

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 10TH-11TH, 2024 // 1 SAMUEL

THE LORD DID NOT ANSWER (1 SAMUEL 28:3-7)

Verse 3 reminds us that Samuel, Israel's spiritual leader, has died.

- There's now a spiritual vacuum in the land of Israel, and Saul's in trouble and needs divine counsel.
- One good thing that Saul did during his reign (probably under the positive influence of Samuel) was that he removed all the "mediums and spiritists from the land" in accordance with the law of Moses (Lev. 19:31, Deut. 18:9-14).

WHY DOES GOD PROHIBIT SPIRITISTS/MEDIUMS?

God prohibits attempting to contact the dead because it is a dangerous link to the demonic.

- When someone dies, their soul is taken to heaven or hell—they don't float around in some ethereal space haunting or giving guidance to the living.
- However, the Bible clearly teaches that there ARE spirit beings that can appear in our physical world—angels and demons.
- Satan and demons "masquerade as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14, NIV) in order to "steal and kill and destroy" (Jn 10:10).
- Demons want to deceive people into thinking that there is no such thing as heaven or hell and the afterlife is vague and mysterious—but it's all an act of deception/fear.
- Christians are to stay away from any form of this!

The Philistines gathered and camped at Shunem opposite of Israel in Gilboa (vs. 4).

- When Saul sees the massive army of the Philistines, he's terrified, and his heart begins to pound in fear (vs. 5). What should he do?
- Samuel is dead and can no longer be consulted for spiritual guidance. Saul had killed the priests of the Lord (1 Sam. 22), and Saul had outlawed the mediums and spiritists.

Saul was in a terrible, desperate place—he was a pathetic shell of the mighty man who once stood head and shoulders above everyone else.

- In desperation and crippling fear, Saul attempts to inquire of the Lord.
- But the Lord doesn't answer—not by dreams, not by the Urim, and not by a prophet (vs. 6).
- God was completely silent and would not give Saul an answer.

In one sense, it's not that God was completely silent in Saul's life; it's that God was silent concerning this specific situation.

- King Saul knew God's previously revealed will but had rejected it and was currently rejecting it!
- Saul didn't want to obey God in what he already knew so God wouldn't reveal more to him.
- The answer to Saul's problems was humble repentance, but that's not what he wanted.

Saul sends his servants to find him a medium who can counsel him on what to do next.

- Even though Saul was the one who banned mediums and spiritists, his servants locate a medium in the land of En-dor (vs. 7).
- If we want the guidance and blessing of God, but we plug up our ears whenever we hear the correcting voice of God, it shouldn't come as a surprise to us when God seems silent.

CONSULTING THE MEDIUM (1 SAMUEL 28:8-14)

Saul puts on a disguise by dressing as a commoner and takes two of his servants by night to the medium of En-dor and tells her to consult a spirit for him (vs. 8).

- The sheer hypocrisy of this scene is staggering—Saul is breaking the very law he was known for enforcing.
 - The medium is no fool: she senses something about the situation is off and fears it is a trap (vs. 9).
- The medium is afraid because spiritism was a capital crime in Israel, but Saul assures her by taking an oath using the name of the Lord (the one whose law he's breaking) that she won't be punished (vs. 10).
- This is a blasphemous, wicked thing to use God's name to dabble with necromancy and witchcraft! Spiritual language and the use of spiritual words mean nothing on their own.

Saul tells the medium to "bring up" none other than the prophet Samuel. To her great shock, surprise, and amazement, the prophet Samuel materializes, wearing his prophetic robe, and the medium screams in terror (vs. 11-12).

- Wait a second...if dead people are either in heaven or hell, then why is this medium able to contact and "bring up" Samuel from the dead?
- Are spiritists/mediums for real???

Most mediums/spiritists, psychics, palm readers, astrologers, and fortune tellers are frauds with no real power who simply deceive desperate and gullible people for money.

- However, there are some who have real power (Acts 16:16-38) from the demonic.
- The fact that the medium of En-dor screamed in terror when Samuel actually showed up tells us something: she's probably not used to truly seeing dead people.

This doesn't mean that it is genuinely possible for spiritists or mediums to speak with the dead (if they actually do contact a "spirit," it's a demon), only that God allowed it on this one exception in order to pronounce judgment on Saul from the prophet Samuel one last time.

- When the medium saw the spirit form of Samuel coming up from the earth, she knew that her client was none other than King Saul (vs. 12-14).

Saul bowed down low to the ground in homage to Samuel as he came up from the place of the dead (vs. 14).

- Satan would love nothing more than for people to dabble in the occult world of seances, spiritism, necromancy, ghost-hunting, psychics, etc.
- God's commandments are designed to protect us from the schemes of the enemy who is set on deceiving and devouring us (1 Pet. 5:8).

