

1 Samuel 28 Commentary

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Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission
[1 Samuel Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

TIMELINE OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS & CHRONICLES									
1107	1011				971	931	853	722	586
1 Samuel	2 Samuel				1 Kings	1 Kings	2 Kings		
31	1-4	5-10	11-20	21-24	1-11	12-22	1-17	18-25	
1 Chronicles 10		1 Chr 11-19		1 Chr 20-29	2 Chronicles 1-9	2 Chronicles 10-20	2 Chronicles 21-36		

Legend: B.C. dates at top of timeline are approximate. Note that 931BC marks the division of the Kingdom into Southern Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) and Ten Northern Tribes. To avoid confusion be aware that **after the division** of the Kingdom in 931BC, the Southern Kingdom is most often designated in Scripture as "**Judah**" and the Northern Kingdom as "**Israel**." Finally, note that 1 Chronicles 1-9 is not identified on the timeline because these chapters are records of genealogy.

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Map on Left [ESV Global Study Bible](#), on right [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#)
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1 Samuel 28:1 Now it came about in those days that the Philistines gathered their armed camps for war, to fight against Israel. And Achish said to David, "Know assuredly that you will go out with me in the camp, you and your men."

- **in those days:** 1Sa 7:7 13:5 17:1 1Sa 29:1
- **Philistines:** Jdg 3:1-4
- **you will go out with me:** 1Sa 27:12 29:2,3
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passage:

1 Samuel 29:1 Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek, while the Israelites were camping by the spring which is in Jezreel.

GOD'S CHECKMATE PLACES DAVID ON HORNS OF A DILEMMA!

[Horns of a dilemma](#) signifies a person has to choose between one of two alternatives, both of which potentially have negative consequences. David had "[painted himself into a corner](#)" creating by his own actions and decisions a predicament for himself that left him with no acceptable alternative. David now experiences a major conflict of interests.

Now it came about in those days that the Philistines gathered their armed camps for war, to fight against Israel- The mustering of Philistines troops sets the stage for a dangerous dilemma for David. Once again we see the omnipotent, omniscient hand of Yahweh providentially moving the pieces on the chess board (so to speak) which would bring about a double [Checkmate](#)" (a check from which a king cannot escape!), one for King Saul, and a second "[Checkmate](#)" for King David! It is fascinating to see how the providence of God may have a multiplicity of effects as in this passage. The more you read the Scriptures and understand the providential workings of God, the more you are amazed at His great and marvelous works (cf Rev 15:3+) and the more you revere and adore Him! He Alone is truly worthy to be praised!

And Achish said to David, "Know assuredly that you will go out with me in the camp, you and your men- Achish a Philistine lord was surely involved in the decision to move against Israel. And because he has fallen into the mindset that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, Achish considers David to be his friend, and in fact even his servant! David has been too successful in deceiving Achish that he had been raiding Israeli towns for the previous 16 months. And since he had been so successful and his warriors were thoroughly battle ready, Achish logically seeks David to go out with him against the Israelites. He sees no conflicts for David taking this action. David's success at raiding and success at deceiving now place him between a proverbial [rock and a hard place](#)! On one hand if he accepts the offer, he potentially would be fighting his own people and ultimately King Saul, of whom he had repeatedly stated that he would not touch the LORD'S anointed (1Sa 24:6, 10+, 1Sa 26:9, 11, 23+). If on the other hand he refuses saying he could not kill his own people, he blows his 16 month deception and risks Achish bringing down the hammer on him!

THOUGHT - Have you ever been between a [rock and a hard place](#)? Most of us have been at some time in our lives. How did you respond? There is no evidence that David responded as he had when faced with other difficult decisions and inquired of the LORD (1Sa 23:2, 4, 1Sa 23:9-12). We wish the text had recorded "and David inquired of the LORD," but it did not. This is one time we would be better imitating the "old David" who

inquired of the LORD! So next time you find yourself on the horns of a dilemma, seek the counsel of the LORD. If the "horns" are the consequences of sinful choices however, the LORD'S response might not be forthcoming and/or affirming/comforting.

"He is the perfect picture of the carnal man operating on his own resources."

Ray Pritchard - There is one final result of compromise. It climaxed with an order to join the other side. For David and his men, everything seems to be going great. In fact, it seems like God is blessing him more than ever before. Life is beautiful until the day David gets his **draft notice**. Now the chickens are coming home to roost. Why did Achish welcome David's defection so many months ago? He was collecting an IOU and now he calls it in. What's worse, he names David as his personal bodyguard. That means that if the Philistines win the battle, it will be the bodyguard's duty to kill the defeated king. Which means that David will be forced to do the one thing he has steadfastly refused to do—kill Saul. David never intended to get into this mess. In his mind, going to live with the Philistines was just a temporary maneuver to buy some time and space. But now he is faced with the full results of his compromise. Unless God intervenes, he will be forced to fight against his own people. But that's what happens whenever you live your life apart from God. One little step leads to another, one tiny compromise opens the door to another, and before long you find yourself in too deep to get out. When that happens, you think, "It's okay. I'll make it." But you won't. By now, David is too indebted to Achish to even think about backing out. He is the perfect picture of the carnal man operating on his own resources. ([Ziklag is Burning](#))

1 Samuel 28:2 David said to Achish, "Very well, you shall know what your servant can do." So Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

BGT 1 Samuel 28:2 κα ε πεν Δαυιδ πρ ς Αγγους ο τω ν ν γν σει ποι σει δο λ ς σου κα ε πεν Αγγους πρ ς Δαυιδ ο τω ς ρχισωματοφ λακα θ σομα σε π σας τ ς μ ρας

LXE 1 Samuel 28:2 And David said to Anchus, Thus now thou shalt know what thy servant will do. And Anchus said to David, So will I make thee captain of my body-guard continually.

KJV 1 Samuel 28:2 And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever.

NET 1 Samuel 28:2 David replied to Achish, "That being the case, you will come to know what your servant can do!" Achish said to David, "Then I will make you my bodyguard from now on."

CSB 1 Samuel 28:2 David replied to Achish, "Good, you will find out what your servant can do." So Achish said to David, "Very well, I will appoint you as my permanent bodyguard."

ESV 1 Samuel 28:2 David said to Achish, "Very well, you shall know what your servant can do." And Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

NIV 1 Samuel 28:2 David said, "Then you will see for yourself what your servant can do." Achish replied, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

NLT 1 Samuel 28:2 "Very well!" David agreed. "Now you will see for yourself what we can do." Then Achish told David, "I will make you my personal bodyguard for life."

NRS 1 Samuel 28:2 David said to Achish, "Very well, then you shall know what your servant can do." Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

NJB 1 Samuel 28:2 David said to Achish, 'In that case, you will soon see what your servant can do.' Achish replied to David, 'Right, I shall appoint you as my permanent bodyguard.'

NAB 1 Samuel 28:2 David answered Achish, "Good! Now you shall learn what your servant can do." Then Achish said to David, "I shall appoint you my permanent bodyguard."

YLT 1 Samuel 28:2 And David saith unto Achish, 'Therefore -- thou dost know that which thy servant dost do.' And Achish saith unto David, 'Therefore -- keeper of my head I do appoint thee all the days.'

GWN 1 Samuel 28:2 "Very well," David responded to Achish, "you will then know what I can do." "Very well," Achish told David, "I will make you my bodyguard for life."

BBE 1 Samuel 28:2 And David said to Achish, You will see now what your servant will do. And Achish said to David, Then I will make you keeper of my head for ever.

RSV 1 Samuel 28:2 David said to Achish, "Very well, you shall know what your servant can do." And Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

NKJ 1 Samuel 28:2 And David said to Achish, "Surely you know what your servant can do." And Achish said to David, "Therefore I will make you one of my chief guardians forever."

ASV 1 Samuel 28:2 And David said to Achish, Therefore thou shalt know what thy servant will do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of my head for ever.

DBY 1 Samuel 28:2 And David said to Achish, Thereby thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of my person for ever.

BHT 1 Samuel 28:2 wayyö⁹mer Däwid ´el-´äkîš lākēn ´aTTâ tēda` ´ēt ´ášer-ya`áSè `abDe⁹kā wayyö⁹mer ´äkîš ´el-Däwid lākēn šömēr lürö´šî ´áSî|mkā Kol-hayyāmîm P

NIRV 1 Samuel 28:2 David said, "I understand. You will see for yourself what I can do." Achish replied, "All right. I'll make you my own personal guard for life."

RWB 1 Samuel 28:2 And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of my head for ever.

WEB 1 Samuel 28:2 And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of my head for ever.

- **Very well:** 1Sa 27:10 2Sa 16:16-19 Ro 12:9
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

ACHISH MAKES DAVID THE GUARDIAN OF HIS HEAD!

David said to Achish, "Very well, you shall know what your servant can do." - NLT - "Now you will see for yourself what we can do." - David's answer is vague. The Septuagint clearly places this in the future "you **will** know what your servant **will** do." Calling himself Achish's servant would be words of assurance to the king that David would do as the king desired. But the writer pushes the "pause button" on this scene, so that we are left to wonder which "horn" of the dilemma is going to gore our hero David! As they say "stay tuned," to be continued in Chapter 29 (don't read ahead and spoil the surprising solution).

So Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life." - Achish has completely fallen for David's deception, so much so that he will have David be "*the guardian for my head*," the literal Hebrew rendering of **make you my bodyguard!** You don't need to ponder that one for very long to see the almost comical irony. David had already lopped off one giant Philistine head (1Sa 17:51+), so he would not be wise Philistine's first choice to guard his head!

1 Samuel 28:3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had removed from the land those who were mediums and spiritists.

- **Samuel:** 1Sa 25:1 Isa 57:1,2
- **removed:** 1Sa 28:9 Ex 22:18 Lev 19:31 20:6,27 De 18:10,11 Ac 16:16-19
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAMUEL REMOVED FROM LIFE MEDIUMS REMOVED FROM LAND

The writer now presents us with two facts to give us some context for the strange story that follows.

Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him and buried him in Ramah, his own city - The first fact is that Samuel is really dead and is in the place of the dead ([Sheol](#) - the cool side - read Luke 16:19-31+). Why would the writer repeat what he has only 3 chapters before clearly stated? It is not as if we are likely to forget that Samuel was no longer on the scene of the living. I personally believe it makes the subsequent events all that much more dramatic when Samuel appears on the scene of the living again!

And Saul had removed from the land those who were mediums ([ob/ov](#)) and spiritists ([viddeoni](#)) - Saul's witch hunt was one of

the more Biblical actions he took in his 40 year reign. But it will also prove to be one of the most ironic acts of Saul, for he will seek that which he removed. Is this a reflection of his hypocrisy, this time of taking action, but in his heart holding a different belief? The fact that Saul removed mediums indicates that he clearly knew contact with them was forbidden and this is one of the reasons he was dead some 24 hours after consulting a medium.

1Chr 10:13-14+ says "So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the LORD, because of the word of the LORD which he did not keep; **and also because he asked counsel of a medium, making inquiry of it**, and did not inquire of the LORD. Therefore He killed him and turned the kingdom to David the son of Jesse.

QUESTION - [What does the Bible say about necromancy?](#)

ANSWER -Necromancy is defined as the conjuring of the spirits of the dead for purposes of magically revealing the future or influencing the course of events. In the Bible, necromancy is also called "divination," "sorcery" and "spiritism" and is forbidden many times in Scripture (Leviticus 19:26; Deuteronomy 18:10; Galatians 5:19-20; Acts 19:19) as an abomination to God. It is something that the Lord speaks very strongly against and is to be avoided as much as any evil. The reason for this is twofold.

First, necromancy is going to involve demons and opens the one who practices it to demonic attack. Satan and his demons seek to destroy us, not to impart to us truth or wisdom. We are told that our "enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Second, necromancy does not rely on the Lord for information, the Lord who promises to freely give wisdom to all who ask for it (James 1:5). This is especially telling because the Lord always wants to lead us to truth and life, but demons always want to lead us to lies and serious damage.

