

SAUL RESORTS TO A WITCH

[BIBLE TEXT](#) : I Samuel 28:3-25

LESSON 216 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20)..

[BIBLE TEXT in King James Version](#)

1 Samuel 28:3-25

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.

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

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

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

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.

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.

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?

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

[BIBLE REFERENCES:](#)

I The Rejected Saul's Hopeless Position

1 Samuel, God's Prophet who had been Saul's counselor, was dead, I Samuel 28:3;

1 Samuel 25:1

¹ And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

1 Samuel 9:27

²⁷ And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.

2 The Philistines were again gathered against Israel, I Samuel 28:4

3 Saul's fear was the beginning of the retribution sent because of his rejection of God, and for disobedience, I Samuel 28:5;

1 Samuel 13:13

¹³ And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

1 Samuel 15:26-29

²⁶ And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

²⁷ And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

²⁸ And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, *that is* better than thou.

²⁹ And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he *is* not a man, that he should repent.

4 Saul could not receive an answer from God, I Samuel 28:6

II Saul's Visit to the Witch of Endor

1 The law of God against witches and sorcerers was unmistakably clear,

Exodus 22:18

¹⁸ Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

Leviticus 19:31

³¹ Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I *am* the LORD your God.

Leviticus 20:27

²⁷ A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood *shall be* upon them.

Deuteronomy 18:9-12

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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,

¹¹ Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

¹² For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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:

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.

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

the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

Isaiah 8:19-20

¹⁹ And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?

²⁰ To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them.

2 Saul had previously taken a firm stand against witchcraft, I Samuel 28:3, 9

3 In seeking for a witch, Saul once more became a willful transgressor of God's law, I Samuel 28:7-10;

1 Samuel 15:23

²³ For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.

III The Appearance of Samuel, the Man of God

1 The witch agreed to use her devil-power, and heard Saul's request for Samuel, I Samuel 28:11

2 Her astonishment when Samuel appeared proves he did not come by her power or at her bidding, I Samuel 28:12;

Ezekiel 14:7-8

⁷ For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself:

⁸ And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

3 Saul recognized Samuel from the witch's description, I Samuel 28:13, 14

4 Saul attempted to honor Samuel as in the past, I Samuel 28:14;

1 Samuel 13:10

¹⁰ And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

1 Samuel 15:13

¹³ And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed *be* thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

IV The Message of God Given Through Samuel

1 Saul wanted counsel and advice, since God no longer answered his prayers, I Samuel 28:15

2 The message Samuel gave Saul was not new, or according to his wish, but was a repetition of a former denunciation, I Samuel 28:16-18;

1 Samuel 13:13-14

¹³ And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

¹⁴ But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee.

1 Samuel 15:26-29

²⁶ And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the

hand of the Philistines.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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:

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

LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

²⁷ And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

²⁸ And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, *that is* better than thou.

²⁹ And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he *is not* a man, that he should repent.

3 Saul was told that he and his sons would die the next day and that Israel would be defeated, I Samuel 28:19

4 Saul, formerly God's chosen, was prostrate in despair but still deliberately unrepentant, I Samuel 28:20-25

NOTES:

The Hopelessness of an Apostate

The life story of Saul, Israel's first king, is truly a biography of inconsistency. Alternately cruel and tender, Saul showed unreasonable clemency to his enemies and pursued his best friends with the anger of a demon. At first he was a humble servant of God, but in a short time he became an example of stubbornness, rebellion, and conceit. He obeyed the voice of God in even the smallest details at the beginning of his call, but soon after his accession to power began to rebel against God to an extent that is hardly equaled by anyone, until he finally was rejected by God and man.

The deceiver of men has taken some Biblical passages that specifically teach certain truths and, by clever and cunning argument, caused those who do not love the truth to think that the very opposite from the actual truth is being taught. Some say that this lesson text teaches the possibility of contact with departed spirits; but we can plainly see, when we examine the passage in openness of heart and mind, that the very opposite is true. There is enough evidence presented in this one incident to refute completely every false teaching on that particular subject.

Saul was in a crisis. Israel's enemies were pressing hard. Saul had no counselor, either human or divine, to guide him. Everything seemed to be silent but the poignant evidence that he was abandoned by God. The only things that would justify us in saying that the Lord had not completely and absolutely abandoned Saul are in this incident of divine intervention in pronouncing solemn doom upon him, and in the fact that God did not allow the devil to interpose himself as Samuel in order to make valid the witch's claim to supernatural power.

We see the king of Israel, once head and shoulders above all in Israel, now stooped in shabby disguise, with haggard face and sunken eyes, fatigued from hunger and nervous strain, consulting a witch. He had degenerated so far, spiritually, that he actually believed a witch could bring Samuel from the realm of the dead. He had gone so far that he no longer realized that whatever these servants of Satan may do, that is supernatural, is either by devil power or by deception.

Nothing good can come from the source of evil. Truth will never be spoken by the father of lies unless he can, by its use, make an otherwise offensive deception acceptable. In this particular instance there is little doubt but that Satan wanted to establish a precedent which would prove to be the undoing of many people in subsequent days, but he was prevented from doing so by Almighty God. Those who love that which is not truth may choose to distort this incident in an attempt to prove their claims, but those who love God and His truth see here the unmistakable refutation of every diabolical claim.

