

Modern 

Spiritualism :

WHAT IS IT?

NOTES OF A LECTURE

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WHAT IS IT ?

“ When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that chirp and mutter : should not a people seek unto their God ? For the living to the dead ? ”
(Isaiah viii. 19.)

THERE is no doubt whatever that we are surrounded by a vast world of spirits, some good, and some evil.

The good are those who continue in their proper allegiance to their Creator ; the evil are those who are in revolt against Him, following the leadership of Satan. But both good and evil are deeply interested in the affairs of men ; the one delighting in their blessing, and the other seeking to compass their ruin.

There are three notices of the spirit world in the Epistle to the Ephesians to which I would refer for a moment. In Chap. i. 20-21 we have Christ's position in relation thereto. He is seated “ far above all principality and power.” However mighty the spirit forces in the universe, Christ is superior to them all, and all must yet acknowledge His Lordship. In Chap. iii. 10 we are told that “ now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies

is make known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God." These are holy spirits, who observe with unselfish interest what God is doing for His redeemed, and they admire the wisdom of His ways therein. Then in Chap. vi. 12, we learn that our conflict is "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in the heavenlies." Here we have that malignant host, which is ever opposed to God and to His saints.

These spirit forces are highly organised (we read of "chief princes" amongst them—Dan. x. 13), and their power is enormous. Not only do they act upon individual minds to their ruin, but they influence also the course of public affairs, being largely responsible for the disasters which from time to time come upon men. In Daniel x. 13-20,

The veil is drawn aside

and we are permitted to see a little of what is taking place in the world of the invisible. Daniel is seen in prayer three weeks about his people, and at the end of that period an angel came to him, saying that he was sent forth at once with the answer, "But," said he, "the prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days." Of whom is the angel speaking? Not of a man, for how could the Persian Sovereign hinder an angel coming from heaven with an answer to the prophet's prayer, or how would he know that the prophet had ever prayed at all? It is a mighty spirit of whom the angel speaks—a spirit that interested itself either for good or for evil in the affairs of the Persian monarchy. Then in verse 20 we read,

“now will I return to fight the Prince of Persia, and when I am gone forth, lo, the Prince of Grecia shall come.” It is impossible to introduce men into such a passage. The angel is speaking of movements and counter-movements in the spirit world.

In 1 Kings, xxii. 19-23, we have another glimpse behind the veil. Ahab, being determined to attack Ramoth-gilead, and refusing the prophet's warning, Micaiah was permitted to draw aside the veil for a moment, that the wilful King might see that he was being allured to his destruction by spirit action working upon the minds of his servile advisers. “Hear thou therefore the word of Jehovah: I saw Jehovah sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left. And the Lord said, ‘Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before Jehovah, and said, ‘I will persuade him.’ And Jehovah said unto him, ‘Wherewith?’ And he said, ‘I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And He said, ‘Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.’” Thus the disastrous expedition which cost Ahab his life was discussed and settled in the spirit world, and an evil angel dragged down to his ruin the wilful king who had long since turned his back upon his Creator.

The last great clash of nations

will be brought about in a like manner. In Rev. xvi. 12-16, we have the gathering together of the nations and

their kings to Armageddon. But how are they gathered? Listen, "I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are the spirits of demons, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." By seductive spirit influences therefore, working upon the minds of the rulers, the world's final catastrophe will be brought about.

The word of God sternly prohibits any attempt to hold communication with the spirit sphere. When the Israelites were about to enter Canaan 3,500 years ago, they were divinely warned that they would find the land full of this great sin, and they were forbidden to copy the evil ways of the heathen. "For all these things are an abomination unto Jehovah: and because of these abominations Jehovah thy God doth drive them out from before thee." (Deu. xviii. 12). It was the crowning sin of King Saul that he asked counsel of one that had a familiar spirit. (1 Chron. x. 13). For this reason Jehovah slew him, "and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse."

Sorcerers (*i.e.* Spiritualists) are classed with murderers and whoremongers in Rev. xxi. 8, for whom is destined the lake of fire for ever.

But is it possible to hold communication with spirits? The answer is "Yes." But—*with whom*? "Can we speak to our dead?" is the eager question of many in our time.

