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)

*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)

*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)

**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)

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

**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)

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

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

**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)

**16:13** *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.

*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** *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)

*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)

*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)

**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)

**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)

**16:21** *David became one of his armor-bearers.* May refer to a later time after David’s victory over Goliath (see 18:2). (CSB)