

THE STORY OF DAVID'S SECRET ANOINTING AS KING AND HIS SERVICE IN SAUL'S COURT: GOD JUDGES THE HEART, NOT THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON

1 SAMUEL 16:01–23

Introduction

Picture a king sitting upon his throne, ruling over a nation and people he had governed for years. But unknown to him, some distance away, a young boy is about to be secretly anointed to replace him, a young boy who was to become the future king of the nation. And not only is a secret anointing taking place, but this young boy would soon be serving in the royal court at the very feet of the king he would someday replace. And the king would be totally unaware that the young boy was the future anointed king.

What a picture of high drama! A suspenseful picture of the shift of power, the highest power of a nation being secretly transferred from a ruling king over to a young boy who was destined to become king.

This is the dramatic story unfolded in this present chapter of God's Holy Word. Because of disobedience, King Saul was destined to be removed as king of Israel by the hand of God's judgment. But the work of God among the Israelites and upon this earth was to go on. And to carry on the work of God, God had chosen a young boy who had a heart "after God's own heart" (13:14). This young boy was to become the future king of God's people. From the day of David's secret anointing to the end of Saul's life, David would be a threat to Saul's claim to the throne. And Saul would seek to kill David time and again. This drama is played out in the remaining chapters of this great book, 1 Samuel. This is: *The Story of David's Secret Anointing As King and His Service in Saul's Court: God Judges the Heart, Not the Appearance of a Person*, 1 Samuel 16:1-23.

- I. The mission of Samuel to arise and anoint a new king: conquering grief and sorrow (vv. 1-5).
- II. The secret anointing of David: being empowered by God's Spirit (vv. 6-13).
- III. The beginning of David's preparation to be king: a picture of God's sovereignty (vv. 14-23).

I. *1 Samuel 16:01–05 The Mission of Samuel to Arise and Anoint a New King*

There was the mission of Samuel to arise and anoint a new king. Remember that the LORD had rejected Saul and promised to raise up another king, "a man after God's own heart" (13:14), and a man who was "better than" Saul (15:28). This was a specific reference to David, and it was now time to anoint the young boy to become the future

king of Israel. As mentioned in the introduction above, this is high drama at its best, for Saul was still king and would continue ruling for many more years. But here the LORD commissions Samuel to secretly anoint a young boy who was to be the future king of the nation. From this point on, the story focuses upon the jealousy of Saul toward David and his many attempts to kill the future king of Israel. The present scene launches the suspenseful adventure of this high drama:

1. The LORD rebuked Samuel, for he had grieved over His rejection of Saul far too long. Because of Saul's disobedience, the LORD had rejected him as king and the kingdom was to be torn from him. It had been the sad duty of Samuel to inform Saul of his rejection by the LORD (15:22-23, 26, 28). Delivering the message of Saul's rejection had been a difficult mission for Samuel. From the beginning Samuel had held great hope for Saul, for Saul appeared to have all the attributes needed to be a very successful ruler. He was tall, handsome and had a charismatic personality. More importantly, when he first began to rule, he had both a humble, respectful spirit and a bold, courageous spirit (9:1-27; 10:1-27; 11:1-15). Moreover, Saul had been chosen to be king by the LORD Himself, and the LORD had transformed him, giving him a new and changed heart (9:15-17; 10:9-15). Saul had been just the kind of man people desired in a leader, and he had the additional qualification of having been chosen and equipped by the LORD Himself. Outwardly — from all appearances — no man had more to offer than Saul.

But Saul had failed and been condemned by God, rejected as king. Someday out in the future, Saul would be removed from the throne and another dynasty of kings would rule Israel. The dynasty of Saul's kingdom would never be established. This was a terrible tragedy for Saul and his household. And the tragedy of Saul's failure gripped the soul of Samuel: he became discouraged, depressed, downhearted and began to grieve over the situation. As Scripture says, for some long period of time he mourned. A sorrowful, grief-stricken spirit gripped his emotions. He mourned for Saul personally, because Saul had been so disobedient and so disappointing both to the LORD and to him personally. In addition, Saul was to lose his kingdom and dynasty.

But the day came when God was ready to begin preparation for the new king. It was time for Samuel to snap out of his grief and mourning over Saul, time for Samuel to arise and secretly anoint a new king. Thus, God confronted Samuel and strongly rebuked him. He had been mourning far too long. He must now arise and fill his horn with oil and go to Bethlehem to the household of Jesse, for God had chosen one of his sons to be the new king.

