

Leviticus 20:27: "A man also or woman that hath 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 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:9-12; 1 Samuel 15:23; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Galatians 5:19-21; Acts 8:9-11; Revelation 21:8; Revelation 22:15; Isaiah 8:19, 20

These scriptures are sufficient to show that dealing with familiar spirits, otherwise called sorcery, or witchcraft, is a sin of fearful magnitude in the sight of God. The testimony of the Bible furnishes the answer to this important question. It is the holding of direct communication with Satan or his evil angels, under the name of conversing with the spirits of the dead.

**1 Samuel 28:3-20:** *"Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. And 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 thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee. And the women said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land; wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? And Saul swear to her by the Lord, saying, As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice; and the woman spake to Saul saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid; for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh 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. And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams; therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the Lord hath done to him, as he spake by me; for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David; because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines; and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me; the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines. Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel; and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night."*

1. Saul, the king of Israel, had lived in rebellion against God for many years. Because of this, the Lord had left him to himself, and refused to communicate with him either by dreams, or by prophets, or in any other manner. The army of the Philistines had come up against him, and in his distress he sought to one having a familiar spirit.

2. Samuel, the prophet of God, was now dead. He had faithfully warned Saul against disobeying the Lord, and in the last warning that he gave him, he told him that rebellion was as the sin of witchcraft. Now that Samuel is dead, Saul, who had despised his word for many years, and who had lived during this time without any communication with God through his prophets, now determined, by the means of witchcraft, which Samuel had warned him against, to have an interview with Samuel.

3. The woman having the familiar spirit, who is commonly called the witch of Endor, practiced her unholy calling in the most secret manner. For Saul, in obedience to the law of God, had put to death all such persons so far as he could find them. This woman stood ready to bring up any dead person that could be named, and to enable the inquirer to converse with that person.

4. The familiar spirit that consorted with this woman was the efficient cause of all the wonders that were wrought. It could personate or counterfeit the dead man so that those who conversed with the familiar spirit should believe that they were conversing with their dead friend, because every peculiarity of his was perfectly imitated.

The first act of the woman was to ascertain whether Saul really wished to converse with the dead, or whether he feigned this in order to detect her in the practice of witchcraft, and put her to death. But when Saul had sworn to her by a solemn oath that she should not be punished for divining unto him by the familiar spirit, the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up unto thee?" Saul said to the woman, "Bring me up Samuel." And thus we have the very words used in seeking unto those who had familiar spirits. The diviner, sorcerer, enchanter, necromancer, wizard, or witch, for these names are all given to those who in some form do this work, asks of the one who seeks knowledge from the dead, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And the inquirer names the dead person with whom he would converse.

The woman invokes her familiar spirit, and the divination proves eminently successful. "And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice; and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul." But there was a fact that the woman learned the moment this reputed Samuel appeared, and that fact filled her with terror. The first act of this so-called Samuel, was to make known to this woman that her guest was no other than Saul, the king of Israel, the man who had destroyed every such person as herself that he could discover. It was this fact that alarmed her; for in her terror she cries out, "Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul." The first act of this professed servant of the Most High was to put this wicked woman on her guard by a private hint that he who was her guest was no other than Saul himself.

"And the king said unto her, Be not afraid; for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh 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."

It is to be observed, 1. That of all the wonderful things seen on this occasion, Saul saw nothing. Witness the expressions, and it will be seen that it was the woman, and not Saul, who saw what was seen. Thus, "the woman saw Samuel;" the king said, "What sawest thou?" The woman said, "I saw gods ascending out of the earth." Saul inquires, "What form is he of?" The woman answers, "An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived [from the woman's description] that it was Samuel."

There are several facts here brought to view hard to be explained if this was the real Samuel, but very easy to understand if this was the familiar spirit personating or counterfeiting him. The first is, that holy Samuel should come in answer to her wicked incantations. The second is, that he should arise out of the earth. The third is, that the woman should see him, while Saul could not see him. The fourth is, that this holy man should first of all communicate private information to this abandoned woman, putting her on her guard against Saul. The fifth is, that the woman was not alarmed at the presence of this old man with his mantle, but only alarmed when he told her that she had Saul in the house.

Can it be believed that he was raised by God to talk with Saul upon the devil's own ground? Would such a man as Samuel, who held witchcraft as a heinous sin, 1 Samuel 15:23, before beginning his message to Saul, first hold private converse with this wicked woman in the midst of her incantations?

The first words of this so-called Samuel are remarkable. He does not wait to hear Saul's request, but asks Saul in a petulant manner what he had disturbed him for, to bring him up. This is an acknowledgment on the part of this reputed Samuel that he had come through Saul's act of seeking Satan. It is not holy Samuel sent by God; but is that kind of Samuel that Satan could send. And observe, he does not represent himself as coming down from the courts of glory, but as coming up from the regions below.

Finally, let us hear what is said of it by that sacred writer who makes the only other mention of it.

**1 Chronicles 10:13, 14:** "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; and inquired not of the Lord: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse."

It was the familiar spirit that he inquired of, and that held discourse with him. This is made very manifest by quoting this text without the supplied words: "For asking of a familiar spirit to inquire. And inquired not of the Lord." It was the familiar spirit, therefore, and not the Lord through Samuel, with whom Saul conversed. As a result, the Lord slew him!

**Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6** "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun."