

SAUL AND THE NECROMANCER

Introduction:

1. Chapter 27 revealed a dark period in the life of David.
2. His troubles will be visited again in chapters 29 and 30.
3. But, before those events take place, we are allowed to see just how far Saul has fallen.
4. This is one of the most tragic chapters in the Bible.

- I. The Death of Samuel (28:3)
 - A. We have already read of the death of Samuel (25:1).
 - B. However, it is mentioned here to emphasize the importance of what occurs in this chapter.
 - C. Samuel had died, had been mourned, and had been buried.
 - D. Also, we learn that Saul had put the wizards and those with familiar spirits out of the land.
 1. The first word is the idea of a mumblor or one who makes a hollow sound (cf. Isaiah 8:19; 29:4).
 2. It referred to a person who used tricks of the voice, like ventriloquism, to claim to speak to the dead – a necromancer.
 3. The word for “wizard” means a “conjurer” or a “soothsayer.”
 4. Saul had removed them from the land in partial obedience to God (cf. Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:10-12).
- II. The Fear of Saul (28:4-6)
 - A. Following the death of Samuel, Saul realized that he had lost favor with God.
 - B. When the Philistines gathered for battle against Israel, Saul was overcome with fear.
 - C. When he tried to enquire of the Lord, he received no answer.
 1. This is not a contradiction with 1 Chronicles 10:13-14.
 2. Saul enquired of the Lord, but not according to God’s commands.
 3. Remember, the priest with the ephod was with David (23:6, 9).
 4. Also, the prophet Gad was with David (22:5).
 5. When God did not answer Saul, he turned to occult practices instead of seeking the reason for God’s silence.
- III. The Request of Saul (28:7-11)
 - A. First, Saul requested that someone find him a necromancer – one who claimed to speak to the dead.
 - B. When he learned that there was a woman in Endor claiming this ability, Saul disguised himself and traveled to her at night.
 - C. His second request was for her to bring up Samuel’s spirit from the grave.
 - D. The woman protested, knowing that her life was in danger if she were discovered.
 - E. So, Saul took an oath using the name of Jehovah that she would not be punished for her crime.

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- IV. The Appearance of Samuel (28:12-19)
- A. Following Saul's request, something amazing happened – Samuel actually appeared!
 - B. It must be understood that this was the work of God, not of the necromancer.
 - 1. She was more surprised than anyone was when Samuel was seen!
 - 2. Her sorcery consisted of deception and trickery.
 - 3. When she saw a real miracle, she was dumbfounded (cf. Exodus 8:18-19; 9:11; Acts 8:5-24).
 - 4. She was afraid for she had seen a spiritual being ascending out of the earth.
 - C. As she described what she had seen to Saul, the king recognized that Samuel was present.
 - D. Then, Samuel spoke directly to Saul.
 - 1. Strangely, Saul did not seek Samuel's counsel when he was alive.
 - 2. Now that he is dead, Saul would give anything to have him back (cf. Luke 16:24-27).
 - E. Saul asked of Samuel what he should have been asking all along – "What shall I do?"
 - F. Samuel's reply reveals the tragedy of Saul's life – *"Why do you ask me, seeing that the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?"*
 - G. Samuel reminded Saul that the Lord had done what He promised.
 - 1. He had taken the kingdom away from Saul.
 - 2. He had given it to David. *{This is the first time we read of Saul actually knowing that David was to be the new king.}*
 - 3. All of this was because of Saul's unwillingness to obey the Lord.
 - H. Furthermore, he informed Saul about what would happen in the battle.
 - 1. The Philistines would defeat the Israelites.
 - 2. And, on the next day, Saul and his sons would die.
- V. The Departure of Saul (28:20-25)
- A. Again, Saul was overcome with fear and fell upon the ground.
 - 1. The man who stood head and shoulders above the rest had been brought low because of his disobedience.
 - 2. The King like all the nations around Israel had proven the folly of rejecting God for the wisdom of men.
 - B. Saul was persuaded to eat a little food for his strength.
 - C. Then, he and his servants went out into the night (cf. John 13:30).