

1 Samuel Chapter 16 Commentary

1Sa 16:1 ¶ "And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons. 2 And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD. 3 And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee."

God tells Samuel to stop mourning over Saul because God has rejected him. God tells Samuel to fill his horn with oil and go to Bethlehem, to Jesse's house **"and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee."** We notice: God says that the one he has chosen is to be anointed unto God, not Israel. Saul was chosen to serve Israel's desires. This man, chosen by God, is chosen by God to serve God, not Israel who has rejected God. A lesson for us: if we are called of God to fill a position in his church, we are called to serve God, not man.

Saul is reigning as a man without God's support or assistance, and the man is showing through, which is why Samuel asked God, **"How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me."** God gives Samuel specific instructions of how to go about and accomplish this mission he has been sent on. Samuel follows the specific instructions of God and prospers in the work assigned to him.

God has given us specific instructions, in the King James bible, of how we are to accomplish that which he has given us to do in this life. If we are consistent in following the **"thou shalts"** of the bible, God will consistently bless our efforts, and his word of truth will not return to him void. Remember, we serve a successful Saviour, who has never failed to accomplish that which God gave him to do. Jesus is our perfect example.

4 "And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably? 5 And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice."

The elders of Bethlehem tremble and desire to know if Samuel comes in peace. Israel now knows that Saul and Samuel have parted ways. If Samuel is here without a reasonable cause, and Saul finds out, they will be in trouble. As God has directed him, Samuel tells them he has come to sacrifice to God. He directs them to sanctify themselves and join him in sacrificing to God. Samuel also sanctifies Jesse and his sons and brings them with him.

We see that Samuel is still performing the office of Priest of God to Israel. The lesson for us is to obey God in all things, whereby we can set an example for God's people on earth. God will never require us to do something that he does not equip us to do, successfully.

6 ¶ "And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him. 7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

"Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature;" We are reminded of those things pointed out when Saul was anointed to be king, seen in: **1Sa 9:1-2; 1 ¶ "Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. 2 And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people."** God points out that as he had previously chosen Saul to be king, in accordance with the desires of Israel, using the fleshly attributes of stature and countenance. God declares that he chooses, by examination of the heart of a man, and seeks out a man after his own heart.

8 "Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. 9 Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. 10 Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not

chosen these. **11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. 12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah."**

Samuel thinks the oldest son is the one, because of his fleshly attributes, but God says no. Jesse brings the seven sons present before Samuel, but God says none of these. Samuel inquires if Jesse has any more sons, and Jesse tells him the youngest son is keeping the sheep. Samuel commands to bring him hither and God identifies him as the **"man after God's own heart"** and commands Samuel to anoint him. Samuel anoints David in front of Jesse and his brethren, and the spirit of God comes upon David from then until his death. His mission accomplished Samuel goes to Ramah.

We point out: **"and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward."** David is filled with the Holy Spirit **"all of his life,"** just as we are when we are born again. We often say that God did not dwell with men always in the Old Testament, because scripture tells us God would visit certain ones at different times in their lives. However, this does not preclude that God did not leave his Holy Spirit to dwell in that person. We are told in scripture that Noah **"walked with God"** seen in: **Ge 6:8-9; 8 ¶ "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. 9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God."** Later on, we are told of Noah in: **Ge 7:1 ¶ "And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."** This tells me that the Spirit of God dwelt with Noah as a Child of God.

I am quite certain, if you were to examine my own life as a Christian, there would be times that you would say that you saw no evidence that the Holy Spirit was dwelling with me, and you can say the same thing for yourselves. Likewise, I can testify there are times in my life when I am sure the God is speaking to me and directing my life, although I do not feel this all the time, which is exactly like God visiting the Old Testament saints at different times in their lives to give them certain directives in their lives.

However, there are some that we are told of plainly that God departed from them, such as Saul, who totally rejected God, seen in: **1Sa 16:14 ¶ "But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him."** If this verse was all we had to judge by, we would wonder about the eternal life of Saul, since God departed from him, and we are not told that God ever returned to Saul. However, the same thing can be true in our own lives if we totally reject God and live completely by our own will. God will allow us to go our own way, but he will certainly bring judicial wrath down upon us before we depart this life. If we are not letting the light of Christ shine through our lives, people are going to wonder about our eternal salvation also; especially, if they have no previous evidence that we are born again child of God to judge by. We shall have more to say on this in verse 14.

Certainly, we can learn a good lesson here in choosing church leaders. We should not choose them by their appearance, what they are capable of in nature, or how much money and influence they have in the world. Church leadership should always be filled by people who are like David, **"a man after God's own heart."** They should be men filled with the Holy Spirit as was specified when the office of deacon was created, seen in: **Ac 6:3 "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."** The whole heart's desire of all of God's people should be to serve God in faithfulness, and this should be especially exemplified in those who fill leadership positions.

We have often heard, and scripture testifies, God does not call the qualified, but qualifies the called. We shall see this carried out in David's life. He is in for a long training session on leadership before he actually takes the position of King over Israel. We shall learn that we grow in the Lord by observing the trials and tribulations in David's life.

14 ¶ "But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. 15 And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee."

We were told that the spirit of the Lord came upon Saul in: **1Sa 10:6 "And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man."** And that God gave him

a new heart in: **1Sa 10:9 ¶ "And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day."** God has given us evidence that he has made Saul a child of God by changing him into another man and giving him a new heart.

