

## ***Session 3 David Anointed in Bethlehem (1 Sam. 16:1-13)***

### **I. DAVID ANOINTED IN BETHLEHEM (1 SAM. 16:1-13)**

- A. We see the rejection of King Saul in chapter 15 and the anointing of David in chapter 16. The story of David's anointing is similar to Saul's anointing (9:16; 10:1). Both accounts report the anointing of a young man in private, initiated by the Lord's direct command. The high point of Samuel's ministry was anointing David as the second king of Israel.
- B. Saul's work for God had ended, but God's work would go on. This chapter is not so much about David as it is about God. We see God's personality in His choice of "weak ones" (1 Cor. 1:28).
- C. Samuel's declaration that God had rejected Saul was a private statement (1 Sam. 15:34-35). Saul continued to reign, but the leaders of Israel did not know that the Spirit had left him.
- D. God's rejection of Saul and choice of David was decisive, clear, and final, yet it took about 15 years for the story to unfold. His purposes come to pass, but not as fast as we would like. God usually works behind the scenes. His sovereignty was demonstrated in the context of their personal choices.

### **II. SAMUEL WENT TO BETHLEHEM TO ANOINT A NEW KING (1 SAM. 16:1-3)**

- A. The Lord told Samuel to go to Bethlehem to anoint a new king.

***<sup>1</sup>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."<sup>2</sup> Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'<sup>3</sup> "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." (1 Sam. 16:1-3)***

- B. God's zeal and desire for David: The Lord raised up David as king for His pleasure and purpose. Samuel taught David that he was anointed as a king "for God" (1 Sam. 13:14; 16:1, 3), or for God's pleasure. He repeatedly used specific language denoting His zeal, such as "sought for Himself" (13:14), "you shall anoint for Me" (16:3), and "I have provided Myself a king" (16:1).

***<sup>14</sup>"The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart." (1 Sam. 13:14)***

***<sup>1</sup>"For I have provided Myself a king among his sons." (1 Sam. 16:1)***

***<sup>3</sup>"You shall anoint for Me the one I name to you." (1 Sam. 16:3)***

- 1. David knew that he was chosen first for God, thus he responded by diligently seeking Him, longing to worship, love, and obey God and see His beauty (Ps. 27:4; cf. 18:1; 31:23; 36:8).  
***<sup>3</sup>But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly. (Ps. 4:3)***
- 2. David will rule "for the Lord" even into the millennial kingdom (Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; cf. Isa. 55:3-4; Jer. 30:9; Hos. 3:4-5; Amos 9:11-12; 1 Sam. 13:14?).

