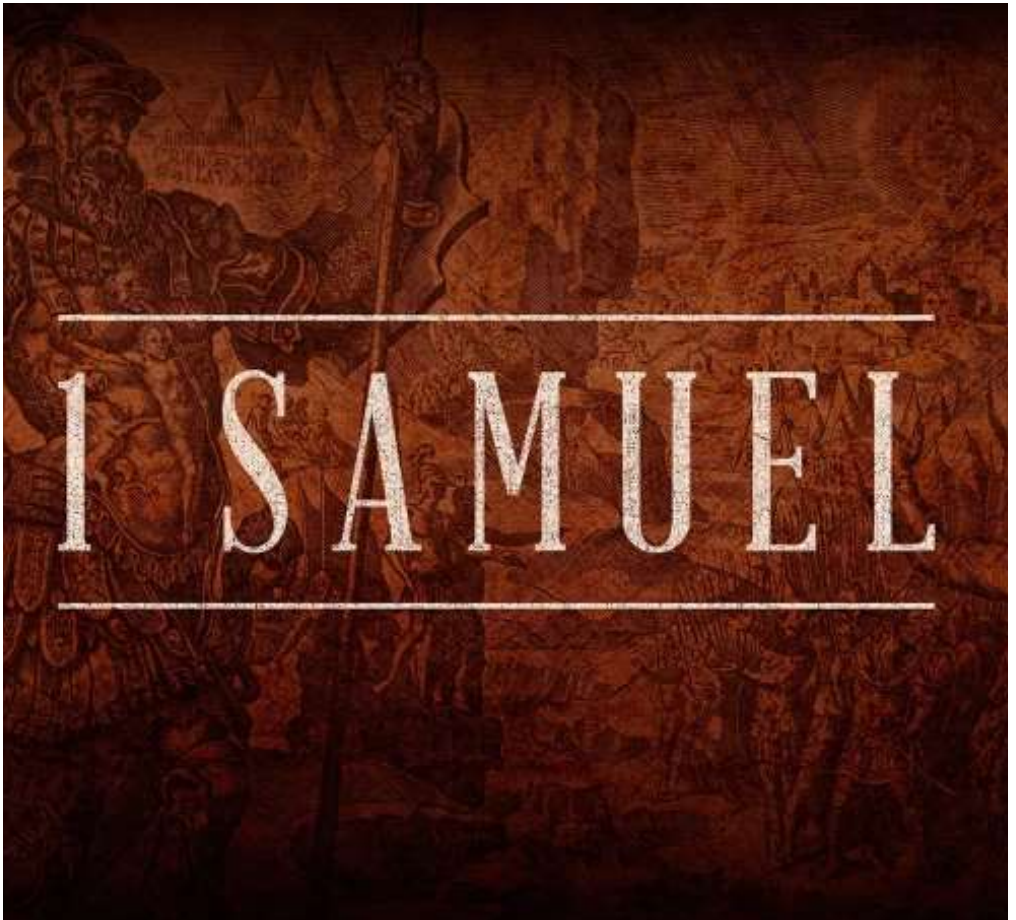


# Let's Worship God

2nd-7th November 2020

1 Samuel



# 1 SAMUEL

## **Monday - 1 Samuel 28:3-25 - Saul's Last Supper**

If you knew you had one meal left to eat, what would it be? Very few of us get to choose, death row inmates being the most obvious exception to the norm. Their choices are fascinating, ranging from a KFC bucket to steak, including simply just an olive. One photographer has recreated the last meals of some death row inmates and it's fascinating. As you look at what is served you can't help but think what it would be like to eat a final meal. No matter how fine the food, surely you cannot escape the looming gloom of your own mortality. Would you even enjoy the food? Would you feel regrets or panic? Maybe you'd be resigned and could enjoy it? Would you feel ready to die? We'll all eat a last meal, though it's unlikely we'll get to choose it, and may not even know it's our last.

We've entered the end game for Saul, David, and the story of 1 Samuel. Their relationship is irreparably broken down. War is looming between the Philistines and the Israelites. David is in exile in Philistia, faced with the prospect of fighting against Israel. This book is going to close with Saul's death - he will face his last day and eat his last meal. That's what is recorded in chapter 28 - Saul's last meal. We could easily miss its significance, overshadowed by who serves it to him. It is a strange chapter and a sad chapter. This week, we want to draw the lessons from Saul's last night and last supper.

Let it make you think - what would you do if you knew a meal or a day would be your last? Would you have things to experience, people to see, and things to say? Are there relationships you'd want to repair and wrongs to put right? How would you prepare for eternity? What would you do if you knew it was your last day?

