

Chapter Eight

The Flesh and the Spirit: First Samuel

First Samuel is one of the key books of the Old Testament, forming a link between the decadence of the period of the Judges and the rise of the monarchy--first Saul and then David. It is the story of three men: Samuel the last of the judges and the first of the prophets; Saul the first king of Israel; and David the greatest of all of Israel's kings. These three men mark off the divisions of the book.

The first seven chapters give us the life of Samuel. Chapters 8-15 present King Saul who is seen as symbolic of the man of the flesh; for in him we see the ruin which is caused by the mind which is set on the flesh. By contrast, David is the man of faith, and is a beautiful illustration of the mind which is set on the Spirit, as Romans 8:6 puts it: "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace."

SAMUEL: THE VOICE OF GOD

Samuel, who became the human expression of the voice of God to both Saul and David, was the chosen instrument of God to close the realm of the judges and to introduce the beginning of the prophetic ministry and of the monarchy.

The first chapter introduces another of the great women of the Old Testament. Like Sarah and Rachel, Hannah enters the biblical scene as a barren woman. She was the wife of a man named Elkanah, a Levite of Ephraim.

Though her husband loved her, Hannah's life was made miserable by Elkanah's second wife, Peninnah, who taunted Hannah because of her barrenness and boasted of her own fertility in having given her husband many sons and daughters.

The barrenness of Hannah, coming as it does at the beginning of this book, doubtless is introduced to illustrate the spiritual state of Israel. The people of God had fallen into a state of utter infertility and barrenness. The priesthood, which God had set up with the Tabernacle as a means by which the people would have access to Him, was beginning to disappear. It had degenerated to mere ritual and ceremony and was no longer a potent factor in maintaining the vitality of faith within the nation.

Hannah was a woman of quiet faith and godly character. In great distress, she took her problem of barrenness to the Lord at the Tabernacle in Shiloh. As she prayed, Eli the priest saw her lips move but heard no sound. So he thought she was drunk. When she was rebuked by Eli, Hannah explained that she had been promising God that if He would give her a son she would dedicate him to the service of the Lord all his life, as a Nazirite from his birth. Eli pronounced a blessing on her and she and her husband returned to their home. In due course, the promised son was given and Hannah named him Samuel, which means "asked of God."

True to her vow, when the child was weaned, probably about five or six years of age, Hannah brought him to the Tabernacle and left him in the care of Eli the priest to serve the Lord.

Chapter 2 records the beautiful song Hannah sang on this occasion. Within it she indicates the problem she herself has faced in the mockery of her rival, which was also the problem Israel faced as a nation at that time.

"Boast no more so very proudly, do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and with Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are shattered, but the feeble gird on strength" (2:3,4).

The priesthood was failing in Israel not because there was anything wrong with the priesthood, but because the people, in pride, refused to bow before the Lord. Through arrogance they would not turn from their idolatrous worship and come before the Lord for cleansing. As a result, their access to God was cut off. Ultimately, in the contrasting lives of Saul and David, this book will describe the eternal conflict between the proud heart which finds confidence in itself and its ability to perform and the humble spirit which looks to God in utter dependence and thus receives all the fullness of divine blessing.

The state of spiritual decay in the priesthood was clearly visible in the lives of Eli's two sons. Contrary to the law, they forced the people to give them the best parts of their offerings. Also they openly lay with the women who served in the Tabernacle. This scandalous conduct was only mildly rebuked by their father Eli, and in due course Jehovah sent an unnamed man of God to Eli to announce that the priesthood would be taken away eventually from his descendants and given to another. This prophecy was fulfilled in the days of Solomon, when Abiathar of Eli's family was set aside and Zadok from another house within the tribe of Levi was given the priesthood. The promise of "a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul" (2:35) seems to anticipate the coming of the Messiah and the eternal priesthood of the Lord Jesus.

The remarkable account of the boy Samuel being called by the direct voice of the Lord (3:1-18) is reminiscent of the appearing of God to Moses in the wilderness of Midian. The nature of Samuel's ministry as an authentic prophet of the Lord was indicated by God's revelation to him of the fate of Eli and his sons. As the lad grew to manhood, he became widely recognized as God's appointed prophet, so that "all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord" (v. 20).

Again the low state of Israel's faith was observable when, on the occasion of a military defeat at the hands of the Philistines, the people superstitiously demanded that the Ark of the Covenant be taken from the Tabernacle and accompany them in the renewed battle. Total disaster followed wherein thousands of Israelites were slain, including the two sons of Eli, and the Ark itself was taken captive by the Philistines.

