

1SAMUEL 28: 1 In those days, the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. Achish said to David, "Know assuredly that you shall go out with me in the army, you and your men."

The Philistines prepare to attack the Israelites, and Achish informs David that he shall accompany him to battle, 1Sam 28:1, 1Sam 28:2. Saul, unable to obtain any answer from God, applies to a witch at En-dor to bring up Samuel that he may converse with him on the issue of the war, 1Sam 28:3-11. Samuel appears, 1Sam 28:12-14. He reproaches Saul with his misconduct, and informs him of his approaching ruin, 1Sam 28:15-19. He is greatly distressed; but at the solicitations of the woman and his own servants, he takes some food, and departs the same night, 1Sam 28:20-25.

Verse 1

The Philistines gathered their armies together - Sir Isaac Newton conjectures that the Philistines had got a great increase to their armies by vast numbers of men which Amasis had driven out of Egypt. This, with Samuel's death, and David's disgrace, were no inconsiderable motives to a new war, front which the Philistines had now every thing to hope.

Thou shalt go out with me to battle - This he said, being deceived by what David had told him.

1SAMUEL 28: 2 David said to Achish, "Therefore you shall know what your servant will do." Achish said to David, "Therefore will I make you my bodyguard for ever."

Verse 2

Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do - This was another equivocal answer; and could only be understood by his succeeding conduct. It might imply what he could do in favor of the Philistines against Israel; or in favor of Israel against the Philistines. Achish understood it in the former sense; and therefore he said to David, I will make thee keeper of my head for ever; i.e., Thou shalt be captain of my life-guards.

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

Verse 3

Samuel was dead - And there was no longer a public accredited prophet to consult.

Those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards - See the note on Lev 19:31, and Exo 22:18.

1SAMUEL 28: 4 The Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and encamped in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they encamped in Gilboa.

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

Verse 5

When Saul saw - He saw from the superiority of his enemies, from the state of his army, and especially from his own state towards God, that he had every thing to fear.

1SAMUEL 28: 6 When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD didn't answer him, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

Verse 6

The Lord answered him not - He used the three methods by which supernatural intelligence was ordinarily given: -

1. Dreams. - The person prayed for instruction; and begged that God would answer by a significant dream.
 2. Urim. - This was a kind of oracular answer given to the high priest when clothed with the ephod, on which were the Urim and Thummim. How these communicated the answer, is not well known.
 3. Prophets. - Who were requested by the party concerned to consult the Lord on the subject in question, and to report his answer. The prophets at that time could only be those in the schools of the prophets, which Samuel had established at Naioth and Gibeah. These were the only successors of Samuel that we know of.
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1SAMUEL 28: 7 Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek me a woman who has a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her." His servants said to him, "Behold, there is a woman who has a familiar spirit at Endor."

Verse 7

Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit - Literally, Seek me a woman, בעלת אוב baalath ob, the mistress of the Obidiah or Pythonic spirit - one who had a familiar spirit, whom she could invoke when she pleased, and receive answers from him relative to futurity.

Strange that a man, who had banished all such from the land, as dangerous to the state, as impostors and deceivers, should now have recourse to them as the only persons in whom he could safely put his confidence in the time in which Jehovah had refused to help him!

At En-dor - This was a city in the valley of Jezreel, at the foot of Mount Gilboa, where the army of Saul had now encamped.

1SAMUEL 28: 8 Saul disguised himself, and put on other clothing, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, "Please divine to me by the familiar spirit, and bring me up whomever I shall name to you."

Verse 8

Saul disguised himself - That he might not be known by the woman, lest she, being terrified, should refuse to use her art.

1SAMUEL 28: 9 The woman said to him, "Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?"

1SAMUEL 28: 10 Saul swore to her by the LORD, saying, "As the LORD lives, no punishment shall happen to you for this thing."

