

FIRST SAMUEL

Chapter 16

Samuel Anoints David

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? Saul will hear about it and 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.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 man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”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, “but he is tending the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”¹² So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; he 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 upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.

16:1 *The LORD said to Samuel.* Probably c. 1025 B.C. (see note on 15:1–35). (CSB)

I have rejected him. Luth: “Since God is a just judge, we must love and laud his justice and rejoice in God even when he miserably destroys the wicked in body and soul, for in all this his lofty and unspeakable justice shines forth. Thus even hell is no less full of good, the supreme good, than is heaven.... The Lord forbade Samuel ... to continue mourning for Saul.... It is as if he says: Does my will so displease you that you prefer the will of man to me?” (AE 42:156). Although Samuel wasn’t originally in favor of the monarchy, he grieved over what might have been, over the promise cut short by disobedience to God (15:22–23). Yet, God lifts him out of his depression by sending him on an errand. (TLSB)

Jesse. For Jesse’s genealogy see Ru 4:18–22; Mt 1:3–6. (CSB)

Bethlehem. A town five miles south of Jerusalem, formerly known as Ephrath (Ge 48:7). It was later to become renowned as the “town of David” (Lk 2:4) and the birthplace of Christ (Mic 5:2; Mt 2:1; Lk 2:4–7). (CSB)

I have chosen one of his sons to be king. See notes on 13:14; 15:28. (CSB)

16:2 *Saul will ... kill me.* The road from Ramah (where Samuel was, 15:34) to Bethlehem passed through Gibeah of Saul. Saul already knew that the Lord had chosen someone to replace him as king (see 15:28). Samuel fears that jealousy will incite Saul to violence. Later incidents (18:10–11; 19:10; 20:33) demonstrate that Samuel’s fears were well-founded. (CSB)

heifer. Used in peace offerings (Lv 3:1). A heifer is here, for that reason, a sacrificial offering. (TLSB)

say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’ This response is true but incomplete, and it was intended to deceive Saul. (CSB)

16:3 *anoint.* See note on 9:16. (CSB)

God takes initiative in anointing David as future king; 24:6 refers to the king as “the LORD’s anointed,” which becomes our word “Messiah.” (TLSB)

16:4 *Bethlehem.* Small town (Mi 5:2). (TLSB)

trembling. Because Samuel represents God’s awesome majesty. (TLSB)

peaceably. Prophet’s words could be words of judgment or words of mercy. (TLSB)

16:5 *Consecrate yourselves.* Involves preparing oneself spiritually as well as making oneself ceremonially clean by washing and putting on clean clothes (see Ex 19:10, 14; Lev 15; Nu 19:11–22). (CSB)

Jesse was probably not one of the elders, since the expression “son of Jesse,” as applied to David by his opponents (20:27–31), implied ridicule. This would mean Jesse was of no account in his community. (TLSB)

16:6–13 The selection of “God’s anointed” flows from His love, not from the external splendor of the one He chooses (Ps 78:70–72). The mystery of divine election is part of the mystery of God’s good and gracious will. God’s thoughts are not our thoughts (Is 55:8–9). (TLSB)

16:6–9 *Eliab ... Abinadab ... Shammah.* Three oldest sons will soon be part of Saul’s army.

16:6 *Eliab.* Jesse’s oldest son (17:13). (CSB)

Lit, “God is father.” God isn’t as impressed with Jesse’s firstborn son as is Samuel. Samuel doesn’t always accurately perceive God’s ways and intentions. (TLSB)

16:7 *his appearance or his height.* Samuel is not to focus on these outward features, which had characterized Saul (see 9:2; 10:23–24). (CSB)

heart. The Lord is concerned with man's inner disposition and character (see 1Ki 8:39; 1Ch 28:9; Lk 16:15; Jn 2:25; Ac 1:24). (CSB)

Cf v 12. David's external appearance isn't God's primary focus. God seeks someone who will not run after other gods. (TLSB)

16:8 *Abinadab.* Jesse's second son. (CSB)

16:9 *Shammah.* Jesse's third son. (CSB)

16:10 God did not choose one of Jesse's seven oldest sons. In the Bible, God often chooses a younger brother (Jacob rather than Esau, Ephraim rather than Manasseh; Gn 25:23; 48:17–19). (TLSB)

16:11 *he is tending the sheep.* The Lord's chosen one is a shepherd (see note on 9:3; see also 2Sa 7:7–8; Ps 78:71–72). (CSB)

sit down. Presumably to eat.

16:12 *ruddy.* Lit, "reddish." Implies a healthy-looking attractiveness. David's good looks were a bonus to his inner worth in God's eyes. (TLSB)

16:13 Anointing with oil here encompasses anointing with the Holy Spirit (Is 61:1). There is a new emphasis on the Spirit of the Lord abiding with God's chosen leader. (TLSB)

in the presence of his brothers. The small circle of witnesses to David's anointing assured its confidentiality, but also provided ample testimony for the future that David had been anointed by Samuel and that he was not merely a usurper of Saul's office. (CSB)

the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. See 10:5–6, 10; 11:6; Jdg (CSB)15:14.

