

The Revival of Spiritism; What It Indicates

by H.J. Vine

H.J. Vine's sermon warns of the revival of Spiritism as a foretold apostasy, emphasizing the need for vigilance among believers and the ultimate victory of God over evil.

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:10

Topics: "Spiritual Deception", "End Time Prophecy"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the forewarning of Spiritism in Christendom, as foretold in the sacred writings, and the apostasy from 'the faith' to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Scriptures indicate that Spiritism is a sign of the near return of Jesus Christ, with a period of almost unlimited sway before the saints are translated to heaven. The sermon delves into the dangers of Spiritism, the deceptive messages from spirits, and the need to heed God's Word to avoid falling into darkness and deception.

Transcript

Those who are instructed in the Word of God by the Holy Spirit are not surprised at the present-day recrudescence of Spiritism; rather would they be surprised did not such a revival of this ancient cult take place; because it has been long foretold in the sacred writings as that which would take place in the midst of Christendom in these days; and the forewarning is divinely given for the sake of those who are redeemed in Christ--who are truly of "the faith"--that they might be forearmed when it reappeared.

The Forewarning

Note first what is said to Timothy, a young servant of our Lord Jesus Christ: "The Spirit speaketh expressly"--laying special emphasis on the matter--"that in the latter times some shall depart (or 'apostatise') from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:4). Here Spiritism in its deceptive and its doctrinal forms is plainly foretold; and after indicating other accompaniments, the apostle adds, "If thou put the brethren (those who are truly the children of God) in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ." Now notice, this is apostasy from "the faith." We are not told to expect this in heathendom. Nor is it the remarkable activities of spirits in the midst of Confucianism, of which we have reliable records from China. Neither is it the strange phenomena so frequently observed amidst the dark superstitions of India and Ceylon. It is not Buddhist, Brahman, or Mohammedan. It is an apostasy specially indicated to take place in Christendom, for it is an apostasy from "the faith," seducing spirits and their teachings being turned to instead.

Other Scriptures show us that this is a sign of the near return of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He will come again and take all true believers out of the world to be "for ever with the Lord"; and, then, for a while, before He takes up the direct government of the nations and peoples of the earth, Spiritism will have almost unlimited sway; but, first, as we have said, all the saints of God will be translated from earth to heaven like Enoch before the day--in the twinkling of an eye. The moment the one Holy Spirit who indwells us quickens our mortal bodies, and we are gone, Spiritism, which is spreading so rapidly now, will have no check, and the "strong delusion" foretold in 2 Thessalonians 2 will seize upon those who "received not the love of the truth that they might be saved" (v. 10). These deceiving spirits may easily say,--when men are at first in fear because of the disappearance of so many--We told you that something extra-ordinary would happen. Men's minds will be enslaved in gross darkness, for there will be "works of power and signs and lying wonders" done by these Satanic agencies. It will be a marvellous imitation of what the Lord did, and His apostles, whose preaching of salvation was also accompanied by "signs and wonders and with diverse miracles" or "acts of power" (Heb. 2:4). We can therefore understand how those who have not "the love of the truth that they might be saved" now, will be carried away then; but the march from earth to heaven of all the redeemed will have suddenly and swiftly taken place before that awful day has arrived. At the Victor's shout--for the Lord will call us away with "a shout" (1 Thess. 4:16)--we shall rise and leave the world behind.

Spiritism New and Old

There is nothing edifying in the smallest degree in the writings of spiritists. Much is very paltry, and the editors themselves admit this, but they are lured on and their records contain a great deal which has been rightly termed "trash." It is freely admitted that the messages received from the spirits are frequently deceptive, and that lies are often told. It is just what the Spirit of truth "expressly" foretold in the Scriptures. There is much fraud and trickery by so-called spiritualists, but the Holy Word of God leaves this alone and deals only with the actual working of spirits which come to deceive, impersonating the departed it may be, or professing to reveal something to those who heed them. It is certain that no unfallen spirit, angel or other, would transgress by seeking to gain the attention of men and women. The fact that some do so proves that they are fallen spirits, and are working to seduce and turn souls from the truth, as Scripture shows.