### **Questions**

1. What would you do if you knew it was your last day?
2. How would you prepare for eternity?

### **Prayer Points**

1. Pray for the Holy Spirit's help to see the 'wood' of this chapter, and not miss it due to the strange 'trees'.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

### **Memory Verse**

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Revelation 1:17-18

**Praise: Psalm 49:1-5 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# 1 SAMUEL

## **Tuesday - 1 Samuel 28:3-7, 15-18 - Saul Reaping what He Sowed**

The camera cuts suddenly from David being mustered with Achish in Gath, being enlisted as the First Hebrew Regiment of the Philistine Army, to Philistine forces marching north to Shunem. Saul's gathering forces 6 miles south at Mt Gilboa. What we see on screen are two forces amassing across a valley. The narrator is speaking, telling us two facts: Samuel is dead, mourned for and buried; Saul, in the past, has driven out all the occultists. This second fact is a rare positive comment on Saul's reign. Israel had been commanded not to turn to them or seek them (Leviticus 19:31), to put them to death (Leviticus 20:17), and to put to death the one who turned to them (Leviticus 20:6). This is a positive aspect of Saul's legacy.

We've read the chapter; we know what Saul does, but let's set it aside and think about why Saul does what he does. He is confronted with his arch enemies, who have moved into the north to take control of a major trade route. He sees their army and is petrified (verse 5). Perhaps it was its size; or perhaps it was their chariots arrayed on the vast plain of Jezreel - ideal territory for a devastating combat vehicle. He seeks help and guidance from God, but there is none coming (verse 6); not by personal revelation (dreams), not by priestly revelation (Urim - something in the priestly garment), not by prophet - only silence.

In desperation Saul consults a medium, which we'll deal with another day. Let's jump to the outcome - silence from God is broken by Samuel bringing a terrible message. Samuel tells Saul that God has turned away from him and become his enemy. God has torn the kingdom out of his hand and given it to David. The reason? Verse 18 - Saul had not listened to and obeyed God. Saul had rejected the command and guidance he had received, and now God is doing exactly what God said he would do. Saul is reaping what he sowed.

### **Questions**

1. In what sense is Saul reaping what he sowed?
2. How does this chapter show the consistency and justice of God?

### **Prayer Points**

1. Unlike Saul, ask for a heart sensitive to what has already been revealed to you of God's will.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

### **Memory Verse**

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Revelation 1:17-18

**Praise: Psalm 13 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# 1 SAMUEL

## **Wednesday - 1 Samuel 28:3-7, 15-18 - Reaping what We Sow**

Do you see what's happening in this chapter? God had spoken to Saul in chapter 15, and Saul didn't want to listen. God told Saul what to do, and he wouldn't do it. God gave guidance, and Saul didn't want to follow it. Saul is reaping what he had sown - he had ruled as if God was silent, and now God is silent.

Saul stands as a sobering warning to us of the fearsome wrath of God against persistent sinners. He is very patient with unrepentant sinners, but not indefinitely. He is also just and must call us to account; he must be consistent and do what he has promised to do. He leaves the door into his Kingdom open for a long time, but it will eventually be shut. If you have spent your life telling God that you don't want to hear from him, you may find that he won't speak to you when you realise your need. When trouble comes there may be no answer. A persistently refusing heart is a hardening heart, and there comes a point where God withdraws the opportunity for forgiveness.

We see it in Jesus' instructions to the 12 apostles when he sent them out in Matthew 10:14-15: "And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town." John Bunyan pictured it in *Pilgrim's Progress* as a man locked in an iron cage weeping, "I have so hardened my heart that I cannot repent."

The opportunity passed for Saul. Is that a danger you face? Have you heard the message, but you are stopping your ears? Are you acting the part and answering the right questions, but have no heart-love for Christ? If you persistently refuse to listen to God, he will stop speaking to you. We reap what we sow. The day for repentance and obedience is today.

### **Questions**

1. Has God been speaking to you for a long time about a particular sin?

### **Prayer Points**

1. Ask God for a heart that is soft to his Word.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

### **Memory Verse**

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Revelation 1:17-18

**Praise: Psalm 95:5-9 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

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# 1 SAMUEL

## Thursday - 1 Samuel 28:7-19 - The Medium of Endor

Rejected by God, where does Saul turn? The woman is best known as "the witch of Endor". I'm not sure where that name comes from, as nearly all translations call her a "medium". This is a better term, "witch" can bring all sorts of wrong ideas and images. A medium is someone who claims to be in contact with the spirits of the dead and able to communicate between the living and the dead. We're familiar with them - seeing them perform at hotels, on TV, and at fairs. Our shock in this chapter is not so much that such a medium exists, but that it actually seems to work - Saul asks for Samuel, and Samuel comes up! Anyone of us could search online for a local medium, tarot reader, or clairvoyant and find one within 15 minutes of us. Often they are fraudsters, conning the gullible and needy; but that's not what we have here. So what is God's Word saying about mediums and communicating with the dead - is it possible? Are they real?

