

"A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART"

1 Samuel 16:1-13

The book of 1 Samuel is the story of Israel's search for a king. Saul's work for God had all but ended. The handwriting was on the wall for him. This chapter portrays the unfolding of God's plan as it centered in the young man, David. This chapter is not so much about Samuel and David as it is about God. It portrays the Lord's infinite superiority to all things human.¹

God tells Samuel to go and anoint a new king over Israel.

1 Samuel 16:1–2... Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons." 2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'"

How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Samuel's grief over Saul's failure was understandable. But apparently, God felt it had gone on for too long. He roused his elderly prophet to action, giving him the most important assignment of his ministry.² There is a time to mourn, but there is also a time to move on.

Fill your horn with oil and go...This must have excited Samuel because he knew that God wanted him to anoint someone else as king over Israel. God will never allow His work to die with the death or the failure of a man. If it

¹ Robert D. Bergen, [1, 2 Samuel](#), vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 176.

² Tony Evans, [The Tony Evans Bible Commentary](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2019), 306.

is *God's* work, it goes beyond any man. Perhaps Samuel was paralyzed with mourning because of Saul's tragic rebellion, but God was not paralyzed.

I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons— Jesse was the grandson of Ruth and Boaz ([Ruth 4:17, 22](#)).

(16:2) Samuel said, "How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me." We can certainly understand Samuel's fear. Perhaps Samuel's excessive mourning over Saul introduced an element of fear and unbelief in his heart. Samuel didn't have anything to worry about, because God showed him what to do!

And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'"

To anyone who inquired about his trip, Samuel should tell the truth, but not the whole truth. He should tell them he had come to sacrifice. Withholding the whole truth from those who have no right to know it is not unethical (16:2b–3).³

1 Samuel 16:3... "You shall invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for Me the one whom I designate to you."

(16:1) For I have provided Myself a king among his sons—Years before this, Israel rejected the LORD as their king because they wanted a human king instead. God gave them a human king after their own desire (Saul) but God was still on the throne, crowning who He pleased as He pleased.

The simple fact was that God did rule Israel. They could recognize His rule, submit to it, and enjoy the benefits. Or they could resist His rule over Israel

³ James E. Smith, [The Books of History](#), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), 289.

and suffer because of it. The LORD is God and King and will always triumph. But my attitude matters *a great deal* as it affects my ultimate destiny.

We don't have to fear when there is a transition of leadership because we know that God will provide for Himself a leader to shepherd His people. In some unlikely places God is raising up leaders for His people. He will keep them obscure until He chooses to raise them up.

(16:3) You shall anoint for Me the one whom I designate to you: The first king of Israel (Saul) was the *"the people's choice."* As you know, he failed and disqualified himself. This new king that God sent Samuel to anoint would be *"the Lord's choice."*

Samuel comes to sacrifice at Bethlehem.

1 Samuel 16:4–5... So Samuel did what the LORD said, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and said, "Do you come in peace?" 5 He said, "In peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." He also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

So Samuel did what the LORD said, and came to Bethlehem—Obedience to the Lord is essential. Bethlehem was a small town not very far from Jerusalem. It was the home of Ruth and Boaz, from whom the family of Jesse descended. It was a hilly grain-growing region with many small grain fields carved into the hillsides.

And the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and said, "Do you come in peace?"— Considering what Samuel had just done with the Amalekite king, Agag (1 Samuel 15:33), it is no wonder the elders of Bethlehem were nervous and fearful.

He also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice— The idea was not that Jesse and his sons were to just watch Samuel sacrifice this heifer. They would watch the sacrifice and then share in a large ceremonial meal, eating the meat that came from the sacrificed animal.

When an animal was sacrificed as a peace offering, a fellowship offering, or a consecration offering, then part of the animal was burnt before the LORD, and part of it was eaten in a special ceremonial meal.

God doesn't choose any of Jesse's older sons.

1 Samuel 16:6–10... When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him." 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." 9 Next Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." 10 Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."

Apparently after the public sacrifice, Samuel retired to the house of Jesse to partake of the sacrificial meal. ⁴

Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him—As Samuel looked at the oldest son *Eliab* he thought, "This man sure looks like a king. This must be the one God will tell me to anoint. That's a good choice, God!" Samuel saw a tall, good-looking young man who *looked* like he would be a great king and leader.

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him"—Samuel made the mistake of judging Eliab based on his *appearance*. This was the same mistake Israel

⁴ James E. Smith, [*The Books of History*](#), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), 290.

made about their first king. Saul looked like a king, but he didn't have the heart of a king. It didn't matter how good Eliab *looked* because God said, "I have rejected him."

For God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart—Even the best of men will look at the outward appearance. At that moment, Samuel was guilty doing it. We must understand that we can't read the secrets of another's heart and we often do judge on outward appearance.