- C. **How long will you mourn for Saul?** 1 Samuel 15 ends with Samuel mourning for Saul, whom the Lord had rejected; 1 Samuel 16 begins with God telling Samuel to stop mourning. It was inappropriate, since the Lord had rejected Saul as king (15:28). Samuel must let go of his personal opinions and feelings and fulfill God's assignment by anointing a king after God's heart.
- D. **Jesse the Bethlehemite:** Samuel was sent to David's father, Jesse, who lived in Bethlehem, to anoint a new king from among his sons (16:1). David was born in Bethlehem, the youngest of the eight sons of his father, Jesse. First Chronicles 2 charts Jesse's genealogy: Boaz is his grandfather, and six more generations back is Perez, son of Judah and Tamar (1 Chr. 2:3-12; Ruth 4:17-22). Jesse had eight sons (16:10, 11) at the time of David's anointing: three of them joined Saul's army (17:13), and five were still at home, with David being the youngest (17:14). Jesse's genealogy in 1 Chronicles lists only seven sons. Apparently one son died young, after David's anointing.
- E. **Go to Bethlehem:** Bethlehem was an insignificant village about ten miles from Samuel's home in Ramah (1 Sam. 8:4; 15:34; 16:13). Bethlehem is about six miles southwest of Jerusalem. Samuel's yearly circuit, from Ramah to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah (7:16), did not include Bethlehem.
- F. **Saul will kill me:** Samuel knew that if he anointed a new king, Saul would see it as treason. Samuel risked his life to obey this prophetic word. The Lord told Samuel to take a heifer to sacrifice (Gen. 15:9; Deut. 21:3-4).
- <sup>2</sup>**Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'" (1 Sam. 16:2)**
- G. **I will show you what you shall do:** God usually directs us one step at a time. Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Daily bread speaks of God's daily provision and direction. Samuel seemed to ignore this directive—he saw Eliab and assumed he was the one God had chosen.
- <sup>3</sup>**"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." (1 Sam. 16:3)**
- H. **Invite Jesse to the sacrifice:** After the sacrifice Samuel hosted a private dinner. The elders of the town and Jesse and his sons were invited to the sacrifice and the meal that followed. Note that guests also joined the meal before Saul's anointing by Samuel (9:13, 22, 24).
- I. **Leadership lesson:** Leadership transitions can be difficult and dangerous times, even when they are in God's will. Samuel, David, and David's family were put at risk in doing God's will in Israel.
- J. The elders of the city trembled when Samuel arrived in Bethlehem (16:4-5). Their trembling reflected their respect for Samuel; they may have thought that he had come because the people of Bethlehem had acted sinfully. They assumed that if a prophet was visiting them, it must be negative, to address their failure. Many people carry a residual guilt in their hearts, so the very idea of receiving prophetic ministry unsettles them. The role of the elders in the anointing is not specified.
- <sup>4</sup>**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?"<sup>5</sup> 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. (1 Sam. 16:4-5)**

- K. The first emotion highlighted in this God-initiated plan is fear. Samuel was afraid of Saul, and the elders were afraid of Samuel. Samuel was the nation's most respected leader, so those in the king's court watched his actions closely. His visit to a village beyond his normal judicial circuit would be noticed and reported to King Saul. However, Samuel invited Jesse and his sons to a sacrifice, despite the potential hostility of Saul. Samuel never visited Saul's royal court again (1 Sam. 15:36).
- L. **Sanctify themselves:** Samuel told the elders to prepare themselves appropriately to approach God for the sacrifice—this included ritual washings, abstaining from anything unclean (Ex. 19:10; 1 Sam. 21:5), a temporarily abstaining from sexual relations, and avoiding contact with a dead body.

### III. THE LORD CORRECTED SAMUEL'S VIEW OF THE NEW KING (1 SAM. 16:6-11)

- A. Samuel went to Bethlehem, but without knowing all the details of God's will.  
***“So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, “Surely the LORD’S anointed is before Him.”<sup>7</sup> 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.”<sup>8</sup> Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.”<sup>9</sup> Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.”<sup>10</sup> Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen these.”<sup>11</sup> 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.” (1 Sam. 16:6-11)***
- B. **When they came:** It took many hours to skin, prepare, and cook the animal between the sacrifice and the feast. They spent the intervening time at the house of Jesse.
- C. **We will not sit down:** God did not allow the dinner to begin without David being present. It seems that the anointing of David took place while the preparations were being made for the feast.
- D. **There he is:** David was rejected by his family, who gave him the menial work of tending the sheep during the most significant event of their lives. He was close enough to be in sight and pointed out.
- E. **The LORD does not see as man sees:** Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the decisions and intentions of the heart. This is one of the most important statements in Scripture.
- F. **The LORD looks at the heart:** People measure themselves and others by *externals* (performance, gifting, achievement, money, and position, etc.) yet God measures by *internals* (the goals, intentions, decisions, and movements of the heart toward God).
  - 1. David's understanding of God's heart was formed by the truths of how God chose him, as revealed to Samuel by God. This knowledge dynamically affected David's view of himself.
  - 2. David saw himself as God's beloved (Ps. 60:5), as the apple of God's eye (Ps. 17:8), as one in whom God delighted (Ps. 18:19), and as one treated with gentleness by God (Ps. 18:35).

