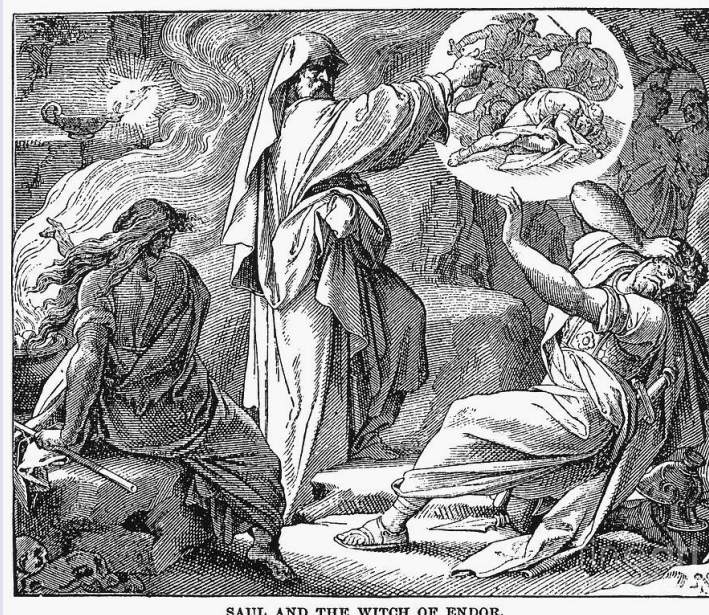


## “I AM IN GREAT DISTRESS”

### SAUL’S DISTRESS

In the last day of his life, King Saul had reached the bottom. Scripture says that **David had made an alliance with the Philistines**: in fact, King Achish made David his ‘bodyguard for life’. The **Philistines gathered their troops** at Shunem with **David’s men in the reserve units supporting from behind**. King Saul and the Israelites set up camp at Gilboa. **When Saul saw the Philistine army he was terrified**. He inquired of the LORD but **the LORD did not answer him by dreams, by Urim, or by prophets**. (See 1 Samuel 28 for a full account of these events.)

**King Saul changed his clothes to disguise himself** and he took his two sons to consult a medium, a spiritist in Endor. He asked her to bring up a spirit. She said **‘why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?’** Saul promised she would not be harmed. ‘Who shall I bring up?’ she asked. ‘Bring up Samuel’ he said. **‘Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!’** she cried at the top of her voice. The King said ‘don’t be afraid. What do you see?’ ‘An old man in a robe is coming up’, she said. Saul knew it was Samuel. **Saul prostrated himself on the ground**.



SAUL AND THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

1

Samuel said to Saul ‘Why do you disturb me?’ **Saul said ‘I am in great distress.’** **The Philistines are fighting against me**, and **God has turned away from me**. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. I have called on you to tell me what to do.’

Samuel said ‘Why do you consult me now that **the LORD has turned away from you** and become your enemy? **The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands** and given it to one of your

<sup>1</sup> Source of Image: <http://fineartamerica.com/featured/saul--witch-of-endor-granger.html>

neighbors – to David. The LORD will hand over both Israel and you to the Philistines, and **tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also hand over the army of Israel to the Philistines.**

Immediately Saul fell on the ground filled with fear. His strength was gone. The woman and his two sons urged him to eat something. He got up and sat on the couch. **The woman hastily butchered a fatted calf** and kneaded bread baked without yeast. **She set it before Saul and they ate.** That same night they left.

### COMMENTARY – SAUL’S DISTRESS

*How stressful was the experience Saul was going through?*

**How stressful would it be to know for a certainty you are going to die a horrible death tomorrow?**

*To know the hated enemy will gloat over your death? To know **your sons are also going to die** in the same battle. To imagine **you might possibly see your sons die** before your eyes as they are slain by the sword of the enemy. To know **the army of which you are the head will be defeated** and also slain? To know that after tomorrow **the people of the nation of which you are the head will have no king and no army to protect them.** To expect in all likelihood there will be **further distress, loss of innocent life, looting and carnage perpetrated by your sworn enemy after you die** and the army you lead is demolished and disgraced.*

*To add to this, **there was no holy comforter present for Saul.** God would not carry him by the hand through the hour of his trial. He would face all these horrors in the weakness of the human condition, unassisted by any divine supply of grace. He was the Lord’s “anointed”. In the past when the “the Spirit of God came upon him in power” (1 Sam. 11:6) Saul had experienced boundless courage in the face of great dangers and enemies. Now he knew that God had left him. He was going to die on a hill with the whole nation of his own people witnessing his downfall, and the whole nation of those who hate God celebrating his demise at the same time.*

*In the darkness of that cold night Saul and his two of his three sons had their last meal with a medium, a witch. Saul must have recalled Samuel’s words **“To obey is better than sacrifice; rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft”** (1 Sam. 15:22-13). Scripture says that the woman butchered the fatted calf **hastily.** **The meat between Saul’s teeth may have had the blood still in it.** Knowing a witch prepared the meal, it could very well have been served in the way those who belong to the occult offer a sacrifice to the Devil. For a Hebrew, Saul had reached the very bottom of human life.*

*Somehow, some way, in spite of all his fear and foreboding, **Saul did not flee for his life.** Knowing full well what the day would bring, Saul and his sons took their place at the head of the army and fought their final battle on mount Gibeon.*

## THE DAY OF BATTLE

The Philistines fought with Israel; many fell slain on Mount Gilboa. The Israelites fled. Saul and his sons stood their ground against the foe. **All of Saul's sons: Jonathon, Abinadab, and Malki-Shua died while Saul was still alive.** He may have seen them fall. The archers of the Philistines wounded Saul critically. (All the details of these events are provided in 1 Samuel 31).