The great war has given tremendous impetus to this thing. The world is full of sorrow as never before. Empty chairs and aching hearts abound on every hand. Mourners are told that they may still keep in touch with the departed. The Press has given every encouragement to this, and eminent men have lent their influence thereto. But is it true, or is it instead a monstrous delusion and fraud?

One simple fact will help us here. In Rev. i. 17-18, Christ introduces Himself as the One who has the Keys of death and Hades. Hades means the invisible world, the world of spirits. Of this, then,

Christ holds the Keys.

Not for a single moment will He ever surrender them. He is Lord of the dead as well as of the living (Rom. xiv. 9). The believing dead are described in Scripture as "present with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8), and it is not within the power of evil persons called mediums to disturb their repose for the sake of a fee. The unbelieving dead are "spirits in prison," and no one can get past Christ in order to communicate with them.

"But," some will say, "words are actually proceeding from the spirit world." This is probably true, but who are the speakers? Not the dead, but evil spirits who personate them. The aim of these malignant beings is to gain the confidence of the living, in order to compass their everlasting destruction.

"But," it will be urged, "there is one clear case in the Bible itself of a dead man conversing with the living."

The incident is recorded in 1 Sam. xxviii., but it does not help the modern spiritualist in the smallest degree. There is nothing in common between it and what men are asked to believe.

The circumstances are these. A great battle was impending between Israel and the Philistines, and Saul had the dismal feeling that it would end disastrously. In his distress he turned to the God whom he had long forsaken, only to find that God would have nothing to do with him. Then he enquired for a woman that had a familiar spirit, and learning that there was such a person living at Endor, he visited her by night. Overruling her scruples, he bade her bring up Samuel. Observe carefully what happened. Before she could commence her incantations, Samuel appeared. She was not permitted to get into touch with her usual demon that night. Jehovah intervened for reasons of His own. The woman was terrified at the appearance of Samuel, for she had never had such an experience before. *God sent* the prophet to the abandoned King; the woman had nothing whatever to do with the matter.

Note carefully Samuel's protest. "Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?" Modern spiritualists would have us believe that the dead are only too willing to communicate with the living. One would not gather it from the incident that we are considering. Observe also that Samuel said, "Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing Jehovah is departed from thee, and become thine enemy?" Do mediums or spirits give such reproachful answers to their clients to-day? Moreover, it is perfectly

clear from this that there is nothing of God in Spiritualism. Saul only turned to the medium when he felt that God had altogether done with him.

Is it Profitable

in any way to enter into communication with the spirit world? Suppose I were to get into touch with angels, what can they teach me? If they tell me anything that is good and true, it is in the Bible already, and if they tell me anything that is not in the Bible, then they tell me lies, and what is the profit of listening to lies? In Gal. i. 8, the Apostle says, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Or suppose I could get into touch with the dead, what can they teach me? All that God would have me know is contained in the Bible; whatever is not there is false. In Luke xvi. we have a man in torments pleading that one might be sent from the dead to warn his five living brethren, but he was told, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." That is, they had the sacred writings, and apart from them nothing need be said. But he pleaded further, "Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they would repent." The reply was, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." In the Bible, and in the Bible only, is the call of God to men; and there only may be found the light that God has been pleased to grant us concerning the life beyond.

But this raises a question of the deepest importance. Can the Bible indeed be trusted? Is it the very word of God? It is impossible to discuss this fully in these pages; but one simple consideration may be suggested. Is it not reasonable to suppose that a God who is infinitely good would give certainty somehow and somewhere concerning the life beyond? Is it likely that He would leave the earth's millions to grope in darkness where eternal issues are involved? It is not likely. Then where is His voice to be heard if not in the Scriptures? Those who would shake the confidence of men therein have an awful responsibility resting upon them.

It is a fact to be noted that though we read of several persons being restored to life in Bible times, not once are we told of anything that they related of their experience while amongst the dead. As to this, their lips appear to have been divinely sealed.

This revival of Spiritualism

need not surprise any who pay heed to the Word of God. 1 Tim. iv. 1-2 comes to mind here. "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons; speaking lies in hypocrisy," etc. These times are manifestly upon us now.