3. The Lord does not evaluate His people with accusation as others do. God's paradigm for evaluating life is different than man's—God defines His people by the intentions of their heart. He sees our heart motives (1 Cor. 4:5) and our inner qualities (Ps. 29:2).
  4. Sometimes we look at negative externals (our lack of gifting or opportunity or position) and wrongly conclude that we have no future in God's purpose.
- G. ***Do not look at his appearance:*** The Lord told Samuel not to look at *externals*—performance, skills, accomplishments, position, wealth, failures, etc. He chose an uneducated farm boy as His anointed.
- H. David found his primary identity (his sense of value and success) in who he was in his relationship with God. He measured his success in life by how much he grew in grace and to the degree which he walked in obedient love for God and meekness toward people.
- I. ***Leadership lesson:*** God chooses differently than man—He esteems unknown people in unknown places for His purposes. God often chooses those whom others reject.
- J. ***Leadership lesson:*** We must not choose people who have great gifts but lack a servant spirit or spiritual devotion to the Lord. Conversely, do not abandon your calling just because you have not yet had opportunity to walk in it.
- K. The tension increased as Jesse presented his seven sons to Samuel one by one and they were rejected. It never occurred to any of them that young David was good for anything other than menial farm work. Paul declared this principle teaching us that God chose what is weak in the world to shame the mighty that no one might boast in the presence of God (1 Cor. 1:27-29).
1. ***Eliab:*** Though tall in stature and handsome, Jesse's first born was rejected as the new king.
  2. ***Abinadab:*** Jesse's second son, with the name of Saul's son, was rejected (1 Samuel 31:2).
  3. ***Shammah:*** Jesse's third son was called Shimeah (2 Sam. 13:3) or Shimma (1 Chr. 2:13).
- L. The Lord had not chosen any of them. Samuel was a seasoned prophet, yet he made wrong assumptions about God's will in the most significant royal appointment in Israel's history.
- M. Jesse had seven sons plus David (17:12). However, in 1 Chronicles 2:13-15 Jesse's seven sons *include* David. Thus, one of Jesse's sons apparently died young, after David's anointing.
- <sup>13</sup>*Jesse begot Eliab his firstborn, Abinadab the second, Shimea the third,* <sup>14</sup>*Nethanel the fourth, Raddai the fifth,* <sup>15</sup>*Ozem the sixth, and David the seventh. (1 Chr. 2:13–15)*

#### IV. SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID AS THE NEW KING OF ISRAEL (1 SAM. 16:11-13)

- A. The Spirit of the Lord came upon David (16:13) as it had once rested on Saul (10:6, 10; 11:6). God worked in David's life inspiring his heart and strengthening his body to do courageous acts. The Hebrew word *ruach* means breath, wind, and Spirit—"it is the invisible hand of God that moves in the visible world"

***<sup>12</sup>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!” <sup>13</sup>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. (1 Sam. 16:12-13)***

- B. ***Ruddy***: David’s complexion and hair were reddish. Most Jewish boys had black hair and a dark complexion. In the East, men were generally dark-haired. The adjective *ruddy* is used of Esau (Gen. 25:25) and referred to the reddish hue of his hair.
- C. ***Samuel anointed him***: The Lord gave orders for Samuel to anoint David (16:12). The rite took place in the presence of his brothers, that is, privately, which explains why others were not aware of it. This resulted in potential danger to Samuel, David, and Jesse’s entire family, and probably created negative dynamics between David and his seven brothers. Oil symbolizes God’s presence.
1. David was chosen by God and anointed by the great prophet Samuel. David and Samuel are together only here and in 19:18. This was the first of three times that David was anointed.
  2. Anointing David publicly instead of at a private dinner would have forced his family into a hostile relationship with Saul. Even this private rite placed Jesse and his family in a difficult and dangerous position. Later on, David had to seek asylum for his parents (1 Sam. 22:3-4).
  3. David’s anointing was a prophetic indication that here was the man whom God, in His own way and time, would place upon Saul’s throne, without any scheming by David. His anointing strengthened his position—it became known from his boyhood that he had been marked out for a high office. Note that when David was being hunted, he did not appeal to this anointing.
  4. After this event, the political landscape of Israel would be changed forever.
- D. David’s name is mentioned for the first time (16:13). The meaning of *David* includes “beloved.”
- E. Some scholars suggest that when a leader anointed someone, they were *pledging themselves* to the anointed one. For example, when the elders of Judah (2 Sam. 2) or of Israel anointed David (2 Sam. 5:3), they were making a commitment to David. So when God chose someone to be anointed as king, God Himself was showing His commitment to that new king. This is what we see in 1 Samuel 16. Samuel anointing David at the Lord’s command spoke of David’s life and calling coming under God’s blessing. David’s rise as king was marked by God’s manifest favor and power.
- F. From this day forward, David became the central figure in Israel’s history. God had rejected Saul as the anointed; Saul’s decline ran parallel to David’s growth in kingly qualities.
- G. Did David or others really understand the meaning of his being anointed? Maybe not. They may have assumed that he was being selected for training in Samuel’s schools; we assume David was trained by Samuel in the law of God. Perhaps he spent a few years in the prophet’s company.

