

MEET DAVID**INTRODUCTION**

David is mentioned name over 1,000 times in the Bible – more than Abraham, more than Moses, more than any other man. There are almost 60 references to his name in the New Testament. He is the very first man to be mentioned, ‘The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David’, Matt. 1.1 – and the last, ‘I am the root and the offspring of David’, Rev. 22.16. More is written about him than any other man – some 60 chapters are concerned with his life-story, apart from the 73 psalms which he is specifically said to have written.

David was a man of many parts. He was ‘the sweet (‘the beautiful’) psalmist of Israel’, 2 Sam. 23.1; an accomplished musician; ‘a prophet’, Acts 2.30; a great warrior; an accomplished actor – as witness his convincing performance before Achish, 1 Sam. 21.13-15; and he was by far Israel’s greatest king in Old Testament days – providing the benchmark for all who came after him, whether good or bad; from Solomon, 1 Kings 11.4, 6, 33, to Josiah, 2 Kings 22.2; 2 Chron. 34.2.¹ God is said later to do many things ‘for the sake of’ David His servant, 1 Kings 11.12-13, 32, 34; 15.4; 2 Kings 8.19; 19.34; 2 Chron. 21.7. Oh, and he wasn’t bad with a sling!

In many ways, it is a pity that the writer to the Hebrews felt constrained to drop the portcullis on his record of the lives of men of faith before he reached David; ‘What shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets’, Heb. 11.32. Although it is not that difficult us for us to trace, through the inspired record of David’s life, the many ways in which his faith was demonstrated, tested and refined – how it grew and developed, and, on occasions, failed.

One distinctive feature of David’s history was that it was marked by constant repetitions. The most striking cases are those of Jonathan’s two intercessions before Saul on David’s behalf, chapters 19 and 20 – of David’s two flights to Achish at Gath, chapters 21 and 27 – of the two separate occasions when Saul threw his spear at David, chapters 18 and 19 – of the double betrayal of David by the Ziphites, chapters 23 and 26 – and of two separate occasions when David spared Saul’s life, chapters 24 and 26.²

The section from 1 Sam. 16.1 to 2 Sam. 5.10³ covers the rise of David to kingship over a united Israel. (Although there is a case for making the break at the end of 1 Samuel. For, just as Joshua begins with ‘Now after the death of Moses’, and Judges begins with ‘Now after the death of Joshua,’ so also 2 Samuel begins with ‘Now ... after the death of Saul’, 1.1.⁴ That is, there is as sharp a break at 2 Sam. 1.1 as at Josh. 1.1 and Judg. 1.1.)

David was not, of course, the first human king in Israel – Saul was. But it is only with the anointing and rise of David that it can be said that God’s ‘intended’ monarchy was truly established in Israel. For, unlike the reign of Saul – which was a complex mixture, resulting from a combination of popular demand and divine choice – the reign of David was instituted by the sovereign choice of God alone. (On the question, ‘Did God originally intend Israel to have a human king?’, see Annex A.)

In effect, chapters 16-31 are as much the story of the decline and ultimate fall of Saul and Jonathan as they are the story of the rise of David – although the beginning of that decline and fall was made clear back in chapters 13-15. Chapters 16-31 mark the transition in Israel’s kingly rule, with Saul descending and David ascending. On many occasions the accounts of the lives of Saul and David intersect. At other times those accounts follow the careers of Saul and David separately.

The life of David represents a very significant stage in the unfolding of God’s programme of the ages – of His purpose and plan of redemption - forming an essential part of God’s preparation for the coming of David’s ‘Son’, the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵ For the Messiah came ‘of the seed of David’, Acts 13.23; Rom. 1.3; 2 Tim. 2.8; compare John 7.42. The Christ was to be ‘of the fruit of his loins’, Acts 2.30, and would be known, not only as ‘the Son of David’, but as ‘the Root and Offspring of David’, Rev. 22.16.

For a Chronology of David’s life see Annex B.

CHAPTER DIVISION

1 Sam. 16 tells how, following on from the rejection of Saul, the overruling providence of God brought the young – and relatively unknown – shepherd boy David to the court of Saul.

This, the middle chapter of 1 Samuel, marks a key stage in the transfer of power – both spiritual and political – from Saul to David.

The two halves of the chapter provide us with a series of contrasts:

David chosen to take a king's place, v.1	David chosen to enter a king's court, v.19
The Spirit of the Lord comes on David, v.13	The Spirit of the Lord departs from Saul, v.14
Oil is poured on David, v.13	An evil spirit comes on Saul, vv.14, 23
Samuel brings a sacrificial heifer to Bethlehem, vv.1-5	Jesse sends a laden ass to Saul, v.20
David: favour with God; 'this is he', v.12	David: favour with Saul; 'let David ... stand before me', v.22
David the young shepherd, v.11	David the skilled musician, vv.18-23
The section opens with Samuel mourning, v.1	The section closes with Saul refreshed, v.23

The main division of the chapter comes at the end of verse 13. Note the verbal indicators : (i) the 'horn with/of oil' at verses 1 and 13, and (ii) the phrase 'the Spirit/spirit . . . departed from', both as the opening words of v.14 and the closing words of v.23.

