

“From Séance to Sermon!”

I. **INTRO:**

A. **Communion:** 1st communion of a new year; new decade.

1. Let's start this year by remembering **Who** we have a relationship with.
2. When **Charles the 1st**, King of “*England, Scotland, & Ireland*” in the 1600's found himself on the run, 8 men hid him & cared for him for weeks. **Though a large reward was out for him, & these 8 men were w/o a shilling amongst them, none betrayed him.** One of these men, **Hugh Chisholm**, since that time would only shake peoples hands, left handed. He would explain to them why, “*When it came time to depart he shook our hands*” & so Hugh swore to never again give to any man **the hand he had given to his King!**
 - a) We have given our heart/life/love to our King. May we never give that place/position/privilege to any man/anyone.
 - b) The one who has handled the *sacred things of Christ* cannot soil his hands w/ common & unworthy things! (repent/come clean, as we start 2011)

B. **Jesus** concluded his famous sermon on the Galilean hillside w/a story which was *a parable about life*. He contrasted 2 men, 1 wise, the other foolish. Each built a house, each on a different foundation. The fate of these 2 houses were the fate of the 2 men, by the choices each of them made throughout their life. **Both of their houses/lives were subjected to the fury of the elements. Anyone who listens to my teaching & follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock...But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand.** Mt.7:24,26

1. We are all responsible for the choices we make.
2. God has revealed His **desires & purposes** for us in Scripture, & we can choose either to obey or disobey His will.
 - a) Adversity tests our resolve & shows us what kind of people we are.
3. You could say 1st Samuel *fleshes out this parable* in the lives of **David & Saul**.
4. **Saul, is about to face his last sirocco** that just blew in off the desert floor.
 - a) Whatever **rationalizations** Saul has made over the years to limit his *culpability*, or *excuse his conduct*, were in vain. His day of reckoning has come. His weaknesses exposed.¹
5. Instead of building his life on the **spiritual building blocks** of relationship with his God, he choose the **straw & sticks** of his own making.
6. Now, the winds of trouble are about to **huff & puff, & blow his house down!**

¹ Cyril J. Barber; The Books of Samuel; pg.291

II. FROM SÉANCE TO SERMON!

A. BODYGUARD! (1,2)

- B. Achish was so fooled by David, that he wanted to make him his personal bodyguard.
1. To make matters worse, Achish planned a major assault on Israel, w/David & his men right by his side.
 2. See what troubles David caused himself by making a decision out of **fear** instead of **faith**? How could he fight against his own people? **Yet** if he didn't his cover would be blown.
 3. Fortunately, the Philistine military leaders resolve the situation for him in ch.29

C. I CAN'T HEAR THE LORD! (3-6)

- D. (4) Saul had been fighting the wrong enemy for so long(David) that when the real enemy appeared, the king was unprepared.

1. So the 2 armies faced each other across the valley.

E. (6) The Lord did not answer him -

1. **Not by dreams** - **maybe because** when you don't enquire of God by **day**, He doesn't usually speak to you by **night**?
2. **Not by Urim**(priests) - **maybe because** you performed genocide on 85 of them.
3. **Not by prophet** - **maybe because** you always refused to listen to the prophets.

- F. **Choose Your God!** - **Joshua**, who had been chosen to succeed Moses and who, unlike his predecessor, had been privileged to enter the Promised Land, assembled his people to remind them of the mighty acts of God. He assured them that Yahweh would continue to bless them if they were faithful.

1. **The Israelites**, like all people, were confronted by **alternatives**. Some were interested in materialistic gods. Joshua knew this and challenged them to choose their god. He did not want them to live by **half** choices, **convenient** choices, or **popular** ones. The climax to his farewell was, "Choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

- G. God was not with him, & prayer was not answered because he did not seek the Lord **while He may be found**. *Nor, Call upon Him while He was is near.* (Is.55:6)

1. So Saul would seek **divine guidance**...another way!

- H. (4-6) **Gathered** - **saw** - **inquired** - backwards! (inquire first)

