

David is Selected as the Next King of Israel

1 Samuel 16:6-23

1 Samuel 16:6-23 - *"So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him!"⁷ 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."⁸ So Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."¹⁰ Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."¹¹ 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."¹² 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!"¹³ 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.¹⁴ But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him.¹⁵ And Saul's servants said to him, "Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you."¹⁶ 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."

¹⁷ So Saul said to his servants, "Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring him to me."¹⁸ Then 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."¹⁹ Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me your son David, who is with the sheep."²⁰ 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.²¹ So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armorbearer.²² Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight."²³ 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."

Background Notes

In verses 1-5, Samuel was directed to go to Bethlehem and secretly anoint one of the sons of Jesse as the next king of Israel. *"Now the LORD said to Samuel, "... 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" (v1).* God was removing Saul as king over Israel because of his disobedience, pride, and rebellious attitude.

When Samuel arrived in Bethlehem, “...*the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, “Do you come peaceably?”* Why were they trembling? Samuel was a circuit-riding judge, and the elders of Bethlehem probably thought that Samuel had come to their city to pronounce and execute judgment in some matter. That’s why they asked Samuel, “*Do you come peaceably?”* Samuel assured them that he had come in peace. Samuel then invited them to come to a sacrifice to the Lord that he was about to offer. “*And he said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.”*”

Then he invited Jesse and his sons to come to the sacrifice. Remember, this was the “cover” (the creative concealment) that the Lord had told Samuel to use when he went to Bethlehem, so that the disobedient and rejected King Saul would not know that Samuel was anointing the next king of Israel.

Kings and high priests of Israel were anointed with oil in those days as a symbolic gesture, indicating that this person was set apart for God’s holy service. The oil, of course, was olive oil. David was anointed privately in 1 Samuel 16, and after King Saul’s death he was anointed publicly. He was anointed as king of Judea in 2 Samuel 2, and then over all of Israel in 2 Samuel 5.

Doctrinal Points

1. All human hearts are under the searching eye of God.

Ruth 4 tells us that Jesse was the grandson of Ruth and Boaz, and thus David was the great-grandson of Ruth and Boaz. Since the book of Ruth comes before 1 Samuel in the Bible, why didn’t Samuel know right away that he was to anoint David? Answer: Samuel didn’t have the book of Ruth when he went down to Bethlehem to anoint the next king of Israel! In fact, Samuel himself probably wrote the book of Ruth later, after this occasion.

So, when Samuel came to Bethlehem, all he knew was what had God told him -- that one of Jesse’s sons would be the next king. But Jesse had eight sons! Samuel didn’t know which son God had chosen. So, seven of Jesse’s sons came before Samuel, but David was not among them because he was out in the fields taking care of the sheep. At first Samuel was convinced that Eliab, Jesse’s oldest son, was the one he should anoint, because Eliab looked impressive. After all, Saul had been an impressive looking young man. But God said that Eliab was not the one. “*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.*” This verse has occasionally been pulled out of context and used by folks to justify wrong-doing: “Hey, God knows my heart, so I can do whatever I want, regardless of how the ‘outward appearance’ looks!” That is certainly not what this verse is saying.

The point of this verse, then and today, is that we tend to be way too impressed with people’s outward appearance and worldly credentials! Is he or she good looking? Smart? Athletic? Well-connected? How many degrees do they have after their names? How much money do they have? What connections do they have? But God is not impressed with these outward appearances! God looks at a person’s heart. Are they proud? Are they hypocritical? Are they rebellious?

Or, are they humble and open to God and His Word? In John 4:23, Jesus said, *“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.”* We need to look beyond outward appearances to the heart attitude of a person. God sees the heart of every person. All human hearts are under the searching eye of God.

2. All evil spirits are under the sovereign control of God.

In verses 14-23 we see that young David already had a relationship with King Saul, even before David fought Goliath. Because of David's music ability and skill with a harp, David became Saul's private musician. Saul really liked David and made young David his armor-bearer. *“So David came to Saul and stood before him and he loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer.”*

What about this evil spirit that terrorized Saul? Verses 14-16 say that it was from the Lord! *“But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him. And Saul's servants said to him, “Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you. 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.”*

Are these verses a problem for you? An evil spirit from the Lord – what does that mean? We have the same so-called problem in 1 Kings 22:23: *“Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.”* The prophet, Michaiah, was speaking to King Ahab about his false prophets, and telling Ahab that the Lord had put a deceiving spirit, a lying or deceiving spirit into the mouths of Ahab's false prophets.

This is really not a problem when we look at the overall teaching of Scripture. Evil spirits were at one time part of the holy angelic host of heaven. God created them, but they rebelled against God and fell along with Satan; now they are evil spirits. God didn't create them evil, and He is not the source of their evil. We learn from Matthew 25:41 that eventually all fallen angels, along with Satan, will be in hell. Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. But right now, Satan and the fallen angels, or evil spirits, are not yet consigned to hell.

However, don't get the idea that they have complete freedom at this time! All evil spirits are under the sovereign control of God. Because they're under God's control, they are only permitted to do what God allows. And while God is not the source of evil, He can use the evil of mankind or fallen angels to accomplish His purpose. That's what we see here in 1 Samuel 16, when it says that the evil spirit was “from the Lord.” Ephesians 1:11 says that God *“works all things after the counsel of His will.”* All evil spirits are under the sovereign control of God.

Practical Application

Listen to hymns in order to soothe your soul.

Most likely when David played his harp for Saul, he played some of the Psalms that he had written. As a result, Saul's soul was refreshed and the evil spirit departed from him.

Many times our souls are troubled, not necessarily from evil spirits, but from all kinds of pressures as we live our lives in this hectic, ungodly world. Did you ever try listening to good Christian music – music that contains Scripture and Scriptural truth -- to calm your troubled soul? Try it! It works! Many believers have found Christian music to be a great blessing. Listen to hymns to sooth your soul.