

Bible Study January 24, 2023

1 SAMUEL 16 (NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION)

Samuel Anoints David

1 The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”

2 But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.”

The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’

3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”

4 Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”

5 Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

The elders were afraid because they knew of the split between Samuel and Saul, and they did not want repercussions. Samuel performed the purification rite for Jesse and his sons to prepare them to come before God in worship and to offer a sacrifice.

6 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”

7 But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Saul was tall and handsome—an impressive-looking man. Samuel may have been trying to find someone who looked like Saul to be Israel’s next king, but God warned him against judging by appearance. When people judge by outward appearance, they may overlook quality individuals who lack the particular physical qualities society currently admires. But appearance doesn’t reveal what people are really like or what their true value is.

Fortunately, God judges by faith and character, not appearance. And because only God can see what’s on the inside, only he can accurately judge people. Most people spend hours each week maintaining their outward appearance; they should do even more to develop their inner character. While everyone can see your face, only you and God know what your heart really looks like. What steps are you taking to improve the attractiveness of your heart in God’s eyes?

⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.” ⁹ Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.” ¹⁰ Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.” ¹¹ So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

¹² So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

¹³ So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

David was anointed king, but it was done in secret; he was not publicly anointed until much later (2 Samuel 2:4; 5:3). Saul was still legally the king, but God was preparing David for his future responsibilities. The anointing oil poured over David's head stood for holiness. It was used to set people or objects apart for God's service. Each king and high priest of Israel was anointed with oil. This commissioned them as God's representatives to the nation. Although God rejected Saul's kingship by not allowing any of his descendants to sit on Israel's throne, Saul remained in his position until his death.

David in Saul's Service

¹⁴ Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.

What was this tormenting spirit the Lord sent? Perhaps Saul was deeply depressed. Or perhaps when the Holy Spirit left Saul, God allowed an evil spirit (or a demon) to torment him as judgment for his disobedience (this would demonstrate God's power over the spirit world; see 1 Kings 22:19-23). Either way, Saul was driven to madness and paranoia, which led him to attempt to murder David.

¹⁵ Saul's attendants said to him, “See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. ¹⁶ Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the lyre. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes on you, and you will feel better.”

Harp were popular musical instruments in Saul's day, and their music is still known for its soothing qualities. The simplest harps were merely two pieces of wood fastened at right angles

to each other. The strings were stretched across the wood to give the harp a triangular shape. Simple strings could be made of twisted grasses, but better strings were made of dried animal intestines. Harps could have ten to thirteen strings and were louder than the smaller four- or eight-stringed instruments called lyres. David, known for his shepherding skills and bravery, was also an accomplished harpist and musician who would eventually write many of the psalms found in the Bible.

17 So Saul said to his attendants, “Find someone who plays well and bring him to me.”

18 One of the servants answered, “I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the lyre. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the LORD is with him.”

19 Then Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, “Send me your son David, who is with the sheep.” 20 So Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them with his son David to Saul.

21 David came to Saul and entered his service. Saul liked him very much, and David became one of his armor-bearers. 22 Then Saul sent word to Jesse, saying, “Allow David to remain in my service, for I am pleased with him.”

When Saul asked David to be in his service, he obviously did not know that David had been secretly anointed king (16:12-13). Saul’s invitation presented an excellent opportunity for the young man and future king to gain firsthand information about leading an army and building a nation.

Sometimes our plans—even the ones we think God has approved—have to be put on hold indefinitely. And sometimes our plans get interrupted or don’t develop as quickly as we desire. Like David, we can use this waiting time profitably. We can choose to learn and grow in our present circumstances, whatever they may be.

23 Whenever the spirit from God came on Saul, David would take up his lyre and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.