The idea that dead people's spirits can be contacted for information is false. Those who attempt such contact inevitably contact demonic spirits, not the spirits of dead loved ones. Those who die go immediately to heaven or hell—heaven if they believed in Jesus as Savior, and hell if they did not. There is no contact between the dead and the living. Therefore, seeking the dead is unnecessary and very dangerous.[GotQuestions.org](#)

Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about praying to / speaking to the dead?](#)
- [What is a séance?](#)

1 Samuel 28:4 So the Philistines gathered together and came and camped in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together and they camped in Gilboa.

- **Shunem:** Jos 19:18 2Ki 4:8
- **Gilboa:** 1Sa 31:1 2Sa 1:6,21 21:12
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Philistines @ SHUNEM & Saul @ GILBOA

THE LOCATION OF THE TWO ARMIES

So the Philistines gathered together and came and camped in [Shunem](#); and Saul gathered all Israel together and they camped in [Gilboa](#) - See the map above for Shunem just to north of Jezreel and Mt Gilboa which localizes respectively the Philistine and the Israelite forces. Notice the town of En-dor is about 2 miles to the north of Shunem and 6 miles north of Gilboa (which will help you understand why Saul needed a disguise in 1Sa 28:8 - he clearly had to cross enemy territory to reach Endor). This is not simply a border raid, but the Philistines have now encroached into the heartland of Israel, preparing for an attack which would prove devastating to Israel.

Shunem - (two resting-places) is a little village in the tribe of Issachar, to the north of Jezreel and south of Mount Gilboa (Josh. 19:18), where the Philistines encamped when they came against Saul (1 Sam. 28:4), and where Elisha was hospitably entertained by a rich woman of the place. On the sudden death of this woman's son she hastened to Carmel, 20 miles distant across the plain, to tell Elisha, and to bring him with her to Shunem. There, in the "prophet's chamber," the dead child lay; and Elisha entering it, shut

the door and prayed earnestly: and the boy was restored to life (2 Kings 4:8-37). This woman afterwards retired during the famine to the low land of the Philistines; and on returning a few years afterwards, found her house and fields in the possession of a stranger. She appealed to the king at Samaria, and had them in a somewhat remarkable manner restored to her (comp. 2 Kings 8:1-6).

GILBOA, MOUNT - gil-bo'-a (~har hagilboa], "Mount of the Gilboa"): this mountain is mentioned in Scripture only in connection with the last conflict of Saul with the Philistines, and his disastrous defeat (1Sa 28:4; 31:1,8; 2Sa 1:6,21; 21:12; 1 Ch 10:1,8). If Zer'in be identical with Jezreel--a point upon which Professor R.A.S. Macalister has recently cast some doubt--Saul must have occupied the slopes on the Northwest side of the mountain, near "the fountain which is in Jezreel" (1Sa 29:1). The Philistines attacked from the plain, and the battle (REMEMBER THEY HAD IRON CHARIOTS WHICH WOULD BE VERY EFFECTIVE ON THE FLAT PLAIN OF JEZREEL - AKA [Esdraelon](#)) went bad against the men of Israel, who broke and fled; and in the flight Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchi-shua, sons of Saul, were slain. Rather than be taken by his lifelong foes (1Sa 14:52), Saul fell upon his sword and died (1Sa 31:1-6).

1 Samuel 28:5 When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly.

- he was afraid: Job 15:21 18:11 Ps 48:5,6 73:19 Pr 10:24 Isa 7:2 21:3,4 Isa 57:20,21 Da 5:6
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Mt Gilboa (R) with View of Jezreel Valley (Shunem)

When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly- [In the map above](#), see the Philistine forces undoubtedly including their iron chariots (1Sa 13:5) amassed at Shunem in the level Plain of Jezreel, poised to launch their attack. Saul is at Gilboa (over 1600' elevation) which from the northern face commands a view of the Jezreel Valley (see depiction above), so Saul quickly realized that he was in serious trouble! His heart trembled greatly at the Philistines because his heart failed to reverentially tremble before Yahweh. Saul saw a giant force preparing to attack and feared because God had rejected him and was not with him. David saw a giant Philistine ready to attack but was not afraid because (1Sa 17) he came in the Name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel (1Sa 17:45) and was confident that "the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD'S and He will give you into our hands." (1Sa 17:47). Two anointed kings, two giant enemies, two different valleys (Elah - 1Sa 17:2, Jezreel - 1Sa 29:1), two different hearts (after God, after man) and two dramatically different outcomes (life, death, eternal reign, rejected reign).

1 Samuel 28:6 When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.

- **inquired:** 1Sa 14:37 1Ch 10:14 Pr 1:,27,28 La 2:9 Eze 20:1-3 Joh 9:31 Jas 4:3
- **dreams:** Ge 28:12-15 46:2-4 Nu 12:6 Job 33:14-16 Jer 23:28 Mt 1:20
- **Urim:** Ex 28:20 Nu 27:21 De 33:8
- **prophets:** Ps 74:9 La 2:9 Eze 20:3
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passage:

1 Samuel 14:37+ **Saul inquired of God**, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You give them into the hand of Israel?" But He did not answer him on that day.

SAUL INQUIRED TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE!

When Saul inquired ([shaal](#); Lxx - [eperotao](#) - to ask for something) **of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets** - This is Saul's second inquiry of Yahweh (1Sa 14:37 - also uses [shaal](#); Lxx - [eperotao](#) - to ask for something) and his second "busy signal!" Note that 1Ch 10:14 says Saul "did not inquire of the LORD," where inquire is a different Hebrew word (darash) conveys the sense of God's people seeking after their God (Dt. 4:29; Hos. 10:12; Amos 5:4), a type of seeking that will be greatly rewarded (Ps 34:10). That this nuance of seeking God Himself is an important aspect of asking God is shown by the Septuagint translation of 1Ch 10:14 which uses the verb [ekzeteeo](#) which describes an intense seeking, a diligent

searching, with a sincere and earnest desire to obtain God's favor (as in Septuagint translations of Dt 4:29, 2Ch 15:2, 13, Ps 14:2, Jer 29:13 which all use *darash* and [ekzeteo](#)). In the Septuagint the verb [ekzeteo](#) is preceded by the strongest Greek negative (*ou/ouk*) signifying that Saul **absolutely did not seek for God with this type of heart seeking**. One might say it this way -- Saul wanted an answer from God, but he was not really seeking after God Himself. The tragedy of Saul is that while he did not inquire of God in the sense meant by

The writer describes 3 ways God communicated with men in the Old Testament. Saul had effectively, "efficiently" eradicated two of the methods of communication, the prophets and the priests. Recall the priests had been summarily annihilated by Saul in a fit of paranoia motivated by jealousy and anger (1Sa 22:11-19+). But in the providence of God, one some of the priest Ahimelech named Abiathar had escaped the sword and fled to David with the ephod (1Sa 22:20-21+, 1Sa 23:6+). So Saul had no priests and no ephod, which meant that there was no Urim to enable divine communication because the Urim was in a pocket vest of the ephod. Saul had also cut off the lines of communication with one of the greatest prophets in the history of Israel, the man of God Samuel (1Sa 15:35+). Finally, and most devastating of all Saul had rejected the Word of God and the LORD had rejected him from being king over Israel (1Sa 15:26+).

David - a king without a country but with a God!

Saul - a man with a country but not with a God!

The irony of the two men anointed king of Israel is that one was a man with a country but without God, while the other was a man without a country but with God! The other irony is that the Hebrew verb for inquire is the root of Saul's name, specifically it is a passive participle form of *shaal*, making it clear that Saul was "the asked for one" to reign as king over Israel. Israel GOT WHAT THEY ASK FOR -- A king like all of the other nations! Now it was time for a king after God's own heart!

Robert Bergen - Quite properly, Saul first "**inquired of the LORD**" (1Sa 28:6), seeking guidance in dealing with the Philistines. (The comment in 1 Chr 10:14 that Saul died because he "**did not inquire of the LORD**" does not contradict this passage. Instead, it affirms the contention of 1 Sam 28 that Saul's final source of guidance was not Yahweh.) However, the Lord "**did not answer him by dreams,**" that is, through a personal revelation given directly to him. Nor did the Lord respond by means of the **Urim,**" that is, with the revelatory device that could only be used with the assistance of an Aaronic priest (cf. Ex 28:30; Nu 27:21). This is not surprising since Saul had slain many of the Aaronic priests, and the only named surviving priest from Nob—one who possessed an ephod—had fled to David (cf. 1Sa 22:18–20). Furthermore, **the Lord did not answer by means of "prophets."** Saul did not receive a prophetic word for two reasons: **first**, because Samuel was dead, and **second**, he had lost the support of the prophets when Samuel, the leading prophet of Israel in his generation and the leader of a group of prophets (cf. 1Sa 19:20), had declared Saul's kingship had ended (cf. 1Sa 15:24, 28–29). (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

Inquire ([07592](#)) **shaal** means ask, inquire, consult. One could ask another person or even God for something (1 Sam. 23:2; Ps. 122:6; 137:3; Eccl. 7:10). People sometimes sought information by asking Urim and Thummim (Num. 27:21), or an occult wooden object (Ezek. 21:21; Hos. 4:12). Solomon asked for wisdom (1 Ki. 3:5, 11), David frequently inquired of the Lord (1 Sam. 23:2; 30:8; 2 Sam. 2:1; 5:19, 23; 1 Chr. 14:10, 14), but the leaders of Israel "asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord" and were thus deceived by the Gibeonites (Josh. 9:14). Since prayer often includes asking or petition, *shā'al* is sometimes used in the sense of "praying for" something: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps. 122:6) In the idiomatic phrase, "to ask another of his welfare," it carries the sense of a greeting (cf. Ex 18:7; Jdg 18:15; 1Sa 10:4). Frequently, it is used to indicate someone's asking for God's direction or counsel (Josh. 9:14; Isa. 30:2). In Ps. 109:10 it is used to indicate a begging.

Shaal - uses in 1 Samuel-2 Chronicles 1 Sam. 1:17; 1 Sam. 1:20; 1 Sam. 1:27; 1 Sam. 1:28; 1 Sam. 2:20; 1 Sam. 8:10; 1 Sam. 10:4; 1 Sam. 10:22; 1 Sam. 12:13; 1 Sam. 12:17; 1 Sam. 12:19; 1 Sam. 14:37; 1 Sam. 17:22; 1 Sam. 17:56; 1 Sam. 19:22; 1 Sam. 20:6; 1 Sam. 20:28; 1 Sam. 22:10; 1 Sam. 22:13; 1 Sam. 22:15; 1 Sam. 23:2; 1 Sam. 23:4; 1 Sam. 25:5; 1 Sam. 25:8; 1 Sam. 28:6; 1 Sam. 28:16; 1 Sam. 30:8; 1 Sam. 30:21; 2 Sam. 2:1; 2 Sam. 3:13; 2 Sam. 5:19; 2 Sam. 5:23; 2 Sam. 8:10; 2 Sam. 11:7; 2 Sam. 12:20; 2 Sam. 14:18; 2 Sam. 16:23; 2 Sam. 20:18; 1 Ki. 2:16; 1 Ki. 2:20; 1 Ki. 2:22; 1 Ki. 3:5; 1 Ki. 3:10; 1 Ki. 3:11; 1 Ki. 3:13; 1 Ki. 10:13; 1 Ki. 19:4; 2 Ki. 2:9; 2 Ki. 2:10; 2 Ki. 4:3; 2 Ki. 4:28; 2 Ki. 6:5; 2 Ki. 8:6; 1 Chr. 4:10; 1 Chr. 10:13; 1 Chr. 14:10; 1 Chr. 14:14; 1 Chr. 18:10; 2 Chr. 1:7; 2 Chr. 1:11; 2 Chr. 9:12; 2 Chr. 11:23

Apologetics Study Bible (see note) Why didn't the Lord answer Saul's plea for help? The Bible teaches that people who consistently reject God's leadership in their lives, and refuse to follow the guidance He has already provided, should not expect Him to deliver them from trouble resulting from their poor choices (Job 27:9; 35:12; Pr 1:23-28; Is 1:15; Jer 11:11; 14:12; Ezek 8:18; Mic 3:4; Zech 7:13; James 4:3). **Saul had consistently disobeyed God** (1Sa 13:13-14; 15:11-23), even going so far as to kill the Lord's priests (1Sa 22:17-19). He had created vast problems for himself and his nation. The Lord was not going to promise the king supernatural deliverance from those problems, even though Saul earnestly sought His help. Instead, God would use the Philistines

Norman Geisler - [goto page 181 in When Critics Ask](#) -

1 Chronicles 10:14—**Did Saul inquire of the Lord or not?**

PROBLEM: 1 Samuel 28:6 says “when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him.” However, this verse says just the opposite, namely, “he [Saul] did not inquire of the Lord; therefore He killed him.” But how can both be true?