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

Verse 11

Whom shall I bring up - The woman certainly meant no more than making her familiar personify whomsoever the querist should wish. In the evocation of spirits this is all that, according to the professed rules of their art, such persons pretend to; for over human souls in paradise or in the infernal regions they have no power. If we allow that there is such an art founded on true principles, all it can pretend to is, to bring up the familiar; cause him when necessary to assume the form and character of some particular person, and to give such notices relative to futurity as he is able to collect. And this even in the cases to which authenticity is generally allowed, is often scanty, vague, and uncertain, for fallen spirits do not abound in knowledge: this is an attribute of God, and rays of this perfection are imparted to pure and holy intelligences; and even Satan himself, as may be seen from most of his temptations, is far from excelling in knowledge. He may be cunning and insidious, but he certainly is not wise and prudent; we in general give this fallen spirit credit for much more wisdom than he possesses.

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

Verse 12

When the woman saw Samuel - That Samuel did appear on this occasion, is most evident from the text; nor can this be denied from any legitimate mode of interpretation: and it is as evident that he was neither raised by the power of the devil nor the incantations of the witch, for the appearances which took place at this time were such as she was wholly unacquainted with. Her familiar did not

appear; and from the confused description she gives, it is fully evident that she was both surprised and alarmed at what she saw, being so widely different from what she expected to see.

1SAMUEL 28: 13 The king said to her, "Don't be afraid. For what do you see?" The woman said to Saul, "I see a god coming up out of the earth."

Verse 13

I saw gods ascending out of the earth - The word אֱלֹהִים *elohim*, which we translate gods, is the word which is used for the Supreme Being throughout the Bible; but all the versions, the Chaldee excepted, translate it in the plural number, as we do. The Chaldee has, I see מַלְאָכָא דִּי "malacha dayeya, an angel of the Lord, ascending from the earth. This sight alarmed the woman; it was what she did not expect; in this she could not recognise her familiar, and she was terrified at the appearance.

1SAMUEL 28: 14 He said to her, "What does he look like?" She said, "An old man comes up. He is covered with a robe." Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and showed respect.

Verse 14

An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle - This seems to have been a second apparition; she cannot mean that she had seen gods ascending out of the earth, and these gods were like an old man with a mantle. The angelic appearance first mentioned prepared the way for Samuel; and the whole was done so as to show to the woman that her art had not prevailed in the present instance, and that what was now taking place was wholly independent of her incantations.

Saul perceived that it was Samuel - The description was suitable to his person and clothing.

1SAMUEL 28: 15 Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me, to bring me up?" Saul answered, "I am very distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me, and answers me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams. Therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I shall do."

Verse 15

Why hast thou disquieted me - The complaint is not directed against the woman but against Saul. Indeed, her incantations had no influence in the business, and it does not appear that she had commenced her operations before the angels had prepared the way of the prophet, and before the prophet himself had made his appearance.

That thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do - In his former difficulties, and when pressed by his enemies, he was in the habit of consulting Samuel; and now he applies to him as his former

preceptor. God, he knew, might answer by such a man as Samuel, when he would answer by no other means.

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

Verse 16

Wherefore then dost thou ask of me - Was ever I wont to give answers that were not dictated by the Lord? It is his counsel alone that I communicate.

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

Verse 17

The Lord hath done to him - I believe these words are spoken of Saul; and as they are spoken to him, it seems evident that him should be thee. The Vulgate has tibi, the Septuagint σοι, to Thee: and this is the reading of five of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., as well as of both the Bibles printed at Venice in 1518, where we read לך lecha, to Thee, instead of לו lo, to Him.

As he spake by me - Here was no illusion; none but Samuel could say this.

1SAMUEL 28: 18 Because you didn't obey the voice of the LORD, and didn't execute his fierce wrath on Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day.

Verse 18

Nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek - See 1Sam 15:1-9 (note) and the notes there.

1SAMUEL 28: 19 Moreover the LORD will deliver Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines; and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will deliver the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines."

Verse 19

To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me - What an awful message! In the course of the ensuing day thou shalt be slain, thy three sons shall be slain, and the armies of Israel shall be delivered into the hands of the Philistines! Can any person read this, properly considering the situation of this unfortunate monarch, the triumph of the enemies of God, and the speedy ruin in which the godlike Jonathan is about to be involved, without feeling the keenest anguish of heart?

But Samuel says, "He and his sons should be with him." 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."

Saul had committed the sin unto death - the sin to be visited with a violent death, while the mercy of God was extended to the soul. Thus say my faith, my hope, and my charity; and doth not the mercy of God say the same?

