

1 Samuel 28

What was happening in the Philistine camp (v. 1)? Preparations for war against Israel were underway.

What did Achish communicate to David? His role in the battle. **Which was what?** Fight alongside the king....against his Jewish brothers.

How did David respond (v. 2)? *Stand by! You will be impressed!* David's response to Achish was deliberately ambiguous. He did not promise to fight for the Philistines but gave the impression he would.

As a result of his lies and deceitful actions, David found himself in a most compromising position, for he would now be called on to demonstrate his loyalty to his new lord by fighting against his own people!¹ This would leave him vulnerable to Achish, if the Philistine king learned what was really happening.²

What position did Achish assign to David? Achish interpreted David's words as a strong commitment to him and rewarded David with a position as his bodyguard for life.³

What action had Saul taken in the land of Israel (v. 3)? Saul had expelled all the mediums and spiritists.

When the two armies set up camp prior to going into battle, how did Saul react (vv. 4-5)? Saul saw how dramatically he was outnumbered. *"He was afraid and terror filled his heart."* Saul got a good case of "foxhole religion." He was in a hard place. He was desperate.

How did Saul initially deal with his fear (v. 6)? He prayed to the Lord.

How did the Lord respond to Saul (v. 6)? He was silent. God gave Saul no guidance in response to his prayers. He gave the king no revelation about how to proceed. Since Saul had refused to listen to God in the past (Chapters 13 and 15), God now refused to listen to him (cf. v. 18). Normally, when people refuse to pay attention to the word of God, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to hear the word of God (cf. Jeremiah 7:13-16; 2 Thess. 2:10b-12).⁴

Saul found himself in a terrible place. The Philistines were threatening Israel, Saul's courage had failed him, and now God was silent when Saul sought Him. He was facing the consequences of blatant, repeated disobedience. He knew what he was supposed to do. God had told him clearly.

Saul started as a great man of courage. Look at him now. **How did he end up in this downward spiral?** The answer according to Samuel is quite simple – disobedience. Saul began to lose his courage when the Holy Spirit departed from him (1 Samuel 16:14). From that point, he was forced to live life in his own strength.

When his prayer strategy failed, what did Saul do (v. 7)? He sought the services of a medium.

Mediums and spiritists are people who try to communicate with the dead, but in reality communicate with evil spirits. "Medium" is a term that stresses the mediating position of these people between the living and the supposed dead, while "spiritist" emphasizes the fact that they deal with demonic spirits.⁵

To his credit, Saul had previously obeyed the commands in the Mosaic Law to cast out those who practiced occultic arts, mediums and spiritists (Deuteronomy 18:9-15). The Mosaic Law prescribed death for them because God promised to give His people all the information He wanted them to have about the future from the prophets. God commanded that mediums and spiritists would have no place among His people. Saul had done this in his earlier days, when he was still influenced by Samuel's leadership.

How did Saul approach the medium, traditionally known as the Witch of Endor (v. 8)? He disguised himself.

What was the medium's initial response to Saul's request (v. 9)? *"Why have you set a trap for my life, to bring about my death?"* The medium wondered if this was a government "sting" operation; but Saul assured her.... swearing in the name of the Lord, no less.....that she wouldn't be punished.

After assuring the medium of no reprisal, what did Saul request from her (v. 11)? To bring up Samuel.

Why request Samuel? He was a familiar link with God. He was trusted based on his past history with Saul.

When the woman saw Samuel, what did she do (v. 12)? She shrieked with a loud voice. **Why was the medium so freaked out?** This medium was familiar with the presence of demonic spirits. Now, when Samuel *really* appeared from the world beyond, she was shocked to have a *real* encounter with the spirit realm. She had never seen this before.

So startled was she by Samuel's appearance that she immediately realized that this was the work of God and not herself and that her disguised nocturnal visitor was actually King Saul. This implies that she did not really expect to raise up Samuel but only a satanic imitation.⁶

What do you make of this appearance by Samuel? Most believe that this was a genuine (but strange) appearance of Samuel. This is the best explanation, because it is supported by the reaction of the medium, who got more than she bargained for. It is also supported by the *truth* of what Samuel said. What Samuel predicted came true. God was directing this evolution.

Some may say that it is impossible for Samuel to reappear, coming from the world beyond back to this world. But Moses and Elijah also came from the world beyond back to this world when they appeared with Jesus at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:3).

When Saul asked the reappearing Samuel for help, what was the bad news that Samuel gave him (vv. 16-19)? Samuel confirmed Saul's deepest fears. *The Lord has deserted you and has given the kingdom to David. Israel will be defeated in battle and you and your sons will die tomorrow all because of your disobedience (especially as seen in the Amalekite fiasco (15:7-26)).*

How did Saul take the bad news (v. 20)? He fell prostrate on the floor, badly shaken and filled with fear.

What did the medium offer Saul (v. 22)? After reluctantly accepting the lavish meal that the medium prepared....a meal that was truly "fit for a king"..... Saul arose and dejectedly walked off into the night. The fatted calf may have been killed, but not for the purpose of celebrating. The dinner Saul ate that night was like the last meal of a man on death row, awaiting execution in the morning.

God commands us to have nothing to do with the occult, devil worship, or the unclean spirit world. Modern attempts to practice forms of spiritism and/or foretell the future would include the use of mediums, séances, hauntings, Ouija boards, horoscopes, tarot cards, channeling, witchcraft, crystal balls, etc. God considers these practices an abomination (Deuteronomy 18:9-12; Isaiah 8:19-20; Galatians 5:20; Revelation 21:8), and those who involve themselves in such things invite disaster (Acts 19:13-16). They are dangerous links to the demonic world even if undertaken in a spirit of fun.

¹ Eugene H. Merrill, "1 Samuel," The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 453.

² Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Samuel, 2024 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 198.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 200.

⁵ Ibid., 199.

⁶ Eugene H. Merrill, "1 Samuel," The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 454.