

45. The Book of 1 Samuel—28:1-20

“Christian Divination” Pt. 1

(5/1/16)

1 Samuel 28:3-8, 11 (NKJV)

³ Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had lamented for him and buried him in Ramah, in his own city. And Saul had put the mediums and the spiritists out of the land. ⁴ Then the Philistines gathered together, and came and encamped at Shunem. So Saul gathered all Israel together, and they encamped at Gilboa. ⁵ When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. ⁶ And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets. ⁷ Then Saul said to his servants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "In fact, *there is* a woman who is a medium at En Dor." ⁸ So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, "Please conduct a seance for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you."...

¹¹ Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" And he said, "Bring up Samuel for me."

What Saul engaged in here is known as ‘*divination*’.

Divination generally refers to attempts to learn "*hidden things*" that cannot be known by normal means.

Divination falls into two main categories—mechanical and mental (internal).

Mechanical divination uses *physical* means to acquire hidden knowledge.

Examples of this include such things as gazing into crystal balls, examining the livers or other internal organs of animals, interpreting the way arrows land after being thrown into the air, and reading Tarot cards.

Internal divination, sometimes called "soothsaying," involves conjuring up a spiritual entity during a trance or an altered state of consciousness.

Sometimes this spirit entity will appear as a person no longer living who returns and speaks words of wisdom and comfort.

Sometimes the spirit who is "called up" speaks "through" a medium (as in 1Sam. 28).

Whether a person uses the mechanical or internal method of divination—it is an attempt to connect with the spirit realm and gain hidden (occult) information.

Divination and all other forms of occult practices have been forbidden by God—

Deuteronomy 18:9-14 (NKJV)

⁹ "When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. ¹⁰ 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, ¹¹ or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. ¹² For all who do these things *are* an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. ¹³ You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. ¹⁴ For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you.

However as we said last week these things have infiltrated the Church and have become part of the apostasy the N.T. writers warned us was coming in the Last Days right before the return of Jesus Christ to the planet earth to establish His Kingdom.

The word apostasy means a “*departure*” or a “*departing*”.

When it used in N.T. it refers to a departing from “the faith” (New Testament truth as given by God to the apostles and then through them to the Church)—

1 Timothy 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

And that’s why Jude admonished all Christians to—“*contend earnestly* (fight for it with every ounce of strength you can muster) *for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*”

2 Timothy 4:3-4 (NLT)

³ For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will reject the truth and chase after myths.

Maybe some of you here have heard of the book “*Have Heart*”?

The book was written by Steve and Sarah Berger—Steve is pastor of a Calvary affiliate down in Tennessee called Grace Chapel.

In August of 2009 the Berger’s nineteen year old son Josiah was on his way to meet some friends at a local burger place when he got into a car accident and was severely injured.

Josiah teetered on the brink of death while the entire church and Christian community in the area prayed for him to pull through—however three days later Josiah died.

Of course the Berger's and everyone in their church were devastated and out of that tragedy the book *Have Heart* was written.

The book relates how Josiah's parents, family and friends were coping with his death—an ongoing story intended to comfort others who have or are facing similar life tragedies.

The subtitle of the book is: "*Bridging the gulf between heaven and earth*"—and this is where the book takes a turn into the unscriptural.

You see the book involves reports that after he died Josiah started communicating with his family, friends and members of their church from the dead.

As one Christian reviewer and pastor put it,

"This book is one of the latest among popular books being published for evangelical audiences on the subject of the afterlife involving visitations to and from Heaven and the connection between the living and the dead. Of this genre, this book is one of the most emotionally charged books, and exemplifies how gut-wrenching stories can shut down rational thinking. As the high-intensity story captivates the reader into a feelings-driven state, the book's contents subtly facilitate a change in worldview as it suggests novel interpretations of Scripture."

According to the book the first time Josiah made a visitation from heaven was one evening at a service set aside for prayer and worship at Grace Chapel.

A guest worship leader, Rita Springer, was playing the song, "*It's Gonna Be Worth It.*"

"The song really touched me and took me to a deeper place with the Lord," said Jim Sterling, the Executive Pastor at the church.

Pastor Jim recounts in the book how that when Josiah's life was hanging in the balance he, along with many others at the hospital, was praying for the Lord to spare Josiah's life.

At one point Pastor Jim prayed, “*God, this better be worth it (heaven)*”.