When news of his sons' death was brought to old Eli he fell over backward and broke his neck at exactly the same moment his daughter-in-law gave birth to a son. In view of the terrible circumstances, she named the child *Ichabod* ("the glory has departed"). Here Israel reaches one of the lowest states in its national history.

Though the Ark of the Covenant brought no victory to Israel, nevertheless, in the hands of the Philistines it proved to be a source of continual torment. The Ark was placed in the temple of Dagon, the Philistine fish god. On two successive mornings the Philistines found their idol first lying on its face before the Ark and the second morning shattered to bits. Next a plague of tumors broke out among the people of the city of Ashdod, who hastily sent the Ark to Gath. There the tumors broke out again. The association of these tumors with mice (probably rats) has been understood by some scholars to indicate a form of the bubonic plague.

Finally, in desperation, the lords of the Philistines decided to return the Ark to Israel, along with an offering of five golden tumors and five golden mice. In order to determine whether God was actually behind the plague the Philistines hitched two milk cows to a cart but shut up the cows' calves at home. Contrary to nature, the cows drew the cart away from their calves, directly to Bethshemesh, which was the first city within the border of Israel.

Here God taught the people a lesson in reverence, for when 70 men looked into the Ark out of curiosity, contrary to the Law, they immediately died. Frightened by this slaughter, the inhabitants of Bethshemesh appealed to the people of Kiriath-jearim to take the Ark into their city. There it was put into the care of Eleazar, a Levite, and remained for some 20 years.

Samuel seized the occasion of Israel's renewed fear to exhort the people to put away their idols and to serve the Lord only. The people gathered at Mizpah and confessed their sin. As Samuel was offering the burnt offering, the Philistines attacked but were routed by a mighty thundering from the Lord. The subsequent great victory over the Philistines was memorialized by a stone which Samuel erected and named Ebenezer, "the stone of help."

SAUL: THE MAN OF FLESH

Saul, the first king of Israel, begins his career with bright promise. But a shadow over his reign is seen from the very beginning when the people demand of Samuel a king "like all the nations" (8:20). This is a denial of their very purpose, for under Moses they had been called to be unlike all the nations, and were to be a people directly governed by God. Though in Deuteronomy provision had been made for a king, he was to be a king of humble spirit and obedient heart who would be the human instrument of the government of God. But as so many times before, God permitted them to have their way that they might learn from the sad results the nature of their folly. The principle of the flesh is thus seen at work in the nation of Israel to destroy its communion and enjoyment of God's blessing.

The same principle is interwoven in every Christian life. The desire of the flesh is to be religious in a manner acceptable to the world and to conduct its business along the principles of the world. Even within the church many are often uncomfortable with the idea of an invisible Head directing the affairs of the local assembly. They insist on making a pastor or some other leader the ultimate voice of authority in the church, and thus follow Israel in their folly.

The fascinating story of Saul follows. It is the story of a young man of handsome physique and apparently modest disposition, who nevertheless proves to have little real concern for the things of God, but rather is interested in pursuing his own endeavors (9:1,2). He is first found busy with his father in the donkey business. In the inscrutable ways of God, the donkeys strayed off and Saul was sent in search of them. After a long and fruitless search he ended up at the town where Samuel lived. Saul's servant suggested that they consult the prophet as to the location of the donkeys, but Saul was not anxious to do this for he wanted to return home. The servant prevailed upon him. So Saul went to Samuel and, to his amazement he found that Samuel was expecting him (9:18-20), for God had told Samuel that a young man from Benjamin would appear the next day and Samuel was to anoint him as king over Israel. The prophet had prepared a feast for Saul and symbolically set the shoulder of the roast before him, the portion of an offering always symbolic of government (9:22,23).

The next day, Samuel privately anointed Saul as the new king. He described three signs which would be fulfilled to assure him that this was a definite call of God (10:1-8). These signs were immediately fulfilled. In due course the people were called together at Mizpah for the formal presentation of their new king. On this occasion there was a manifestation of that weakness of character in Saul which eventually brought about his complete failure as a king; for despite the clear demonstration as to the will of God, he seeks to evade that responsibility by hiding among the baggage (v. 22). It appeared to be modesty, but in view of Saul's later character it seems more likely to be a stubborn spirit which found it inconvenient to do God's will.

