take them back with Him to heaven (**John 14:1-3**). When He comes the graves of His people will burst open and they will rise, and those who are living will be caught up into the clouds with them to meet the Lord in the air (**1 Thessalonians 4:16-18**). “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” **1 Corinthians 15:51-53**.

Many people grow up with the idea that when a good person dies their “soul” goes to heaven to live with God. This belief has led to all kinds of misunderstandings among people all over the world. Some people believe you can communicate with the dead through a medium,

pray to saints, or visit with a ghost. In ancient Egypt they buried practical items, treasure and servants with the pharaoh because they believed he would need them in the land of the dead. However, the Bible teaches us that, as we have seen, that when we die we are no longer involved in anything that takes place on this earth (**Ecclesiastes 9:5-6**). In addition, the Bible teaches us that we are mortal, not immortal, and that we do not possess an immortal soul.

When God created mankind the Bible says, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” **Genesis 2:7**. The King James Bible says, “man became a living soul.” The Hebrew word for soul is “nephesh”. It is correctly translated as living being or living creature. In former times the word “soul” was used to describe a person. A ship’s log would record the number of “souls” on board, for example. It is interesting that **Genesis 1:24** mentions “living creature”, or “nephesh” in referring to the animals. That is because the word “nephesh” refers to any living creature whether animal or human.

Another Hebrew word in **Genesis 2:7** is “ruach”, which means breath, or spirit. God took the dust of the ground and modeled out a man, and then He breathed “ruach” into Adam and then he became a “nephesh”, or soul, or living being. Those two components make up our life: the dust of the ground and the breath of life. When we die the Bible says those two components separate and go back to where they came from. “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.” **Ecclesiastes 12:7**. God gave the ability to live and it returns to Him when we die. However the spirit is not a being or person, but the spark of life. A light bulb is composed of physical elements and electricity, or spark. Without the physical elements the spark does nothing, and without the electricity the physical elements do nothing, but when put together a light is made.

The Bible says only God has immortality (**1 Timothy 6:16**). But it is the joy of every follower of Jesus to look forward to receiving immortality at the second coming of Jesus, when “This mortal must put on immortality.” **1 Corinthians 15:53**. What a happy day that will be! “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’” **Verse 54**.