SOLUTION: It should be noted first that two different words with different meanings are used here. Samuel uses the Hebrew word *shaal*, which usually means simply to ask, to consult, or to request. Chronicles, however, uses the word *darash* which often means to search for, or to seek after. In other words, Saul did not sincerely inquire of the Lord because He really wanted to know God’s will, but because he was hoping God would agree with his will.

In brief, Saul inquired casually but not sincerely. He went through the ritual, but he was not seeking the reality.

1 Samuel 28:7 Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "Behold, there is a woman who is a medium at En-dor."

- **Seek:** 2Ki 1:2,3 6:33 Isa 8:19,20 La 3:25,26 Hab 2:3
- **medium:** 1Sa 28:3 De 18:11 Isa 19:3 Ac 16:16
- **that I may:** Lev 19:31 1Ch 10:13 Isa 8:19
- **Endor:** Jos 17:11 Ps 83:10
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Leviticus 20:27+ (PENALTY FOR MEDIUMS) ‘Now a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their bloodguiltiness is upon them.’”

Deuteronomy 18:9-14+ (LAW REGARDING MEDIUMS) “When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. 10 “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 “For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you. 13 “You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. 14 “For those nations, which you shall dispossess, **listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners**, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do so.

Deuteronomy 17:18-19+ (INSTRUCTIONS FOR KING AND THE LAW) Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. 19 “It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, 20 that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.

See ENDOR North of Jezreel
GILBOA just south of Jezreel

SAUL STOOPS TO SORCERY!

Then - This marks progression in the narrative and in context marks Saul's state of extreme fear and desperation.

Saul said to his servants, "Seek for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her."- Clearly Saul is at "wits end" and "beside himself." Had he been doing what a king should have been doing (see Dt 17:18-20 [above](#)), he would have known that consulting a medium was tantamount to committing a capital offense against the Most High God. It is notable that Saul does die some 24 hours after this dark deed!

And his servants said to him, "Behold, there is a woman who is a medium at En-dor- Now if Saul was a godly man, he would have thrown the servants into the brig (or worse) for not revealing the presence of a medium at En-dor. Why? Because Saul had set about to rid Israel of spiritism so prior to this crisis time he would not have looked favorably on his servants withholding information of a known medium. But Saul was an opportunist and was desperate to hear a Word from God.

Related Resource:

- [Saul, The Spiritist, and Samuel," Grace Journal 11.1 \(Winter 1970\): 13-29](#). Thomas O. Figart

Norman Geisler - From [When Cultists Ask](#) Similar to below but with slight differences

1 SAMUEL 28:7–20—How could God allow the witch of Endor to raise Samuel from the dead when God condemned witchcraft?

MISINTERPRETATION: The Bible severely condemns witchcraft and communication with the dead (Exod. 22:18; Lev. 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:9–12; Isa. 8:19). In the Old Testament, those who practiced it were to receive capital punishment. King Saul knew this and even put all witches out of the land (1 Sam. 28:3). Nevertheless, in disobedience to God, he went to the witch of Endor, asking her to contact the dead prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 28:11–19). The problem here is that she appears to be successful in contacting Samuel, which seems to lend validity to the powers of witchcraft, which the Bible so severely condemns. Those who practice witchcraft, such as Wicca, sometimes cite this verse in support of their religion (Mather and Nichols, 1993, 313).

CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION: Some believe that the witch worked a miracle by demonic powers and actually brought Samuel back from the dead. In support of this they cite passages which indicate that demons have the power to perform miracles (Matt. 7:22; 2 Cor. 11:14; 2 Thess. 2:9, 10; Rev. 16:14). The objections to this view include the fact that death is final (Heb. 9:27). The dead cannot return (2 Sam. 12:23) because there is a great gulf fixed by God (Luke 16:24–26), and demons cannot usurp God's authority over life and death (Job 1:10–12).

Others have suggested that the witch did not really bring up Samuel from the dead, but simply faked doing so. They support this by reference to demons who deceive people who try to contact the dead (Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:11; 1 Chron. 10:13) and by the contention that demons sometimes utter what is true (cf. Acts 16:17). The objections to this view include the fact that the passage seems to say Samuel did return from the dead, that he provided a prophecy from Samuel that actually came to pass, and that it is unlikely that demons would have uttered truth of God, since the devil is the father of lies (John 8:44).

Another view is that the witch did not bring up Samuel from the dead, but God himself intervened to rebuke Saul for his sin: (a) Samuel seemed to actually return from the dead (vv. 14, 20), but (b) neither humans nor demons have the power to bring people back from the dead (Luke 16:24–31; Heb. 9:27). (c) The witch herself seemed to be surprised by the appearance of Samuel from the dead (v. 12). (d) There is a direct condemnation of witchcraft in verse 9. It is highly unlikely that the same text would give credence to witchcraft by claiming that witches can actually bring people back from the dead. (e) God sometimes speaks in unexpected places through unusual means (cf. Balaam's donkey, Num. 22). The major objections to this view are that the text does not explicitly say that God performed the miracle, and that a witch's dwelling is a strange place to do it. God is sovereign in regard to when and where he intervenes, however, and not all miracles are labeled as such (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:1–9). A miraculous act can speak for itself.

Norman Geisler - [see page 151 When Critics Ask](#) - **1 SAMUEL 28:7ff—How could God allow the Witch of Endor to raise Samuel from the dead when God condemned witchcraft?**

PROBLEM: The Bible severely condemns witchcraft and communication with the dead (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:9–12; Isa. 8:19). In the OT those who practiced it were to receive capital punishment. King Saul knew this and even put all witches out of the land (1 Sam. 28:3). Nevertheless, in disobedience to God, he went to the witch of Endor for her to contact the dead prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 28:8ff). The problem here is that she appears to be successful in contacting Samuel, which lends validity to the powers of witchcraft which the Bible so severely condemns.

SOLUTION: Several possible solutions have been offered to this episode at Endor. Three will be summarized here.

First, some believe that the witch worked a miracle by demonic powers and actually brought Samuel back from the dead. In support of this they cite passages which indicate that demons have the power to perform miracles (Matt. 7:22; 2 Cor. 11:14; 2 Thes. 2:9–10; Rev. 16:14). The objections to this view include the fact that death is final (Heb. 9:27), the dead cannot return (2 Sam. 12:23) because there is a great gulf fixed by God (Luke 16:24–27), and demons cannot usurp God's authority over life and death (Job 1:10–12).

Second, others have suggested that the witch did not really bring up Samuel from the dead, but simply faked doing so. They support this by reference to demons who deceive people who try to contact the dead (Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:11; 1 Chron. 10:13) and by the contention that demons sometimes utter what is true (cf. Acts 16:17). The objections to this view include the fact that the passage seems to say Samuel did return from the dead, that he provided a prophecy from Samuel that actually came to pass, and that it is unlikely that demons would have uttered truth of God, since the devil is the father of lies (John 8:44).

A third view is that the witch did not bring up Samuel from the dead, but God Himself intervened in the witch's tent to rebuke Saul for his sin. In support of this view is the following: (a) Samuel seemed to actually return from the dead (v. 14), but (b) neither humans nor demons have the power to bring people back from the dead (Luke 16:24–27; Heb. 9:27). (c) The witch herself seemed to be surprised by the appearance of Samuel from the dead (v. 12). (d) There is a direct condemnation of witchcraft in this passage (v. 9), and thus it is highly unlikely that it would give credence to witchcraft by claiming that witches can actually bring people back from the dead. (e) God sometimes speaks in unsuspecting places through unusual means (cf. Baalam's donkey, Num. 22). (f) The miracle was not performed through the witch, but in spite of her. (g) Samuel seems to really appear from the dead, rebukes Saul, and utters a true prophecy (v. 19). (h) God explicitly and repeatedly condemned contacting the dead (see above) and would not contradict this by giving credence to witchcraft. The major objections to this view are that the text does not explicitly say that God performed the miracle, and that a witch's tent is a strange place to perform this miracle.

1 Samuel 28:8 Then Saul disguised himself by putting on other clothes, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, "Conjure up for me, please, and bring up for me whom I shall name to you."

- **disguised:** 1Ki 14:2,3 22:30,34 Job 24:13-15 Jer 23:24 Joh 3:19
- **please:** De 18:11 1Ch 10:13 Isa 8:19
- **bring:** 1Sa 28:15
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

See **ENDOR North of Jezreel**
GILBOA just south of Jezreel

SAUL DISGUISES HIMSELF BUT REVEALS HIS HEART

Then - When is then? This seems that in his desperate state of mind, he moves quickly to seek an answer to his question of how to handle the invading Philistine forces. Desperate times call for desperate measures

Saul disguised himself by putting on other clothes - Why would he need to disguise himself? He was the very one who had commanded extermination of mediums, so for him to be seen consulting a medium would expose his hypocrisy. Saul seems always to be concerned what men thought of him, but had relatively little concern for what God thought! Indeed, Saul was truly a man after a man's heart! Secondly, from the map above, Saul would need to travel north from Gilboa about 6 miles to Endor which meant he would be going through Philistine occupied territory (Philistines were at Shunem 2 miles south of Endor). Thirdly, he did not want the medium to recognize him, lest she refuse to perform necromancy for fear of him killing her. Given the dangers inherent of this endeavor, we can see how utterly desperate Saul was at this point to take the risk.

and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night - Why **by night**? This has been addressed above. It is almost symbolic that he went at **night** for it reminds us of another man named Judas who went out from the last supper John writing "and it was night." (Jn 13:30). Two men separated by 1000 years, but united in that they both had dark hearts, both rejected the word of the Lord and both suffered dreadful deaths from suicide.

And he said, "Conjure up for me, please, and bring up for me whom I shall name to you - Saul has just committed a capital crime for which the Torah called for the death penalty. In Saul's bitter tragic ending, God the righteous Judge would pass sentence on Saul and carry it out within 24 hours of his abominable crime!

EVALUATION OF SAUL'S LIFE	
GOOD POINTS	DEGENERATED INTO

Striking Appearance 1Sa 9:2	Pride 1Sa 18:8
Initiative 1Sa 11:7	Rebellion 1Sa 20:31
Bravery 1Sa 13:3	Recklessness 1Sa 14:24
Patriotic Spirit-filling 1 Sa 11:6	Demon Possession 1 Sa 16:14

Gleason Archer - [page 184 of New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties](#) -What took place in 1 Samuel 28:8–16? Did Samuel really appear to Saul? Did Saul actually talk with him in the witch’s cave?

There is little doubt that satanic powers are able to produce illusionary images and communicate with the living by this means. Such “lying wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9) are part of the Devil’s stock in trade. On the other hand, it certainly lies within God’s power as well to present an appearance for the purpose of conveying His message by a special revelation.

The oracle delivered by this shade or apparition sounded like an authentic message from God, with its announcement of doom on the guilty, unfaithful king. It even sounded like something Samuel himself would have said, had he remained alive after the massacre of Ahimelech and the priests of Nob (1 Sam. 22:11–19). Therefore it is entirely possible that this apparition was the actual shade of Samuel himself, when he asked, “Why has thou disquieted me, to bring me up?” Apparently Samuel had been directed by God to leave his abode in Sheol or Hades (where even the saved believers awaited the future resurrection of Christ, which would bring about their transferal to heaven itself) in order to deliver this final message to King Saul. Conceivably the deceased Samuel could have communicated long distance through an apparition in the cave of Endor, but the words “to bring me up” make this very doubtful.

On the other hand, it should be observed that the witch herself was quite startled by this ghostly visitor, as she said, “I see a god [Heb. ’elōhím] coming up out of the earth” (v.13). This clearly implies that this authentic appearance of the dead (if such it was) was no result of her own witchcraft; rather, it was an act of God Himself that terrified her and that she had in no sense brought about in her own power. It would seem that God chose this particular occasion and setting to give His final word to the evil king who had once served His cause with courage and zeal. No scriptural basis for spiritism is furnished by this episode, nor for necromancy—both of which are sternly condemned as abominations before the Lord (Deut. 18:9–12; cf. Exod. 22:18; Lev. 19:26,31; 20:6,27; Jer. 27:9–10).