As Saul stood among the people, they raised a great shout, for he looked the very picture of a king, towering head and shoulders above everyone.

The first test of his kingship came with an attack by the Ammonites against Jabesh-gilead in the north (chap. 11). Stirred by the Spirit of God, Saul sent word to the 12 tribes to gather an army, and 330,000 men responded. A great victory resulted and in the midst of it Saul manifested a spirit of fairness and mercy toward some who had refused to acknowledge his kingship. Responding to Samuel's call the people gathered at Gilgal and there renewed their vows to the Lord and offered peace offerings and burnt offerings for the new king (11:15).

On this occasion, Samuel delivered what was virtually a farewell address on his part (chap. 12), for though he would continue to serve as prophet it would be in a somewhat more private manner. He rapidly surveyed the history of Israel from the days of Moses and Aaron to the present moment, reminding them that deliverance had always come to them when they walked in obedience to God, but disaster had befallen them whenever they turned from Him. Now even though the Israelites' insistence on having a king meant a partial rejection of the government of God, the old prophet promised them that the Lord would not cast away His people for His own name's sake, and he, Samuel, would continue to pray for them and teach them.

Chapters 13 and 14 are a summary of Saul's wars with the Philistines. It is difficult to determine how long a

period they encompass, but it was probably several years.

Saul first amassed a standing army of 3,000 men and put part of it under his son, Jonathan, who defeated a garrison of the Philistines at Geba. This brought on a massive mustering of the Philistine army with some 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore. This enormous army so frightened the Israelites that they fled before them, hiding in the caves and rocks of the mountains.

Meanwhile, Saul waited at Gilgal with his small army for Samuel to come and offer offerings for their success. When the prophet delayed beyond the seven appointed days, Saul took on himself the priestly office and, as he explained to Samuel when he came, "forced myself, and offered the burnt offering" (13:12). This self-dependent spirit was rebuked by Samuel with the announcement that, because of Saul's act, his kingdom would be taken away and given to another man.

While the people trembled before the oncoming Philistines, Jonathan and his armor-bearer manifested great confidence in the power of God to act on their behalf. The two men made a remarkable attack on the foe resulting in the slaying of 20 men. This unexpected attack produced panic among the Philistines and, seeing it, the Israelites emerged from hiding to complete the rout of the Philistines.

Again Saul's weakness is shown as he laid a rash oath upon the people to refrain from taking food during the battle. This so weakened the fighting men that they were unable to accomplish as great a victory as they might have. It further imperiled the life of Jonathan, who had not heard about his father's order and had eaten of some honey during the battle. When Saul's intransigence threatened Jonathan's life, the people refused to allow him to be sacrificed but ransomed him, apparently by the payment of money (14:45).

God gave Saul one last chance to redeem himself as king. He commanded Saul, through Samuel, to launch an attack upon the Amalekites and utterly destroy them by the edge of the sword. Remember that Amalek was the people about whom Moses had said, "The Lord will have war against Amalek from generation to generation" (Exod. 17:16). Saul's campaign was victorious, but again he proved disobedient; for he spared King Agag of the Amalekites and saved the best of the sheep and oxen and the goods. His fleshliness is thus revealed, for he presumed to find something good in what God had declared utterly bad. This is a clear picture of what many Christians do today when they refuse to judge the manifestations of the flesh, but defend them and excuse them as part of their personality or temperament.

When Samuel came to Saul, having been told of his disobedience by the Lord, he was met by Saul's announcement that he has completely performed the commandment of the Lord. However his self-commendatory speech was interrupted by the telltale bleating of sheep and the lowing of the oxen which he had spared. Saul lamely excused himself as having saved them for sacrificial purposes, but Samuel bluntly interrupted his hypocrisy with the announcement that the Lord had rejected him from being king over Israel. In the course of his rebuke he reminded Saul that obedience is the first and greatest service to God, and that rebellion is like witchcraft and stubbornness like idolatry. Samuel then called for a sword and himself slew the Amalekite king. Then Samuel returned to his home, never to see Saul again. However, he grieved over the disobedient

The statement at the end of chapter 15, "the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel," is written from a human point of view. The eternal God,- of course, does not change His mind, and He knows the end from the beginning, even before anything is brought into existence. But to one living in Saul's day it would appear that God had changed His mind. Thus the statement is recorded from the human perspective.

