

1st Samuel, Samuel to King David Chapter 16 – David Anointed King

*[Please note : sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Hello! The last time I spoke, in July 2023, we considered together the time when Saul was chosen as the King of Israel. In the five sessions after that, we learnt quite a bit about Saul's reign and how he acted. Sadly, it was a downwards slide, with God having to tell Saul twice that his kingdom would not last. This is an important point which we'll come back to. Today, I am picking up the story of Saul again, this time speaking about David, Saul's replacement, and how he was anointed as the new King instead of Saul. As you can imagine, this did not go down well with Saul, and we will see how the subsequent events played out in our next five sessions.

Our chapter today is 1 Samuel 16, and the overall plot is that, firstly, God instructed Samuel to go and anoint a new King. Secondly, we see how Samuel performed this, and how David was picked out as the chosen one. Finally, we will see how the Holy Spirit came upon David and also left Saul, and how Saul and David were brought into contact with each other.

Let's start with God's instructions to Samuel. I will read the first three verses, from the New King James Version:

"Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons." And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." But the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you."

It must have been a hard message for Samuel, who seemed to have a real affection for Saul. But Saul had proved unfaithful. After the episode when Saul had not waited for Samuel but instead had impulsively offered the sacrifice, we read in 1 Samuel 13 verse 14 that Samuel had said,

"But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

In 1 Samuel 15 verse 28, after Saul's further disobedience to God's command, Samuel further said,

"The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbour of yours, who is better than you."

What should Saul have done? He should have genuinely repented and acknowledged his sins. Whatever the consequences might have been, he would have known God's forgiveness and God's continued favour, whether or not he would have remained as king. We can say this with confidence, because there were kings who acted very badly indeed, and then repented, and God was gracious to them – David, in fact, being one example. If you wish, you can read the story of King Manasseh, King of Judah, in 2 Chronicles chapter 33, verses 1 – 20. Manasseh acted very wickedly indeed, and as a result he was taken captive by the King of Assyria off to Babylon. Let me read 2 Chronicles chapter 33 verses 12 – 13:

“Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God.”

God always acts consistently. I am sure that if Saul had truly repented, he would have known God's favour, whatever that might have looked like in practice. But we have a significant clue in verse 2 of our chapter today that Saul did not repent. We read earlier what Samuel said to God: “How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.”

Ordinarily, for Samuel to anoint another King while King Saul was reigning, without receiving God's instructions to do so, would have been an act of treason. But as we have seen, Samuel had already twice announced to Saul that his kingdom would not endure due to his actions. Thus, Saul would have known that he could not continue in his position under God's favour. Samuel's fears that Saul would seek to kill him rather suggest that Saul did not take well Samuel's announcements that his kingdom would not last. It sounds like Saul, instead of repenting, hardened his heart and determined to hang on to his throne at all costs.

By the way, verses 1 – 3 are a good example of how a Bible atlas can be helpful when studying a Bible passage. As I was reading around the subject, one author helpfully mentioned that Samuel, who lived in Ramah, would have passed in or near Gibeah, Saul's capital, on his way down to Bethlehem. Bethlehem was pretty much in a straight line south from Ramah, and Gibeah was just south of Ramah. It helps us to imagine the account we are reading if we can get a feel for where the various locations were.

We can see therefore that Samuel might well have been concerned that his journey down to Bethlehem could have aroused Saul's suspicions! God told Samuel to say that he was going to sacrifice to the LORD. This was indeed true, and as another commentary mentioned, sacrifice was the proper approach to God, which would have been necessary for the solemn occasion of anointing a new King. As a practical point, this exchange reminds us that we should certainly never tell lies, yet we do not owe everyone an explanation of what we are doing. We can be discerning in what we say.

Picking up our story in verses 4 and 5, we read:

“So Samuel did what the LORD said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, “Do you come peaceably?” And he said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.”

There seems to have been a general atmosphere of fear in the land! Perhaps the elders were concerned that Samuel was coming in his capacity as a judge. At any rate, the impression does not seem to be that of a happy, peaceful land.

Verses 6 – 7 are a key point of our study today. Samuel thought that Jesse’s oldest son, Eliab, would be God’s choice for Saul’s replacement, but this was not so.

“So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him!" But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.””

Here is a great and important point – “man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” How easy it is to be influenced by outward appearance! God looks beyond that, to what is inside. God is interested in the true man or woman, not what they look like. Fast forward to Acts chapter 13 verses 21 – 22 in the New Testament, where the Apostle Paul said when speaking in the synagogue in Antioch,

“And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.’”

The Apostle Paul referred to David as a “man after God’s heart.” What a great commendation! It was what God saw. But apparently no-one else saw it because David had not even been invited to the sacrifice! Let’s pick up our chapter in verses 8 – 13. Try to imagine the scene as seven of Jesse’s sons pass by, and none of them are God’s chosen King. I wonder what Samuel felt as he had to ask, “Is everyone here? Is anyone missing?”

“So Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here." So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!" Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.”

Before we move on, let’s briefly consider an example in the New Testament of “man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 10, verses 1 and 7, we read as follows:

“Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ – who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you. ... Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's.”

Evidently, the Apostle Paul did not seem to have much of what we might call ‘presence’ about him, which caused some people to despise him and discount his message and his teaching. They were

looking at the outward appearance. But Paul has to remind them not to do this: “Do you look at things according to the outward appearance?” Let’s not write people off just on the basis of their outward appearance. It’s what’s inside that matters.

1 Samuel 16 Verse 13 is important: “And the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.” What a blessing for David! And also, how necessary for David! A lesson we all need to learn is in the Old Testament prophet Zechariah, chapter 4 verse 6:

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.”