- I. **MILITARY GUIDANCE W/ A MEDIUM'S HELP?** (7-14)
- J. (7) Find me...a medium -
- K. In the ancient Near East there were several different ways by which people discerned the will of the gods:
1. **Teraphim**: *household idols* were used for divination purposes.
 2. **Hepatoscopy**: *hepa/liver* seeing omens of the future in the *entrails* or *liver* of an animal
 3. **Hydromancy**: divination by means of signs derived from the appearance of water and its movements.
 4. **Rhabdomancy**: use of a divining rod.
 5. **Belomancy**: use of the flight of arrows. For example, three arrows would be marked with the phrases, God orders it me, God forbids it me, and the third would be blank. The arrow that flew the furthest indicated the answer.
 - a) Ezek.21:21 **For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination. He shakes the arrows(Belomancy); he consults the teraphim(Teraphim); he looks at the liver(Hepatoscopy).**
 6. **Astrology**: consulting the stars presupposed that the heavenly constellations were in fact deities or controlled by them.
 7. **Necromancy**: communicating with the dead.
 - a) All of these methods were forbidden to the Hebrews.
 - b) **God's will was readily made known to all who sought Him in sincerity & truth!**
- L. Consulting a medium was *expressly forbidden* in the Law of God.
1. Lev.19:31 **Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God.**
 2. **Saul, too, was resorting to something *he himself* had disowned & forbade(9a)**
- M. (8) **Saul disguised himself - Really?** He was actually revealing his *true self!*
1. Through his reign he had been pretending, now the truth was leaking out.
- N. **By night** - Saul began his reign in “*the dawning of the day*”(9:26) but now Saul was walking in darkness.
- O. (11) Interesting, the friend Saul *grieved* in **life**, is the one he *calls for* in **death!**
1. Often, **too late** do we learn to *appreciate* those who tried to help us. **Too late** do we *humble* ourselves.

P. (12) **Wow, what really happened? The possibilities:**

1. [1] The medium actually roused Samuel [2] God, not the medium, sent Samuel to Saul [3] A demonic/satanic deception occurred [4] The medium faked the apparition [5] The experience was actually a hallucination.
 - a) I believe #2 holds the most weight.

Q. **SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS!** (15-19)

R. (15a) Bummer to be asked to “*come back*” to this place, after seeing/being in glory!

1. I'd be upset too!

S. (15b) Paul would have counseled Saul as he did Timothy many years later, **Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked.** 1 Tim.1:19 NLT

1. Saul stands out as an example of those whose many years of self-will have left them bankrupt of any viable relationship with the Lord.
2. The heavens were closed to Saul's pleas & no answer was given. **Why?**
 - a) William Blaikie said: Among other **effects** of **sin & rebellion**, one of the worst is a **stiffening of the soul**. Making it hard & rigid, so that it cannot bend, it cannot melt, it cannot change its course.
 - b) Saul's long career of *willful disobedience* had produced in him this stiffening, a *rigor mortis* of the soul!
 - c) **Sin dries up the fountain of remorse & they will not flow;**
Sin stiffens the knees & they will not bend;
Sin paralyses the voice & it will not cry;
Sin blinds the eyes & they cannot see;
Sin closes the ears & the voice of mercy is not heard. (William Blaikie)
3. He who **chooses the beginning** of a road **chooses** the place it leads to. It is the **means** that determine the **end**. - H.E. Fosdick

T. (16-19) Instead of providing Saul w/**guidance** in fighting the Philistines, he reminded Saul of his **disobedient** past & doomed future. [Like: hammer blows, 1 after another]

1. Saul's disobedience in the **past**, led to darkness in the **present**, & defeat and death in the **future**.
 - a) When God gave him opportunities to repent, he ignored them.
 - b) He did not **seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near.**

U. **STILL NO REPENTANCE!** (20-25)

V. No verbal response, just fell to the ground in terror when he heard those words.

1. **Still no repentance.** I'm sure he had not expected the interview w/Samuel to be a pleasant one, **but** he never imagined it would sound his **death knell!**

W. **Christians & the Occult** -

1. God forbade Israel to dabble in the **Occult**, & these warnings should be heeded today, too.
2. **Seemingly innocent games that border on the occult can open the door to serious problems.** (Both **Peter & Paul** gave harsh words in NT to sorcerers. Acts 8:9; 13:6)
3. **Occult means "hidden"**. It covers practices that are not approved of by God e.g., astrology, casting spells, consulting with spirits, magic, sorcery, witchcraft, and spiritism.
 - a) Occult practices such as Ouija boards, tarot cards(*chiromancy*/palm-divination), astrology charts, contacting the dead, seances, magic 8-ball, crystals, etc. are to be avoided by the Christian. **[But, the key is really not anything/anyone other than the living God!]**
4. As for **seances**, listen to what Isaiah said in 8:19 **When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?**

X. **God without disguise!** - C.S. Lewis

When the author walks onto the stage, the play is over. God is going to invade, all right; but what is the good of saying *you are on His side then*, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else comes crashing in? This time it will be **God without disguise**; something so overwhelming that it will strike either **irresistible love** or **irresistible horror** into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. That will not be the time for choosing; **It will be the time when we discover which side we really *have chosen*, whether we realized it before or not.** Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side.

1. **Have you chosen the right side?**
2. **Chose this day whom you will serve...& serve Him!**