DAVID: THE MAN OF FAITH

The story of David is the story of the man after God's own heart. Jehovah sent Samuel to the home of Jesse in Bethlehem in order to choose a king from among Jesse's eight sons. When the seven eldest passed before Samuel each one looked like a king in the making, but God said to Samuel of each, "This is not the one that I have chosen. " At last David, the youngest, was brought in from the fields where he had been watching his father's sheep. Though David was young and handsome, nevertheless the choice was not made according to outward appearance for God declared that He looked upon the heart. Before his anointing, the Spirit of God

came upon David and remained with him throughout his life.

In the meantime, the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and we are told "an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him" (16:14). This expression means that God had allowed evil spirits to have access to Saul's mind and heart, since he himself had chosen to reject the ways and resources of God. As the book of Ephesians warns us, to give way to the desires of the flesh is to give the devil an opportunity over us (see Eph. 4:17-27). The result in Saul's life was attacks of some mental disturbance, expressed in violent outbursts of rage. To calm him in these times a skilled musician was recommended, and in the providence of God David was brought from his father's home to play his lyre in the king's court.

It is evident that David was not to be set on the throne immediately, as was Saul, but he was tested and proved by struggle and adversity. This is the principle God often follows with the man who learns to walk by faith. He is put through a time of obscurity and adversity. Everything seems to go against him until at last he recognizes the great principle by which God's activity is always enacted--man can do nothing in himself, but only in complete and utter dependence upon the God who indwells him. Even as a shepherd boy, David had begun to learn this, for he could say, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul" (Ps. 23: 1-3).

In chapter 17 we have the famous story of the testing of David as he comes face to face with the giant Goliath. The armies of Israel were being mocked and taunted by this giant who paraded up and down morning and evening, mocking the impotence of the Israelites who did not dare to send a man into combat against him. When David came from his flock to bring food to his brothers he found the whole camp of Israel plunged into gloom and despair. While he was there the giant came again and mocked the men of Israel, daring them to meet him in combat. David's question to his brothers was, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" That is always the outlook of faith. It is not shaken by circumstances, but looks beyond them to the God who is greater than all circumstances.

Word was brought to Saul of the young man who is contemptuous of the challenge of the Philistine giant. When Saul summoned him he did not recognize David, possibly because some time had elapsed since David had served in his court, or perhaps Saul's mental illness had erased David from his memory. When Saul saw how young David was he attempted to dismiss him; but David reassured him with stories of how he had killed both bears and lions when they attacked his father's sheep. Saul then consented to David fighting the giant and, thinking to be helpful, put his own armor on David. But Saul was a much larger man than David, and the young man found it impossible to use his armor.

Instead he went down to the brook and chose five smooth stones for his sling. It has been suggested that he chose five because later, in the book of 2 Samuel, we read that Goliath had four brothers. David was prepared to take on the whole family!

When the Philistine champion saw David coming, he cursed David for his youth and vowed to give his flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, but David calmly replied that "this day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands" (17:46). David's faith rested in the assurance that "the battle is the Lord's." Projecting a stone from his whirling sling, he struck the giant between the eyes and Goliath fell on his face to the ground. David ran and seized the giant's own sword and cut off his head with it. Thus he becomes a picture of the One who encountered the great enemy of mankind and met him face to face and slew him with his own sword. We read in Hebrews 2:14, by death Jesus "might render powerless him who [has] the power of death, that is, the devil." David becomes here a picture not only of Christ, but also of the believer who lives the life of Christ.

This event is followed by the story of Saul's great jealousy of David. Because of his "teat victory over Goliath David has now become the sensation of the nation, and Saul eyed him with increasing envy from that day on. Twice, in his madness, Saul sought to kill David with his spear, but both times David evaded him. In sharp contrast with this, Jonathan, Saul's son, openly sought friendship with David and it is recorded he "loved him as himself" (1 Sam. 18:1).

Saul's enmity toward David grew so fierce that he attempted to enlist Jonathan in a plot to kill David. Jonathan nobly defended David and gained a temporary reprieve for him from the king's wrath. Soon, however Saul

again attempted to kill David with a spear, and once again David escaped. The king then sent soldiers to David's house to take him, but Michal, his wife, let David down through a window and, placing an image under the blankets on David's bed, reported to the messengers that David was ill (19: 11-14). When her duplicity was discovered she excused it to her father by claiming David had threatened to kill her if she did not aid his escape.