Now, God tells us: God has withdrawn his Spirit from Saul, and left Saul to his flesh nature. Saul would certainly be aware, I believe, that God has withdrawn from him, for he would no longer have peace in his heart, mind, and soul. God sending an evil spirit to afflict him is God's judicial wrath, the consequence of his sins of disobedience against God, and rejection of God here in time.

"and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him." We give here an example, from scripture, of how God sends an evil spirit to accomplish his purpose, seen in: **1Ki 22:19-22; 19 "And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. 20 And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. 21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. 22 And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so."** Just as God has power over Satan: God has power over all the evil spirits. In this text, Micaiah tells how God accomplished sending a lying spirit into the prophets of Ahab and Jehoshaphat. God has given permission to a lying spirit to influence Ahab to go to war, and thus fulfill God's prophesy of Ahab's end. Just as God loosed Satan to do his works of disasters in the life of Job, to bring Job to an understanding of his depravity, God has now given permission to the evil spirit to go and influence Saul. Why? This will accomplish God's purpose for David to be brought to the king's court and see how government is administered by the king. It is training for David's future occupation of the throne over Israel.

What a great warning, to the Christian, to be in full obedience to Christ. This is a reason that we fill our time and minds with godly things and not evil. We certainly do not want God to withdraw his presence from us and send an evil spirit to torture us here in time.

16 "Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. 17 And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. 18 Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him."

Why a cunning player on an harp? Remember, David is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. We are certain that this is the reason that David's cunning playing on the harp had an effectual work upon Saul. This would be effective, until the time that God will send David to survival school, in the caves and wilderness, fleeing for his life before Saul.

According to several commentators and medical research, proper music has a calming and captivating influence upon the minds of the disturbed and agitated. Hymn singing and soft music has a calming and uplifting influence upon those who are sad. Notice, we said proper music. All music is not soothing to the soul. Some music agitates and/or excites the body to pursue the natural influences of the flesh nature. Especially provocative and sensual music which leads to sexual immorality, and ungodly influences. This is especially true of music that has corrupt lyrics.

God is providentially working out the training of David to be king of Israel. God sends an evil spirit to trouble Saul and causes Saul's servants to recognize what is going on. They propose to Saul to find one who is cunning to play upon the harp, who can play when Saul is troubled and soothe his soul. Notice, God also provided one who knew of David, and his abilities, and moves this person to present David by his qualifications.

Did you notice the qualifications that are recognized in David? **"I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him."** The most important one is the last mentioned: **"the Lord is with him."** In choosing church leadership, this quality should be prominent in the person's life.

19 "Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep. 20 And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul. 21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer. 22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. 23 And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him."

Why would the king ask Jesse to send David to him, and ask permission from Jesse for David to stay with him? I think we can find the answer in: **1Sa 17:12 ¶ "Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehemjudah, whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons: and the man went among men for an old man in the days of Saul."** Jesse was a man of stature among the Israelites, and it is becoming for the king to acknowledge Jesse as a man of prominence.

Saul sends and asks Jesse to send David to him. Jesse complies and sends gifts with David, which is acknowledging that Saul is king. Jesse does this knowing that David has been anointed to be king over Israel. The Lord causes Saul to love David, and he makes him his armorbearer. This puts David in an excellent position to learn how the kingship works.

Saul requests Jesse to allow David to remain with him. When the evil spirit comes upon Saul, David plays upon his harp, and the evil spirit departs, and Saul is refreshed.

God has anointed David to be king over Israel. Now, God is qualifying David to be king in the stead of Saul. How is playing on the harp training David to be king? David realizes that God has departed from Saul. This is teaching David, what will happen to him, if he does not obey God.

Saul does not yet know that David is to be king in his place. This helps us to understand that God will work out things, in our lives as faithful Christians, to qualify us for our place in our service to the Lord.

We shall see a long, hard, struggle in David's life before he takes his place on the throne over all Israel. This is a reminder that Christian life is not about sitting in the rocking chair of grace, but rather, as we are told in scripture in: **Joh 16:33 "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."** The tribulations of life as a Christian are molding, and shaping, us into useful tools in the service of the Lord, and we shall see this manifested in David's life.

Wherefore, we can with Paul glory in tribulations as seen in: **Ro 5:3; 1 ¶ "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."** Tribulations are not pleasant to go through, but if we keep our focus on the eternal goal, they will be made easier to suffer through. We will also learn that God knows best, and remember that in every trial of our faith in Christ, we have been given strength to endure, as seen in: **1Co 10:13 "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."**

Remember, as we follow the life of David in scripture, God has put the Holy Spirit in David. The same thing is true for every born-again child of God. In the new birth, your new heart is filled with the Holy Spirit. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for choosing us to serve under thy lordship, and filling us with thy Holy Spirit presence, which makes us usable to bring glory and honor to your name.

Remember that as a child of God when you are born-again you are a new creation. Just as babies must grow into adults, children of God must grow in all spiritual things to be all that God would have us to be, seen in:

- **Eph 4:15; 12 "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly**

joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

- *1Pe 2:2; 1 ¶ "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, 2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: 3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. 4 ¶ To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."*
- *2Pe 3:18; 14 "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. 15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; 16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. 17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. 18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen."*

Each of these texts teach us: we should be filling our hearts and minds with those things that cause us to grow to spiritual maturity in Jesus Christ. We thank you, King Jesus, that you have taken us under your tutelage, just as you are tutoring David. We ask that you help us to remain faithful, and steadfast, in seeking to know more about you, your written word of truth, the bible, and what you would have us to do. We ask in the name of Jesus, Amen!