SAUL’S MISCALCULATION

God chose Saul to be king of Israel and filled him with His Spirit (1 Sam. 10:6). Because of his continual disobedience to the Lord’s commands (cf. 1 Sam. 13, 15) and his jealousy and hatred for David, however, “the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him” (1 Sam. 16:14, NKJV).

Instead of wisely administering his kingdom, Saul, under the influence of the evil spirit, spent most of his time persecuting David. The Philistines took advantage of Saul’s negligence and gained a huge military advantage over Israel. Saul was losing his mind and his kingdom, and in desperation he consulted the Lord through traditional methods such as prophets, dreams, visions, and Urim and Thummim. The Lord had departed from him, however, and did not answer.

With no word from the Lord by the use of accepted methods, Saul decided to use a method that God had strictly forbidden. Desperate to find out what would happen in the battle with the Philistines the following day, the king disguised himself and made arrangements to consult a spiritualist medium in the land of Endor. Although Samuel, at this point, had died and was buried (v. 3), the medium supposedly conjured up Samuel’s soul from the dead. But did she really? Those who believe in the immortality of the soul frequently use this story in an attempt to prove that the soul of Samuel appeared to the medium of Endor. However, a careful study of the story gives us multiple reasons why this conclusion is untenable.
Read 1 Samuel 28 from the translation of your choice. Write out 1 Samuel 28:10–15. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
THE SAMUEL IMPOSTOR

Was it Samuel’s soul that appeared to the medium at Endor? No, for several reasons. If God refused to answer Saul by approved methods (1 Sam. 28:6), why would He answer him by using a method that He had forbidden? God had commanded: “Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God” (Lev. 19:31, emphasis supplied; cf. Isa. 8:19, 20). The sentence against mediums was death by stoning (Lev. 20:27). Saul knew that God had forbidden necromancy, and for this reason he himself had eradicated them from the land (1 Sam. 28:7–9).

The dead know nothing (Eccles. 9:5, 6). If Samuel was dead, buried, and knew nothing, how could he deliver a message to Saul? Samuel was a righteous man (Heb. 11:32), so why did his purported soul come up from the earth rather than down from heaven (1 Sam. 28:8, 11, 13)?

The medium described the communicating entity as “gods” (*Elohim*) coming up out of the earth (1 Sam. 28:13). The word *Elohim* is variously translated as “a divine being” (NASB), “a spirit” (NIV), “a god-like being” (CJB), or “a god” (ESV). This raises a red flag! Did Samuel become “a god” after his death? Did not Satan pawn off the same lie on Eve when he told her that she would not die but be like God? (Gen. 3:4, 5). Saul believed that the Samuel impostor was a god, and for this reason, he bowed before him with his face to the ground (1 Sam. 28:14; cf. 2 Chron. 7:3; 20:18). The communicating entity was not Samuel, because Samuel would never have accepted worship. Peter (Acts 10:25, 26) and the angels refused worship (Rev. 19:10; 22:8, 9). Even further, one wonders why the purported Samuel looked like an old man covered with a mantle.

The Samuel impostor told Saul, “Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me” (1 Sam. 28:19). If, as some believe, the soul of the dead goes somewhere, will the soul of the wicked go to the same place at death as the soul of the righteous? Spiritualism teaches this, but not Christianity. Samuel is in the grave awaiting the “better resurrection” (Heb. 11:32, 35) and Saul the second resurrection (Rev. 20:5).

The parallel passage in 1 Chronicles proves that the communicant was not Samuel. First Chronicles 10:13, 14 tells us that Saul did not inquire of the Lord: “So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the LORD; therefore, He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.” If Saul did not inquire of the Lord, then the Lord did not answer him. Saul *perceived* that the communicant was Samuel (1 Sam. 28:14, NKJV, KJV), but at this time Saul was possessed by an evil spirit (1 Sam. 16:14) and therefore could not trust his own perceptions.
SPIRITUALISM’S OBJECTIVES

Where did the doctrine of the immortality of the soul come from? Certainly not the Bible! It infiltrated Jewish theology in the Diaspora from Greek philosophy and entered into the Christian church when the early church fathers imbied it from Hellenistic culture. The Roman Catholic Church then embraced this heresy along with Sunday worship and the idea of an eternally burning hell. When Protestants broke away from the mother church, they were never able to discard these three heretical doctrines. According to Roman Catholic theologian John O’Brien, Protestants, so to speak, still carry in their pocket a picture of their mother and a lock of her hair (The Faith of Millions: The Credential of the Catholic Religion [Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1938], 400, 401).

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul has ecumenical implications. Nathaniel P. Tallmadge, who was governor of the territory of Wisconsin and a senator of New York, became a convert of spiritualism. He claimed that the spirit of the deceased John C. Calhoun visited him on a regular basis. According to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, on two separate occasions, in two different years and from two different mediums, Tallmadge asked what the objectives of spiritualism were. The spirit replied on both occasions: “It is to draw mankind together in harmony and to convince skeptics of the immortality of the soul” (The Edge of the Unknown [London: John Murray, 1930], 155). Conan Doyle was also a spiritualist. He wrote about the ecumenical agenda of spiritualism: “I believe that one of the ultimate results of this movement will be to unite Christianity upon a common basis so strong and, indeed, self-sufficient that the quibbles which separate the Churches of to-day will be seen in their true proportion and will be swept away or disregarded” (The Edge of the Unknown, 155, 156). The book of Revelation describes how, at the end of days, “spirits of devils” will go to the kings of the earth and the whole world to gather them for the final battle against God. The prophet Isaiah warned against spiritualism and exalted the Word of God as the only litmus test of truth and error: “And when they say to you, ‘Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,’ should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:19, 20).

The Bible is the great detector of error—the light that rebukes the darkness of the séance chamber. Yet, today multitudes replace the Bible with a multitude of human “authorities” such as science so-called, tradition, philosophy, feelings, emotions, signs and wonders, preachers, theologians, and the testimony of the senses. Satan uses his angels, channelers, astrologers, card readers, crystal ball gazers, palm readers, psychics, and supposed spirits of dead saints because these methods are entirely under his control. Our only safety is to trust the Bible and the Bible only.

Read more at www.inversebible.org/dead12-4
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

*Genesis 3:1–6*
*Revelation 13:13, 14; 16:13, 14*
*Isaiah 8:19, 20*
*Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6*
*Leviticus 20:27*
*1 Chronicles 10:13, 14*
*Matthew 24:23–25*

What other narratives come to mind in connection with 1 Samuel 28?

Review your memorized verse from 1 Samuel 28.
RELATIONAL RESPONSE

The idea that the soul leaves the body at death to be with Jesus seems assuring and comforting, but is it really? Parapsychologists have done tests which prove that something is communicating from the other side. However, there is no way for them to identify who the communicants are. Because the communicants are invisible entities, researchers have no way of proving that they are the spirits of the departed. This is a channel through which Satan has full and complete control and can lead the masses astray from Jesus. He can tell people whatever he wants them to believe, and there is no way they can escape his power by themselves.

We have been told that purported spirits of the dead will appear to the living and tell them that the observance of Sunday honors Jesus and that those who keep the Sabbath are displeasing Him and causing the calamities in the world (cf. Matt. 24:6–9): “Communications from the spirits will declare that God has sent them to convince the rejecters of Sunday of their error, affirming that the laws of the land should be obeyed as the law of God. They will lament the great wickedness in the world, and second the testimony of religious teachers, that the degraded state of morals is caused by the desecration of Sunday” (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911], 591).

Jesus the Living Word cannot contradict the written Word. How can Jesus say in the written Word that He is the Lord of the Sabbath and then send the purported spirits of the departed to tell the world that He wants them to keep Sunday? The living Jesus and His written Word cannot be in conflict, because the Living Word is always in harmony with the written Word. Satan will even counterfeit the second coming of Christ by passing himself off as Christ (Matt. 24:23, 24; 2 Thess. 2:8–12). This will be the almost overmastering delusion.

Our only protection against these delusive end-time deceptions of Satan is to simply believe in and obey the written Word by declaring, “For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing” (Eccles. 9:5). In the last remnant of time, we will not be able to trust our senses or feelings, nor miracles, impressions, or what others say. God will protect those who render unquestioning obedience to the objective, written Word of God.

Satan is an expert at making counterfeits look genuine. A counterfeit $100 bill may look exactly like the genuine to the untrained eye, but this does not necessarily mean that it is. Objective tests, not subjective experience, must be applied to the currency to determine its genuineness. Likewise, the objective Word of God must test all doctrines and religious experience! At the end, “So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested” (White, The Great Controversy, 593).
NOT BELOVED FRIENDS AND RELATIVES

When Saul inquired for Samuel, the Lord did not cause Samuel to appear to Saul. He saw nothing. Satan was not allowed to disturb the rest of Samuel in the grave, and bring him up in reality to the witch of Endor. God does not give Satan power to resurrect the dead. But Satan’s angels assume the form of dead friends, and speak and act like them, that through professed dead friends he can the better carry on his work of deception. Satan knew Samuel well, and he knew how to represent him before the witch of Endor, and to utter correctly the fate of Saul and his sons. (Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2 [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953], 1022.)

I saw that the saints must get a thorough understanding of present truth, which they will be obliged to maintain from the Scriptures. They must understand the state of the dead; for the spirits of devils will yet appear to them, professing to be beloved friends and relatives, who will declare to them that the Sabbath has been changed, also other unscriptural doctrines. They will do all in their power to excite sympathy and will work miracles before them to confirm what they declare. The people of God must be prepared to withstand these spirits with the Bible truth that the dead know not anything, and that they who appear to them are the spirits of devils. (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* [Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1882], 87.)

He [Satan] has power to bring before men the appearance of their departed friends. The counterfeit is perfect; the familiar look, the words, the tone, are reproduced with marvelous distinctness. (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911], 552.)

Spiritualism is the masterpiece of deception. It is Satan’s most successful and fascinating delusion—one calculated to take hold of the sympathies of those who have laid their loved ones in the grave. Evil angels come in the form of those loved ones, and relate incidents connected with their lives, and perform acts which they performed while living. In this way they lead persons to believe that their dead friends are angels, hovering over them, and communicating with them. These evil angels, who assume to be the deceased friends, are regarded with a certain idolatry, and with many their word has greater weight than the word of God. (Ellen G. White, “Spiritualism the Masterpiece of Deception,” in *The Signs of the Times* [Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1874], August 26, 1889.)

Satan leads men to consult those that have familiar spirits; and by revealing hidden things of the past, he inspires confidence in his power to foretell things to come. By experience gained through the long ages, he can reason from cause to effect and often forecast with a degree of accuracy, some of the future events of man’s life. Thus he is enabled to deceive poor, misguided souls and bring them under his power and lead them captive at his will. (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* [Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1890], 687.)
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Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

Where are areas that spiritualism tempts you today personally?

What evidences do we have in 1 Samuel 28 that Samuel did not appear to the medium at Endor?

Did Saul actually see Samuel, or did he perceive that it was Samuel? Why were the perceptions of King Saul unreliable at this point in his life?

According to Hebrews 11:35, when will Samuel be able to speak again?

What method will Satan use at the end of time to deceive the whole world? (See Matt. 24:23, 24.)

How is it possible for Satan to seemingly predict events that will occur in the future or reveal the past secrets of a person's life?

According to Isaiah 8:19, 20, how can we test the reliability of a message from any source? What is meant by the “law” and the “testimony”?