

Did Samuel appear to Saul at the command of the medium?

This is the question to be answered in the following exposition.

I have been conducting my own research on this point because I have always believed that there has been differing views about this part of the book of Samuel by many of the well known and respected church fathers. Further this arousal and urge to research this point was directly related to you stating that the church view was that Samuel did not appear. What follows is my research on the following topic, and it would be greatly appreciated if you can read it and give me your thoughts on it.

To begin one must search the bible for any clues about the validity of the claim made in 1 Samuel 28, this in itself is fought with **danger** as the true orthodox belief is that the scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and as such if the account is not allegorical for anything else it has to be concluded that it was in fact true as stated by the author of 1 Samuel.

In culminating this research article I landed on the account found in the deuterocanonical book of ***The Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach*** which states the following.

“16Samuel the prophet of the Lord, the beloved of the Lord his God, established a new government, and anointed princes over his people.

17By the law of the Lord he judged the congregation, and the God of Jacob beheld, and by his fidelity he was proved a prophet.

18 And he was known to be faithful in his words, because he saw the God of light:

19 And called upon the name of the Lord Almighty, in fighting against the enemies who beset him on every side, when he offered a lamb without blemish.

20 And the Lord thundered from heaven, and with a great noise made his voice to be heard.

21 And he crushed the princes of the Tyrians, and all the lords of the Philistines:

22 And before the time of the end of his life in the world, he protested before the Lord, and his anointed: money, or anything else, even to a shoe, he had not taken of any man, and no man did accuse him.

23 And after this he slept, and he made known to the king, and showed him the end of his life, and he lifted up his voice from the earth in prophecy to blot out the wickedness of the nation.”

From the above account found in Chapter 43:16-23, it is clearly visible that verse 23 leaves no doubt that Samuel did in fact appear to Saul at the command of the medium, and Sirach goes far as saying that Samuel actually prophesied after his death about the death of Saul when this occurred.

If you take this as fact which I DO it leaves no doubt as to whether Samuel appeared or not however the argument is in fact whether Samuel appeared at the command of the medium, or was it through God who allowed Samuel to appear to the Medium at her command.

For this it is important to turn to the Church fathers and see what they have to say about this account in 1 Samuel 28. It is apparent that there has been much conjecture about the appearance of Samuel and it is safe to categorise all opinion into the following three categories and by which fathers they were preached!

1. **Samuel was resuscitated by the woman:** Justin Martyr, Origen, Zeno of Verona, Ambrose, Augustine, Sulpicius Severus, Dracontius, and Anastasius Sinaita.¹
2. **Either Samuel or a demon in his shape appeared at God's command:** John Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Pseudo-Justin, Theodore bar Koni, and Isho'dad of Merv.²
3. **A demon deceived Saul and gave him a forged prophecy:** Tertullian, Pseudo-Hippolytus, "Pionius", Eustathius of Antioch, Ephraem, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius Ponticus, Pseudo-Basil, Jerome, Philastrius, Ambrosiaster, and Pseudo-Augustine.³

Note: References supplied I, ii, iii are supplied in order for validation purposes and they have been extracted from a research article by K. A. D. Smelik in his article entitled: The Witch of Endor: I Samuel 28 in Rabbinic and Christian Exegesis Till 800 A.D. Source: Vigiliae Christianae, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Jun., 1979), pp. 160-179

¹ Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo* 105 (PG 6,721); Origen, *In librum Regum homilia II* (Kleine Texte 83), cf. also comm. on John 20,42 (GCS10,385); Zeno of Verona, *Tractatus I*, xvi, 4 (PL11,376); Ambrose, comm. on Luke 1,33 (PL15,1547); Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum* 11,3 (CCSL44,81-6), *De cura gerenda pro mortuis* XV,18 (CSEL41,651f), *De octo Dulcitii quaestionibus VI* (PL40, 162f), *De doctrina Christiana II*, xxiii, 35 (CCSL32,58), cf. also his epistle 43 (CSEL 34/2,105); Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicle* 1,36 (CSEL 1,37); Dracontius, *Carmen de Deo II*, 1,324ff. (PL60,797); Anastasius Sinaita, 154 *Quaestiones*, 39 and 112 (PG89,581ff. and 764). Perhaps this is also the view of Evodius, cf. his letter to Augustine (CSEL44, 492).