God told Samuel, "Your natural inclination is to only judge based on what you observe. I can judge the heart that you can't see. So, look to Me and don't be so quick to judge a person only on their outward appearance."

(16:10) The LORD has not chosen these—God told Samuel that He had not chosen any of the seven sons of Jesse attending the feast. It wasn't that these sons of Jesse were bad men, but they were not God's choice. Contrary to what Samuel and Jesse were thinking, God had someone else in mind!

Other men who were not firstborn but who were selected by the Lord over their more socially powerful older brothers include Seth, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, and Moses.⁵

Samuel asks about Jesse's absent son.

1 Samuel 16:11... And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are these all the children?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep." Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here."

Samuel had a problem. God told him, "*I have provided Myself a king among his sons* (1 Samuel 16:1). Yet here were the seven sons of Jesse and God did

⁵ Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 180.

not choose any of them. Since Samuel knew God's word was true, he knew there must be another son of Jesse who was not at the sacrificial feast.

"There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep"—

This shows the low regard David had among his own family. . .

- First, his father didn't even mention him by name.
- Second, he wasn't even invited to the sacrificial feast.
- Third, he was only called to come because Samuel insisted on it.

When we consider that David was the youngest of eight sons, we shouldn't be surprised at the way this played out. God often chooses unlikely people to do His work, so that He gets the glory and honor He deserves! Alan Redpath observed . . .

"You may not be intellectual or well thought of in your family circle; you may be despised by others for your faith in Christ. Perhaps you had only a little share in the love of your parents, as David did. But remember that those who are rejected of men often become beloved of the Lord."

David was called for this great anointing when he was *keeping the sheep*. Keeping the sheep was a servant's job. The fact that David was entrusted with this job shows that Jesse's family was not wealthy. He was faithful in protecting and providing for the sheep. Therefore, the Lord could trust him with big things!

Keeping the sheep meant that David spent a lot of time in nature looking over the sheep and looking at the glory of God's creation. God built in him a heart of worship. He wrote masterful poems that were turned into songs. . .

Psalm 19:1–6... The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. **2** Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. **3** There is no speech, nor

are there words; Their voice is not heard. **4** Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, **5** Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. **6** Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

Psalm 8:3–9... When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained; **4** What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? **5** Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! **6** You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, **7** All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field, **8** The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas. **9** O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth!

Keeping the sheep required a special level of care. It meant you knew the sheep needed the care and help of a good shepherd. During these years, God built into David a heart that would sing about the LORD as his shepherd (**Psalm 23**).

Keeping the sheep meant that David had to trust God in the midst of great danger. He had to contend with lions and bears and wolves to protect the sheep.

Keeping the sheep was not waiting time; It was training time. David was a great man and a great king over Israel because HE NEVER LOST HIS SHEPHERD'S HEART! Psalm 78 speaks of the intimate connection between David the shepherd and David the king.

Psalm 78:70–72... He also chose David His servant And took him from the sheepfolds; **71** From the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him to shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance. **72** So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them with his skillful hands.

David is chosen and anointed.

1 Samuel 16:12–13... So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." **13** Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

We don't know how old David was at this time. Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian, said that David was ten years old. Others suggest he was about fifteen years old. It's safe to say he was in that range.

And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he!"—By all outward appearances David's seven brothers seemed to be better material for royalty. As unlikely as he was, David was the one God chose to be Israel's king.

- David was a shepherd, but there were a lot of shepherds.
- David was good-looking, but so were a lot of young men.
- David was young, but there were plenty of young men God could have chosen.

God described what made David special. . .

1 Samuel 13:14... "But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

God's choice of David shows that we don't have to quit our jobs and enter into full-time ministry to be people after God's own heart. We don't need to be famous or prominent to be people after God's own heart. We don't need to be respected or even liked by others to be people after God's own heart. We don't need status, influence, power, the respect or approval of men, or great responsibilities to be people after God's own heart.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers—"The public anointing was the outcome of what had taken place in private between David and God long before." (Redpath)

And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward— The oil on the head was a sign of an inward reality. The real anointing happened when the Holy Spirit came upon David.

This is the first mention of David's name in 1 Samuel. His name means "Beloved" or "Loved One." David will become one of the greatest men in the Bible. He's mentioned more than 1,000 times in the pages of Scripture—more than Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, more than Moses, and more than any mere man mentioned in the New Testament. Jesus wasn't known as the "Son of Abraham" or the Son of Moses," but as the *Son of David* (Matthew 9:27 and at least a dozen other places).

And Samuel arose and went to Ramah— Samuel did not begin a "*Let's Enthroned David*" political party and he did not begin to undermine Saul's throne, looking for a way to establish David as king. He waited on the Lord!