

WITCH OF ENDOR AND SAMUEL'S "RESURRECTION"

King Saul needed a message from God. God would not speak. Samuel the prophet who could give a message was dead. So Saul disguises himself and finds a woman in Endor who reportedly could commune with the dead. She is known to posterity as the Witch of Endor.

She succeeded, or she seemed to!, in calling Samuel up and he gave a message and complained about being disturbed. Christians say, "The Bible does not say that the Witch of Endor called up Samuel from the dead to speak with Saul. It says she tried to call him up and he appeared which could mean that she had no power to do it but it was God who made Samuel appear to her. She was shocked when she saw the apparition probably meaning that she was not used to this happening and it had been the first time."

The story says that the Witch called up Samuel and he appeared. It does not tell us whether her call caused this or if God just let him appear meaning it had nothing to do with her. In fact, reason says she probably did. That is the way the story reads. Correlation is not causation but nothing in the story fits the notion that she was a complete fraud.

Why did God or the Witch need Samuel to suffer the inconvenience of actually rising from the dead? Why can't like a medium could she not make do with a dream or some other way to get a message from the prophet?

Though the Bible condemns spirit mediums it never up to that point says that they cannot bring back the dead. It is only later on the notion that the dead cannot return surfaces. Luke 16 has Jesus declare that no power at all can make the dead come back. Only God can do that. If the New Testament is heresy and should not be added on to the Old Testament then there is no case theologically or scripturally to be made for saying that spiritism never has successful seances.

The medium was shocked but the story does not say why she was shocked! If it was clearer or better than the usual apparitions it could still shock her. Or it could be that she thought she had the power to raise the dead but not a prophet of God!

Samuel complains about being disturbed as if he was forced to appear. This matches the witchery claim that they can make the dead manifest. Also, it is like Samuel died and knew it was happening and is now baffled as to what he is doing back on earth and finds it a nuisance. It is like he thinks he is resurrected. The story could be Samuel be temporarily resurrected.

Samuel was there against his will for he would not appear for a woman who was practicing forbidden arts which God proscribed on pain of death. Samuel would not want to appear to help Saul either for Saul was in the bad books with the prophet and with God. Even though Samuel was giving a shocking message, it was still giving in to Saul for Saul wanted a message bad or good.

The account indicates that it was the real Samuel for he is presented as speaking as a prophet of God who could forecast the future. It says his word was reliable. We have no reason to assume it was not the real Samuel. We must interpret it no other way. There is no room for speculation that it is another spirit pretending to be him.

Samuel did not need to appear at all. A message would have done. That he appeared just as he was aged and before his death indicates just how much power was being attributed to this woman.

Samuel warns Saul of God's retributive wrath. Christians say the fact that Saul went to a medium was one of the reasons for God's ill-will. That is not in the text either.

The prophecy according to the story came true!!

The woman realises that her client is Saul.

Sirach, which is in the Catholic list of divinely inspired New Testament books, says that before Samuel died, he promised God and the king that he had been an honest man and never had stolen. Then we read that even after he died he was able to really appear to Saul and tell Saul what fatal end to expect. The text says that out of the grave Samuel spoke as a prophet of God to call on the people to desist from wickedness.

This story causes grave trouble for Christians. What if like Samuel, Jesus was not raised from the dead but was forced to manifest and imagined he had risen from the dead when he had not? What if a powerful magician was the real power behind it? There is no evidence or proof that the interpretation Christians impose on the story is valid. That is why we cannot use the resurrection accounts as instigators of faith for Jesus and the accounts accept the full unconditional validity of the Old Testament.