One spirit, professing to be that of F. W. H. Myers, the poet, said: "I feel just as lonely. Lodge, it is just as they say, you grope in fog and darkness" (Survival of Man, by Sir O. Lodge, p. 295). One would expect a godly man to turn from these things after hearing such words; but the temptation seems to be tremendous to an inquisitive mind; and it is pursued notwithstanding the serious warnings of God's Holy Word. I read Isaiah 8:19-22 to one psychic student who was deeply immersed in it. He seemed to be interested in these solemn words when a violent rapping startled him, and hurrying from the room he seized his hat and went out into the night.

I could give many other instances from experience, but it is unnecessary. What the inspired volume says is of greater importance to us. I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer, said one of old, by taking heed of Thy Word.

In Egypt

When God, on the ground of redemption by the blood of the lamb, was about to deliver His people from Egypt and march them from the land of their slavery, the masters of the psychic sciences were called in to

oppose Moses and Aaron, who demanded the freedom of Israel. In more ways than one we have a type in this of our own deliverance through the blood of Christ; but let us follow the actual facts; for they reveal a remarkable development of psychic powers. The present students of these things are a long way behind. When Aaron threw down his rod it became a serpent. God thus gave a sign to Pharaoh--the greatest monarch of that day. This powerful king, however, had in his colleges men of extraordinary learning--unearthed writings and monuments show this. Among them were those who were familiar with "enchantments." They were the spiritualists of that time, called in Exodus 7:11, "The wise men and the sorcerers," "the magicians of Egypt."

These men were acquainted with supernatural powers, and had access to the royal presence. They cast down their rods also and they became serpents in like manner as Aaron's, but his rod swallowed up theirs. Satan is called that old serpent "which deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). By deception he brings about the fall of men and nations, as he did with Adam and Eve at the beginning; and it is striking that God should give this serpent sign to Pharaoh. God's people and representatives were a despised minority, but the power with them was greater than that with their opponents who sought to keep them in Egypt. It is the same today. In the oft-quoted passage as to trying the spirits in 1 John 4 it is said to the children of God: "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods!

Their imitations, however, still successfully followed Moses and Aaron and steeled the king against Israel, until Aaron brought life out of the dust of the earth. "Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, This is the finger of God." The Holy Spirit is thus named in the gospels. It is He Who is in the children of God and greater than he that is in the world. At this sign the psychic men were brought to the dust before God literally. It is striking again to notice what was said to the "old serpent" at the beginning: "Dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." These signs were given in view of the deliverance of God's people; and again, when He brings Israel back to their land by and bye, it is said, "According to the days of thy coming out of Egypt will I show unto him (their enemy) marvellous things . . . they (those who oppose) shall lick the dust like a serpent" (Micah 7:15, 17). The power of God must triumph over every other power, and He shows it victoriously through the salvation of those who believe. Spiritists may imitate. Their familiars may say, God is unknown; but that is untrue. He is fully revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The exceeding greatness of His power, too, toward those who believe, has already been shown in the resurrection of Christ, their representative Head as well as Lord. "Out of dust" man was made at the first; "out of dust" life was brought through Aaron's rod, and this balked Egypt's magicians. Out of "the dust of death" the mighty power of God raised Jesus our Lord, the Head of the assembly from among the dead; and this secures the eternal overthrow through man of every opposing force, and the complete triumph of good over evil, of light over darkness, of Christ over Satan. The children of Israel marched out in triumph. They sang of the Lord's victory on the far shore of the Red Sea! The magicians had not helped the great Pharaoh, nor had they secured prosperity for his great country by their enchantments. It was severely smitten, the mighty monarch's power was broken, too, and the Egyptians themselves were spoiled. God's righteous judgment fell upon that land of dark practices, and His down-trodden people were delivered with songs of gladness on their lips from the tyranny which had made them groan in cruel bondage.

In Palestine

When Israel marched toward the land of promise, fear took hold of the inhabitants of Palestine. God had waited long centuries before punishing them for their wickedness (Gen. 15:16; Deut. 18:9-14). Diviners, enchanters, and those with familiar spirits, had plunged the nations of that land into darkness and

degradation. "Because of these abominations," it is distinctly said to Israel, "the Lord thy God doth drive them out before thee" (Deut. 18:12). Pharaoh tried to hold God's people in his power, and, now, as they approach the land, Balak seeks to oppose them by means of that extraordinary clairvoyant Balaam. Needless to say, it failed. Even the donkey was more clairvoyant than the master; yet, in spite of the angel with the sword (forespeaking Balaam's own punishment) on he went in his folly, only to have to declare, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." Balaam was a man of repute in those days; a man who could also entertain nobles and princes; "the man," as he himself said, "whose eyes are open, who heard the words of God, who saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open" (Num. 24:3-4); nevertheless he had to own to Balak that he was unable to curse God's people, and "Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together; and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times." The wickedness of Balaam's heart, however, comes out afterwards, when he advised Balak to corrupt the Israelites though he could not stay their possession of the Land of Promise.

