

Saul, Samuel and the Witch

(1 Samuel 28)

- A. Samuel was a great prophet and well-noted in Scripture. **PSA 99:6; JER 15:1.**
1. He was the last of the judges of Israel before they had a king. **1SAM 7:15; ACT 13:20.**
 2. He anointed Israel's first two kings, Saul and David. **1SAM 15:1; 16:13.**
 3. His ministry was a hinge of national and spiritual history. **ACT 3:24.**
 4. This chapter shows that he even prophesied after his death.
- B. God had turned Saul into another man and given him another heart and he prophesied by the Spirit of God. **1SAM 10:6-10.**
1. Saul was particularly blessed and set in great prominence by God.
 2. But by now Saul had sinned away his favor and fellowship with God, and his royalty was terminated. **1SAM 15:28.**
- C. **vs. 1-2.** Having been persecuted by Saul, David ended up among the Philistines. It is a sobering reality that the righteous sometimes find better security among unbelievers than among the covenant people of God. **ACT 23:10.**
- D. **vs. 3-6.** Samuel was dead but the real loss to Saul was that the Spirit had earlier departed from him (**1SAM 16:14**). Losing a good preacher is one thing; quenching the Spirit is worse. **1TH 5:19 c/w PSA 51:10-12.**
1. God had ceased to heed Saul's pleas, an awful condition to avoid. **PRO 1:24-28.**
 2. Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits (**v. 3**) whereas the Law demanded their trial and execution. **EXO 22:18; LEV 20:27.**
 - a. This is a spiritual error to avoid: instead of mortifying forbidden sin in ourselves, we only discourage it. **COL 3:5-6.**
 - b. It is better to make no provision for sin than allow it to be accessible. **ROM 13:14.**
 - c. As with Saul in this chapter, in times of distress when we are out of fellowship with God, we too easily resort to some sin that should have been mortified.
 3. Saul's folly here absolutely contributed to his death. **1CH 10:13.**
- E. **vs. 7-20.** Unable to move heaven, Saul tried to move hell. But repentance and begging for mercy are always better options. **JON 3:4-10.**
1. This account was mocked by an old TV comedy series, *Bewitched*, which had "good" witch, *Samantha* (apparently a female form of the name *Samuel*) and her witch-mother, *Endora*.
 - a. There is no such thing as a good witch. Wicca is a lie.
 - b. Fools mock at sin (**PRO 14:9**) as if it is a non-issue. God is not mocked. **GAL 6:7.**
 - c. Witchcraft remains an abominable work of the flesh. **GAL 5:20.**
 - d. Personal spiritual well-being and gospel-work are facilitated by clear repentance of such sin. **ACT 19:17-20.**
 2. Saul sought divination from a witch by necromancy via a familiar spirit, contrary to **DEU 18:10-11**, pulling out the stops of occult sins.
 - a. His rebellion against known duty was earlier likened to witchcraft. **1SAM 15:23.**
 - b. Rebellion and witchcraft are both unrighteous grasps at power.
 - c. Saul had stooped to the level of the heathen kings. **ISA 47:12-13; EZE 21:21.**
 - d. The witch was apprehensive but Saul gave her a "special indulgence." **vs. 9-10.**
 3. Some have suggested that it was not Samuel that came up to reprove Saul but a devil in

disguise that the witch called up, her familiar spirit which she would pass off as Samuel. But the rest of the account indicates otherwise.

4. **vs. 11-12** do not even say that the woman called up Samuel. That is an unstated assumption.
5. Her reaction in **v. 12** is telling. She cried out in shock: this was not her familiar spirit.
 - a. It says, "...the woman saw Samuel..."
 - b. She also suddenly realized it was Saul there. Why would a familiar spirit which specialized in deception make her realize that?
6. When she described what she saw in **v. 14**, Saul perceived that it was Samuel, the one whose mantle he had rent. **1SAM 15:27**.
7. The Holy Spirit wrote, "And Samuel said to Saul..." (**v. 15**), not "The lying spirit said to Saul..." The Spirit calls him Samuel again in vs. 16, 20.
8. All that was said to Saul in **vs. 15-19** was accurate, true and came to pass. **1SAM 31:2**.
 - a. The rebukes were appropriate. Would a lying spirit do this or rather rationalize away his sins and their judgments?
 - b. The marks of a false spirit/prophet are solidifying sinners in their errors and failed prophecies (**EZE 13:22; DEU 18:22**) but all was in good order here.
9. God later allowed another dead prophet, Moses, to be seen and heard. **MAT 17:1-3**.

F. This account should remind us:

1. to avoid all forms of occultism, including fortune-tellers and astrology, and not treat them lightly.
2. to seek the living God, not dead sinners. **ISA 8:19-20**.
3. to avoid deep-seeking things not revealed. **ACT 1:7; COL 2:18**.
4. to trust the word of God as sufficient (**2TI 3:16-17**) and reject extra-scriptural pretences.
5. that the words of a prophet which reprove impenitent sinners while he lived will be no more pleasant *post-mortem*.
 - a. The scriptures by which the apostles and prophets still speak have no different message than they gave in person.
 - b. The testimony of righteous Abel still condemns Cain. **HEB 11:4**.