A DEADLY PROPHECY (1 SAMUEL 28:15-25)

"WHY HAVE YOU DISTURBED ME...?" (VS. 15A)

Because this is the O.T. (before Christ's completed work on the cross), Samuel was not in heaven but in the place of comfort, blessing, and rest known as Abraham's bosom (Lk. 16:19-31).

- When Jesus finished His work on the cross, sin's penalty was paid in full for the believing dead, and they were ushered into heaven.

- Those who die in Christ are in a far better place!

Saul answers Samuel by essentially telling him, "I'm in serious trouble! The Philistines are attacking, God has turned against me and won't answer me, so I had no choice but to bring you up from the dead to ask you" (vs. 15).

- Samuel answers by essentially saying, "Let me get this straight—God has turned against you and won't answer because of your sin, but instead of repenting and getting right with him, you're breaking God's laws to try and get answers from me??" (vs. 16-17)

The last thing you ever want to hear from a dead guy is, "I'll see you and your kids tomorrow!" but that's exactly what Samuel says to Saul (vs. 19).

- That didn't mean Saul was going to also be in the place of the believing dead, but they were going to the place of the dead (Sheol). Jesus taught in Lk. 16 that this place was divided into two realms (paradise/Abraham's bosom, and torment) with a chasm between them.

When Saul heard the news that both he and his sons would die and his army would fall into the hands of the Philistines as an act of God's judgment, he fell flat on the ground in terror and weakness because he hadn't eaten anything all day and night (vs. 20).

- The medium urged Saul to let her prepare a meal for him—he initially refused but eventually gave in, ate, and left her house (vs. 21-25).

You can learn a lot about a person by where they turn or what they look to in times of trouble or need.

- The answer to most of our problems isn't found in some grand, magical (or even religious) ceremony—it's found in humbling ourselves, repenting of our sin, and surrendering our entire hearts, lives, and wills to God with an obedient heart (this is what many AREN'T willing to do).

REJECTED (1 SAMUEL 29:1-11)

IN A PLACE YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER BE (VS. 1-3)

David has been living in a very godless and backslidden place for the past year and a half.

- Because David had chosen to live among the Philistines and align himself with Achish, king of Gath, he's now forced to go with them against his own people, the Israelites!
- David's men line up for battle with the Philistines.
- David probably never imagined his wandering from the Lord would lead him to such a dark, dangerous, and terrible place.
- Interestingly, even though David couldn't see that he didn't belong amongst these ranks, the Philistine commanders noticed and pointed it out.
- Achish defends David's loyalty to the Philistines.

REJECTED BY THE WORLD (VS. 4-5)

It's almost as if David has forgotten who he is!

- David's previous victories in fighting the Lord's battles must have seemed like distant memories at this point.
- However, the Philistines recognized him for his past exploits against them and saw David as an absolute liability to their cause and as a potential turncoat.
- If you are truly in Christ (you've been born again, regenerated, and given the Holy Spirit), you will never be fully accepted by the world.
- You have a different nature, set of values, and worldview that the world simply cannot understand or receive (1 Cor. 2:14).
- Even if you temporarily forget who you are as a Believer, sometimes God's greatest reminder of your identity is rejection from the world.

"YOU DON'T BELONG HERE—GO HOME!" (VS. 6-10)

David couldn't find peace or rest in the land of Israel under the care of God, and now he finds that his Philistine "friends" won't accept him either.

- King Achish tells David of his rejection from the other leaders and sends him home, even as David protests and pleads, citing his loyalty.
- Despite David's pleadings, Achish tells him to go home—he's not one of them and never will be.
- Rejection always hurts, but so many of us care more about the approval of those who don't know God than we do the approval of the Lord.
- Sometimes, God reminds us of who we are and gets our attention through the world's rejection.

SOMEWHERE NEAR ROCK BOTTOM (VS. 11)

Early the next morning, David and his men left to return home to Ziklag.

- David is probably hurt, frustrated, and angered by his rejection from the king he had spent 16 months working for.
- He's not there yet, but David's rock bottom is approaching quickly (1 Sam. 30:1-5)—all these things are a wake-up call to repentance.

WHEN GOD SEEMS SILENT

- If we claim to want the guidance and blessing of God, but we plug up our ears whenever we hear His correcting voice—it shouldn't come as a surprise to us when God seems silent.
- God will always seem very silent to those who refuse to listen and obey.
- Are we obeying the truth we already know God has spoken and revealed?

SEARCHING WHEN WE ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER

- The answer to most of our problems is not found in some new, sensational revelation or spiritual experience—it's found in humbling ourselves before God in reverence, repentance, and obedience.
- God has been revealed to us through creation, our conscience, and through Christ—we suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).

WAKE UP CALLS

- God loves you enough to let you feel the pain of your own sinful, selfish, and foolish choices by allowing you to hit rock bottom.
- It may be an arrest, divorce, job loss, loss of a relationship, a conflict you created, or rejection and alienation by your "friends"—it's God ordained to teach, discipline, and correct you.
- Are you done doing it your way yet?