1 Samuel 28:9 But the woman said to him, "Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?"

- **how he:** 1Sa 28:3
- **why are you then:** 2Sa 18:13 2Ki 5:7
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**SAUL'S HYPOCRISY:
SEEKING A MEDIUM**

A hypocrite is someone whose behavior belies their words. Their practice is at odds with their profession. In Saul's case he claimed to be a witch hunter/killer but ends up being a seance seeker! As we have repeatedly seen, Saul is spiritually schizophrenic at best!

But the woman said to him, "Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death - The medium is suspicious these men might be spies sent by Saul to eliminate her! Boy, is she is for the surprise of her life (in more ways than one)!

1 Samuel 28:10 Saul vowed to her by the LORD, saying, "As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing."

- **vowed:** 1Sa 14:39 19:6 Ge 3:5 Ex 20:7 De 18:10-12 2Sa 14:11 Mt 26:72 Mk 6:23
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE HYPOCRITE SWEARS BLASPHEMOUSLY

Saul vowed to her by the LORD, saying, "As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing- Saul is amazing as he has no sense of sacred spiritual boundaries. Here he is at a medium's home, having supposedly cleansed the land of mediums, while he himself is committing a crime that in the Torah calls for the death penalty. And to top it all off, he has the gall to use the LORD'S name in vain to justify his evil!

Woodhouse - The incongruity of swearing an oath by the Lord about this act of deep rebellion and disobedience to the Lord seems to have escaped Saul. ("The irony of Saul's doing this in a negotiation with a conjurer of spirits is vividly caught by the Midrash: 'Whom did Saul resemble at that moment? A woman who is with her lover and swears by the life of her husband.' " [Borrow Alter, David, p. 173.](#)) The woman, too, seems strangely, even naively, obliging. We might expect her to ask who this stranger was to offer such a guarantee against the king's decree. Instead we read: "Then the woman said, 'Whom shall I bring up for you?' " (v. 11a). ([1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader](#))

1 Samuel 28:11 Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" And he said, "Bring up Samuel for me."

- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE WITCH LET'S DOWN HER GUARD

Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" - The medium accepts Saul's blasphemous oath, although she still does not know the identity of the man who made the oath. She's in the fiduciary business of carrying out necromancy and business has probably been slow since Saul declared his "witchhunt" edict.

And he said, "Bring up Samuel for me - It is interesting Saul does not say *Samuel the prophet* because surely other Israelite boys had been born and died with the name of this popular prophet. She forgoes asking anymore detail on his identity and goes into action with just the name "Samuel."

1 Samuel 28:12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman spoke to Saul, saying, "Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul."

- **Saul:** 1Sa 28:3 1Ki 14:5
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

WONDERMENT AND DISCERNMENT OF THE WITCH

When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice- The Hebrew text says she "saw Samuel." It does not say she saw a vision of Samuel, etc. The text would support this was Samuel and that she actually recognized him. But Saul is still in the dark in more ways than one!

and the woman spoke to Saul, saying, "Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul - Not only does she seem to recognize Samuel, but somehow she now discerns that the person requesting Samuel's appearance is Saul himself.

Woodhouse - This chapter of the Bible tells us nothing whatsoever about the practice of mediums and necromancy (except to remind us of the fact that the Law and the prophets forbade these practices). It is a mistake to try to draw conclusions on that subject from this chapter. Did the woman have the power to bring Samuel back from the dead? The text does not say so. It simply tells us that Samuel appeared. It seems far more likely to me that the Lord sent Samuel to Saul on this evening, just as on a very

different occasion he sent Moses and Elijah to Jesus (Matthew 17:3). The dark powers of this woman (if she possessed such) were irrelevant.²⁶([1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader](#))

[Apologetics Study Bible \(see note\)](#) Did the medium of Endor really conjure up the dead prophet Samuel? Though scholars disagree on this question, the Bible suggests that she did. The law of Moses sternly forbids consultation of mediums (Lv 20:27; Dt 18:10-12) but never says that communicating with dead people is impossible. Saul was seemingly able to speak with a figure that not only accurately repeated key themes from Samuel's previous private conversations with Saul, but also correctly predicted the deaths of Saul and his sons. This suggests that the king was indeed speaking with Samuel.

1 Samuel 28:13 The king said to her, "Do not be afraid; but what do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a divine being coming up out of the earth."

BGT 1 Samuel 28:13 κα ε πεν α τ βασιλε ς μ φοβο ε π ν τ να ρακα ς κα ε πεν α τ Θεο ς ρακα
ναβα νοντας κ τ ς γ ς

LXE 1 Samuel 28:13 And the king said to her, Fear not; tell me whom thou has seen. And the woman said to him, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

KJV 1 Samuel 28:13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

NET 1 Samuel 28:13 The king said to her, "Don't be afraid! What have you seen?" The woman replied to Saul, "I have seen one like a god coming up from the ground!"

CSB 1 Samuel 28:13 But the king said to her, "Don't be afraid. What do you see?" "I see a spirit form coming up out of the earth," the woman answered.

ESV 1 Samuel 28:13 The king said to her, "Do not be afraid. What do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a god coming up out of the earth."

NIV 1 Samuel 28:13 The king said to her, "Don't be afraid. What do you see?" The woman said, "I see a spirit coming up out of the ground."

NLT 1 Samuel 28:13 "Don't be afraid!" the king told her. "What do you see?" "I see a god coming up out of the earth," she said.

NRS 1 Samuel 28:13 The king said to her, "Have no fear; what do you see?" The woman said to Saul, "I see a divine being coming up out of the ground."

NJB 1 Samuel 28:13 The king said, 'Do not be afraid! What do you see?' The woman replied to Saul, 'I see a ghost rising from the earth.'

NAB 1 Samuel 28:13 But the king said to her, "Have no fear. What do you see?" The woman answered Saul, "I see a preternatural being rising from the earth."

YLT 1 Samuel 28:13 And the king saith to her, 'Do not fear; for what hast thou seen?' and the woman saith unto Saul, 'Gods I have seen coming up out of the earth.'

GWN 1 Samuel 28:13 "Don't be afraid," the king said to her. "What do you see?" "I see a god rising from the ground," the woman answered.

BBE 1 Samuel 28:13 And the king said to her, Have no fear: what do you see? And the woman said to Saul, I see a god coming up out of the earth.

RSV 1 Samuel 28:13 The king said to her, "Have no fear; what do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a god coming up out of the earth."

NKJ 1 Samuel 28:13 And the king said to her, "Do not be afraid. What did you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth."

ASV 1 Samuel 28:13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what seest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I see a god coming up out of the earth.

DBY 1 Samuel 28:13 And the king said to her, Be not afraid; but what didst thou see? And the woman said to

Saul, I saw a god ascending out of the earth.

BHT 1 Samuel 28:13 wayyö⁹ mer läh hamme⁹lek ´al-Tîrî Kî mâ rä´ît waTTö⁹ mer hä|´iššâ ´el-šâ´ûl ´élöhîm rä ´îti `ölîm min-hä´ä⁹rec

NIRV 1 Samuel 28:13 He said to her, "Don't be afraid. Tell me what you see." The woman said, "I see a spirit. He's coming up out of the ground."

RWB 1 Samuel 28:13 And the king said to her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said to Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

WEB 1 Samuel 28:13 And the king said to her be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said to Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

- **coming up out of the earth:** Ex 4:16 22:28 Ps 82:6,7 Joh 10:34,35
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAUL UNAWARE OF WITCHES SAMUEL SIGHTING

The king said to her, "Do not be afraid; but what do you see?"- Trapped by her recognition of him and not wanting to "lose touch" with whoever caused the medium to cry out with a loud voice, he tell her "fear not."

And the woman said to Saul, "I see a divine being coming up out of the earth- This statement would also support that this being was in fact Samuel up from the bowels of Sheol (the "cool side").

Woodhouse - There is no point in speculating about why or how she could see Samuel, but Saul could not and had to ask. In response the woman gave a description, if we can call it that, of what she saw: "And the woman said to Saul, 'I see a god coming up out of the earth' " (v. 13b). That was not particularly helpful. (The plural term translated "a god" (ESV) has been variously rendered: "a ghostly form" (REB); "a spirit" (NIV); "a ghost" (Mauchline, 1 and 2 Samuel, p. 182); "a divine being" (NRSV) ([1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader](#))

1 Samuel 28:14 He said to her, "What is his form?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage.

BGT 1 Samuel 28:14 κα ε πεν α τ τ γνωσ κα ε πεν α τ νδρα ρθιον ναβανοντα κ τς γς κα ο τος διπλο δα ναβεβλημ νος κα γνω Σαουλ τι Σαμουηλ ο τος κα κυψεν π πρ σωπον α το π τ ν γ ν κα προσεκ νησεν α τ

LXE 1 Samuel 28:14 And he said to her, What didst thou perceive? and she said to him, An upright man ascending out of the earth, and he was clothed with a mantle. And Saul knew that this was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the earth, and did obeisance to him.

KJV 1 Samuel 28:14 And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.

NET 1 Samuel 28:14 He said to her, "What about his appearance?" She said, "An old man is coming up! He is wrapped in a robe!" Then Saul realized it was Samuel, and he bowed his face toward the ground and knelt down.

CSB 1 Samuel 28:14 Then Saul asked her, "What does he look like?" "An old man is coming up," she replied. "He's wearing a robe." Then Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed his face to the ground and paid homage.

ESV 1 Samuel 28:14 He said to her, "What is his appearance?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage.

NIV 1 Samuel 28:14 "What does he look like?" he asked. "An old man wearing a robe is coming up," she said. Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.

NLT 1 Samuel 28:14 "What does he look like?" Saul asked. "He is an old man wrapped in a robe," she replied. Saul realized it was Samuel, and he fell to the ground before him.

NRS 1 Samuel 28:14 He said to her, "What is his appearance?" She said, "An old man is coming up; he is wrapped in a robe." So Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance.

NJB 1 Samuel 28:14 'What is he like?' he asked. She replied, 'It is an old man coming up; he is wrapped in a cloak.' Saul then knew that it was Samuel and, bowing to the ground, prostrated himself.

NAB 1 Samuel 28:14 "What does he look like?" asked Saul. And she replied, "It is an old man who is rising, clothed in a mantle." Saul knew that it was Samuel, and so he bowed face to the ground in homage.

YLT 1 Samuel 28:14 And he saith to her, 'What is his form?' and she saith, 'An aged man is coming up, and he is covered with an upper robe;' and Saul knoweth that he is Samuel, and boweth -- face to thee earth -- and doth obeisance.

GWN 1 Samuel 28:14 "In what form?" he asked her. She answered, "An old man is coming up, and he's wearing a robe." Then Saul knew it was Samuel. Saul knelt down with his face touching the ground.

BBE 1 Samuel 28:14 And he said to her, What is his form? And she said, It is an old man coming up covered with a robe. And Saul saw that it was Samuel, and with his face bent down to the earth he gave him honour.

RSV 1 Samuel 28:14 He said to her, "What is his appearance?" And she said, "An old man is coming up; and he is wrapped in a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance.

NKJ 1 Samuel 28:14 So he said to her, "What is his form?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is covered with a mantle." And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed down.

ASV 1 Samuel 28:14 And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a robe. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance.

DBY 1 Samuel 28:14 And he said to her, What is his form? And she said, An old man comes up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.

BHT 1 Samuel 28:14 wayyö⁹mer lâ mà|-Tä'órô waTTö⁹mer 'îš zäqên `ölè wühú´ `öþè mü`il wayyë⁹da` šä`ûl Kîl-šümú`ël hû´ wayyiqqöd´ aPPa⁹yim´ a⁹rcâ wayyišTä⁹Hû s

NIRV 1 Samuel 28:14 "What does he look like?" Saul asked. "An old man wearing a robe is coming up," she said. Then Saul knew it was Samuel. He bowed down. He lay down flat with his face toward the ground.