Several answers have been given in church history: that this was a delusion or vision in their minds; that it was a demonic spirit given to deceive Saul; that it was real and the woman's powers were authentic; or that it really was Samuel, but the woman was a fraud, and God surprised her. There are several things to notice about the verses. Verse 12 says plainly that she saw Samuel, not a figure "like" Samuel, or that she thought she saw Samuel. She's terrified by this - it is something unusual and unexpected, even from her perspective. Notice too that Samuel's role as a bringer of God's word is unchanged. One author writes: "The story carries the stamp of realism." The best answer seems to be that this is indeed an appearance of Samuel himself. I don't think the story makes comment on the woman's power. This seems an extraordinary event even for her. We can't say here that the Bible says it wasn't genuine - the Bible condemns occultism, but never questions its effectiveness. Missionary experience and incidents in times of revival point to evil spiritual forces at work in our world. Don't write this off as mumbo jumbo too quickly; but don't get sidetracked by the reality of the woman's powers, that is irrelevant here.

### Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that all 'powers' are subject to Christ.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

### Memory Verse

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Revelation 1:17-18

**Praise: Psalm 115:1-2, 10-11 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# 1 SAMUEL

## Friday - 1 Samuel 28:7-19 - Resorting to the Unthinkable

Don't be sidetracked by the reality, or not, of the woman's powers. What is more important is that it seems like God allowed her to call up Samuel; he is, according to one writer, "sent by the unexpected will of God." God does something unusual to get his point across to Saul.

We should be shocked to find Saul disguised, lurking about at night, having passed through Philistine-held territory, participating in some sort of séance and communicating with a dead prophet. After all, he is the one who cast out the mediums. It is unthinkable that a king of Israel would consult one, and especially for Saul, given his zeal in driving them out. This is where desperate people resort to.

It is no different today for people who have rejected God and disobeyed his clear voice - people will turn anywhere to get help and guidance. Mediums, clairvoyants, and tarot readers are big business; people are seeking words of comfort, answers, guidance, and help. 1 Samuel 28 is not prehistoric and primitive; it is just as relevant today as 3000 years ago. The Spiritualist Association of GB website declares: "spiritualism removes fear of death, comforts the bereaved and gives hope to the lonely and forsaken." This is where people are turning for help and peace.

But there's a broader point too. Try telling Saul 20-30 years earlier, at the height of the medium expulsions, that he'd spend his last night consulting one - he'd scoff at you; it's unthinkable. But having rejected the voice of God he's desperate for any voice and will do anything to get guidance.

Is God speaking to you today? Maybe he has been for some time, pressing the claims of Jesus - the Lord of Life and Death, the one who controls spiritual forces (Satan is on his leash) and who conquered these dark forces by his death. Are you refusing to listen and obey? Where will you end up? Will you end up resorting to something that is unthinkable now?

### Questions

1. Why do you think spiritualism is so popular today?

### Prayer Points

1. Pray that many would hear God's voice in his Word, rather than seeking hope from spiritualism.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

### Memory Verse

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Revelation 1:17-18

**Praise: Psalm 49:10-14 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# 1 SAMUEL

## **Saturday - 1 Samuel 28:20-25 - Realising our True Hope**

The chapter ends with a bizarre scene - Saul's last supper. Picture him lying full length on the floor, paralysed by the fear of God's judgement. Weak and immobilised by hunger, the man who wouldn't obey the voice of God is implored to obey the voice of a medium urging him to eat (verse 22-23). With Saul propped up on a bed, this woman becomes very homely and prepares a feast - slaughtering the special, fattened calf and baking the bread would have taken a few hours. The condemned man's last meal is a feast fit for a king. The chapter ends on a profoundly sad note - Saul departs into the night. It is not only literally night, but symbolically too. There is no light, no hope, no joy for Saul. It is symbolic of his life and reign - he was an abject failure as king.

To us, reading it 3,000 years later, it is meant to sound familiar. Think of a story of another king who also had a last supper of unleavened bread, before going out into the night (Matthew 26:30-31). He also went out to his death, this time though, not to be killed by his enemies, but to conquer them. You see, where Saul failed, Jesus succeeded; where Saul disobeyed, Jesus obeyed; where Saul rejected God's will, Jesus accepted God's will.

Across Ireland, Britain, Europe, and the United States people are increasingly turning to mediums to hear words from beyond the grave - words of comfort and hope to remove the fear of death. What they hear, real or not, cannot bring ultimate comfort, since they cannot bring loved ones back, nor prevent their own death. It is the wrong word from the grave. Instead, hope is found in the words of another from beyond the grave - the Prophet, greater than Samuel, who returned from the dead, not by the work of a medium but by his own power. It is only Jesus who holds out hope and comfort, and removes the fear of death. His word from beyond the grave is, "Trust in me; rest in me for hope and comfort in the face of death." Revelation 1:18: "I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

### **Questions**

1. What are the similarities in the last meals of king Saul and King Jesus?
2. What are the differences in their situations?

### **Prayer Points**

1. Give thanks for the Prophet who came back from the dead with a message of hope for those doomed to die.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

### **Memory Verse**

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Revelation 1:17-18

**Praise: Psalm 68 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that  
Ezra read from  
the book of the Law  
day after day  
and that  
the people of God  
were filled with joy!**

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