1SAMUEL 28: 20 Then Saul fell immediately his full length on the earth, and was terrified, because of the words of Samuel. There was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.

Verse 20

Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth - Literally, he fell with his own length, or with the fullness of his stature. He was so overwhelmed with this most dreadful message, that he swooned away, and thus fell at his own length upon the ground. The woman, being terrified, had probably withdrawn to some distance at the first appearance of the prophet; and Saul was left alone with Samuel. After some short time, the woman came again unto Saul, found him sore troubled, and offered him those succours which humanity dictated.

1SAMUEL 28: 21 The woman came to Saul, and saw that he was very troubled, and said to him, "Behold, your handmaid has listened to your voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have listened to your words which you spoke to me.

1SAMUEL 28: 22 Now therefore, please listen also to the voice of your handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before you; and eat, that you may have strength, when you go on your way."

1SAMUEL 28: 23 But he refused, and said, "I will not eat." But his servants, together with the woman, constrained him; and he listened to their voice. So he arose from the earth and sat on the bed.

Verse 23

I will not eat - It is no wonder that not only his strength, but also his appetite, had departed from him.

And sat upon the bed - Beds or couches were the common places on which the ancients sat to take their repasts.

1SAMUEL 28: 24 The woman had a fattened calf in the house. She hurried and killed it; and she took flour, and kneaded it, and baked unleavened bread of it.

Verse 24

The woman had a fat calf - The ancients used great despatch in their cookery. In hot countries they could not keep flesh meat by them any length of time; hence they generally kept young animals, such as calves, lambs, and kids, ready for slaughter; and when there was occasion, one of them was killed, and dressed immediately.

Unleavened bread - There was not time to bake leavened bread; that would have taken considerable time, in order that the leaven might leaven the whole lump.

1SAMUEL 28: 25 She brought it before Saul, and before his servants; and they ate. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

Verse 25

They rose up, and went away that night - The transactions of this chapter occupy one night only.

1. Saul came by night to En-dor, 1Sam 28:8.
2. He consulted the woman, and had his conference with Samuel the same night; for no time whatever appears to have been lost after his arrival at En-dor.
3. He was overcome by the heavy tidings which he heard; and which for a time appear to have deprived him of all power.
4. The woman kills a calf; dresses a part; makes and bakes bread; and Saul and his servants eat. And,
5. They rose and went away that night, 1Sam 28:25. The next day, in all probability, the battle happened in which Israel was defeated, and Saul and his sons lost their lives.

There is a considerable diversity of opinion, both among learned and pious men, relative to the subject mentioned in this chapter, that of raising Samuel from the dead. Some deny the possibility of the thing, and say that it was the devil that personified Samuel; and others, that the whole was the imposition of this cunning woman, and that there was no supernatural agency in the business. This is not a proper place to argue the point. I have given my opinion in the notes. I may sum up in a few particulars.

1. I believe there is a supernatural and spiritual world, in which Human spirits, both good and bad, live in a state of consciousness.

2. I believe there is an invisible world, in which various orders of spirits, not human, live and act.
3. I believe that any of these spirits may, according to the order of God, in the laws of their place of residence, have intercourse with this world, and become visible to mortals.
4. I believe there is a possibility, by arts not strictly good, to evoke and have intercourse with spirits, not Human; and to employ, in a certain limited way, their power and influence.
5. I believe that the woman of En-dor had no power over Samuel; and that no incantation can avail over any departed saint of God, nor indeed over any human disembodied spirit.
6. I believe Samuel did actually appear to Saul; and that he was sent by the especial mercy of God to warn this infatuated king of his approaching death, that he might have an opportunity to make his peace with his Maker.
7. I believe that the woman found, from the appearances, that her real or pretended charms had no effect; and that what now took place came from a totally different disposition of things from those with which she was conversant.
8. I believe that direct, circumstantial, and unequivocal oracles were now delivered concerning things which neither human nor diabolical wisdom could foresee or penetrate; that the defeat of the Israelites, and the death of Saul and his three sons on the following day, were matters which, from their nature, could only be known to God himself; and that no demon or bad spirit could be employed in such a transaction.