During this worship service, so touched by the song he was hearing, Pastor Jim asked God, “*Lord, is it worth it?*”

Then, according to Pastor Jim’s account, something incredible happened—“*The next thing I knew,*” relates “Mr. Jim” (as Josiah affectionately called him), “*Josiah came into the sanctuary.*”

He went on to describe what happened—

“It wasn’t like he just appeared there. It was a sense of him coming into the aisle, and he got down on one knee and bent into my ear. He said, “Way worth it, Mr. Jim.” Then, as quickly as he came, he left. It wasn’t that he disappeared; rather, it was a sense of him leaving the sanctuary.... He had a sense of speed about him, not that he was hurried, but as if life on earth was much slower than in Heaven—it’s a different place, a different plane—I stood up and went over to my wife and told her, “Josiah was just here.””

In the aftermath of Josiah’s “appearing,” the Berger’s relate how they informed the guest worship leader, Rita Springer, about Josiah’s visit with “Mr. Jim” that evening.

She then told the Berger’s about the prayer request she made to God before the service—*“Father, could Siah [Josiah] come worship with us tonight?”*

After hearing what Pastor Jim experienced—she believed that God had granted her request.

And because of that incident and others like it the Berger’s reached the emotional but unbiblical conclusion that “*Yes, the residents of Heaven are personally present, they are aware, and they are near!*” (HH, 100-101)

Pastor Larry DeBruyn, the one I mentioned earlier, who reviewed the book went on to say—
“Have Heart’s story line is that, by various forms of communication, the dead do bridge the gulf between Heaven and earth because those in Heaven are aware of and present with loved ones and friends on earth. This new understanding obviously has great appeal to those who are grieving for the loss of loved ones and who therefore desire continuing communication from them. Thus, for the bereaved, the book’s appeal lies in the possibility of receiving communications from those loved ones who have passed from this world into Heaven.”

In the Berger’s words, belief in receiving such communication with the dead draws upon a *“sanctified imagination within the confines of biblical truth.”* (HH, xxii)

Jeremiah 23:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; They speak a vision of their own imagination, Not from the mouth of the LORD.

Pastor Larry DeBruyn—

“The Bergers hope the message in their book Have Heart will help the grief stricken not to “lose heart”, as well as “stretch” the minds of Christians “to the other side.” (HH, xxii) However, such emotional mind-stretching can lead to adopting unbiblical beliefs about the afterlife, one of which is that for the living, contact with the dead is both desirable and possible. Have Heart is a compelling and emotive account written with the hope that others beset by similar losses in life would be helped. (HH, xiii.) Because the Bergers’ story arouses intense sympathy in readers as they identify with their loss, it becomes difficult to disengage one’s feelings from their teachings about the afterlife. When the authors employ their “sanctified imagination within the confines of biblical truth,” important issues are raised about postmortem existence. The authors believe that breaking away from traditional “in the box thinking” about the afterlife gives God an opportunity “to maximize our view of Heaven.” (HH, xxii) But in breaking out of the box, Christian readers must beware lest they will also break away from the Bible.”

Many years ago the Vineyard Churches used to be affiliated with Calvary Chapel.

Whereas Calvary Chapel based everything we believe on God’s Word and if an experience or a doctrine was not found in the Bible we rejected it.

John Wimber, founder of the Vineyards, was more into spiritual experiences rather than into the verse by verse teaching of the Bible.

And when Calvary pastors challenged him because many of those experiences weren't in the Bible he responded by saying, "*Calvary Chapelites are too much into the Bible. God is bigger than His Word and can do things that are not found in the Bible...*"

That sounds very much like Pastor Steve Berger when he encourages Christians to use "*sanctified imagination and think outside the box (of Scripture)*" and to be open to things that are not in the Bible.

Things like believing that our dead loved ones come from heaven to visit us on the earth and want to communicate with us to encourage us and to make heaven more real to us.

Look, my heart goes out to the Berger family—I can't even imagine the pain of losing a child.

The problem is that Satan will often wait till we are weary, hurting, and broken hearted to attack us capitalizing on our physical and/or emotional weakness to take us captive with false doctrine.

Of course the goal of false doctrine is to mislead us so he can destroy our walk and witness or (if an unbeliever) a person's eternity.

One of the big ways Christians are being steered into false doctrine today is through experiences that feed into their emotions.

Many are basing their beliefs, not on the Bible, but on some experience that they had or someone else has had.

This story appeared in the newspapers and on T.V. a couple of days ago—

“As millions of Orthodox Christians around the world prepare to celebrate Easter this Sunday [today] and the miracle of Jesus Christ's resurrection, thousands across the Chicago area are flocking to a southwest suburban parish to see what they believe to be a different miracle.

Since July, tiny droplets of fragrant oil have trickled down an icon of St. John the Baptist in front of the altar at Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Homer Glen. Parishioners believe the oil has healing properties and that its origins are a blessing from God...