David, however, fled to Samuel at Ramah, and there, when Saul sent messengers after him, was protected by a direct divine intervention in which the Spirit of God turned back three companies of soldiers by compelling them to prophesy. At last when Saul himself came to capture David, he too was seized by the Spirit of God and prophesied before Samuel, so that it was said throughout all Israel, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (19:24). From here to the end of the book, we have the story of the unceasing persecution of David by Saul. It is a living illustration of the principle Paul declares in Galatians 4:29, "He who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit." The quote refers directly to Esau and Jacob, but the principle is reflected in various accounts in Scripture, and especially in this account of the persecution of David by Saul. It was during these days of constant flight that David wrote many of the psalms, those wonderful songs which speak of God's faithfulness in distressing conditions. David returned to seek the intervention of Jonathan, with his father, and the two young men exchanged vows of eternal friendship. Jonathan knew that God had chosen his friend to be king, but he was without jealousy and consented to the divine appointment, only asking David to promise that he would not cut off his friendship from Jonathan and his descendants after he became king.

When Saul noted David's absence from the royal table, Jonathan explained that he had given him permission to go to Bethlehem. Upon this, Saul fell into a great rage and threw his spear at Jonathan. Seeing the king's unreasoning rage, Jonathan warned his friend by an appointed signal that his life was in great danger. The two took their leave of one another in a touching scene of mutual grief (I Sam. 20:42).

Through the painful persecution that David was now experiencing it is evident that God was preparing him for the work that lay before him. He fled first to Nob, the city of priests. There, needing bread, he was given the Bread of the Presence from the table of showbread in the Tabernacle (21:6). Centuries later, Jesus would refer to this incident and justify David's conduct as the actions of a man of faith. However, the next incident reveals David's occasional fear, for he sought refuge among the Philistines in the city of Gath. There he found his reputation as a valiant warrior had preceded him. To avoid being slain by the Philistines, he pretended to be mad, letting his spit run down his beard. It is sad to see the anointed of the Lord reduced to such tactics to save his own skin. The story stands as a continuing warning against taking refuge among those who are basically the Lord's enemies.

David now gathered about him a band of some 400 men and made his guerrilla headquarters in the cave of Adullam. There everyone who was in distress, everyone in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him. When Saul was told by Doeg the Edomite (a descendant of Esau) concerning David's visit to Ahimelech the priest, Saul summoned the entire body of priests to his presence. There he accused them of harboring David and ordered them to be killed. When the king's soldiers refused to kill the Lord's priests, Doeg the Edomite fell upon them and killed 85 persons. One of the sons of Ahimelech, named Abiathar, escaped the slaughter and joined David in his hiding place (chap. 22). It is interesting to note that in his exile David the king had a prophet, Gad, and a priest, Abiathar, whose resources were available to him even though he was being hunted, "just as one hunts a partridge in the mountains" (26:20). So too when we find ourselves in trouble, unable to work out our problems ourselves, we can find in the Lord Jesus Christ, (who is our Prophet, our Priest and our King) all that it takes to bring us through the time of trouble to the place of reigning and triumph.

King Saul's relentless pursuit of David meant that the affairs of the kingdom were falling in great disarray. The Philistines took full advantage of this condition, and attacked the city of Keilah. It is David, rather than Saul, who responds. With 600 of his men he put the Philistines to rout and saved the city. When David learned that Saul had heard he was in Keilah and was sending an army against him, David consulted the Lord through his priest, Abiathar, and learned that the men of the city were ready to give him up to Saul's vengeance.

Again he fled, this time to the wilderness of Ziph. There Jonathan sought him out and encouraged his heart

with reminders that God had determined to make him king over Israel. The Ziphites attempted to betray David into the hands of Saul, but David was spared when the Philistines launched another attack and Saul had to turn aside from his pursuit of David and go against the Philistines (23: 15-29).

David's greatness of spirit is revealed by the account of Saul's renewed pursuit of him after returning from the battle with the Philistines. Saul unwittingly entered the very cave in which David and his men were hiding. While Saul was in there, David managed to cut off the hem of the garment he had laid aside. After Saul left the cave David came out and held up the piece of garment as proof that when he had him in his power he did not take vengeance but rather honored him as the Lord's anointed and spared his life. Saul seemed to be moved by this mercy on David's part and acknowledged that David would indeed be king some day. But since David and his men returned to their stronghold, it seems they attached little importance to Saul's words (24:22).

