

A KING IS FOOLED



IN TELLING you the story of the shepherd boy David who became king of Israel, I mentioned that King Saul died. Now I want to tell you a very strange experience that Saul had just before his death. Because King Saul was no longer doing what was right, God allowed the army of the Philistines to attack the children of Israel again. This was some time after David had killed Goliath the giant. Saul raised as large an army of Israelites as he could to fight back, but he was afraid. Even a very small army could have driven away the Philistines if God had helped the Israelites, but he didn't help them, and Saul was worried. Now, what do you suppose he did? Well, Saul did about the worst thing of all the wicked things which caused God to be displeased with him—he tried to get advice from the Prophet Samuel who had died. Yes, the good prophet had passed away. While he lived he had done the best he could to help Saul by warning him not to continue doing things which were displeasing to God. But Saul did not pay attention to his warnings. You may wonder why Saul did wrong in trying to speak to Samuel after the good prophet had died. The reason is that when a person

dies he can't talk with anyone, because he is asleep in death and can be awakened only by the power of God. But Satan tries to make people believe that dead people are not really dead.

If you have read the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden you will remember that Satan told them a lie about death. He said that they would not die if they disobeyed God. Of course Adam and Eve did die, and all their children died; so that proves Satan didn't tell the truth.

But when a person tells a lie he usually thinks he has to tell another lie to cover up the first one. So he keeps right on telling lies, which is a very bad thing to do. In order to cover up his first lie that people wouldn't die because of sin, Satan has said that those who die are not really dead. Isn't that awful? We know that dead people are really dead, don't we? But Satan says, "No, they are not dead," and he has tried to prove that he is telling the truth by making believe that people can talk with those who are dead.

Satan and other wicked angels who work with him are able to deceive the people by making them think they can talk with their dead friends. God knew this, and when he gave his Law to the Israelites this was one thing which he forbade them to do.

In those days Satan was able to get women to work for him in his wicked schemes of deceiving people, and these were called witches. And Saul, while he was trying to please God, had ordered that all witches be driven out of the land of Israel so they wouldn't be able to deceive the Israelites.

But when Saul became fearful of the Philistines and couldn't get any help from God, he thought of his old friend Samuel who had died. He wondered if, after all, it might not be possible to talk with him. So what do you suppose he did? He gave orders to some of his trusted men to find one of the condemned witches so he could visit her and see if she could get Samuel to talk with him. They found a witch who was hiding in a cave near a place called Endor. She was known as the Witch of Endor.

When the witch was visited by these Israelites she was very much afraid, because she knew that Saul had ordered all witches

destroyed. She was more afraid than ever when she discovered that it was Saul who was now visiting her. But the wicked king told her not to be afraid, because he would protect her. Satan is very powerful and very deceptive, and he made the witch believe that she saw gods coming right up out of the earth. And then she described a person she saw coming out of the earth whom Saul said must be Samuel.

Saul was very nervous and excited, and so was the witch, and Satan was able to make them both believe that Samuel was actually talking with them. When Samuel was alive he was very faithful to God. He knew that God would not communicate with the wicked king, and neither would he if God didn't want him to do so. Even if the dead Samuel could have talked with Saul he would not have done so. It was all a trick of Satan, and the wicked King Saul was certainly deceived by it. He thought he had actually talked with Samuel, but Samuel was dead and could not talk with anyone.

Satan likes to frighten people. Pretending that it was Samuel speaking, he had the witch tell Saul that the army of the Israelites would be defeated by the Philistines, and that Saul would be with Samuel the next day. Saul understood this to mean that he would die the next day, and it made him very nervous indeed.

A few days later, when the Philistines attacked the Israelites, Saul was wounded, and he killed himself rather than fall into their hands. That was the end of a man who started out to be a good king but who did not continue to obey God. It's a sad story, isn't it? Let us try not to be like King Saul.

QUESTIONS

- Who was the Witch of Endor, and why was it wrong for King Saul to visit her?
- Why was it not possible for Samuel, who had died, to talk to King Saul?
- How did King Saul die?