We need the Holy Spirit to enable us to do anything for God. Indeed, it is the Holy Spirit who causes us to be born again. In John’s Gospel, chapter 3 and verses 5 – 6, the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus,

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

We receive the Holy Spirit at our conversion, when we first put our faith in the Lord Jesus, as Paul writes to the Ephesians in chapter 1 verse 13:

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

In the New Testament, the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit living inside believers is one of the tremendous results of the Lord Jesus’s death on the cross, His resurrection and His ascension to glory. An important verse that explains this is John chapter 7 verse 39, where we read that Jesus “spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” The Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost after the Lord Jesus’s ascension and glorification, and He comes to dwell within everyone who truly puts his or her trust in the Lord Jesus. He will never leave such a person, which we know because of what the Lord Jesus said in John chapter 14 verses 16 – 17:

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

It was not the same in the time of David and Saul, as we read in our chapter 1 Samuel 16 verse 14,

“But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him.”

Today, we who live after the momentous events of the Lord Jesus’s crucifixion, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification, come into all the benefits of this wonderful work, if we place our trust in Him as our Saviour. As I have just said, a true believer need never fear that he or she might lose the Holy Spirit. He is the “other Helper” that “abides with us for ever.” If we are believers, our responsibility is not to grieve the Holy Spirit by our sinful actions and attitudes, as we read in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 30:

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

If we take into account what we have learnt about King Saul's life in 1 Samuel so far, it would seem that he was not someone characterized by true faith in God. Importantly, as I pointed out at the beginning of this talk, Saul did not turn to God in repentance for his disobedience, as hinted by Samuel's fear that Saul might kill him if he found out that Samuel was on his way to anoint a new King. Whatever the 'distressing spirit' was, it seems to have been a specific judgement on Saul who had rejected God's word. Nevertheless, there was healing available, as we will see shortly. There was judgement on the one hand, and mercy on the other hand. If only Saul had humbled himself before God!

Saul's servants soon noticed the change that came over Saul. In verses 15 – 16 we read:

“And Saul's servants said to him, "Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you. Let our master now command your servants, who are before you, to seek out a man who is a skillful player on the harp. And it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well.””

It is interesting that music was able to help Saul. God provided a means of temporary alleviation of his symptoms, and it would have been good if, as a result of this, Saul had gratefully turned to God. It makes me think of Romans chapter 2 verse 4,

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”

Saul was keen on this prescription, as we see in verses 17 – 18:

“So Saul said to his servants, "Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring him to me." Then one of the servants answered and said, "Look, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the LORD is with him.”

This is a rather interesting description of David! Remember, David had not even been considered important enough by his own family to be invited to the sacrifice! It seems as if this servant of King Saul saw more in David than most people did. The key thing was that “the LORD is with him.” The Spirit of God who had come upon David had an unmistakable effect on David.

It was the same with the Lord Jesus. In Isaiah chapter 53, we read in verses 2 – 3:

“For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.”

Jesus of Nazareth, when He was on this earth, was not generally admired by the mass of the people. Looking at the outward appearance, they did not see what they thought was a grand, impressive world leader. But in the same book of Isaiah, chapter 11 verses 1 – 2, we read:

“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,

the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”

Here is what was truly majestic, truly magnificent!

So in the last five verses of our chapter, we see how in God’s providence, the current yet rejected King, and the anointed yet still hidden King were brought into each other’s presence. Let’s read verses 19 – 23:

“Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me your son David, who is with the sheep." And Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine, and a young goat, and sent them by his son David to Saul. So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armourbearer. Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight." And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.”

Once again, we have a very dismissive way of describing David: “Your son David, who is with the sheep”! Yet we see how David became a real blessing to Saul. David did not think, ‘I have been anointed as King by God, so I will start to get followers behind me and topple Saul!’ Instead, he waited for God’s time, and meanwhile acted to help and relieve Saul. How sad that Saul did not turn to God in that time! It is a sorrowful story. May none of us refuse to repent before God!

But let’s not end our study on a sorrowful theme! There is more we can say about David the son of Jesse. What we have been reading about is true history; it actually happened as recorded for us. But it also has a further significance because David is in many ways a picture of the Lord Jesus. I have just quoted from Isaiah chapter 11, where prophetically the Lord Jesus is called a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots. Very often in the Gospels, the Lord Jesus is called ‘the Son of David.’ In Luke chapter 1 verses 31 – 33, when the Angel Gabriel was sent to Mary, he told her:

“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

There are very many aspects of David’s life that, while being true historical events, have a symbolic significance because they illustrate things about our Lord Jesus. God willing, we will explore some of these in the next few weeks. Here are three things we can think about from our study today in chapter 16:

- David was not particularly admired or respected by his fellow countrymen and women. It was the same with the Lord Jesus, who was “despised and rejected by men” (Isaiah 53:3), and of whom it was written, “For even His brothers did not believe in Him” (John 7:5).
- David was a “man after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22). Similarly, the Lord Jesus was the One of Whom God said, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11).
- The Holy Spirit came upon David, and Saul’s servants recognised that “the LORD is with him”. Similarly, in Acts chapter 10 verse 38, Peter spoke about, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”

So, let's be encouraged, if we trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, because we know that He is God's Anointed One. At the moment, He is not particularly revered by the world. Often, His name is used as a swear word! Like David in our chapter today, He is not recognized for who He is, God's chosen King. But that does not alter fact that He is indeed God's chosen one! We will never make a mistake by following Him. Let's take the end of Isaiah chapter 40 verse 23 as a promise:

“For they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me.”

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today message on 'David Anointed King', talk number T1342, in the series 1st Samuel, the period from Samuel to King David. I hope it has encouraged you!

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