The death of Samuel at this point meant that Israel had lost a great voice for God and a great prayer warrior for the people.

We then in, chapter 25, have the account of Nabal (which means "fool") and his wife, Abigail. When this wealthy but mean-spirited farmer was shearing his sheep near Mount Carmel, David sent 10 of his young men to ask for a supply of food, reminding Nabal that the safety he enjoyed was due to the presence of David and his men. Nabal refused with unusual churlishness, and David, angered, gathered his men to wreak vengeance upon the foolish man.

When Nabal's wife Abigail heard that David was intent upon their destruction, she hastily sent David a generous present of bread, wine and sheep, clusters of raisins and cakes of figs. Mounting her donkey she went toward the men and met David on his way to revenge. There, with gracious words, she reasoned with him, reminding him that he was taking vengeance into his own hands and this would be evil in the eyes of the Lord. David courteously commends her for the service she has rendered him in preventing a bloody deed on his part.

When Abigail, the next morning, told her husband Nabal of his narrow escape from death, the shock brought on an attack, which 10 days later resulted in his death.

When David heard of Nabal's death, he sent his servants and claimed Abigail as his wife. We are also told that David took Ahinoam of Jezreel to be his wife as well, in place of Michal whom Saul had given to another. Here we have evidence of a weakness in David which would ultimately lead him into the most terrible sin of his life.

Once again the Ziphites attempted to betray David to Saul, and once again Saul pursued him with an army of 3,000 men. This time David and two of his men found Saul sleeping at night in the midst of his camp, and, carefully stealing into the camp amidst the sleeping men, David took Saul's spear and water jar and left the camp. Then standing afar off he called out, waking the king and his men, and rebuked Saul's general, Abner, for his lack of care of the king. He again reminded Saul that he had had an opportunity to take his life but spared him because he was the Lord's anointed.

Once again Saul was moved with remorse and confessed to David, "I have played the fool" (26:21). But there is no attempt to restore David to his rightful place, and the account ends with Saul returning to his headquarters and David going his way into exile again.

This perhaps accounts for David's weary and despondent statement that he feels he must soon perish at the hand of Saul, and again David seeks refuge among the Philistines, asking of King Achish accommodation in the town of Ziklag (27:5-7). From there he carried out raids against other Canaanite enemies of Israel. But in his reports to Achish, David deceived him into thinking his attacks were directed against the cities of Israel. It is clear that when a believer takes refuge among those who are the enemies of faith he is in great danger of violating some fundamental principle of righteousness himself. Surely the God who had delivered David from the hand of Goliath could have kept him from the hand of Saul, without the necessity of resorting to a refuge among the Philistines.

This dallying with the Philistines resulted in David being compelled to join the Philistine army in preparing to launch an attack upon Israel (28:1). When King Saul learned that the Philistines were gathering against him he was afraid and sought the Lord for guidance, but the Lord refused to answer him in any manner. In desperation, Saul disguised himself and sought out a medium, though he himself had given orders long before that such mediums should be put to death. Saul asked the medium of Endor to recall Samuel from the dead to advise him. Evidently God overruled in this and sent, not an impersonating spirit as the medium expected, but the true Samuel who announced Saul's impending death on the battlefield the next day (28:13-19).

The scene changed then to the Philistine armies who were assembling for the battle. When the lords of the Philistines saw David among them, they protested to King Achish and forced David to turn back. When David returned to Ziklag he found that in his absence the city had been sacked by the Amalekites. He sought the guidance of God and set out in pursuit. He managed to overtake the raiders and attacked and destroyed them, recovering his two wives and great quantities of spoil. He insisted that 200 of his men who had been too exhausted to join him should share equally in the spoil with those who had gone with him; for he maintained that it was the Lord who had delivered the enemy into his hands and not those who fought.

The closing chapter of the book recounts the fulfilling of Samuel's prophecy; for when the battle was engaged between Saul and the Philistines, the Philistines overtook Saul and slew all his sons, including Jonathan, and wounded Saul. When his armor-bearer refused to kill him, Saul died by his own hand. The Philistines, finding Saul's body with those of his sons, cut off their heads and hung their bodies on the wall of the city of Bethshean, but the men of Jabesh-gilead recovered them by night and buried their remains in Jabesh.

So Saul joined Samuel in the life beyond, but as one whose earthly life was essentially wasted and whose opportunity for service in eternity was thereby diminished. His life recalls the words of Paul in I Corinthians 3:14: "If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward."

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