In the closing books of the Bible we are warned concerning the successors of this remarkable man of such extraordinary psychic attainments. The "way" of Balaam the "doctrine" of Balaam, and the "error" of Balaam, will again be pursued, we are told; but just as God's people came out of Egypt and entered the Land of Promise, so will the elect be safely and surely brought through to their heavenly inheritance, in spite of all the workings of fallen spirits and of those who are deceived by them. Indeed, their special activities always seem to indicate some near and special intervention on their behalf by the Lord, as we have seen. In Palestine itself the cult had developed to a very high degree, and the propensities of the race seemed to severely demand that the men, women, and children should all be exterminated. Righteousness might require this, but mercy also, lest they should enslave God's people likewise by their practices. In measure, that is just what happened; for Israel did not carry out fully God's command; and many were led away by idolatry and familiar spirits. King Saul sought to rid the land of them, yet he himself fell away and consulted a witch at the end, but only to hear his own doom solemnly pronounced.

The progress of these dark sciences in the centres of learning reached at least nine distinct branches :--

Fire traversing.

Divination.

Observing of times.

Enchantment.

Witchcraft.

Charming.

Spiritism.

Sorcery.

Necromancy.

These various branches of occultism might seem imposing to the students of that day, but the Scripture says: "All that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord" (Deut. 28:12). In God's sight those who practise these things are ABOMINABLE, and the things they do are ABOMINATIONS. Ruined body and soul themselves, they had ruined the kingdoms of the land; and this seems to be always the outcome of this "falsely-named science."

Notwithstanding, however, all the solemn warnings of God, the Israelites themselves fell under the allurements of these things, and in King Manasseh's day we read, "He made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel" (2 Ki. 21:6, 9). God therefore gave them over to captivity.

At the time when the Lord Jesus came to men, many in the land of Israel were possessed by spirits, and on nearly every other page of the Gospels we read of them being cast out by the Lord and His disciples. He spoke of Israel's national condition in relation to this, as "when the unclean spirit is gone out." It is striking that Israel, so prone to this thing, has been free from it since their dispersion, but they are going back to Palestine in unbelief, and the unclean spirit will return. When he is come, he findeth his house "empty, swept, and garnished. Then goes he, and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there." Thus spake the Lord, showing that there is to be a terrible revival of this spirit-possession in the land, and that the last state of Israel will be worse than the first.

In Babylon

Before the overthrow of the vast Babylonish empire we find psychic and similar sciences very advanced. The monarchs of that day looked upon them as of the very first importance. The great Nebuchadnezzar had about the throne of the empire "the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans and the soothsayers." The last king, Belshazzar (a deputy king), of Babylon, was exceedingly profane; and amidst a great feast, which he made to a thousand of his lords, he abandoned himself to insult the God of Israel, the true God. Automatic writing is common in modern Spiritism, and sometimes there is seen the appearance of a hand or arm: and at that impious feast, in the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand," and wrote upon the wall of the king's palace. But this was God's writing, and the king saw it, and fear seized him, as well it might (Dan. 5). He called in the scientific men--"the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers"--"the wise men of Babylon," as they are named in Daniel 5:7. The king offered them great rewards if they could explain the writing, but they failed to do so. Then forgotten Daniel, in whom was God's Spirit, was called in. He read the writing and gave the interpretation, which pronounced the doom of the monarch. In that very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.

It has often been said that the book of Daniel gives us principles that obtain during "the times of the Gentiles," before Israel is restored to her city and land. The failure of these scholars to read and interpret God's writing was not confined to that day; we see it today; these things are hidden from the wise and prudent, but the forgotten children of God still read and benefit by the unfoldings of the inspired Volume, for the Spirit who indited its words dwells in them. Soon after the overthrow of the Babylonish empire the restoration of God's people to Jerusalem took place. It will be so again, when the future "Babylon" of Revelation is destroyed; but before that time, every true believer on our Lord Jesus Christ will leave earth for heaven, at the coming of Christ into the air, as 1 Thessalonians 4 shows us,

The way for the present revival of dark sciences, so long forbidden in God's Word, has been prepared by the higher critics, men who boast in their scholarship, but who by their destructive criticism of God's Holy Word have made it easy for men to be deceived.