RWB 1 Samuel 28:14 And he said to her, What is his form? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.

WEB 1 Samuel 28:14 And he said to her, What is his form? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he {is} covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it {was} Samuel, and he stooped with {his} face to the ground, and bowed himself.

- **a robe:** 1Sa 15:27 2Ki 2:8,13,14
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAMUEL AND SAUL'S REUNION

He said to her, "What is his form?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe." It was fitting that Samuel was **wrapped in a robe**. The last time Saul had seen Samuel he had torn the **robe** symbolizing Yahweh's tearing of the kingdom from Saul. The word for **robe** is same word used of the boy Samuel's robe (1Sa 2:19) and the prophet Samuel's robe which Saul tore (1Sa 15:27).

And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage- **Saul knew** is the Hebrew

verb yada, which can speak of intimately knowledge, and indicates that in some way Saul at that moment knew it was Samuel. Did Saul see Samuel? The text is not clear but based on what he knew was Samuel, he responds with reverential submission. It is too bad that he had not submitted to Samuel's authority after he been anointed king, for things might have been so different for his 40 year reign.

Woodhouse - This is the first (and only) time we have seen Saul bowing down before another human. He had bowed before the Lord (1 Samuel 15:31), and others in the story had bowed, (David to Jonathan, 1 Samuel 20:41; David to Saul, 1 Samuel 24:8; Abigail to David, 1 Samuel 25:23, 41.) but not Saul. The king had at last been brought to his knees. ([1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader](#))

1 Samuel 28:15 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" And Saul answered, "I am greatly distressed; for the Philistines are waging war against me, and God has departed from me and no longer answers me, either through prophets or by dreams; therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I should do."

BGT 1 Samuel 28:15 κα ε πεν Σαμουηλ να τ παρην χλησ ς μοι ναβ να με κα ε πεν Σαουλ θλ βομαι σφ δρα κα ο λλ φυλοι πολεμο σιν ν μο κα θε ς φ στηκεν π μο κα ο κ πακ κο ν μοι τι κα ν χειρ τ ν προφητ ν κα ν το ς νυπν οις κα ν ν κ κληκ σε γνωρ σαι μοι τ ποι σω

LXE 1 Samuel 28:15 And Samuel said, Why hast thou troubled me, that I should come up? And Saul said, I am greatly distressed, and the Philistines war against me, and God has departed from me, and no longer hearkens to me either by the hand of the prophets or by dreams: and now I have called thee to tell me what I shall do.

KJV 1 Samuel 28:15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

NET 1 Samuel 28:15 Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Saul replied, "I am terribly troubled! The Philistines are fighting against me and God has turned away from me. He does not answer me— not by the prophets nor by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what I should do."

CSB 1 Samuel 28:15 "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Samuel asked Saul. "I'm in serious trouble," replied Saul. "The Philistines are fighting against me and God has turned away from me. He doesn't answer me anymore, either through the prophets or in dreams. So I've called on you to tell me what I should do."

ESV 1 Samuel 28:15 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Saul answered, "I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams. Therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do."

NIV 1 Samuel 28:15 Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" "I am in great distress," Saul said. "The Philistines are fighting against me, and God has turned away from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what to do."

NLT 1 Samuel 28:15 "Why have you disturbed me by calling me back?" Samuel asked Saul. "Because I am in deep trouble," Saul replied. "The Philistines are at war with me, and God has left me and won't reply by prophets or dreams. So I have called for you to tell me what to do."

NRS 1 Samuel 28:15 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Saul answered, "I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams; so I have summoned you to tell me what I should do."

NJB 1 Samuel 28:15 Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed my rest by conjuring me up?' Saul replied, 'I am in great distress; the Philistines are waging war on me, and God has abandoned me and no longer answers me either by prophet or by dream; and so I have summoned you to tell me what I ought to do.'

NAB 1 Samuel 28:15 Samuel then said to Saul, "Why do you disturb me by conjuring me up?" Saul replied: "I am in great straits, for the Philistines are waging war against me and God has abandoned me. Since he no

longer answers me through prophets or in dreams, I have called you to tell me what I should do."

YLT 1 Samuel 28:15 And Samuel saith unto Saul, 'Why hast thou troubled me, to bring me up?' And Saul saith, 'I have great distress, and the Philistines are fighting against me, God hath turned aside from me, and hath not answered me any more, either by the hand of the prophets, or by dreams; and I call for thee to let me know what I do.'

GWN 1 Samuel 28:15 Samuel asked Saul, "Why did you disturb me by conjuring me up?" Saul answered, "I'm in serious trouble. The Philistines are at war with me, and God has turned against me and doesn't answer me anymore-either by the prophets or in dreams. So I've called on you to tell me what to do."

BBE 1 Samuel 28:15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why have you made me come up, troubling my rest? And Saul in answer said, I am in great danger; for the Philistines are making war on me, and God has gone away from me and will no longer give me any answer, by the prophets or by dreams: so I have sent for you to make clear to me what I am to do.

RSV 1 Samuel 28:15 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Saul answered, "I am in great distress; for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams; therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do."

NKJ 1 Samuel 28:15 Now Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" And Saul answered, "I am deeply distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me and does not answer me anymore, neither by prophets nor by dreams. Therefore I have called you, that you may reveal to me what I should do."

ASV 1 Samuel 28:15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

DBY 1 Samuel 28:15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul said, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answers me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams; therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known to me what I shall do.

BHT 1 Samuel 28:15 wayyô⁹mer šümú⁹él 'el-šá⁹ûl lâ⁹mmâ hirGazTa⁹nî lûha`âlôt 'ôfî wayyô⁹mer šá⁹ûl car-lî mû⁹öd ûpûlišTîm nilHâmîm Bî wē|lôhîm sâr mē|`ālay wūlô|`-`ānâ⁹nî `öd Gam Būya|d-hannübî`îm Gam-Ba⁹Hálômô⁹t wā`eqrâ`è lûkâ lûhôdî`ē⁹nî mâ `e`ésè s

NIRV 1 Samuel 28:15 Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you troubled me by bringing me up from the dead?" "I'm having big problems," Saul said. "The Philistines are fighting against me. God has turned away from me. He doesn't answer me anymore. He doesn't speak to me through prophets or dreams. So I've called on you to tell me what to do."

RWB 1 Samuel 28:15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am grievously distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God hath departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known to me what I shall do.

WEB 1 Samuel 28:15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am grievously distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God hath departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known to me what I shall do.

- **Why have:** 1Sa 28:8,11
- **I am greatly distressed:** Pr 5:11-13 14:14 Jer 2:17,18
- **Philistines:** 1Sa 28:4
- **God:** 1Sa 16:13,14 18:12 Jdg 16:20 Ps 51:11 Ho 9:12 Mt 25:41
- **answers:** 1Sa 28:6 1Sa 23:2-4,9-12
- **therefore:** Lu 16:23-26
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAUL'S DISTRESS PRESENCE OF ENEMY ABSENCE OF GOD

Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" - The implication is that Samuel had been in a state of rest or tranquility.

Robert Bergen - Scholars are divided on the question of whether Samuel actually spoke to Saul during the seance. Some suggested alternatives include the following: (1) The medium actually roused Samuel. (2) God, not the medium, sent Samuel to Saul. (3) A demonic/satanic deception occurred. (4) The medium faked the apparition. (5) The experience was actually a hallucination. **A surface reading of the text suggests Samuel actually spoke to Saul.** (Borrow [1 & 2 Second Samuel - Shepherd's Notes](#))

John MacArthur writes "God—much to the medium's shock and to Saul's horror—actually allows the deceased prophet to speak words of rebuke to the wicked king." (See [1 Samuel - The Lives of Samuel and Saul](#)).

And Saul answered, "I am greatly distressed - Saul answer is summed up by the fact that he is now in deep trouble.

for - This term of explanation introduces two major reasons Saul is feeling such intense pressure.

the (1) Philistines are waging war against me, and (2) God has departed from me and (3) no longer answers me(contrast David 1Sa 23:2-4,9-12), **either through prophets or by dreams** - Saul has in essence three serious causes for concern! He is not incorrect in his "theological" assessment! Note he does not mention the Urim (possibly because he recalls killing all the priests at Nob!) Saul informs Samuel of facts we have already seen in the preceding passages. The enemy has gathered and God had departed. Furthermore all Saul's attempt to communicate with Yawheh fell on deaf ears. One is reminded of Psalm 66:18 which says "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear." Saul had regarded wickedness in his heart from most of his 40 year reign! He should not expect that he would have any communication with God.

Departed is the Hebrew verb [sur](#) which means that the Spirit of God had gone away (1Sa 16:14) and is in the perfect tense denoting a completed action. The Septuagint translates [sur](#) with the verb [aphistemi](#) is also in the perfect tense which signifies that this departure occurred in the past and the effect is still in existence and implies permanence.

Note what Saul does not say -- he fails to mention his own disobedience as the underlying theological problem!

therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I should do- Therefore introduces Saul's desperate conclusion that he was out of options and the only possible one would be to hear from a dead prophet about how to engage the Philistines.

Woodhouse - The contradiction involved in calling up from the dead Samuel, the great prophet of God, when God had turned away from Saul did not seem to bother the king.([1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader](#))

Departed (turned aside)([05493](#)) [sur](#) basically means to change direction, to turn away, to go away, to desert, to quit, to keep far away, to stop, to take away, to remove, to be removed, to make depart. Literally of turning aside or departing from the road a person is traveling (Jdg 18:3, 15) or departing from a road or path by turning aside from the original course (Ex 3:3; Dt. 2:27; Jdg. 18:3; 19:15; Ru 4:1; 1 Sam. 6:12; 1 Ki 22:32; Jer.5:23); to step out of line militarily (1 Ki 20:39); to retreat from a path (Ge 49:10; Ex 8:27; Nu 12:10; 14:9; Dt. 4:9; Jdg. 16:19; 1 Sa 6:3; 16:14)' Used figuratively, it has to do with the moral direction someone is taking; turning from the right road. Israel turned aside from the way of their ancestors walked (Jdg. 2:17) and away from God's commands (Mal 3:7).

Sur uses in 1 Samuel-2 Chronicles - 1Sa 1:14; 1Sa 6:3; 1Sa 6:12; 1Sa 7:3; 1Sa 7:4; 1Sa 12:20; 1Sa 12:21; 1Sa 15:6; 1Sa 15:32; 1Sa 16:14; 1Sa 16:23; 1Sa 17:26; 1Sa 17:39; 1Sa 17:46; 1Sa 18:12; 1Sa 18:13; 1Sa 21:6; 1Sa 28:3; 1Sa 28:15; 1Sa 28:16; 2Sa 2:21; 2Sa 2:22; 2Sa 2:23; 2Sa 4:7; 2Sa 5:6; 2Sa 6:10; 2Sa 7:15; 2Sa 12:10; 2Sa 16:9; 2Sa 22:23; 1Ki 2:31; 1Ki 15:5; 1Ki 15:12; 1Ki 15:13; 1Ki 15:14; 1Ki 20:24; 1Ki 20:39; 1Ki 20:41; 1Ki 22:32; 1Ki 22:43; 2Ki 3:2; 2Ki 3:3; 2Ki 4:8; 2Ki 4:10; 2Ki 4:11; 2Ki 6:32; 2Ki 10:29; 2Ki 10:31; 2Ki 12:3; 2Ki 13:2; 2Ki 13:6; 2Ki 13:11; 2Ki 14:4; 2Ki 14:24; 2Ki 15:4; 2Ki 15:9; 2Ki 15:18; 2Ki 15:24; 2Ki 15:28; 2Ki 15:35; 2Ki 16:17; 2Ki 17:18; 2Ki 17:22; 2Ki 17:23; 2Ki 18:4; 2Ki 18:6; 2Ki 18:22; 2Ki 22:2; 2Ki 23:19; 2Ki 23:27; 2Ki 24:3; 1Ch 13:13; 1Ch 17:13; 2Ch 8:15; 2Ch 14:3; 2Ch 14:5; 2Ch 15:16; 2Ch 15:17; 2Ch 17:6; 2Ch 20:10; 2Ch 20:32; 2Ch 20:33; 2Ch 25:27; 2Ch 30:9; 2Ch 30:14; 2Ch 32:12; 2Ch 33:8; 2Ch 33:15; 2Ch 34:2; 2Ch 34:33; 2Ch 35:12; 2Ch 35:15; 2Ch 36:3

1 Samuel 28:16 Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has departed from you and has become your adversary?"