The Spirit stays with David. (However, see note, Ps 51:11–12.) Elsewhere, the Spirit comes and goes (three times for Samson—Jgs 14:6, 19; 15:14—and twice for Saul—1Sm 10:10; 11:6). Before Samuel's time, the Lord's Spirit is mentioned infrequently, except for the time of the judges (Jgs 3:10; 6:34). The rush of the Spirit upon David ensures that whatever the future may hold, he is divinely equipped for the work God calls him to do. (TLSB)

16:1–13 Samuel's focus is directed away from Saul's ruined potential to what God will do through Jesse's youngest son, David, a man after God's own heart (13:14). Because God looks on our hearts (v 7), we stand condemned before Him (Jer 17:9–10a). Yet, He leads us to plead: "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Ps 51:10). By faith in the Gospel, our hearts are cleansed (Ac 15:9), and we are reassured that God will not despise a broken and contrite heart (Ps 51:17).

• Thank You, Lord, that You do not judge by appearances but have promised us that there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rm 8:1). Amen. (TLSB)

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. 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 harp. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes upon you, and you will feel better.” 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 harp. 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.” ²³ Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.

16:14–17:58 In the next two episodes, David is introduced to Saul’s court and to Israel as a gifted musician and warrior. With these two gifts he would become famous in Israel and would lead the nation to spiritual and political vigor (see 2Sa 22; 23:1–7). Also through these two gifts Saul would become dependent upon David. (CSB)

16:14–23 Episode could have occurred after defeat of Goliath, but it is placed here to contrast the departure of God’s Spirit from Saul with the conferring of His Spirit upon David. (TLSB)

16:14 *the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul.* Cf. Jdg 16:20. The removal of the Spirit from Saul and the giving of the Spirit to David (v. 13) determined the contrasting courses of their lives. (CSB)

Because of Saul’s disobedience to God (ch 15). Bas: “[The Holy Spirit] does not abide with those who, on account of the instability of their will, easily reject the grace which they have received. An instance of this is seen in Saul” (*NPNF* 2 8:38). See Chem, *LTh* 1:145. (TLSB)

evil spirit from the LORD. This statement and similar ones in Scripture indicate that evil spirits are subject to God’s control and operate only within divinely determined boundaries (see Jdg 9:23; 1Ki 22:19–23; Job 1:12; 2:6; compare 2Sa 24:1 with 1Ch 21:1). Saul’s disobedience continued to be punished by the assaults of an evil spirit (vv. 15–16, 23; 18:10; 19:9). (CSB)

Harmful, or evil spirits are subject to God’s control and operate only within divinely determined boundaries. What God permits, God is said to do. God still guides what Saul does. Chem: “God

permits, allows, suffers sin in the sense of deserting or leaving someone to it” (*LTh* 1:218). (TLSB)

tormented him. Saul’s increasing tendencies to despondency, jealousy and violence were no doubt occasioned by his knowledge of his rejection as king (see 13:13–14; 15:22–26; 18:9; 20:30–33; 22:16–18) and his awareness of David’s growing popularity, but an evil spirit was also involved in these psychological aberrations (see 18:10–12; 19:9–10). (CSB)

Saul’s dangerous moods are occasioned by knowledge that God has rejected him as king. His bad conscience robs him of any sense of God’s presence. (TLSB)

16:16 *you will feel better.* The soothing effect of certain types of music on a troubled spirit is a generally recognized phenomenon (see 2Ki 3:15). Beyond this natural effect of music, however, it would appear that in this instance the Spirit of the Lord was active in David’s music to suppress the evil spirit temporarily (see v. 23). (CSB)

People were aware of the effects of certain types of music on those with psychological problems. (TLSB)

16:17 *a man who can play well.* His music is of such quality that it has the necessary therapeutic effect. (TLSB)

16:18 *a man of valor.* See note, Jgs 6:12. David was not yet 20 years old. This raises questions of chronology (TLSB)

prudent in speech. Highly prized virtue in Israel. (TLSB)

the LORD is with him. David’s outstanding feature. A servant of Saul already recognizes this about him. (TLSB)

16:19 *Send me your son David.* Saul unknowingly invites to the court the person God chose to be his replacement. In this way David is brought into contact with Saul, and his introduction to Israel begins. (CSB)

Saul is oblivious to the irony that he is inviting his successor under his roof. (TLSB)

16:20 *bread.* David’s father gives a donation to the royal kitchen as an act of goodwill. (TLSB)

16:21 Samuel had warned his people that a king would take their best men into his service (8:16). (TLSB)

David became one of his armor-bearers. May refer to a later time after David’s victory over Goliath (see 18:2). (CSB)

Honorary title conferred on a member of the king’s entourage. (TLSB)

16:22 Though Jesse lost David’s services as shepherd, it was great compensation to have a son in the king’s court. (TLSB)

16:23 With God's Spirit absent from Saul, the evil, harmful spirit that came upon him had to be exorcised from time to time. God still shows Saul mercy by letting David provide relief from the spirit's torments. (TLSB)

16:14–23 David plays music to soothe Saul when an injurious (“evil”) spirit brings Saul emotional and mental instability. When you are overwhelmed by temptation or depression, pray to God: “Take not Your Holy Spirit from me” (Ps 51:11). Jesus, your Good Shepherd, gave His life for you. No one can snatch you out of His hand (Jn 10:28). • “Almighty God, merciful Father, since You have wakened from death the Shepherd of Your sheep, grant us Your Holy Spirit that when we hear the voice of our Shepherd we may know Him who calls us each by name and follow where He leads.” Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p 603) (TLSB)