

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Samuel: God's Shift Of Israel From Apostasy Under The Judges To David's Reign

I. 1 Samuel: From Samuel To The Death Of Saul

BB. Overcoming A Sense Of Hopelessness

(1 Samuel 28:3-25)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Though this Sunday is New Years Day when people typically wish one another "Happy New Year," many people feel a sense of hopelessness:

(1) Susan Stamper Brown's editorial, "Being a liberal must mean living with hopelessness" in the Republican-American, December 22, 2016, p.8A, told how "first lady Michelle Obama . . . during" a "recent Oprah Winfrey interview . . . said, 'We are feeling what not having hope feels like.'"

Ms. Brown explained that "when" Mrs. Obama's "husband became the 2008 Democratic Party nominee," she had said, "'(I)t feels like hope is finally making a comeback.' But, now that President Obama is on his way out the door, hope is, too" for the first lady, *Ibid.*

(2) Such hopelessness affects many teens and young adults today: according to a recent article in the Fresno Bee, "Teen suicide is now the second leading cause of death in youth ages 10-24 nationwide." (*fresnobee.com*, Michael B. Danovsky, "Valley teen suicide, depression can be prevented," December 29, 2016)

Last Sunday one of our teens told me that students are being taught by secular Biology teachers that all they are is DNA, so teens are left feeling their lives are pointless, making it easier for them to be lured to commit suicide.

(3) Hopelessness afflicts people we know locally: a believer Christmas Day told my wife and me how divorce is plaguing the lives of some of his friends, making his gathering with them a strange mixture of goodwill and pain.

Need: *Accordingly, we ask, "How can I overcome a sense of spiritual desperation and hopelessness?!"*

- I. Saul became so desperate, he did what he knew as evil in seeking help from a witch, 1 Samuel 28:3-7a:**
 - A. Saul feared the Philistines who gathered at Shunem on the Plain of Jezreel where their "sophisticated weapons could be used more advantageously to crush the Israelites," Ryrie St. Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 1 Sam. 28:4-5.
 - B. Sensing he needed spiritual guidance and help against this humanly superior foe, Saul nevertheless found himself in a desperate situation where God no longer answered his requests for guidance in any of the upright means of dreams, the Urim of the High Priest (*Ibid.*, fn. to Exodus 28:30) or prophets, 1 Samuel 28:6.
 - C. Saul was so desperate that he committed a sin that he would not have done in his early years -- he asked his servants to find a witch for him that he might inquire of her for alleged guidance from the dead, 1 Sam. 28:7a:
 1. Saul had obeyed Scripture in removing those who practiced spiritism in Israel, 1 Sam. 28:3b; Dt. 18:10-11.
 2. Thus, when God refused to answer him through the usual righteous means, a desperate Saul did what he knew was very evil -- he sought guidance from a witch who allegedly consulted the dead, 1 Samuel 28:7a.
- II. This sin arose from Saul's having progressively replaced obedience to Scripture with human reasoning:**
 - A. Back in 1 Samuel 13:10-13, Saul had disobeyed Samuel's command to wait a full seven days for him to come and offer a sacrifice, for Saul had seen the Philistines amass their forces to where many of his own men had abandoned their posts. **Relying on human effort and reasoning**, he hurriedly performed the sacrifice himself in violation of God's Word to get God's blessing for victory even though this action was itself unbiblical!
 - B. Then, in 1 Samuel 15:13-23, Saul had failed to heed God's command to destroy all the Amalekites and their livestock in holy war, choosing to keep the healthy animals alive with the excuse that he would offer them up as a pleasing sacrifice to the Lord! He thus rationalized that he could **appease God though disobeying Him!**
 - C. In 1 Samuel 16:14, God's Holy Spirit left Saul, and in judgment He sent a demon to plague Saul, distorting his thinking even more, explaining Saul's ongoing warped way of thinking in 1 Samuel 28:2-7a!
 - D. Accordingly, by the time he functioned in 1 Samuel 28:11, Saul planned to use a witch who trafficked in demons to call up the late godly prophet Samuel that Saul might get an encouraging word from God through Samuel. Such distorted thinking that brashly tried to mingle the demonic with godliness had thus risen from Saul's long and spiritually deteriorating practice of replacing obedience to God's Word with his own thinking!
- III. Tragically, had Saul heeded Scripture all along, precedents show he would have defeated the Philistines:**
 - A. The southern part of the Plain of Jezreel where the Philistines gathered against Saul in 1 Samuel 28 was where Balak with 10,000 men in Israel defeated a vastly superior Canaanite chariot army back in the era of the judges in Judges 4-5. (The MacMillan Bible Atlas, 1968, maps 60, 95 and 96)

- B. That victory was marked by God's sending a great rain storm to soften the ground there, getting the Canaanite chariot army stuck so Israel's men might defeat them, cf. Judges 5:20-21; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 390.
- C. Thus, had Saul all along been heeding God's Word, he would have enjoyed great victory over the Philistine chariots at Shunem by God's sending a storm on the Philistine chariots like He once did on the Canaanites!