BGT 1 Samuel 28:16 κα ε πεν Σαμουηλ να τ περωτ ς με κα κ ριος φ στηκεν π σο κα γ γονεν μετ το πλησ ον σου

LXE 1 Samuel 28:16 And Samuel said, Why askest thou me, whereas the Lord has departed from thee, and taken part with thy neighbour?

KJV 1 Samuel 28:16 Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?

NET 1 Samuel 28:16 Samuel said, "Why are you asking me, now that the LORD has turned away from you and has become your enemy?"

CSB 1 Samuel 28:16 Samuel answered, "Since the LORD has turned away from you and has become your enemy, why are you asking me?"

ESV 1 Samuel 28:16 And Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy?"

NIV 1 Samuel 28:16 Samuel said, "Why do you consult me, now that the LORD has turned away from you and become your enemy?"

NLT 1 Samuel 28:16 But Samuel replied, "Why ask me, since the LORD has left you and has become your enemy?"

NRS 1 Samuel 28:16 Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy?"

NJB 1 Samuel 28:16 Samuel said, 'Why consult me, when Yahweh has abandoned you and has become your enemy?"

NAB 1 Samuel 28:16 To this Samuel said: "But why do you ask me, if the LORD has abandoned you and is with your neighbor?"

YLT 1 Samuel 28:16 And Samuel saith, 'And why dost thou ask me, and Jehovah hath turned aside from thee, and is thine enemy?"

GWN 1 Samuel 28:16 Samuel said, "Why are you asking me when the LORD has turned against you and become your enemy?"

BBE 1 Samuel 28:16 And Samuel said, Why do you put your questions to me, seeing that God has gone away from you and is on the side of him who is against you?"

- **Why then:** Jdg 5:31 2Ki 6:27 Ps 68:1-3 Rev 18:20,24 19:1-6
- **become:** La 2:5
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

1 Samuel 16:13-14 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah.
14 Now **the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul**, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him.

SAMUEL'S CUTTING BUT TRUTHFUL WORDS

Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has departed from you and has become your adversary- Samuel the dead prophet still seems to be a true prophet for the words he utters are true. His words confirm that Saul is correct in saying the LORD had **departed from** him, and this seems to have actually occurred almost 40 years earlier when the Spirit came on David and departed from Saul. (1Sa 16:13-14+). Samuel's second prophetic word reminds one of the words of the greater Prophet Jesus Who declared "he who is not with Me is against me." (Mt 12:30a).

Departed again as in the previous passage is the Hebrew verb [sur](#) which means that the Spirit of God had gone away (1Sa 16:14) and is in the perfect tense denoting a completed action. The Septuagint translates [sur](#) with the verb [aphistemi](#) is also in the perfect tense which signifies that this departure occurred in the past and the effect is still in existence and implies permanence. In short, the prophet Samuel (and I believe this was the actual prophet) gives his diagnosis. In other words Samuel is saying that God does not answer Saul because (1) He had departed from him and (2) He had become God's enemy! Woe!

G C Morgan - The Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine adversary.—1 Sam. 28.16.

Perhaps there is no chapter in Old Testament history more tragic than this. Saul's visit in the day of his trouble to the witch of Endor, was the last manifestation of his degradation. Yet what a testimony it affords to that inherent capacity of man for the spiritual! In the day of his direct calamity, he knew the insufficiency of his own wisdom, the uselessness of human advice, and he longed for a voice from the spirit world. In order to secure it, he turned to a woman whose practices were condemned by the law of God. This is the history of spiritism always. It is more than strange how this story has been quoted in defence of things occult. As a matter of fact it condemns them. Let it be carefully read, and it becomes perfectly evident that this woman had nothing to do with the bringing up of Samuel. Still practising her black art, she commenced to practise the deceptions with which she was familiar. When Samuel appeared, she was startled beyond measure. That he did appear to Saul, there can be no question, but he did not come in response to her call. He was sent of God, for the express purpose of rebuking Saul for his unholy traffic with these evil things, and to pronounce his doom. The words are full of solemn import. God, departed from a man, becomes his adversary, and that in the necessity of the case. God never departs from a man until the man has departed from Him. Then, in the interest of righteousness, God is against that man. (Borrow [Life applications from every chapter of the Bible](#))

1 Samuel 28:17 "The LORD has done accordingly as He spoke through me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David.

BGT 1 Samuel 28:17 κα̅πεπο̅ η̅κεν̅ κ̅ρι̅ς̅ σο̅ι̅ καθ̅ ς̅ λ̅λη̅σεν̅ ν̅ χειρ̅ μου̅ κα̅ δια̅ρρ̅ξι̅ κ̅ρι̅ος̅ τ̅ν̅ βα̅σι̅λε̅αν̅ σου̅ κ̅ χειρ̅ ς̅ σου̅ κα̅ δ̅ σει̅ α̅ τ̅ ν̅ τ̅ πλη̅ρ̅ον̅ σου̅ τ̅ Δ̅α̅υ̅ι̅δ̅

LXE 1 Samuel 28:17 And the Lord has done to thee, as the Lord spoke by me; and the Lord will rend thy kingdom out of thy hand, and will give it to thy neighbour David.

KJV 1 Samuel 28:17 And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David:

NET 1 Samuel 28:17 The LORD has done exactly as I prophesied! The LORD has torn the kingdom from your hand and has given it to your neighbor David!

CSB 1 Samuel 28:17 The LORD has done exactly what He said through me: The LORD has torn the kingship out of your hand and given it to your neighbor David.

ESV 1 Samuel 28:17 The LORD has done to you as he spoke by me, for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David.

NIV 1 Samuel 28:17 The LORD has done what he predicted through me. The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors--to David.

NLT 1 Samuel 28:17 The LORD has done just as he said he would. He has torn the kingdom from you and given it to your rival, David.

NRS 1 Samuel 28:17 The LORD has done to you just as he spoke by me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbor, David.

NJB 1 Samuel 28:17 Yahweh has treated you as he foretold through me; he has snatched the sovereignty from your hand and given it to your neighbour, David,

NAB 1 Samuel 28:17 The LORD has done to you what he foretold through me: he has torn the kingdom from your grasp and has given it to your neighbor David.

YLT 1 Samuel 28:17 And Jehovah doth for Himself as He hath spoken by my hand, and Jehovah rendeth the kingdom out of thy hand, and giveth it to thy neighbour -- to David.

GWN 1 Samuel 28:17 The LORD has done to you exactly what he spoke through me: The LORD has torn the

kingdom out of your hands and given it to your fellow Israelite David.

BBE 1 Samuel 28:17 And the Lord himself has done what I said: the Lord has taken the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbour David;

RSV 1 Samuel 28:17 The LORD has done to you as he spoke by me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbor, David.

NKJ 1 Samuel 28:17 "And the LORD has done for Himself as He spoke by me. For the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David.

ASV 1 Samuel 28:17 And Jehovah hath done unto thee, as he spake by me: and Jehovah hath rent the kingdom out of thy hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David.

- to him: or, for himself, The LXX. read [soi,] and the Vulgate {tibi,} to thee; which is the reading of five of Dr. Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., as well as both the Bibles printed at Venice in 1518, where we read {lecha,} "to thee," for {lo,} "to him;" and as the words are spoken to Saul, this seems to be evidently the correct reading. Pr 16:4
- **as He spoke through me:** 1Sa 13:13-14 1Sa 15:27-29
- thy neighbour: 1Sa 15:28 16:13 24:20
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

1 Samuel 13:13-14+ Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. 14 **"But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."**

1 Samuel 15:27-29+ As Samuel turned to go, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. 28 So Samuel said to him, **"The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you.** 29 "Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind."

1 Chronicles 10:13-14+ So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the LORD, (2) because of the word of the LORD which he did not keep (SEE PASSAGES ABOVE); and (2) also because he asked counsel of a medium, making inquiry of it, 14 and did not inquire of the LORD. Therefore He killed him and turned the kingdom to David the son of Jesse.

SAMUEL'S PROPHECY RE SAUL IS FULFILLED

The LORD has done accordingly as He spoke through me - NET = "The LORD has done exactly as I prophesied!" **CSB** = "The LORD has done exactly what He said through me." Note Samuel's use of the past tense, so sure would be the events of the next 24 hours.

For the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David- [See above](#) for the prophetic words of Samuel. **Has torn** is past tense just as it had been stated several decades before in 1Sa 15:28+. It was past tense then because it was so sure to come to pass (Why? because God does not change His mind - 1Sa 15:29+!). It was now even more sure, and in fact would be fulfilled within the next 24 hours when God would kill Saul for his disobedience to the Word of the LORD and for seeking a medium and turn over "the kingdom to David the son of Jesse." (see 1Ch 10:13-14+). There was nothing to add because Saul's heart had not changed since that fateful day almost 40 years earlier (estimate) at Gilgal (cf 1Sa 10:8+ with 1Sa 13:8-14+).

1 Samuel 28:18 "As you did not obey the LORD and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the LORD has done this thing to you this day.

- **obey:** 1Sa 13:9 1Sa 15:9,23-26 1Ki 20:42 1Ch 10:13 Jer 48:10
- **the Lord:** Ps 50:21,22
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

1 Samuel 13:9 So Saul said, "Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering.

1 Samuel 15:9; 23-26 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.....**23-26** "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king." 24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice. 25 "Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me, that I may worship the LORD." 26 But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."

O, THE CONSEQUENCES OF A MOMENT OF DISOBEDIENCE!

As you did not obey the LORD and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek- Note the phrase His fierce wrath indicating that Saul was to have been God's instrument for carrying out His divine edict and justice against Amalek. Saul refused to obey. In case Saul might think the prophetic decree was too harsh, Samuel turns the hands of time back almost 40 years to remind Saul of his moment of rebellion. There is a touch of strange irony here for in that former prophecy Samuel had declared "rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king." What began with **rebellion like divination** came to an end with **rebellious divination** which cost him his kingdom and would cost him his life! (1Ch 10:13-14+)

So the LORD has done this thing to you this day - The Judge of all mankind had tried Saul and found him wanting (of obedience) and judged him guilty of capital crimes against the LORD Himself.

One is reminded of Daniel 2:19-23+ - "Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; 20 Daniel said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. 21 "It is He who changes the times and the epochs; **He removes kings and establishes kings**; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding. 22 "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him. 23 "To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, For You have given me wisdom and power; Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, For You have made known to us the king's matter."

One is also reminded of the three words from another great prophet to another king some 500 years later, when the prophet Daniel declared to Belshazzar "Now this is the inscription that was written out: 'MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.' "This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENE'-- God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. "'TEKEL'-- you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. "'PERES'-- your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians. (EVEN AS SAUL'S WAS GIVEN TO DAVID). That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. 31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two" (Daniel 5:25-30+).

F B Meyer - 1 Samuel 28:18 Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, therefore...

Thus unforgiven sin comes back to a man. We cannot explain the mysteries that lie around this incident; but it is clear that in that supreme hour of Saul's fate, **that early sin, which had never been confessed and put away**, came surging back on the mind and heart of the terror-stricken monarch. "Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, and didst not execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover the Lord will deliver Israel also with thee into the hands of the Philistines" (R. V.). (**ED: I LOVE MEYER'S NEXT POINT AND COMPLETELY AGREE**) But Saul did not realize that even then the gates of God's love stood open to him, if only he would pass through them by humble penitence and faith. If instead of applying to the witch, he had sought God's mercy, light would have burst on his darkened path, and he had never perished by his own hand on Mount Gilboa.

In strong contrast with this, let us put the assurance of the new covenant: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." When God forgives, He blots out from the book of His remembrance. The sin is gone as a pebble in the ocean; as a cloud in the blue of a summer's sky.