- H. David developed his history in God by understanding that God had *found him* in Bethlehem (Ps. 89:20); thus he had confidence that God would *find him* again in the future (2 Sam. 15). God *took* David from the sheepfolds and *brought* him to shepherd His people Israel (Ps. 78:70-71). David said to Zadok, “If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back” (2 Sam. 15:25-26).
- I. **Leadership lessons:** God knows where we are, and His timing is never late. He needs no help in locating “His Davids.” David did not work to gain Samuel’s favor or attention. Similarly, we do not have to strive to gain the attention of “the people in charge.”
1. Do not confuse offering your service with insisting on recognition or receiving a position of honor. Some people misunderstand this principle and wait to be asked to serve. Scripture teaches us to be diligent in serving, yet without insisting on receiving recognition or honor
  2. When we feel the need to measure how much people value or honor our work, it can easily result in complaining. When we know that God sees us, then we can serve with a free spirit.

**V. DAVID ACCEPTED IN THE ROYAL COURT (1 SAM. 16:14-23)**

- A. Note the parallel statements: the Spirit *rested on* David (16:13) and *departed from* Saul (16:14). This theme is stated four times (16:18; 18:12, 14, 28)—the Lord was with David. David delivered Saul from spiritual oppression and, later, Israel from the oppressive Philistine enemy, Goliath.
- <sup>14</sup>*The Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him.*  
<sup>15</sup>*And Saul’s servants said to him, “Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you.”* <sup>16</sup>*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.”* <sup>17</sup>*So Saul said to his servants, “Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring him to me.”* (1 Sam. 16:14-17)
- B. **The Spirit departed from Saul:** At the beginning of his reign, about 25 years earlier, the Spirit had come on Saul (10:6, 10; 11:6). Saul’s character gradually deteriorated. He went from being a national hero to despondent and melancholic, and then an angry, murderous tyrant.
- C. **A distressing spirit:** The Lord allowed Saul to be demonically oppressed as an expression of divine judgment on Saul’s stubborn rebellion. His servants rightly regarded this as punishment from God. This is the only time that the Old Testament describes a person as being tormented by an evil spirit.
1. God sent a *spirit of ill will* between Abimelech and the men of Shechem (Judg. 9:23) and put a *lying spirit* in the mouth of the false prophets during the reign of Ahab (1 Kgs. 22:19-22).
  2. Whenever the distressing spirit tormented Saul, David would play. At first, these fits of insanity probably came on Saul intermittently.
- D. **Seek out a skillful harpist:** Saul’s servants urged him to commission them to find a musician to play for him during his attacks. They rightly believed this would bring relief from Saul’s oppression. So Saul ordered them to search for someone who could play well. Anointed music was known to release the activity of the Spirit (1 Sam. 10:5; 2 Kgs. 3:15).