The first half of the chapter ends with a statement concerning David's receiving the Spirit of the Lord, having described David's anointing as ruler of Israel to replace Saul. The second half of the chapter begins with a statement concerning Saul's forfeiting the Spirit of the Lord, and describes both the coming of 'an evil spirit' on Saul and the coming of David to the court of Saul.

For our study, we will further divide the opening section into two parts.

Verses 1-5. An heifer sacrificed. 'The Lord said," ... I will *send* thee"', v.16.
Verses 6-13. A shepherd-boy anointed. 'And Samuel said ... "*Send* and fetch him"', v.11.
Verses 14-23. A king troubled. 'Wherefore Saul ... said, "*Send* me David"', v. 19.

EXPOSITION

Verses 1-5 An heifer sacrificed.

Verse 1. *'How long wilt thou mourn for Saul'*. This throws us back to the end of chapter 15: 'Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: *nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul*: and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel', 15.35. We need to note also that when 'the word of the Lord (came) unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments', that 'it grieved Samuel ('Samuel was angry', lit.⁶); and he cried unto the Lord all night', 15.11. Samuel 'mourned' for Saul as if he was dead.⁷ In the event, Samuel (as an old man of about 90 years of age⁸) predeceased Saul by some time. It is more than likely that Saul shared in the national mourning for Samuel at that time; 'And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him', 25.1; 'Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah', 28.3. But, whether or not Saul mourned for Samuel, Samuel certainly mourned for Saul!

No doubt Samuel mourned over Saul's loss of his dynasty, 13.14, and, more especially, of his own kingship, 15.23,28 – which Samuel had been instrumental in bestowing on him. But I suspect that Samuel's mourning went beyond personal grief for Saul as an individual and extended to his anxiety for the future welfare of the people⁹. It is not impossible that he feared that, as a result of Saul's sin and rejection, Israel would rapidly self-destruct and return to the conditions which had prevailed when 'there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes', Judg. 17.6; 21.25. Samuel may well have been distressed over the future prospects for God's people. Would Israel's enemies ravage her? Would civil strife break out? What of us? Do we ever sorrow over low spiritual conditions around? Do we 'mourn' before God – or do we moan before men?

'Ah, but', God said in effect, 'though there may be a time to mourn, there is also a time to move on'. For the Lord will never allow His work to cease with the death or failure of a man. If it is God's work, it is bigger than any man. 'I have provided me a king' – the Lord is never without resources. The true and eternal King never loses control of His kingdom. If Israel's first king has proved a failure, Israel's God has another and a better man in the wings, to be trained to take over the reins of the kingdom of Israel. We too must learn that failures in spiritual leaders do not overthrow God's purpose – although they may well tarnish His glory in the eyes of men and cause great grief to His people.

We remember what God told Moses at the shores of the Red Sea: 'Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward', Exod.14.15. And it was now time for Samuel to go forward.

God reminds Samuel of what he knew well, 'I have rejected him from reigning over Israel'. It had been Samuel who had declared to Saul, 'Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king ... I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel', 15.23, 26.¹⁰

It would, of course, be many years – probably around 20 after chapter 15 – before Saul was actually removed and David installed as king. But there are occasions in scripture when a person or an institution is rejected by God privately well before this becomes apparent publicly. For example, although the temple, as God's house, was abandoned by Him before the crucifixion of Christ – 'Behold, your house is left unto you desolate', Matt.23.38 – the fabric stood for another 40 years.

'I have provided me a king among his sons'. Literally, 'I have *seen* among his sons a king for myself'. But, just as the AV interprets it, the word 'see' can carry the sense of 'provide' – as it does in Genesis 22, 'Abraham said, My son, God will *provide* himself a lamb for a burnt offering'¹¹ ... And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be *seen'*, Gen. 22.8, 14.¹²

'I have provided'. Several other terms are used to describe God's selection of David as king. Samuel told Saul bluntly, 'thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath *sought* him a man after his own heart, and Lord hath *commanded* him to be captain¹³ over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee', 13.14. 'I have *found* David my servant', God said, 'with my holy oil have I *anointed* him', Psa. 89.20.¹⁴ David was the king sought and found, the king commanded, anointed and provided by God. God's selection of David comes out clearly in Psa. 78, 'He *chose* David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds', Psa. 78.70.