The Final Rejection and God's Answer

It was necessary for Saul to travel approximately ten miles, through the enemy lines, under disguise, to reach Endor. After finding the woman, he had to persuade her to violate not only the divine law but his own edicts that ordered the punishment of those who did violate the divine law. In doing this he violated the law of God and his own law as well. This action was deliberate, for he countered the woman's arguments and persuaded her that no harm would come to her if she obeyed his request. He knew he was doing wrong, being reminded of that fact by the woman; but he deliberately acted according to his own desires. He knew his way was in absolute rebellion against everything that is divine; yet he followed his course with unyielding determination. He was wholly set to do evil.

There was nothing about the nature of his request that caused wonder or alarm in the witch. But there was ample in what she immediately saw that did cause her both alarm and astonishment. Here is positive evidence that she had nothing whatever to do with the events that swiftly followed Saul's request to talk to Samuel.

The witch at Endor, because of her devil-given power of divination, could enter, to a certain extent, into the realm of spirits. But in this instance God let her see, in addition, that which was ordinarily beyond the gulf, for she manifested complete and overwhelming surprise when she saw "gods ascending out of the earth." It was not what she had planned. It was not what she had expected. She had had no opportunity to use her enchantments, as yet, neither had she time to exert her deception or resort to her devil-power. What she saw was not there at her bidding. This was a greater revelation, and one that took place along a different line than anything she had seen before. The reason was that this was given by the power of One who was greater than either she or her master the devil.

In considering this tragic event, we can see that God worked unusually because of an unusual situation. Saul was an unusual man, an unusual king in a unique position in the history of a nation that is, itself, without equal among the nations of the world.

God is not held to precedents, rules, or customs. If God wants to adopt a method of this kind He can do it and step aside from the course or pattern in and by which He usually works. But that does not mean that He is laying down a principle that will always be the rule. If God chose to bring Samuel back to pronounce doom upon the apostate Saul, He could do so without instituting a rule that the dead can ever be called back by any person. And the fact that He did it once does not mean that He will do the same thing again at any future time. God made laws for man, but not for Himself. He operates according to His infinite wisdom and sovereign will. We are positively justified in saying that God sent Samuel back from the realm of the dead — that He intervened in this affair, setting aside the witch and, in a way, also setting aside Saul — for His own reasons and to accomplish His own purposes.

Saul asked for counsel. He asked for more instructions. But he received neither. It is not written that he actually saw Samuel. The description the witch gave was sufficient for him to know that Samuel was there, and that the voice he heard was Samuel's. The attitude of the witch shows plainly that Samuel did actually appear and was not merely impersonated by her as is the common practice of these devilish deceivers. This incident lends no support to the erroneous belief that information can be received by recourse to the spirit world, for even in this divinely

ordered case we see that Saul received only the words of his doom repeated to him with only a finality of execution added to them. Those who set aside the plan of God and seek for a consolation and comfort that is not justly theirs, through the spirit world or any other agency of the devil, will hear no actual consolation but merely the voice of impending doom speaking their condemnation. There is but one way, and that *is* God's way!

The Results of Rejection

There is no doubt that this is one of the saddest lessons that is to be found in the Bible. There is certainly no joy in the realization that a never-dying human soul is sinking into an endless eternity. Here was a man who had known the love of God and who had tasted of the rich blessings of God's favor. Now we see him, dejected and beyond hope because there was not found, even in this time of extreme crisis, a grain of repentance in his heart for his rejection of God.

The only thing Saul had ahead was an entrance into eternity. The only additional words he heard from the lips of Samuel were: "To morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me." This meant that he would soon be cut off from the land of the living, where there is hope, and be found in the realm of the twice-dead, where hope is past. He would not actually be in the realms of joy and bliss with Samuel, for we read in the case of the rich man and Lazarus that there was a great gulf fixed between the wicked dead and those who have gone to be with the Lord. How basically different was the condemnation in the words of Samuel to Saul than the hope which was contained in the words the dying thief heard spoken by Jesus: "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The thief had repented; Saul had not!

Saul was prostrate on the ground in sheer hopelessness, grief, and remorse. Under persuasion he finally arose, sat on the bed, and ate some quickly prepared food. He did not do so because he desired the food, for his hope was gone, and also all that is good and pleasant in life. One can hardly imagine the ghastliness of the silence that must have hung over the group that waited there. There was none of the jesting, boasting, or nervous anticipation of battle usually found among fighting men on the eve of an engagement. No doubt they ate in silence, their hearts heavy with the words of doom that were spoken that fateful night.

The morrow approached. The man whom God had chosen for a high calling — the one who once had felt the thrill of knowing that the pure, undefiled Spirit of God was upon him, to speak through him, and to guide him — **went out into the night!**

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why was Saul rejected by God?
- 2 Who had been Saul's counselor?
- 3 What was the crisis that confronted Israel, and Saul as their leader, at this time?
- 4 What counselors did Saul have at this time?
- 5 What did Saul do in this time of crisis?
- 6 What did Saul's reaction indicate, especially as to his own spiritual condition?
- 7 What was the law of God concerning sorcerers and witches?
- 8 What attitude had Saul taken toward this law of God in the past? Was his attitude changed in this time of crisis?
- 9 Does this lesson text give certain false prophets any basis for their doctrine?
- 10 Was Saul's request for information granted? What benefits did he receive from the course he took at this time?