- E. One of Saul’s servants already knew of David’s skill in music (16:18). In other words, God opened doors to the royal court for David; he did not even have to try to push the door open.
- <sup>18</sup>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.”<sup>19</sup>Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, “Send me your son David, who is with the sheep.”<sup>20</sup>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. (1 Sam. 16:18-20)***
1. ***Skillful in playing:*** David was an accomplished musician. He was graciously anointed for Saul’s comfort. David became the sweet singer of Israel and established the worship order in the house of God (1 Chr. 23-26).
  2. ***Mighty man of valor:*** David was both brave and successful in facing danger. His exploits of killing the lion and the bear justified him being called a mighty, valiant man.
  3. ***Man of war:*** David may have fought marauding Philistines on occasion while tending sheep.
  4. ***Prudent in speech:*** David was skilled in speaking and, therefore, in building relationships.
  5. ***Handsome:*** As part of being handsome, David would have been in good physical condition.
  6. ***The LORD is with him:*** The presence of God was evident in David’s life. This was the most important blessing that David possessed.
- F. ***Send me your son David:*** Hearing of David’s outstanding abilities, Saul asked Jesse to send David to him. David impressed Saul, and the king requested him to stay permanently.
- G. ***Who is with the sheep:*** David took care of his father’s sheep. Even after he was anointed as king by Samuel, he occasionally left Saul’s royal court and returned to feed the sheep (17:15-19). Prominence and promotion did not cause him to despise humble service.
- H. ***Donkey loaded with bread:*** As a great man could not be approached without a present (1 Samuel 9:7; 10:4), Jesse sent a gift of produce from his farm—a donkey laden with bread, a skin of wine, and a young goat (16:20).
- I. ***David stood before him:*** Standing before the king (16:21) meant to enter into his service (Gen. 41:46). David became one of Saul’s armorbearers after being accepted into Saul’s court.
- <sup>21</sup>So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armorbearer.<sup>22</sup>Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, “Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight.”<sup>23</sup>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. (1 Sam. 16:21-23)***
1. Saul unwittingly invited his successor into his inner court. It was God’s purpose for David to spend a season at the court; therefore the Lord inclined Saul’s heart toward David.

2. Here we see the workings of God’s hand. The king’s heart is in the Lord’s hand, and He turns it according to His will (Prov. 21:1). David wrote of this truth when exhorting people to “commit their way to Lord” and to rest in the Lord, patiently trusting Him to bring His will to pass in their lives (Ps. 37:5-7).
- J. ***Saul loved David:*** Saul wanted to make David a member of his court. David found favor with Samuel (1 Sam. 13:13-14), with Jonathan (1 Sam. 23:17), with Saul (1 Sam. 24:21), with Abigail (1 Sam. 25:28-30), with Abner (2 Sam. 3:9-10, 18), and with all the tribes of Israel (2 Sam. 5:1-2)
- K. David being accepted into Saul’s court came *after* being anointed by Samuel (16:1-13) but *before* he killed Goliath (17:1-58). These two sections highlight David’s approval by the Lord (16:1-13) and by the earthly authority, King Saul (16:14-23). Both passages describe David as serving among the sheep—“there he is, keeping the sheep” (16:11) and “David, who is with the sheep” (16:19).
- L. From the description of David in 1 Samuel 16:18, it seems as if several years had passed since David was anointed in Bethlehem (16:13). Here, David was no longer a child, but a “mighty man.” Yet in 1 Samuel 17:33-36, David appears as a youth in his first battle. There is tension between chapters 16 and 17, when David came to Saul’s attention in connection with killing Goliath. Saul’s servant, knowing who David is, asked for Saul’s permission to seek out a *man* who is skillful on the harp. When Saul asked David whose son he is, he called him a *young man* (17:58). Youth and young man seem to be used interchangeably.
- M. After David defeated Goliath, Saul asked that David be with him always. Saul took him and would not let him go home.
- N. It is possible that David’s first visit to Saul was a short one, and that he returned home on call, waiting to be summoned by Saul. Maybe enough time had passed for Saul not to recognize him when he saw him under different circumstances on the battlefield (17:56).