In one sense, of course, Saul also was God's choice: 'Samuel said to all the people, See ye *him whom the Lord hath chosen*, that there is none like him among all the people?', 1 Sam. 10.24. But Saul's divine election was very different to that of David. In reality Saul was the people's choice; 'ye shall cry out in that day because of *your king which ye shall have chosen you*; and the Lord will not hear you in that day', 8.18; 'Now therefore behold *the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired!*', 12.13.

The fact of the matter was that the people chose the kind of king they wanted, 'Make us a king to judge us like all the nations ... we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles', 8.5, 19-20. The kind of king was their choice. God, fitting in with the people's wishes, simply 'chose' the actual individual who met their specifications.

The contrasting expressions, 'make them a king', 8.22, and 'I have provided (seen) ... for myself a king', say it all. In truth, therefore, David was the king of *God's* own providing – by implication, in contrast to Saul, who was really the king of *the people's* own providing.

'*Jesse the Bethlehemite*'. Presumably the family dwelt in the ancestral property to which Boaz, the mighty man of wealth, long before had brought Jesse's Moabite grandmother, Ruth 4.17. Bethlehem did not have much going for it. It was a small and obscure town, as noted by the prophet Micah; 'Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah'. Also, it is likely that Bethlehem did not enjoy a particularly good reputation in Israel; see Judg. 17.7-9; 19.1-2, 18. But both Bethlehem – and Jesse – would from now on be associated with the name 'David', and, more particularly and importantly, with David's 'Son', the Messiah Himself: 'There shall come forth a rod *out of the stem of Jesse*, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots ... in that day there shall be a *root of Jesse*, which shall stand for an ensign of the people', Isa. 11.1,10; 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah ... out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting', Mic. 5.2. See Matt. 1.1, 5-6, 16-17; 2.4-6.

Verse 2. Samuel protested, 'How can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me'. Samuel had not previously shown himself to be a particularly timid or squeamish individual – to say the least, 'Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord', 15.33 – but there was no telling with Saul. He had been ready to put his own son to death on one occasion, 14.44. Like Herod many centuries later, Saul wasn't likely to flinch at killing off any potential rival for his kingship – and Samuel knew that he was expecting one, 15.28 – or, as the massacre of the priests of Nob proved, killing off anyone who he thought might be supporting his rival – and who was, in his book, guilty of treason.

'*The Lord said, take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord*'. Through Samuel, God does not inform the elders of Bethlehem of *all* that He is about to do. God often has more in mind than He reveals up-front.

But was God telling Samuel to lie? No. What Samuel was told to say was strictly true. For Samuel did offer a sacrifice to the Lord, and, indeed, the anointing of David appears to have been performed in the context of the sacrifice to which Jesse and his sons were called; 'he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice. And it came to pass, when they were come, that ... ', vv.5-6.¹⁵

Samuel was under no compulsion to broadcast the principal purpose of his coming. Had he done so, it would doubtless have led to 'bad' consequences and not to 'good' – and was hardly calculated to do anything for his life-expectancy – or for that of Jesse and his sons. We should note carefully that, in this case, it was *a good action* (the anointing of God's chosen king) which was being concealed – and that for *a good purpose* (to avoid unnecessary and gratuitous danger).

None of us should tell a lie – in every case we should say nothing but what is true. But it is clear from this passage that there are occasions when we are not obliged to tell the *whole* truth – indeed when the Lord would not want us to.¹⁶

Verse 3. The real reason for Samuel's visit!

Verse 4. '*Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Bethlehem*'. In spite of his misgivings and initial objection, Samuel obeyed and went. He was a man who practiced what he preached; 'Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in *obeying the voice of the Lord*? Behold, *to obey* is better ... ', 15.22.

'*The elders of the town trembled at his coming*'. I can understand the colour draining from the faces of the elders of Bethlehem at the unexpected arrival of Samuel – presumably at the city gates. It had probably not been that long since he had 'hewed' Agag¹⁷ into pieces. I guess the word would have spread around fast that Samuel was not a man to mess with. 'Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places', 7.15-16. But why would he now come out of his way to such an insignificant place as Bethlehem? It is possible that Samuel was in the habit of dropping in unannounced to reprove sins, correct abuses and punish offenders. Had he then got wind of some injustice or other wickedness going on in their own community? Had he come on a disciplinary visit? Even as an executioner? 'Do you come in peace?', they¹⁸ not unreasonably enquire.¹⁹

Verse 5. '*Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord*'. Whew - with a great sigh of relief, the elders learnt from Samuel that he had come to offer a sacrifice, and that they were invited to the sacrificial meal. For more than one reason, an heifer had never looked so good.