² John Chrysostom, *Comm. on Matthew VI*, 3 (PG 57,66), *Comm. on the letter to Titus* 111,2 (PG 62,678); Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Quaest. in I Reg.* 28 (PG 0,590), *Quaest. in I Paral.* introduction (PG 80,808); Pseudo-Justin, *Quaestiones et Responsiones ad Orthodoxos* 5 2 (PG 6,1296f. - may be written by Theodoret, cf. Altaner, *Patrologie*, 340); Theodore bar Koni, *Quaestiones* (CSCO5 5,222ff.); Isho'dad of Merv, comm. on Samuel (CSCO229,81ff.).

³ Tertullian, *De Anima*, 57,8f. (CCSL2,866f.) (In the spurious *Carmen adversus Marcionem I*, 126ff. - CCSL2,1437 - however, Samuel is praised, because „he retained prophetic ightsa lso after h is rest“); Pseudo-Hippolytus, *In Reges ragm.* (GCS 1,123), not written by Hippolytus, but by an unknown author, cf. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur* 11, 582 and H. Achelis, *Hippolytstudien* (TU16,4) 122ff.; „Pionius“, cf. n. 2; Eustathius, *De Pythonissa* (K1.T. 83); Ephraem, comm. on Samuel, 28 (in *Opera Omnia*, ed. P. Benedictus, ser. Syr. I [Rome 1737] p. 387-90) - cf. however, n. 3 - Nisibian Hymn, 42,6 (CSCO 240,38f.) and 57,15f (CSCO 240,86), *Contra Julianum*, (CSCO174,86f) and the abstract of a sermon (CSCO 363,63); Gregory of Nyssa, *De Pythonissa* (K1.T.83); Evagrius Ponticus, *Cephaleia Gnostica VI*, 61 (Patr. Or. 28, 242f.); Pseudo-Basil, comm. on Is. 8,19/22 (PG 30,497); Jerome, comm. on Matth. 6, 31 (PL26,46), comm. on Ez. IV,13,17f. (PL25,114), cf. however his comm. on Is. 111,7, 11 (PL2 4,106); Philastrius, *Diversarum Hereseon Liber* 26,1f. (CCSL9,226f.); Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteri et Novi Testamenti* 27 (CSEL 50,54ff.) and Pseudo-Augustine, *De mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae II*, 11 (PL35,2179).

I think the safest group to join is a combination of group 1 and 2. This group I will name group 4 **Samuel was resuscitated by the woman at the Command of the LORD!** Without going into any depth for argument sake – this view will not put the church in any danger for stating what is written is not true in the book of Sirach.

This is extremely dangerous as in essence we are saying the bible was not divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit as it contains false information. However while it is safe to say that the women commanded Samuel to appear it was not her authority, or the authority of Satan that forced Samuel to appear, but it was the Lord who allowed Samuel to appear and prophecy about the death Of Saul.

If one follows this line of thought, the biblical account of 1 Samuel 28 and Sirach 43 will be held true and does not put us in any danger of saying that the bible was not divinely inspired through the Holy Spirit. Further it is important to note that the prophecy given by Samuel contained information about the Death of Saul and his sons. Death is in the hand of the lord and neither Satan nor man knows the hour! This again leads us to a safe conclusion that the Lord commanded Samuel to appear to Saul with a direct prophecy!

I note however that there was a heresy in the early church which was perpetuated by the Jews which stated that Jesus was raised from the dead by “necromancy” as Samuel was raised by the Medium. This heresy was strongly attacked by Pionius a priest and martyr - one of the greats of The early church.

In simple attack of this heresy, Samuel appeared as spirit, but the lord arose in flesh as is evident in the account of Tomas touching his wounds.

As for today, the use of mediums is questionable to say the least. The question needs to be asked - can they really talk to the dead? I answer simply, Satan knows all the past events, thoughts and happenings of everyone’s life and he can have a good guess as to what the future holds due to thousands of years experience with mankind. So in-turn mediums may in fact talk to the dead – but they are not really the dead speaking - for in this way we can deduce who went to heaven and who went to hell. However Satan may speak to these mediums through his knowledge of this person’s life including inner thoughts!

This is my take on the reading of 1 Samuel 28 and I would be deeply interested in what you have to say about it!

Your Servant In Christ!