Saul said to his armor bearer, 'Draw your sword and run me through' or these uncircumcised fellows will run me through and abuse me. But his armor bearer was terrified to raise his hand against the Lord's anointed. So **Saul fell on his own sword and died.**



2

When Israel saw the Israelite army had fled, they abandoned their towns and fled.

The next day **the Philistines found Saul and his three sons dead** in the field of battle. They cut off Saul's head and stripped him of his armor and **proclaimed the good news in the temples of their idols** and among their people. The Philistines put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and **fastened the torso of his body to the wall of Beth Shan.**

When the people of Saul's home town, Jabesh Gilead, heard what the Philistines had done to Saul they journeyed through the night and took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan. **They returned to Jabesh and buried the bones under a tamarisk tree** then fasted seven days.

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<sup>2</sup> Source of Image: [http://clipart.christiansunite.com/1370774461/Bible\\_Characters\\_Clipart/King\\_Saul\\_Clipart/](http://clipart.christiansunite.com/1370774461/Bible_Characters_Clipart/King_Saul_Clipart/)

## COMMENTARY – THE DAY OF BATTLE

*A number of facts stand out in this gruesome account.*

**Saul took his sons into a battle which he knew beforehand he would lose.** Two of his three sons who had been with him the previous night with the witch followed their father into battle even though they knew he would lose the battle and all of them would die. **A third son who is not named went into battle not knowing he was doomed to die.** **We assume the third son was Jonathon** because Jonathon feared the Lord and would never have consented to visiting a medium.

**Saul expected the Philistines to abuse his body.** They did so. **They stripped him of his armor, cut off his head, and fastened his naked body to a wall** in Beth Shan. We read that his armor was deposited in the temple of idols but there is no mention of the head being taken there. We assume the head was placed on the wall of Beth Shan with the rest of the body. **They also fastened the bodies of his sons to the same wall in the same way.** We read that his kin were able only to recover only bones from the bodies that were pinned to the wall. **We infer that birds came during the heat of the day and tore the flesh completely off.** The talons and beaks of carrion birds are as sharp and powerful as their appetite for the flesh of corpses. We do not consider it at all miraculous that such birds could perform this hideous deed nor do we consider it surprising that they would be present to pounce once the bodies were pinned up. It was common for such birds to gather at times of battle, God providing them with instinct a meal is soon forthcoming for them.

## SPIRITUAL APPLICATION

(Dear Christian, we are about to propose something that at first may seem utterly abhorrent to you. We urge you to be patient and hear this argument through before discarding these words).

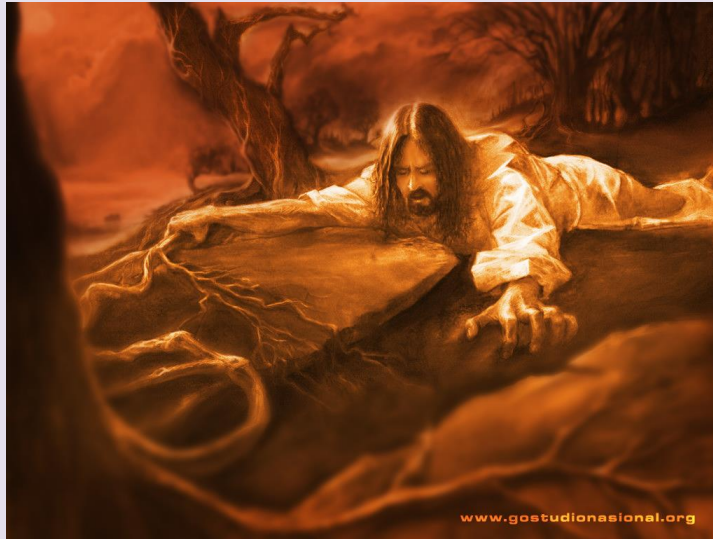
We propose that in **the night before he died Saul provides us with a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in distress in the garden of Gethsemane.** We also propose **the death of Saul is a type of the crucifixion of Christ on the cross.** The sons of Saul symbolize the thieves who died on Calvary.