IV. However, Saul's meeting with the witch only sealed his doom in divine discipline, 1 Samuel 28:7b-25:

- A. Saul's servants informed him that a witch who allegedly contacted the dead for guidance still lived at Endor in the Plain of Jezreel between Mount Tabor and the Hill of Moreh (1 Samuel 28:7; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to 1 Sam. 28:7), so Saul disguised himself to escape identification by the Philistines and the witch who would fear him and went to this medium by night to ask her to bring up Samuel from the dead for him, 1 Samuel 28:7b-11.
- B. When she called up Samuel, and Samuel *actually* came up, the witch cried out, asking Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul," 1 Sam. 28:12. This response reveals that mediums never truly call up the dead, but that they traffic with demons who imitate the deceased. God "miraculously permitted the actual spirit of Samuel to speak and announce" judgment on Saul, *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to 1 Samuel 28:12.
- C. Samuel revealed that God had left Saul and become his Enemy, rending the kingdom from Saul to give it to David since Saul had not obeyed the Lord when He sent him to destroy the Amalekites, 1 Samuel 28:13-18.
- D. Accordingly, Samuel predicted that Israel would be defeated by the Philistines and that Saul and his sons would be slain and join Samuel in death the next day in judgment for Saul's sin, 1 Samuel 28:19.
- E. This news sent Saul falling down with no strength to get up as he had not eaten food for a day, 1 Sam. 28:20. Saul's abstinence from food and his terror accentuated his depressed, fearful state of mind.
- F. Accordingly, the witch and Saul's servants encouraged him to eat some food she prepared for him, so he was able to eat enough to leave for his rendezvous with death in battle the next day, 1 Samuel 28:21-25.

Lesson: *By a lifestyle of relying on human might and reason over humbly obeying God's Word, God's guidance and blessing left Saul so that, in a desperate crisis of facing humanly overpowering foes, he resorted to what he knew was evil so that God judged him. Tragically, had he obeyed God all along, Saul would have routed his foes.*

Application: *If we experience a sense of desperation and hopelessness, (1) may we trust in Christ for salvation to be indwelt by the edifying Holy Spirit of God, John 3:16; Romans 8:9. (2) As a believer, (a) may we confess any disobedience to God we have done as defined by Scripture to find God's forgiveness and restoration of spiritual fellowship with Him, 1 John 1:9, 7; 3:4. (b) Then, may we rely on the Holy Spirit's power (Gal. 5:16) to (c) OBEY God's Word (1 John 2:3) and (d) see Him answer our prayers for His help in time of need (1 John 3:22), noting that God will GUIDE us through our use of WRITTEN SCRIPTURE as OPPOSED to MEDIUMS (Isaiah 8:19-20 NIV, ESV) or ANY OTHER subversive means of communication in today's world (Ps. 119:105; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

While seated in a waiting room of a business last Tuesday, I spotted the April 28, 2014 issue of Time and saw its cover article was "Finding God in the Dark" by Elizabeth Dias. I picked it up to read of the Episcopalian minister Barbara Brown Taylor who was cited there as saying that, in part, since God has allegedly interacted with various famous religious leaders at night, God is to be found in the darkness and trials of life versus the light and happy times.

One example she used was that of Muhammad who received a call to start Islam in a night vision in the "Night of Power" in 610 A. D. ("The Man From Mecca: Muhammad, Founder of Islam," SIM NOW, July/August 1989, p. 2)

However, we know that Islam is a false religion, for though it holds that its holy book, the Qu'ran was dictated to Muhammad by the Angel Gabriel, the Qu'ran repeatedly contradicts itself: (a) the Qu'ran "itself admits that much of its text is ambiguous (3:7)" and "Muslims are even to ask 'the People of the Book [Bible]' for enlightenment (21:7)!" (Dave Hunt, "Islam and the Gospel," The Berean Call, April, 1999, p. 2) (b) The Qu'ran also claims that "Allah created everything 'in the twinkling of an eye' (54:49,50), 'in two Days' (41:9,12), 'in four Days' (41:10), 'in six Days' (7:54; 10:4; 32:4), 'a Day,' equaling 'a thousand years' (32:5) and also 'fifty thousand years' (70:4)," *Ibid.* (c) The Qu'ran also claims that "Jesus is not the Son of God (4:171), yet He is (19:17-21), etc.," *Ibid.*

It is true that God revealed Himself in the night to Joseph by means of dreams in Matthew 1:20; 2:13, 19, 22 and to Daniel in a night vision in Daniel 8:26-27, but not all nighttime supernatural experiences are from God! They all must be tested against the truth of written Scripture (2 Timothy 3:15-17), not viewed as from God by the authority a minister who is a woman in violation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15!

May we trust in Christ to be saved in accord with Scripture revelation and then humbly believe and obey the divinely authoritative written Scriptures over even our own human reasoning to the contrary!