Whether it's an act of God or a chemical reaction, no one really knows. And frankly, few in the Greek Orthodox community care. A rational explanation is irrelevant if what seems to be a supernatural event draws people toward God, clergy say”. (Comment)

Spiritual experiences are very powerful—and Satan uses them very effectively to then plant his doctrines of demons into a person's heart.

Deuteronomy 13:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, ² and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'--which you have not known--'and let us serve them,' ³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

1 John 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 Corinthians 14:29 (NKJV)

²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge [hold up what they say is from God next to the Word of God to make sure it agrees].

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (NKJV)

²¹ Test all things; hold fast what is good [which you can't do if God does things and gives experiences that are not found in His Word].

Amos 3:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

When Steve Berger encourages Christians to use ‘sanctified imagination’ to experience things from God that are not found in His Word—that's very interesting to me.

I say it's interesting because out of all the doctrines of demons that have infiltrated into the Church, none have been embraced and practiced by a wider number of professing Christians than *visualization*—also known as "imaginative visualization."

Leading occult writer David Conway, in his book *Magic: an Occult Primer*, states the absolute necessity of visualization for performing ritual magic—"...*the technique of visualization is something you will gradually master, and indeed must master if you are to make any progress at all in magic...*"

"Imaginative visualization" is often used as a form of divination to conjure up a spirit guide or the dead and even as a technique for conjuring up Jesus Christ!

What is visualization and how does it work?

'Visualization' has been practiced by those in the occult for thousands of years.

Sorcerers, diviners and witches for many centuries have known that the most powerful and effective methodology for contacting the spirit realm in order to acquire supernatural power, knowledge, and healing is through visualization.

Visualization can be traced all the way back to ancient Egypt where the Egyptians believed and taught that the physical could be transformed through mental imagery.

It made its way into Hindu/Buddhist practices and was based on the Hindu belief that the visible, physical universe is actually an illusion created by the mind called a 'maya'.

And therefore they taught that since reality, as we perceive it, is really just an illusion created by our minds—if we want to change our 'reality' we simply need to visualize a different reality (i.e. instead of poverty—wealth; instead of sickness—health etc.).

They taught that if you visualized a mental image hard enough and long enough—you could create whatever reality you desired for yourself through the power of your mind.

Now I want to be careful here so that you don't think I am saying that any use of the imagination is occultic and forbidden by God—God gave us the ability to use our minds to imagine things.

The ability to visualize or imagine something in one's mind before drawing, painting, sculpting or constructing it is invaluable to those who are artists, designers, architects, engineers, novelists, screenwriters—and anyone else that works in a creative field.

The visualization that I'm talking about has nothing to do with the normal use of your imagination.

It is an occult technique that seeks to use the power of the mind and mental images to create and control reality.

And as I said it has crept into the Church and is being embraced by many as a powerful prayer technique for getting physical blessings—

In a popular “success” book, a Christian author writes,
“Form a mental picture of what you desire to achieve. Place yourself in the picture...say it's a new home. Draw all the details in your mind's eye...That's you in the yard standing by the Mercedes Benz. Whose Cadillac?—Your wife's. It's yours the minute you visualize it...Think about it several times each day. Soon all your powers will be concentrated on its achievement.”

This teaching is not found anywhere in the Bible but is found in occult literature as far back as you want to go.

The Christian leaders who promote visualization defend it by saying that occult visualization is actually a counterfeit of God's truth which they teach.

I agree that Satan often tries to counterfeit something that God has given to us—like the gifts of the Holy Spirit. (Explain)

However, when it comes to occult or pagan visualization that Satan has supposedly ripped off from God—there is no true visualization taught or practiced anywhere in the Bible for Satan to counterfeit.

You will not find one Old Testament prophet—not Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel or anyone else who conjured up God by visualizing Him as some are teaching today.

Jesus never taught His disciples that they could get Him to appear at will by visualizing Him or that the key to answered prayer was to visualize whatever it is you want and it will materialize.

Visualization is a doctrine of demons that has come into the church as part of the Last Days deception we are warned about in the N.T.

In Jeremiah 23:16 God has some very harsh words for those practicing these things—

Jeremiah 23:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the LORD.

Dave Hunt—

“The growing belief that visual images created in the imagination open the door to a closer walk with God is part of an epidemic of extra biblical teaching that is being accepted in the church today. The door is being opened to demonic delusion, and it is astounding how many Christians are walking through it...This shamanic technique will play an increasing role in preparing the world for the Antichrist, and we need to know the arguments that friends and loved ones are being given to draw them into this. Think it through carefully for yourself, see what the Bible says, pray and be ready to rescue as many as you can before it is too late.”