Saul's was a sin of omission. (**ED: NOT SURE THAT IS 100% CORRECT - SAUL WILLING VOLITIONALLY REBELLED AGAINST A CLEAR COMMAND AND THUS HE WAS CLEARLY ALSO GUILTY OF A SIN OF COMMISSION!**) The question was not what evil

he had done, but the good he had failed to do. Let us remember that we need pardon for the sad lapses and failures of our lives, equally as for the positive transgressions. And if such things are not forgiven, they will lie heavy on our consciences when the shadows of death begin to gather around us. The New Testament especially judges those who knew and did not do— the slothful servant, the virgin without the oil, the priest that passed by on the other side.

1 Samuel 28:19 "Moreover the LORD will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Indeed the LORD will give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines!"

BGT 1 Samuel 28:19 κα̅ παραδ̅σει κ̅ριος τ̅ν Ισραηλ μετ̅ σο̅ ε̅ς χε̅ρας̅ λλοφ̅λων̅ κα̅ α̅ριον̅ σ̅ κα̅ ο̅ υ̅ ο̅ σου μετ̅ σο̅ πεσο̅νται̅ κα̅ τ̅ν παρεμβολ̅ν Ισραηλ̅ δ̅σει κ̅ριος̅ ε̅ς χε̅ρας̅ λλοφ̅λων̅

LXE 1 Samuel 28:19 And the Lord shall deliver Israel with thee into the hands of the Philistines, and tomorrow thou and thy sons with thee shall fall, and the Lord shall deliver the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.

KJV 1 Samuel 28:19 Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

NET 1 Samuel 28:19 The LORD will hand you and Israel over to the Philistines! Tomorrow both you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also hand the army of Israel over to the Philistines!"

CSB 1 Samuel 28:19 The LORD will also hand Israel over to the Philistines along with you. Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me, and the LORD will hand Israel's army over to the Philistines."

ESV 1 Samuel 28:19 Moreover, the LORD will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. The LORD will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines."

NIV 1 Samuel 28:19 The LORD will hand over both Israel and you to the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also hand over the army of Israel to the Philistines."

NLT 1 Samuel 28:19 What's more, the LORD will hand you and the army of Israel over to the Philistines tomorrow, and you and your sons will be here with me. The LORD will bring down the entire army of Israel in defeat."

NRS 1 Samuel 28:19 Moreover the LORD will give Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines; and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me; the LORD will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines."

NJB 1 Samuel 28:19 What is more, Yahweh will deliver Israel and you too, into the power of the Philistines. Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me; and Yahweh will hand over the army of Israel into the power of the Philistines.'

NAB 1 Samuel 28:19 Moreover, the LORD will deliver Israel, and you as well, into the clutches of the Philistines. By tomorrow you and your sons will be with me, and the LORD will have delivered the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines."

YLT 1 Samuel 28:19 yea, Jehovah giveth also Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow thou and thy sons are with me; also the camp of Israel doth Jehovah give into the hand of the Philistines.'

GWN 1 Samuel 28:19 For the same reasons the LORD will hand you and Israel over to the Philistines. Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. And then the LORD will hand Israel's army over to the Philistines."

BBE 1 Samuel 28:19 And more than this, the Lord will give Israel up with you into the hands of the Philistines: and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me: and the Lord will give up the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.

- **the Lord:** 1Sa 12:25 31:1-6 1Ki 22:20,28
- **and tomorrow:** Ex 9:18 Jer 28:16,17 Da 5:25-28 Mt 26:24 Ac 5:5,9,10

- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SOVEREIGN LORD GIVES ISRAEL & SAUL TO PHILISTINES

Moreover the LORD will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines- These are clearly words of a prophet which were literally fulfilled, and this is another reason I believe Saul was being addressed by a the prophet Samuel. Saul's sin was personal, but as sin almost always does, it affected others, in this case the entire nation of Israel!

therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me - This is a somewhat enigmatic statement. Samuel is dead and is in Sheol (I believe the "cool" side of [Sheol](#) [cf [Hades](#) see [gotquestions](#)] - see Luke 16:19-31+). Does Samuel mean they will be with him in that specific place? I don't think so because there is abundant evidence Saul was not a genuine believer in Yahweh, while there is clear evidence that his son Jonathan was a genuine believer. The most likely explanation of Samuel's statement is not about a specific destination (which he does not state) but about a specific time (tomorrow). Note the **NLT** is a little misleading reading "will be **here** with me," which implies Samuel stated a place which he did not do. Therefore it seems that Samuel is simply using this description to indicate that tomorrow Saul and sons would be dead and in that sense would be "**with**" him. The **Septuagint** translation supports this explanation for it reads "Tomorrow you and your sons with you **will fall**" or in other words it describes their state (dead) and not their specific destination.

Guzik - **You and your sons will be with me** does not mean that Saul was going to heaven to be with the believing dead. In the story Jesus told in Luke 16:19-31, the blessed dead and the cursed dead were both in the same general area. The believing dead were in the place of comfort known as *Abraham's bosom* but the cursed were in a place of torment. Saul would be in the same *general* area as Samuel, but not the same *specific place*.

Indeed the LORD will give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines- Notice twice (**LORD will give over**) we see it is not the Philistines that Saul needed to fear but it was Jehovah Who was sovereign over the Philistines and Israel. In a sense, I believe this was an opportunity for Saul to come to a genuine fear of Yahweh, to confess his iniquity and to repent. It was not too late for one thief on the cross (Lk 23:42-43+), so it was not too late for Saul. He would still die physically, just as the thief died. Israel would still be defeated. But those realities should have brought him to his senses. Sadly there is no evidence to support that Saul ever came to his senses and repented (cf 2Ti 2:24-26+)!

Samuel had warned the people of this consequence in a solemn conditional statement declaring "If you will not listen to the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the command of the LORD, then **the hand of the LORD will be against you**, as it was against your fathers." (1 Samuel 12:15+)

TSK note - there is considerable diversity of opinion, both among learned and pious men, relative to this appearance to Saul. But the most probable opinion seems to be, that Samuel himself did actually appear to Saul, not by the power of enchantment, but by the appointment and special mercy of God, to warn this infatuated monarch of his approaching end, that he might be reconciled with his Maker. There is not the smallest intimation of chicanery or Satanic influence given in the text; but on the contrary, from the plain and obvious meaning of the language employed, it is perfectly evident that it was Samuel himself, as it is expressed in 1Sa 28:14. Indeed the very soul of Samuel seems to breathe in his expressions of displeasure against the disobedience and wickedness of Saul; **while the awful prophetic denunciations which accordingly came to pass, were such as neither human nor diabolical wisdom could foresee, and which could only be known to God himself, and to those to whom he chose to reveal them.**

QUESTION - [Where did Old Testament believers/saints go when they died?](#) (ED: I have inserted this Question not because I believe Samuel is referring to a place, but only to address the question of where Samuel was when he came up if indeed this was the actual man Samuel which I believe it was).

ANSWER - The Old Testament believers went to a place of comfort and rest called "paradise" when they died. The Old Testament taught life after death and that everyone who departed from this life went to a place of conscious existence. The general term for this place was *Sheol*, which could be translated "the grave" or "the realm of the dead." The wicked were there (Psalm 9:17; 31:17; 49:14; Isaiah 5:14), and so were the righteous (Genesis 37:35; Job 14:13; Psalm 6:5; 16:10; 88:3; Isaiah 38:10).

The New Testament equivalent of Sheol is [Hades](#). Luke 16:19-31 shows that, prior to Christ's resurrection, Hades was divided into two realms: a place of comfort where Lazarus was (Abraham's bosom or Abraham's side) and a place of torment where the rich man was (hell). Lazarus's place of comfort is elsewhere called "paradise" (Luke 23:43). The place of torment is called "[Gehenna](#)" in the Greek in Mark 9:45. Between paradise and hell (the two districts of Hades) there was "a great chasm" (Luke 16:26). The fact that no one could cross this chasm indicates that, after death, one's fate is sealed.

Today, when an unbeliever dies, he follows the Old Testament unbelievers to the torment side of Hades. At the final judgment, Hades will be emptied before the Great White Throne, where its occupants will be judged prior to entering the lake of fire (Revelation 20:13–15).

On the other hand, when a believer dies today, he is “present with the Lord” in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:6–9). There, he joins the Old Testament saints who have been enjoying their reward for thousands of years.

A resurrection awaits everyone—either a resurrection to eternal life or a resurrection to “shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). The Bible clearly states that New Testament saints who have died will be resurrected at the event we call the rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). The Bible is less clear about when the Old Testament saints will be resurrected. It is our view that Old Testament believers will be joined to their resurrected bodies at the end of the tribulation period when Jesus returns to earth to set up His millennial kingdom (Isaiah 26:19; Hosea 13:14). GotQuestions.org

1 Samuel 28:20 Then Saul immediately fell full length upon the ground and was very afraid because of the words of Samuel; also there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day and all night.

- **afraid:** 1Sa 28:5 25:37 Job 15:20-24 26:2 Ps 50:21,22
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAUL FELL A BROKEN DEFEATED MAN

Then Saul immediately fell full length upon the ground and was very afraid because of the words of Samuel- Saul did not debate or refute Samuel's words. He knew that Samuel had been a great prophet in life and now was a great prophet in death. His prophetic words would be fulfilled and could not be reversed. Saul's response of fear is appropriate. He had much to fear.

also there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day and all night- With a battle approaching Saul was physically unprepared having not eaten.

1 Samuel 28:21 The woman came to Saul and saw that he was terrified, and said to him, 'Behold, your maidservant has obeyed you, and I have taken my life in my hand and have listened to your words which you spoke to me.

- **I have:** 1Sa 19:5 Jdg 12:3 Job 13:14
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE MEDIUM'S TESTIMONY

The woman came to Saul and saw that he was terrified, and said to him, "Behold, your maidservant has obeyed you, and I have taken my life in my hand and have listened to your words which you spoke to me - The medium realizes the news to Saul is bad. Presumably she wants to be relieved of any blame for such bad news.

1 Samuel 28:22 "So now also, please listen to the voice of your maidservant, and let me set a piece of bread before you that you may eat and have strength when you go on your way."

- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

MEDIUM OFFERS SAUL FOOD

So now also, please listen to the voice of your maidservant, and let me set a piece of bread before you that you may eat and have strength when you go on your way. - "It's a sad note when a practitioner of the occult comforts the king of Israel. But they were two of the same kind; each lived in rebellion against God, and each was under judgment from the LORD." (Guzik)

1 Samuel 28:23 But he refused and said, "I will not eat." However, his servants together with the woman urged him, and he listened to them. So he arose from the ground and sat on the bed.

- **I will:** 1Ki 21:4 Pr 25:20
- **urged him:** 2Ki 4:8 Lu 14:23 24:29 Ac 16:15 2Co 5:14
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAUL REFUSES FOOD WOMAN PERSISTS URGING

But he refused and said, "I will not eat." - He has just heard his death sentence and realizes that the sands of time are quickly slipping away from his mortal life. Food is not something that comes to his mind.

However, his servants together with the woman urged him, and he listened to them. So he arose from the ground and sat on the bed - She makes a meal like they do for prisoners condemned to be executed, feeding them whatever they desire the day before they die!

1 Samuel 28:24 The woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she quickly slaughtered it; and she took flour, kneaded it and baked unleavened bread from it.

- calf: Ge 18:7,8 Lu 15:23
- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

WOMAN PREPARES MEAL FOR SAUL

The woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she quickly slaughtered it; and she took flour, kneaded it and baked unleavened bread from it - This was like the death row inmates last meal - a meal fit for a king, but sadly Saul was a man who had proven he was not fit to be king!

1 Samuel 28:25 She brought it before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they arose and went away that night.

- [1 Samuel 28 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

WOMAN SERVES SAUL HIS LAST MEAL

She brought it before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they arose and went away that night

F B Meyer - Endor and Gilboa (SAMUEL 28; 1 CHRONICLES 10:13)

Earth fades! Heaven breaks on me; I shall stand next
Before God's throne; the moment's close at hand
When man the first, last time, has leave to lay
His whole heart bare before His Maker...

—R. B.