2. Note the response of Samuel: he protested because he feared that Saul would hear about the secret anointing and kill him (v. 2). This was a dangerous mission for Samuel, for Saul would interpret the anointing as a serious threat to his own claim to the throne.

3. The LORD's solution to this problem was for Samuel to go for the purpose of offering a sacrifice (v. 2). Traveling to Bethlehem to offer sacrifice would prevent the arousal of suspicion. As a levitical judge, it was the common practice of Samuel to travel from place to place for the purpose of holding court to deal with legal matters and to offer sacrifice to atone for unsolved murder cases (Deut 21:1-9). (Robert D. Bergen. *1, 2 Samuel*, p. 178).

In the present situation, the LORD instructed Samuel to invite Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice (v. 3). At some point during the sacrifice, the LORD would indicate which son was to be anointed as the secret king.

4. Samuel obeyed, did exactly what the LORD commanded (v. 4).
5. But note the fear of Bethlehem's officials (vv. 4-5). When Samuel arrived in Bethlehem, the officials feared that he had come to hold court and to execute some judgment. And they were apparently unaware of any criminal action that required his presence (7:15-16; Deut 21:1-9). But Samuel assured them that he had come only to offer sacrifice to the LORD (v. 5). He charged them to *sanctify* themselves and to come to the sacrifice with him. The word "sanctify" means to set one apart spiritually and ceremonially or ritually. A person sanctified or consecrated himself by taking a bath, putting on clean clothes, abstaining from sex, and avoiding contact with any dead body (Exo 19:10, 14; Lev 7:19-21; 15:2-33; Num 19:1-22; Deut 23:10-11). But more important than the outward rituals of cleansing oneself, a person was to seek the LORD for spiritual cleansing, confessing and repenting of his sins. The *outward* acts of sanctification or cleansing were merely symbols of *inner* cleansing. At some point Samuel visited Jesse in order to become acquainted with him and his family. And he invited Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice.

Thought 1. Samuel was wallowing around in grief, being gripped by a spirit of dejection, discouragement and depression. Looking at him, a person saw a man with a very sorrowful, grief-stricken countenance. A victorious, conquering spirit was absent.

But this was not the way God intended His servant to live. And it is not the way God intends us to live. Sorrowful experiences do arise in the lives of us all. But they are not to grip us. We are to conquer and overcome such experiences. No matter what confronts us, we are to be triumphant over the circumstance. God will help us conquer and overcome any tragedy or sorrowful experience. He will help us conquer and overcome...

- poverty
- financial difficulty
- loss of employment
- failure
- a sense of purposelessness
- the death of a loved one
- helplessness
- alcohol or drug addiction
- rejection and divorce
- emptiness
- sin and guilt

Conquering power — the power to overcome and triumph over the trials and temptations, problems and tragedies of this life — can be ours through the LORD. The LORD will empower us to live victorious lives, conquering all the sorrowful tragedies

that strike us. We are not to wallow around in grief and despair, displaying a sad countenance. We are to live victoriously, for we are more than conquerors through Christ who has loved us and given Himself for us.

Rom 8:35, 37-39 *Who shall separate us from the love [compassion] of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

1 Cor 10:13 *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

2 Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Heb 13:5-6 *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

1 John 5:4-5 *For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

Deut 33:27 *The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, 'Destroy him!'*

Psa 18:35 *You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me; you stoop down to make me great.*

Psa 28:7 *The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.*

Psa 40:17 *Yet I am poor and needy; may the LORD think of me. You are my help and my deliverer: O my God, do not delay.*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Isa 46:4 *Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.*

II. 1 Samuel 16:06–13 The Secret Anointing of David: Being Empowered by God's Spirit

There was the secret anointing of David and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon him. When the Spirit of God came upon David, it was a symbol that he was equipped and

empowered by God to become the future leader of Israel. Keep in mind that this was a secret anointing:

1. Note that Samuel's choice was not God's choice (vv. 6-7). When Jesse and his sons first arrived at the worship service, Samuel's attention was immediately drawn to the oldest son, Eliab. The young man was tall and attractive, with a charismatic personality (v. 7). Samuel thought that surely this was God's choice. But immediately the LORD rebuked Samuel. He was not to consider the young man's appearance nor height, for the LORD had not chosen Eliab to be king.
2. Note the basic qualification of God for service: it is not physical appearance but the heart that the LORD looks at. Man usually looks at the outward things, but the LORD looks at the heart of a person. The LORD judges a person by his heart and his heart alone.
3. Note who the father would choose to be the future king: he had each of his seven sons in descending order by age pass in front of Samuel (vv. 8-10). After the oldest son Eliab had been rejected, Jesse presented Abinadab to Samuel. But Abinadab was rejected. Then Jesse had Shammah pass before Samuel, but he too was rejected (v. 9). One by one in descending order, Jesse had his sons pass before Samuel. But in each case, Samuel pronounced the fateful words, each was rejected (v. 10). Had it been left to Samuel and Jesse, one of these seven would have been chosen to be the future king of Israel. But God knew the *hearts*, and the *heart* that He was after was not present.
4. Note the choice of the LORD: it was the youngest son, a son who was considered by his father not even to be eligible or qualified to be the future king (vv. 11-12). Samuel had been perplexed, puzzled by the LORD's rejection of Jesse's seven sons. He was bound to be mentally, silently questioning what was going on. Did Jesse have other sons? If so, why would he not have brought them? Finally, he asked Jesse if these seven were all the sons he had. Jesse replied that he did have a younger son who had been left behind to tend the sheep. Hearing this, Samuel immediately sent for David.

When David arrived, note the favourable impression he made upon Samuel, and keep in mind that he was just a young boy. He was "ruddy" which means that he had a healthy bronze complexion. And he was good looking with piercing, bright eyes. As soon as young David walked into Samuel's presence, the LORD immediately identified David as His choice to be king. But keep in mind why he was God's choice: not because of his striking physical features, but because of his heart. He was a young boy with a heart "after God's own heart" (13:14), and his heart was to make him a better man than Saul (15:28).

Psa 75:7 But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another.

5. Note the secret anointing of David (v. 13). And remember that this *secret* anointing was totally unknown to King Saul. David was anointed in the presence of his brothers and apparently no one else. While he was being anointed, the Spirit of the LORD came

upon him. Note what Scripture says: the Spirit of the LORD remained on him from that day forward. God's Spirit never left David. In the words of Robert D. Bergen:

The shapeless, invasive fluid [anointing oil] used in the ceremony served fittingly as a symbol of the mystical presence of God. As the oil worked its way into the individual's hair and pores, it symbolized the divine presence entering into the one being anointed. (Robert D. Bergen. *1, 2 Samuel*, p. 180).

Thought 1. The greatest gift in all the world is the gift of God's Spirit. When we approach God through Christ, God places His own Spirit in us, in the very core of our being. We become indwelt by God's Spirit. It is God's Spirit who convicts and saves and gives us assurance of salvation. He guides, teaches, protects and provides the necessities of life for us, meeting all our needs.

What more could a person ask? It is the Spirit of God who empowers us to conquer all the trials and temptations of life, who enables us to live a victorious and triumphant life day by day.

John 6:63 *"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."*

John 14:17 *"The Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."*

John 14:26 *"But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."*

John 15:26 *"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father — the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father — he will testify about me."*

John 16:13 *"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."*

Acts 1:8 *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Acts 13:2 *While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

Rom 8:11 *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

Rom 8:16-17 *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit, that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

1 Cor 2:12 *We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

1 Cor 3:16-20 *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."*

Gal 4:6 *Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."*

1 Pet 3:18 *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

1 John 2:27 *As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit just as it has taught you, remain in him.*

Isa 30:21 *Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."*

Ezk 36:27 *And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*

III. 1 Samuel 16:14–23 The Beginning of David's Preparation to Be King: A Picture of God's Sovereignty

There was the beginning of David's preparation to be king. What now happened is a clear picture of God's sovereignty and His guidance throughout David's life:

1. Note the removal of God's Spirit from Saul. Simply stated, the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul. But even more tragic than this, an evil spirit was sent by the LORD to torment Saul (v. 14). What does this mean? It certainly means that the Spirit of God was no longer present to guide, protect or provide for Saul as he walked daily throughout the remainder of his life. It certainly also means that the Spirit of God no longer empowered Saul to serve as king. But what does it mean when it says that the LORD sent a tormenting spirit upon him, a spirit that troubled and distressed him, that filled him with depression and fear? Various commentators have interpreted this to mean: (*The Nelson Study Bible*, NKJV, 16:14, 15).
 - => demon-possession sent upon Saul as a judgment because of his disobedience.
 - => some demonic attack or influence allowed by God because of Saul's disobedience.
 - => some evil messenger allowed by God to oppress Saul, an evil messenger such as the one sent to deceive Ahab (1 Kng 22:20-23).
 - => a deep sense of guilt, depression and fear — all kinds of emotional and psychological problems — aroused by God within Saul because of his disobedience.

Whatever the case, Saul had disobeyed God and was now reaping what he had sown. The hand of God's judgment had fallen upon him, and an evil spirit was creating a

sense of guilt, depression and fear within him. God's Spirit had left Saul to live the sinful, wicked and disobedient life Saul had chosen. Just as Scripture teaches, God had given Saul up to live just as Saul wanted, given him up to do his own thing (Rom 1:24). As a result, an evil spirit troubled and tormented Saul.

Noticing this radical change in Saul's behaviour, some of his attendants suggested that a harpist be found who could soothe Saul when he was stricken with an episode of depression and fear (vv. 15-16). Saul agreed and ordered for a musician to be found, one who played well.

2. Note the introduction of David's name to Saul (vv. 18-19). One of Saul's attendants immediately spoke up, sharing that he knew about a young boy who had the needed qualifications and abilities to serve in the court of the king. He was a son of Jesse from Bethlehem, a young boy who was brave, courageous and a potential warrior. The young man also had good judgment and was a fine looking young boy. And even more significant, the LORD was with him. Hearing this, Saul was very impressed and sent for David to be brought to him.
3. Note the beginning of David's service in Saul's court (vv. 20-23). Obviously, Jesse was excited about his youngest son's being called upon to serve in the court of the king. Remember, Jesse already knew that his son was eventually to become the king of Israel. Perhaps he thought that the LORD had moved upon Saul's heart to begin preparing David to assume the office of king upon Saul's death. Whatever the case, Jesse sent a gift to Saul along with his son David (v. 20). When David began serving Saul, the king was very impressed with him, so impressed that he made David one of his armour-bearers. And he requested that David's father Jesse allow his son to become a permanent member of his court. By keeping David close to him, Saul would be assured of David's availability to play the harp when he (Saul) was attacked with a tormenting episode of guilt, depression or fear. And note this is exactly what happened: when some spiritual or mental disturbance struck Saul, David played the harp for him. David was able to soothe, bring relief to King Saul. Saul would feel much better, and in the words of Scripture, the evil spirit would leave him.

Thought 1. In the sovereignty of God, God moved events in order to place David in the court of Saul. God worked all things out, moving the events so that the preparation of the future king could begin. By being in the court of Saul, David would learn how a king should rule a nation. He would learn exactly what a king should and should not do. He would be exposed to the nation's economic, military and justice systems and to the morality and character of its officials. God moved events so that David could learn how to fulfil his task upon this earth.

The lesson for us is clear: God is sovereign. He rules and reigns over the earth. He and He alone is God Almighty, the LORD of hosts who stands over every creature of this universe, both in heaven and in earth. It is He and He alone who is the Creator

and Sovereign LORD of the universe. And because of who He is, He has the power to move events in order to help us. When we need help, God has the power to help us. No matter what our need — no matter how small or how great — God will meet it. He is sovereign, looking after us every step of our lives, taking care of us if we will simply trust Him. God has the sovereign power to help us no matter what we may need.

Mat 6:13 *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen”*

Mat 19:26 *Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”*

Luke 1:37 *“For nothing is impossible with God.”*

Eph 3:20 *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

1 Tim 1:17 *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Heb 13:5-6 *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*

Jude 1:24-25 *To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy — to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forever more! Amen.*

Deut 4:39 *Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.*

1 Chr 29:12 *Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.*

2 Chr 20:6 *And said: “LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you.*

2 Chr 25:8 *Even if you go and fight courageously in battle, God will overthrow you before the enemy, for God has the power to help or to overthrow.*

Job 26:12 *By his power he churned up the sea; by his wisdom he cut Rahab to pieces.*

Job 42:2 *“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.”*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. ■*