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Appendix IV

The Calling Up Of Samuel

(1 Samuel 28:5-19)

“When Saul saw the armies of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by the prophets. Then Saul said to his servants, Seek out for me a woman who has a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman who has a familiar spirit at Endor (verses 5-7).

“So Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray you, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring up to me him whom I shall name to you. And the woman said unto him, Behold, you know what Saul [the king] has done, how he has cut off those who have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: why, therefore do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die? And Saul swore to her by the Lord, saying, As the Lord lives, there shall no punishment happen to you for this thing (verses 8-10).

“Then the woman said, Whom shall I bring up to you? And he said, Bring up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman said to Saul, Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul! And the king said to her, Do not be afraid. What did you see? (Verses 11-13a.)

“She said, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said to her, What form is he? And she said, An old man is coming up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself (verses 13b-14).

“Samuel said to Saul, Why have you disquieted me, bringing me up? Saul answered, I am very distressed: for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me, and doesn't answer me any more, neither by prophets nor by dreams: therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I should do (verse 15).

“Then Samuel said, Why then do you ask of me, seeing the Lord has departed from you, and is become your enemy? (For the Lord has done to him, as he had said by me): for the Lord has rent the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbour, even to David. Because you obeyed not the voice of the Lord, nor executed his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore the Lord has done this thing unto you this day. Moreover, the Lord will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines, and to-morrow you and your sons will be with me: the Lord also shall deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.” (Verses 16-19.)

1 Samuel 28:5-19.

This event has proved a most difficult one for commentators. Saul is introduced as a man completely out of fellowship with the Lord who thus no longer

responds to his prayers even when he presents his entreaties through approved channels. He consequently decides to seek supernatural access to the mind of God by another means. He is informed by his servants of the existence of a medium inhabiting a place named Endor, some fifty miles due north of Jerusalem but not far from his then encampment.

The commentators give divergent views as to what happened. Matthew Henry suggests that it really was Samuel who *was* called up from the dead. With this, some apocryphal literature (Ecclesiasticus 46:20) seems to agree.

Others have said that Satan *posed* as Samuel. They base this on the use of the word *gods* (in verse 13), a word far more frequently rendered in the singular though it is almost always written as a plural form. Sometimes it merely signifies a very important person, such as a judge or one "to whom the word of the Lord has come" in a special way (see Psalm 82:6 and John 10:35⁴⁰⁶).

Jameison, Fausset, and Brown⁴⁰⁷ take an opposite view, namely, that it was not really Samuel who was brought up from the dead. They base this on three considerations. (1) The woman was practicing an art absolutely forbidden by God, and God would not, therefore, resort to such a method of communication with Saul. (2) If God refused to answer Saul personally through the proper channels, it seems highly improbable that his intention to remain silent would be circumvented by *improper* means; and (3) the fact that she appears to have been the only one to have actually seen the apparition could very well have been a subterfuge to secure her own safety by claiming that she was indeed speaking to Samuel — even if she was, in fact, deceiving Saul.

Many suggest that it was a satanically inspired spiritual being of some sort posing as Samuel and speaking with Samuel's voice. Such a situation is reported even in modern times where loved ones are supposedly both seen and heard. In this instance, Saul did not actually see Samuel at all. Indeed, this is almost implied by the

⁴⁰⁶ "I have said, You are gods; and all of you are children of the most High."
Psalm 82:6.

"Jesus answered them, saying, Is it not written in your law, I said, You are gods? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came. . . ." John 10:34, 35

⁴⁰⁷ Jameison, R., A. R. Faussett, and D. Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, revised edition by Herbert Lockyer, 1961, at 1 Samuel 28.

fact that he asked the woman to describe Samuel (verse 13), as though he sought confirmation of identity. He speaks to the medium in the past tense as though the vision had already vanished: "What *did* you see?" It is true that verse 14 reads, "What form *is* he of?", but the verb is not supplied in the original and should possibly be *was* rather than *is* in order to agree with verse 13. So also in verse 14, the witch would have said, "an old man, coming up, and he *was* covered with a mantle" (the verb in italics once again being supplied by the reader).⁴⁰⁸

The content of Samuel's message to Saul (verse 15) might seem to present a problem. Jameison suggests that "the vagueness of the information imparted" somewhat reduces the difficulty since "much of it could have been reached by natural conjecture as to the probable result of the approaching conflict." Many who profess to be mediums or oracles have shown remarkable foresight in making their predictions. Such was the case with Ursula Shipton in the early fifteenth century, and somewhat later Merlin Ambrosius, and a little later still, Thomas Gray (author of "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard") who wrote a "prophetic" poem which appeared under the title *Luna Habitabilis* in 1737.⁴⁰⁹ The witch of Endor may quite possibly have been both well informed and highly intelligent: and she must have been well aware that she was in a dangerous position. Not only was necromancy forbidden on pain of death (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19:31 and 20:27;

⁴⁰⁸ Rotherham (*The Emphasized Bible*) makes this read as a past tense. The *NEB* has neatly avoided the problem, thus tacitly acknowledging it: "Like an old man coming up, wrapped in a cloak". So also *The Modern Language Bible* (Berkeley). The *LXX* at 1 Kings 28:14 (which in the *King James Version* is 1 Samuel 28:14) almost implies a figure "dressed up" in a cloak (ἀναβεβλημενος which is a perfect passive participle of ἀναβαλλω, a Classical Greek form meaning just this.)

⁴⁰⁹ For more on this, see the author's: "Some Striking Fulfillments of Prophecy" (Doorway Paper #13) in *Hidden Things of God's Revelation in The Doorway Papers Series*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1977, vol. 7, Part 3, p.107ff.

Deuteronomy 18:10-11⁴¹⁰), but King Saul himself had expressly forbidden it (1 Samuel 28, verses 3, 9 and 10⁴¹¹).

Jameison concluded by noting that many eminent commentators believed Samuel was indeed sent personally to rebuke the king. On the other hand, Bullinger, commenting upon the words "the woman saw Samuel," observed that this could have been nothing more than "the materialization of a deceiving spirit impersonating Samuel as is done by mediums today."⁴¹²

I have not been able to resolve the problem in my own mind. *Lange's Commentary*⁴¹³ has a very full discussion of the several points of view held on this passage. Certainly there is room for considerable divergence of opinion.

THE END

⁴¹⁰ "You shall not allow a witch to live". Exodus 22:18.

"Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God." Leviticus 19:31.

"A man also or a woman that has a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them." Leviticus 20:27.

"There shall not be found among you any one that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all these things are an abomination unto the Lord." Deuteronomy 18:10-12.

⁴¹¹ "Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. . . . The woman said, You now what Saul has done, how he has cut off all those that 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? And Saul sware to her by the Lord, saying, As the Lord lives, there shall no punishment happen to you for this thing." 1 Samuel 28:3, 9, 10).

⁴¹² Bullinger, E. W., *The Companion Bible*, Henry Frowde, Oxford University Press, no date (c.1913), Part II, at 1 Samuel 28:12, p. 405.

⁴¹³ Lange, John Peter, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, translated, enlarged and edited by C. H. Toy and J. A. Broadus, Grand Rapids, Zondervan 1960 (1877), vol. 3 (Samuel and Kings), pp.331-337.