

## The Jewish Kingdom - Lesson 28

### Philistines and Witches

The final chapters of I Samuel deal with a great military invasion by the Philistines into Israel. Israel, under Saul's poor leadership, is not prepared for such a battle. David finds himself on the wrong side as war looms near.

#### 70. Preparation for a Philistine Invasion - I Samuel 28:1-2

- David has put himself and his men into great favor of the Philistines. They naturally assume that he will accompany them on this campaign. Remember, they think he has been raiding Judah.
- vs. 2 - David agrees to go to battle, but it is unclear why he agrees. He has avoided attacking his own countrymen thus far. He has painted himself into a corner and does not have an exit. We see Achish's trust of him in that he wants David to be head of his personal guard.

#### 71. Saul and the Witch at Endor - I Samuel 28:3-25

- Upon further study, this probably will get arranged differently at a later period. But I promised so we are covering it!
- vs. 3-6 - the stage is set for Saul to panic. The Philistines are invading in force and the Lord will not answer Saul's inquiries by any means. Samuel is dead and buried, the one person Saul would turn to in crisis. Saul in desperation turns to necromancy, a practice forbidden by the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 18:10-12 ) and even enforced by Saul.
- Shunem and Gilboa - are located near the Jezebel Valley north in central Israel. This is further north than most of the Philistine incursions, perhaps a tactic to divide and conquer Israel.
- Endor - meaning is unclear, but perhaps "fountain of the city". It was near Gilboa.
- vs. 8 - you know it's bad if you are hiding what you are doing.
- Alright, let's talk a little about the witch of Endor. She has somehow evaded being killed or cast out of the kingdom but known well enough that she could be easily located by Saul's servants. There is great debate as to whether or not she was a fraud, as are most of scoundrels who claim to talk to the dead. Many scholars believe that she used ventriloquism to fake her seances, and many of the spirit mediums of the Victorian era and today resort to such cheap parlor tricks. By the language it appears what happens is a surprise to her.
- vs. 9-10 - the woman is rightfully scared for her life, but not that Saul drags the Lord into this by swearing by Him. This is a definite sign that Saul was not a spiritual person at all. In all likelihood, his efforts to stamp out these pagan practices was more from Samuel than from him.
- vs. 12 - the woman screamed because she was not expecting to see anything or anyone. Had she really had the abilities she advertised this would not have been a surprise.

- vs. 13 - the use of the word “gods” here is interesting. It is the word *elohim* in Hebrew, a name reserved for God. Most commentators believe she is describing Samuel.
- vs. 14 - Samuel’s appearance was as Saul would have expected, old and clothed as a priest. Perhaps Samuel appeared behind Saul so that Saul could not see him immediately, or perhaps Saul never saw him at all in this process.
- Ok, let’s tackle the big question: is this really Samuel? I think it is. God allowed this to happen once. Neither men nor demons have power to raise the dead. The Bible calls him Samuel, not the form of Samuel or the spirit or any other term. I’m also not sure anyone but Samuel could have given the message to follow. I doubt much of the information contained therein was public knowledge. Also, the fact that a prophecy is made that is fulfilled must not be ignored.
- vs. 15 - Saul loves excuses, doesn’t he?
- vs. 16 - Note that the Lord is not just giving Saul the cold shoulder but is working against Saul. What a terrible place to be!
- vs. 18 - For the story of Saul’s disobedience in his campaign against the Amalekites, see I Samuel 15.
- vs. 19 - Note this prophecy. It will come to pass.
- vs. 20 - fear and exhaustion overtake Saul.
- vs. 21-22 - Why is she so nice? She probably feared Saul would go back on his promise to not kill her after that message.
- vs. 24 - the unleavened bread shows the haste in which the meal was prepared. It had not been given time to rise.
- Let’s close by looking back at I Samuel 13:23. Saul had rebelled against God’s command to kill the Amalekites, and Samuel compares this disobedience to witchcraft, one of the most evil crimes one could commit in Israel. Saul started with rebellion and now we see him on the eve of his death resorting to witchcraft.