Saul was evidently a man of great moral depravity. He was a man who attempted to kill not only his faithful and devoted servant David but also threw his javelin with deadly intent at his own son Jonathon. **How could Saul in any way be a type of Christ?** Scripture says of Jesus **“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth”** (1 Peter 2:22). Here is the secret: **“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us...”** (2 Cor. 5:21). In other words **“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree...”** (2 Peter 2:24).

The animal sacrifice pictures this for us. The high priest lays his hands on the head of the animal to be sacrificed and confesses the sins of the penitent over it. The sins are transferred to the sacrificial animal which then dies for those sins. Only a spotless animal qualifies to be offered as a sacrifice.

## GETHSEMANE

The night before he died, Jesus went with Peter and the two sons of Zebedee to a place called Gethsemane, which is a garden on the Mount of Olives. Jesus told the disciples to sit while he went a distance away to pray. Jesus became sorrowful and troubled. He said to them **“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”** (Matt. 26:38) Going a little farther, he fell down with his face to the ground and prayed **“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me! Yet, not as I will, but as you will.”** (Matt. 26:39)



3

How distressed was Jesus? It says in the account of Luke: **“And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.”** (Luke 22:44). Jesus was exhausted: **“An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him”** (Luke 22:43)

Here are the similarities to the anguish of Saul the night before he died:

- He was in great distress **“I am in great distress...”** (1 Sam 28:16a)
- He sought the will of God concerning his life **“...tell me what to do?”** (1 Sam 28:16b)
- He prostrated himself **“full length on the ground”** (1 Sam 28:20a)
- He had no strength (1 Sam 28:20b)
- There was a vision of a holy being from another world (1 Sam 28:13)

Saul ate the food the witch had prepared which we suspect had the blood still in it. If there was blood mingled with the sweat of Jesus on his brow, could it be that the blood and sweat trickled down his face? Could it be Jesus tasted his blood the night before he died? No, Jesus did not partake of communion with the Devil. But the symbolism of premonition of death is powerful!

<sup>3</sup> Source of Image: [http://gostudionasional.org/en/images/wallpaper/Jesus\\_in\\_Gethsemane\\_1024.php](http://gostudionasional.org/en/images/wallpaper/Jesus_in_Gethsemane_1024.php)

## THE CROSS OF CHRIST

The similarities between the death of Saul and the cross of Christ are many:

- Saul knew he would die a horrible death the next day but he bravely went to his death – he did not run away. Christ also knew the day of his suffering had come (John 12:23&27)
- The Philistines did not slay Saul. Neither did the enemies of God kill Christ: he gave up the ghost on his own accord: **“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”** (Luke 23:46)
- God had forsaken Saul – **“he no longer answers me”** (1 Sam 28:15). Christ experienced the same thing – **“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”** (Matt. 27:46)
- Saul was told his army would be defeated and flee. Christ knew when He, the Shepherd, was struck, his sheep would scatter (Matt. 26:31)
- Saul was the “Lord’s anointed”, King of the Jews. So was the Christ (Matt. 27:11)
- Saul was stripped of his armor and left to hang naked. So was the Christ (Matt. 27:35)
- Saul’s body was pierced by the Philistines (1 Sam 31:9). Christ was pierced too (John 19:34)
- Saul and his sons were hung up (on a wall). Christ and the robbers were hung up as well.



4

<sup>4</sup> Source of Image: <http://www.backtoclassics.com/gallery/kareldujardin/calvary/>

## THE TWO ROBBERS

**Saul had three sons – all died with him on Mount Gilboa.** Two had been with him to see the medium, the third son went to battle unawares his fate was sealed.

**There were two robbers who were crucified with Jesus** (Mark 15:27). One repented of his sins and Jesus promised him: “**this day you shall be with me in paradise**” (Luke 23:43). The other hurled insults at Jesus for not stepping down from the cross and saving them.

Saul had three sons who died with him on Mount Gilboa. There were only two robbers crucified with Christ. **Who is the missing person meant to die with Christ on Calvary?**

This is the confession of the Christian:

**“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live.**

**The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God,**

**Who loved me and gave himself for me.”** (Galatians 2:20)

In fact, there were four people crucified that day at Calvary: Christ, the two robbers, and the bride of Christ, the church, the spirits of all who have placed their sins upon His sacrifice.

Paul writes:

**“...don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus**

**Were baptised with him in his death?”** (Romans 6:3)

**“If we have been united with him in his death,**

**We will certainly be united with him in his resurrection.”** (Romans 6:5)

## MEDITATION

My dear friend: **have you confessed your sins to God** and asked God to put those sins upon Christ?

If so, then Christ took your sins upon his body on the tree. Those transgressions are forgiven. You are going to be with the Lord Jesus in heaven. Hallelujah!

**If you have not repented of your sin,** and asked God to forgive them on the merits of Christ’s death on the cross, then your sins are not forgiven. Don’t be like the robber who insulted the sacrifice of Christ! Don’t be like the sons of Saul who visited the medium with him and died in vain attempting to survive by the merits of their own strength and righteousness. All have sinned! All need a savior! Is your wish for eternity to be eaten by crows and suffer torments – or to live? **Chose life!**