YEARS had passed since David's sling had brought Goliath to the ground, and the Philistines had fled headlong at Ephesdammim before the onset of the men of Israel. A new invasion was now planned to revenge that disgrace, and re-establish the Philistine supremacy over the plain of Esdraelon, which was the necessary link between the wealthy cities of the Euphrates Valley and the vast market for their wares and produce furnished by the cities of the Nile Valley. To hold that great trade-route involved the right to impose very valuable taxation on the merchandise transported to and fro—hence the desire to hold its keys. The tides of Philistine invasion, therefore, poured up by the seacoast route, which was favourable for the evolutions of the Philistine chariots and cavalry, and a strongly fortified camp was formed at Shunem, about three and a half miles north of Jezreel, and celebrated in aftertime as

the abode of the rich woman who so hospitably entertained the prophet Elisha.

Hastily gathering what forces he could collect, Saul marched northwards, and pitched his camp on the slopes of Mount Gilboa, four miles distant from the invading army, and on the south of the Great Plain. "Green plains rising from the level of the Kishon lead to the slopes of Gilboa, swelling after a time into low heights, which rise bare and stony. Behind these the many summits of the hills shoot up abruptly some five or six hundred feet, bleak, white, and barren, their only growths spots of scrub oak and mountain thorns and flowers, which in spring at least are never wanting in Palestine."

The sight of the great force which was arrayed against him seems to have completely paralysed Saul's courage. He contrasted the complete accoutrements of the Philistines with the spears and slings of Israel, and "his heart trembled greatly." The heroic courage which faith might have brought him was not now possible, since the sense of God's presence was withdrawn. There was no rift in the black canopy of despair that overshadowed his terror-stricken soul. He could say with another, "Behold I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand that I cannot see Him" (Job 23:8). It was to this that the terrible series of tragedies, which we are now about to narrate, must be attributed. The restraining grace of God, which he had so long despised and resisted, no longer strove with him, and he was left to follow the promptings of those evil spirits—"the rulers of the darkness of this world"—who, for mysterious purposes, are permitted to assail the sons of men.

True, he inquired of the Lord, for probably the first time after the lapse of many years; but there was no repentance or confession of sin, only abject terror and frantic despair. Therefore "the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

I. ENDOR.—At some previous period, as we have seen, "Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land." He may have done this in one of those strange lucid moments when he became conscious of the strivings of God's good Spirit, or as a set-off to the wild strivings of passion of which he was guiltily conscious—so often men seek to atone for the sins into which they have been betrayed, by some strong outward act, intended as a make-weight in the other scale, or a sop to an uneasy conscience. It became clear, however, that he had no heartfelt abhorrence of the crimes he thus punished, seeing that in his own dire extremity he had recourse to the very arts he had striven to abolish, and sought from the mouth of hell the help for which he had appealed to heaven in vain!

About two miles north from Shunem, in the rear, therefore, of the Philistine army, lay the little village of Endor. It was one of those spots from which Manasseh had failed to expel the old population; and amongst these, the descendants of the ancient Canaanites, was an old woman who professed to be able to bring up the souls of the dead. It is likely enough that her claims were baseless. By ventriloquism and sleight of hand she no doubt simulated the voice and appearance of those who seemed to come from the other world at her bidding. If there was more than that, we do not hesitate to affirm our belief that in all ages demons have been in collusion with necromancers and spiritualists, and have answered to their call. This is at the root and heart of the phenomena of modern spiritualism.

Heavily cloaked and disguised, accompanied by two trusty companions whom tradition has identified as Abner and Amasa, Saul set forth in the early hours of the night, crossed the plain, made a detour round the eastern shoulder of Little Hermon, and arrived safely at the witch's dwelling. The door opened to admit them to the house, and amid the dark weirdness of the interior, revealed by the glimmering light of a brazier, choked with smoke, the woman was quite unable to recognise the features of the haggard man who accosted her with the request that she should bring up whomsoever he should name.

At first she hesitated, reminding him how perilous her profession was, and suggesting that to give him satisfaction might cost her life. "Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits and wizards out of the land; wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?"

With an oath which strangely implicated the God whom he was at that moment denying, and with a touch of his kingly prerogative the king assured her that no punishment should befall her for doing what he requested. "As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing."

Thus reassured, the woman asked whom she should bring up; but she must have been not a little startled, when in a hoarse whisper, as of one paralysed and awestruck by his weird surroundings, the King said, "Bring me up Samuel."

Retiring from him to a distance, the wretched woman began her incantations, perhaps dropping a powder on the coals of the brazier, muttering incantations in a low voice, making passes and adjurations. But before she had completed her preparations the Almighty seems to have interfered, sending back his faithful servant from the world beyond the article of death, so that the witch might not even appear to have the credit of securing so wonderful a visitation. "The woman saw Samuel."

At the same moment that she recognised Samuel, she seems to have recognised Saul also. Startled and frightened for her life she

called with a loud voice, and spake unto Saul, saying, "Why hast thou deceived me?" Perhaps in her excited condition of soul, she was endowed with that supernatural insight which we call clairvoyance; or perhaps there was something in Samuel's appearance so startlingly vivid and real that she was led in that dread hour to connect prophet and king as in years gone by; or perhaps the king in his eagerness had drawn near, and had dropped the mantle which veiled his face and figure. But however it befell, she saw through his disguise, and in horror-stricken tones, cried, "Thou art Saul!"

Again he reassured her, and asked her what she had seen.

"A majestic being, worthy to be God," she replied, "arising as if from out of the earth."

Pressed by Saul to describe his appearance more minutely, for she was beholding a mysterious form, which, though present in the same chamber as himself, was veiled from him, she said, "He resembles an old man covered with a robe." "And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and made obeisance."

Very touching and thrilling was the conversation that followed. I am disposed to think that it was held without the medium of the witch, and that God permitted the prophet to speak with Saul, as afterwards Moses and Elijah to speak with our Lord of the deace to be presently accomplished at Jerusalem. It is likely that these sentences were actually interchanged between the king and his former friend and confidant, to whom he turned remorsefully in his awful agony. Do you not think that if, even then, Saul had turned to Jehovah with tears of confession and the simplicity of faith, he would have been answered according to the multitude of the Divine compassions? Assuredly he would; but there was no sign of such a change of temper.

Samuel did not wait to be questioned, but sadly told the awestruck king that, even in the other life, his misdoings had filled his spirit with unrest, so much so that he could not forbear returning to speak to him once more. "Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?"

Saul's answer was that of despair. "I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams; therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do."

But from the lips of the prophet came no words of comfort or hope. It was useless to ask of the servant the help which was denied by the Master. There was no gain in evading the fact that God Himself was on the side of David, and against the king, whose reign had begun with such fair promise. The multiplied misfortunes which had befallen him and his realm were due to his disobedience to the direct instructions issued with respect to Amalek. The sin which he had now perpetrated had put the last touch on all his transgressions. Nothing, at this hour, could stay or avert the descending avalanche. As he had sown, he must reap; as he had fallen, so he must lie. It was, therefore, revealed that the Lord would deliver Israel also with him into the hand of the Philistines, and on the morrow Saul and his sons should have also passed into the world of spirits; the Hebrew host would be annihilated, the camp sacked, and the land left to the fate which the conquered of those days knew well how to expect.

Little wonder was it that the king fell straightway his full length upon the earth, and was sore afraid. He was already weak with watching and fasting through the previous day; the events of the night had completely unnerved him; and his nervous system collapsed under the terrible strain. Even the callous nature of the witch was smitten with compunction and pity. Her woman's nature was thoroughly aroused by the awful horror that lay on the King's soul. She besought him to eat. By the trust she had reposed in him she pleaded that she had some claim on his mercy, to be expended not for her, but for him. "Let me set a morsel of bread," she pleaded, "before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength when thou goest on thy way."

At first he refused. It seemed as though he would never rise again from the mud-floor on which all the glory of his manhood lay prone. "But his servants, together with the woman, constrained him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed." What memories must have passed before his mind, as he sat on that divan, whilst the woman hastened to prepare the meal! Did he not remember the first happy days of his reign; Jabesh-gilead; the overthrow of the Philistines, not once or twice; and the love of his people? But, step by step, he saw how he had gone down from the sunlit summits to the dark valley, where the black torrent ran, and the overhanging rocks met overhead. As with a drowning man, the whole of his previous career passes before him in a moment of time, so the whole panorama of his past must have stood in clear outline before the mental vision of the king. Then, after hastily partaking of the calf and the unleavened cakes, the three figures stole through the darkness, back to the camp.

II. GILBOA.—On the morrow there was some slight alteration in the disposition of the respective hosts. The Philistines moved towards Aphek, a little to the west of their camp; while the Israelites descended from the heights of Gilboa, and took up a position near the spring or fountain of Jezreel (1Sa 29:1).

Presently the battle was joined. In spite of the most desperate efforts to withstand the onset of the heavily mailed troops that were opposed to them, the Hebrews were routed, and fled from before the Philistines. It is expressly noted by the historian that the lower slopes of Gilboa were covered by the wounded, whose hearts' blood bedewed the mountain pastures (31:1, R. V. margin).

Saul and Jonathan made the most desperate efforts to retrieve the day:

“From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.”

But it was in vain. “The battle went sore against Saul.” “The Philistines slew Jonathan and Abinadab and Melchi-shua, the sons of Saul.” The flower of his army lay strewn around him; the chivalry of Israel was quenched in rivers of blood. Then, leaving all others, the Philistines concentrated their attack on that lordly figure which towered amid the fugitives, the royal crown on his helmet, the royal bracelet flashing on his arm. “The Philistines followed hard upon Saul ... and the archers overtook him, and he was greatly distressed because of the archers.” He knew what fate awaited him if he was captured whilst his life was yet in him. Exposed to ignominy, tortured to death, it seemed to him that immediate death were far preferable to such a fate. “Then said Saul to his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and make a mock of me.”

The armour-bearer dared not lift up his hand against the sacred person of his king, so Saul, placing his sword-hilt firmly in the earth, fell upon the point, which pierced his heart.

The narrative which the Amalekite gave afterwards to David suggests that the effort to take his life was not at once successful; and he seems to have asked this child of a race which he was once bidden utterly to destroy, to give him the last finishing stroke. “He said unto me, Stand, I pray thee, over me, and slay me; for anguish hath taken hold of me; because my life is yet whole in me.” It may be, however, that all this was a fabrication, intended to win David’s favour; for we are told that when the armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he likewise fell upon his sword, and died with him.

The day of Gilboa was a veritable Chevy Chase. “Saul died, and his three sons, and his armour-bearer, and all his men, that same day together.” The next day the Philistines set to work to strip the dead, and finding the bodies of Saul and his sons, they despatched their heads, armour, and decapitated corpses to be carried in triumph through the streets of their principal cities, and finally to be affixed to the walls of Beth-shan. As the tidings spread, the people left the towns and villages in the neighbourhood, and fled across the Jordan. Roving bands followed up the victory, and carried fire and sword into all parts of the land. It was the tidings of their approach to Gibeah that caused the accident to Mephibosheth. “He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled; and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and he became lame” (2 Sam. 4:4).

One brave deed relieved the sombre hues of that terrible catastrophe. The men of Jabesh-gilead could not forget how nobly Saul had come to their aid in the early days of his reign; and they resolved, at least, to retrieve the royal body from the ignominy to which Philistine malice had exposed it. The valiant men therefore arose, and went all night, took down the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the temple walls, bore them reverently back to Jabesh, burnt them to conceal the hideous mutilation to which they had been subjected, buried them under “the tamarisk tree in Jabesh,” and lamented with unfeigned grief this tragic close to a reign which had been once as a morning without clouds.

It is an awful thing when a man persists, as Saul and as Judas, to the end striving against God. We feel that it was a dreadful thing to do as he did; we are horrified at his temerity; we marvel at his infatuation; yet we may fall into his wicked ways, and be overcome of evil as he was. We, too, may have resort to things, habits, and people which we had once religiously tabooed. We, too, are liable to step back to our undoing. If a man, having felt the evil of covetousness, and set himself against the love of money, after a while allows it again to invade his soul; if a man has been a slave of his appetites, and having realised their degrading tendencies, has acted, for a while, on a vow of temperance, but has gradually allowed them to resume their former sway; if after years of irreligion he has begun to be in earnest about his soul, but has again relapsed into moral apathy—is not this like Saul seeking help in the cave of the enchantress, whose class he had proscribed? Such men are wells without water, clouds carried before the blast of the tempest, for whom, in the words of the apostle, is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever: “For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse than the beginning; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they had known it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”