

1Samuel 28:1 ¶ And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men.

1Samuel 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.

Eventually the time came that the Philistines decided to go to war with Israel intending to take over more of their lands. As they gathered together, Achish told David that he expected him and his men to be part of his army.

I liked the CJB translation of verse 2: *“David answered Achish, ‘I see that you already know what your servant will do.’ Achish said to David, “For that answer, I am making you my personal bodyguard for life.”*

I believe David is answering in the same deceptive manner he had used when asked about his raiding in the previous chapter. He allowed Achish to believe that he would fight with him against his own people, but he certainly never intended to do so.

1Samuel 28:3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

Because it will be important to the narrative, it is noted once again that Samuel is dead and buried.

We are also told that Saul had gotten rid of all the necromancers or mediums and wizards or conjurers of spirits. From the Hebrew it would seem that these people all functioned the same; he is just making a distinction between the women and men respectively.

Finally, something Saul did right.

1Samuel 28:4 And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.

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

1Samuel 28:6 And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

The Philistines chose Shunem as the encampment for their army, and Saul gathered the army of Israel directly across from them at Gilboa. This is an area in the land of Issachar on the southeastern side of the Jezreel Valley—the great valley in which the forces of Antichrist will gather for the final battle of Armageddon.

When Saul saw the massive host of the Philistine forces, he became greatly afraid. He tried to inquire of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him in any way.

The inference seems to be that the Urim (and Thummim) was at his disposal, but I remember reading that Abiathar had brought the ephod (where the Urim and Thummim were kept) with him when he escaped to David.

1 Samuel 23:9 "And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod."

So maybe the Urim is a reference to casting lots

1Samuel 28:7 ¶ Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.

1Samuel 28:8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me *him* up, whom I shall name unto thee.

1Samuel 28:9 And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?

1Samuel 28:10 And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

Saul was desperate. He told his servants to find a woman that was a medium that he could consult. They seemed to have a ready answer and told him that there was such a woman at Endor.

So Saul disguised himself and took two men with him to consult the woman. I think he must have had a very good disguise since he was so recognizable—because of his height if nothing else. Remember, he stood head and shoulders above any other man in Israel.

1 Samuel 9:2 "And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people."

They came to the woman by night, and Saul told the woman that he wanted her to bring up a specific person for him. The woman reminded him that King Saul had gotten rid of all the mediums and wizards. She then accused him of trying to trap her and get her killed. Saul swore "by the LORD" that no harm would come to her.

Isn't it interesting that an oath in the name of the LORD caused this woman who was disobedient to the LORD to trust Saul.

Deuteronomy 18:9–12 "When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God

giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee."

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

1Samuel 28:12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou *art* Saul.

The woman asked Saul who he wanted to see, and he told her Samuel. When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed. What she saw was obviously an "unfamiliar" spirit. She also suddenly realized that Saul had deceived her and said so. How did she suddenly know this? Did Samuel say something?

1Samuel 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.

1Samuel 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.

1Samuel 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.

The king again told her that she had nothing to fear from him; then he asked her what she saw. She told him that she had seen an angel (from the Hebrew) or spirit coming out of the earth. Saul pressed her for more information and asked what it looked like. She described an old man covered with a mantle. It seems that at this point Saul *saw* that it was Samuel, so he bowed in a sign of respect for the dead prophet.

"perceived" = to know (properly, to ascertain by seeing)

Samuel asked Saul why he had disturbed him. Saul answered that he was extremely distressed because the Philistines had presented themselves in war against him and God would not answer him. He felt like his only hope was in seeking to get Samuel's advice.

This whole episode testifies to the fact that people of that day understood that death wasn't the end of a person's being. Many, at least, believed in the ability to converse with people after death. They evidently didn't think it just the act of a magician. Personally, I think the LORD supernaturally intervened in this instance for His own purposes in affirming His truth to Saul. I think that mediums and wizards are tools of deception empowered by Satan to further his

own purposes in his rebellion against God. I think that is why the medium screamed. She was not used to actually seeing the spirits she claimed to see; she was used to seeing “familiar” demonic spirits.

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

1Samuel 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:

1Samuel 28:18 Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.

1Samuel 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.

Samuel immediately questioned why Saul would think he would tell him anything since he was in rebellion against the LORD and no longer possessed His Spirit. He told Saul that nothing had changed. Just as he had already told him, the LORD had taken the kingdom from Saul and given it to David because of Saul’s disobedience and his refusal to destroy Amalek. Samuel then added that the LORD would allow the Philistines to defeat Israel and that Saul and his sons would join him the next day; in other words, they would die.

Guzik made an interesting point: “As Saul sought the medium he brought upon himself a curse. God said in Leviticus 20:6: *And the person who turns after mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.*”

The fact that Samuel said that Saul and his sons would be “with” him has always made me think that Saul, though very wicked and rebellious, did have faith in the LORD. We know from the story of the rich man and Lazarus that before Jesus’ resurrection the spirits of the dead, both persons of faith and the faithless, went to a place that had two compartments so to speak; they were separated from each other.

Luke 16:22–26 “And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”

For Saul and his sons to be “with” Samuel would put him with those of faith, though there is much room for uncertainty. I liked the following excerpt from

Clarke's commentary: "Does not this mean that they were to go to paradise? I suppose it means no more than that they should all die. Yet the paraphrase of the Rev. C. Wesley is beautiful:

"What do these solemn words portend?
A ray of hope when life shall end.
Thou and thy sons, though slain, shall be
To-morrow in repose with me.
Not in a state of hellish pain,
If Saul with Samuel do remain:
Not in a state of damn'd despair,
If loving Jonathan be there."

1Samuel 28:20 ¶ Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.

1Samuel 28:21 And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me.

1Samuel 28:22 Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way.

1Samuel 28:23 But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed.

1Samuel 28:24 And the woman had a fat calf in the house; and she hasted, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded *it*, and did bake unleavened bread thereof:

1Samuel 28:25 And she brought *it* before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

Saul responded to Samuel's words by falling flat on the ground in fear. He was weak from having not eaten for a full day and night. The woman responded with compassion. She noted that she had entrusted her life to Saul, and now it was time for him to trust her and eat the food that she gave him. He refused. His servants joined with the woman to urge him to eat. He finally yielded and got up. The woman killed her calf and made some unleavened bread to prepare a meal for Saul and his men. They ate what she served them and left while it was still night.