But this revival indicates the near intervention of the Saviour for the deliverance of the elect of God, when they will surely, and suddenly, leave the world, being "caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." We have seen God's intervention in Egypt in the presence of the psychic men of that day, and how He marched Israel out of the land in triumph. We have seen how he overthrew the intentions of Balak and Balaam, the clairvoyant. We have seen what has happened, and will yet happen, in Palestine through the workings of familiar spirits and sorcery; and lastly, we have seen what happened in Babylon when its last king was slain. The more developed these phenomena become, the more apparent is the divine intervention when that takes place; but, on the other hand, it seems that the advance of these cults brings a tremendous influx of fallen spirits into a nation or empire, and precedes its overthrow. If this be so, the present popularizing of them in this land speaks badly for the future of the nation and empire. It would be well if these things could be swept away before it is too late. There is an empire spoken of in the Bible that goes to pieces, like a ship "in the midst of the sea," One hopes it may not be the British; but the practice of forbidden sciences would expedite such a catastrophe. The question for the true believer is not whether wonderful things are done by these spiritists--Satan can and will do these--but does God's Word sanction or forbid these practices? He forbids them! He names them "abominations," and those who do them Abominable! That is enough for any true believer (Deut. 18:12).

Life After Death

Now as to life after death, it is not only that the spirit of a child of God is absent from the body, when he falls on sleep--as Scripture speaks of death for such--and goes away to be "present with the Lord," but his body also, every particle of its dust, is watched over by God and will be raised again from among the dead. The scientist says no atom can be destroyed though it may be changed. God says of the body, "It is sown," and "It is raised." We have the word of the Apostle Paul, divinely inspired, that to be thus "with Christ" is "far better" than the best we have known here in the body. Nevertheless the body is also to be raised in immortality and incorruptibility, in honour, power, and glory, at the coming again of our Lord and Saviour. He Himself was raised from among the dead, and that is the pledge of our resurrection, "Christ the Firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. 15:23). He is "The Firstfruits of them that slept."

After His own resurrection, seven times, it is said, He was "seen" in the resurrection chapter just referred to. When He, the risen Man, came into the midst of those gathered together at Jerusalem they were confounded and frightened. They supposed they beheld a spirit (Luke 24:37). But it was not a spirit but a real Man who stood before them; a Man who had vanquished death, Satan (who had wielded its power to keep in bondage God's children), and the grave; a risen Man, whose physical resurrection involved their eternal salvation, redemption and glory. Still, they were troubled! He had robbed death of "its sting," Satan of his "power," and the grave of "its victory." He was their victorious Saviour and Lord. Their eternal blessing was secured in Him as well as the glory of God, though they knew it not then.

"Why do thoughts arise in your hearts"? He asked of them. "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have" (Luke 24:39)! They saw Him thus; and it is recorded in the Scriptures of truth, and yet so-called scholars, modernists, would have us believe that they know better than the disciples, and that it was only an apparition they saw! What

folly! What senseless reasoning! Surely Scripture is correct when it says, "Professing themselves to be wise they became fools." The spiritists say, Christ is the supreme Spirit in the unseen! but God says, He is a Man, in a raised, glorified body at His right hand! He died! He rose! He ascended! and He will yet return! He said, referring to His holy body, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). When therefore He was risen His disciples remembered that He had said this. Why did our risen Lord say "flesh and bones," and not "flesh and blood"? His blood had been poured out for our eternal redemption.

Spiritists deny the truth as to Christ. They do not acknowledge Him as the exalted Man at the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens, much less are they prepared to own His deity. To own Him as Man raised from among the dead would overthrow their whole system. It did so with the psychic students at that seat of learning in Ephesus, when they received the gospel preached by Paul (Acts 19:18).

The letter, too, sent to the assembly at Ephesus afterwards, emphasizes the exceeding greatness of God's power which raised Christ as a Man from the dead; and that set Him above every intelligence--principality, authority, power and dominion,--and every name named! What a triumph God has secured in Man--in Man raised and exalted above all!

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