There is a remarkable analogy between our days and the days of Noah in this matter of restless spirit activity. A remarkable condition of things is recorded in Gen. vi. 1-4. "It came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto

them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all that they choose." Who are the sons of God referred to here? Believing men are undoubtedly called "sons of God" in Rom. viii., but it would be irrelevant to introduce that thought into Gen. vi. The expression is best explained by its use in the contemporary book of Job, and there it is beyond all doubt used of angels (Job i. 6; ii. 1; xxxviii). Gen. vi. thus tells us of the spirit world breaking bounds and entering into unholy connection with the human family. That spirits are capable of taking men's form, and performing human functions is clearly shown in Gen. xviii.; xix., where we have angels eating meals with Abraham and Lot. It is beside the mark to quote Luke xx. 34-36 as an objection to this. The Lord is there describing the proper estate of angels, from which the transgressors of Gen. vi. departed. Personally I have no doubt that these are the beings referred to in Jude 6. "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness until the judgment of the great day." This cannot mean evil angels in general, for they have their liberty while divine long-suffering continues; the reference is clearly to certain amongst them whose freedom has been taken away for ever. The progeny of the mixed unions of Noah's days were "mighty men, men of renown." Such confusion could not be permitted in God's universe; and this was one reason why the flood ensued. The evil breed was swept away in that catastrophe; and the fact that the apostate spirits have been deprived of their liberty ever since, has acted

as a deterrent against the repetition of the offence. But while Satan's tactics may change, his object is the same in all ages. Hence the awful condition of things with which we are confronted to-day--the spirit world seeking by all possible means to get into intimate touch with our fellow-men for their present and everlasting ruin.

Demon-possession

is a great reality. Let none deceive themselves as to this. More than one can enter into a single person (Mark v. 9; Luke viii. 2). Demons can adopt a fair exterior as well as a repulsive one. Seeing that Satan himself can play the role of "an angel of light," his ministers are able to act the part of "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. xi. 14-15). They can fill pulpits and speak therefrom as well as mutter in seances. They can also tell the truth when it suits them. The demon who said to the Lord, "I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God," spoke the truth (Mark i. 24); as also did the demon-possessed girl who cried after Paul and Silas through the streets of Philippi, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto you the way of salvation" (Acts xvi. 17). But when these malignant beings speak the truth, it is with a view to gaining the confidence of their victims in order to ensure their everlasting ruin.

The true test as to all spirit utterances is Christ. What do they say of Him? "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John iv. 1). Do they own Him, like Thomas, as "Lord" and "God"? Do they speak with reverence of His atoning sacrifice? Do they acknowledge Him as Judge of living

and dead? Let those who have intercourse with spirits furnish the answers to these questions.

Returning again to Deu. xviii, we hear Moses saying to Israel: "Those nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners." In their search for light upon the great beyond, these were the resource of the heathen. But what about God's people? "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken."

The Prophet is Christ.

He has come. His voice has been heard audibly by men, and His voice may still be heard in Holy Scripture. Here is one of His utterances: "God so loved the world, that He gave His Only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). What words are these! How divinely suited to meet all the need of the human heart! Who would dare to place alongside such an utterance the senseless piffle which from time to time is gravely printed in Sunday newspapers as wonderful messages from the spirit world? Take another passage. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24). Surely this is just the message men need who are in conscious peril! "Unto Him ye shall hearken."

To turn away from God speaking in Christ is a grave sin. "It shall come to pass, that whosoever will not

hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him " (Deu. xviii. 19).

To conclude. Spiritualism is the resource of uneasy consciences and unsatisfied hearts. Men and women who are wandering in gloom, knowing nothing of God and Christ, and without the blessedness of sins forgiven fall a ready prey to this terrible device of Satan. How can the uneasy conscience be set at rest? Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. (Rom. iv. 25). Behold the Saviour on Calvary's tree, smitten in the sinner's stead; behold Him raised from the dead on the third day by the power of God; and learn that for every believing soul the whole question of sin has been settled for ever. It then follows that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. i.). The conscience is thus at rest. The heart finds satisfaction in the increasing knowledge of the Saviour Himself. One man could say of Him: "I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Phil. iii. 8). For the man or woman who can thus speak, the net of Satan is spread in vain.