'*Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice*'. Note the double reference to 'sanctification'. One cannot appear before God and eat in His presence without preparation. The Old Testament makes constant reference to the need for sanctification before experiencing

God and His presence. Remember what Jacob 'said unto his household, and to all that were with him, *Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments*: And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God', Gen. 35.2-3. And what the Lord 'said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and *sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes*, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai ... let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, *sanctify themselves*, lest the Lord break forth upon them', Exod. 19.10-11, 22; cf. Num. 11.18. And what Joshua told the people when they came to the Jordan, 'Joshua said unto the people, *Sanctify yourselves*: for to morrow the Lord will do wonders among you', Josh. 3.5; cf. Josh. 7.13.²⁰ Again, the word of Joel, in the light of the invasion that drew so near, 'Blow the trumpet in Zion ... call a solemn assembly ... gather the people, *sanctify the congregation*, assemble the elders', Joel 2.15-16.²¹ Yet we so casually breeze into God's presence – with no great sense of reverence and awe – 'as though it were entirely natural for humans to meet God. No big deal, it seems, to encounter the Lord of the universe'.²² It seems that Samuel undertook the purification of Jesse's family himself, and so created an opportunity for a private session with them.

Verses 6-13 A shepherd-boy anointed. (The big surprise!)

Verse 6. *'He looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him'*. Having previously hesitated to go to Bethlehem at all, v.2, when Samuel arrived there he was inclined to be a trifle over-hasty. Before too slow; now too fast.

The choice of Saul some years before had been an easy matter for Samuel. God had told him in advance ('in his ear', 9.15) that the king-to-be would be turning up the next day. And when the man did arrive, the Lord immediately said to Samuel, 'behold the man whom I spoke to thee of! This same shall reign over my people', 9.17. There was no room for doubt there. Now, in the case of securing a replacement for Saul, Samuel knows where he lives and whose son he is – but he isn't told *which* of Jesse's eight sons.²³

Samuel has his own criteria for selecting the new king – his age and his size! In considering the 'height of Eliab's 'stature', v.7, Samuel was likely influenced by God's choice of Saul in chapter 10; '... he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that *there is none like him among all the people*', 10.23-24 (c.f. 9.2) – possibly reinforced in his view by the standard criterion for kings of that day.²⁴ One would in any case expect *the first-born* to be *the first choice*! As first-born he would receive a double portion of his father's goods and it was to him that the headship of the family passed when the father died. Here surely was a man worthy to succeed the towering son of Kish. Samuel clearly thought, 'This man sure looks every part a king' – and began to finger his horn of oil! The reader is left in no doubt what would have happened if Samuel had been left to make the choice himself.

Verse 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'*. Of Eliab, God told Samuel, 'I have rejected him', v.7, just He had earlier told him about Saul, 'I have rejected him', v.1. The reference to 'the height of his stature' is clearly intended to take us back to the description given of Saul, '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', 9.2; 10.23-24. Eliab was created in Saul's image, after his likeness. But God was no more impressed by the stature of Eliab that He was with the stature of Saul! He had no interest in replacing 'Saul Mark 1' with a later model, 'Saul Mark 2'!

'On the outward appearance'. God assesses people not on the basis of their appearance but on the condition of their hearts – not on their height or according to one's 'eyes' lit.²⁵ – but their inward worth.²⁶ The Lord's apostles were hardly the sort of men we would have chosen for their position either!

Verses 8-9. Jesse introduced Abinadab and Shammah for Samuel's inspection, but in each case the verdict was the same: 'the Lord has not chosen this one'.

Verse 10. Samuel knew, and informed Jesse, that God had not chosen any of Jesse's sons then present. Evidently the Lord saw that not one of Jesse's seven sons present had the kind of 'heart' which He required. And we don't read of any of them ever playing any leading or honourable part in the subsequent history. It was David's three nephews and not his brothers who proved themselves to be great warriors and, in two cases at least (Joab and Abishai), were given places of authority over his followers. And later again, it was David's 'sons' and not his brothers who 'were chief about the king', 1 Chron. 18.17.

The Lord is about to point out 'a man after his own heart', 13.14 – not meaning 'a sinless heart' (as later events conclusively prove) – but a submissive heart – in marked contrast to Saul. Note the later reference to 'the integrity' of David's 'heart', Psa. 78.72, and to Paul's expanded description, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil (do) all my will', Acts 13.22 – something Saul had singularly failed to do! In both 13.8-10 and 15.7-8, to some extent Saul did God's will, but he did not do 'all' of it – for on both occasions his obedience was incomplete – see 13.11-13 (with 'till I come', 10.8) and 15.11-24. Unlike Saul – and Eliab and his other brothers – David had a heart which beat in rhythm with the heart of God, and the whole tenor and direction of David's life would be to seek and to do God's will.

'And Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these'. This statement suggests that the repeated words 'Neither hath the Lord chosen this', vv.8, 9, may have also been the words of Samuel to Jesse rather than the words of the Lord to Samuel. Samuel was able to conclude that the Lord had not chosen them because the Lord had told him in advance that He would indicate to him which of Jesse's sons it was that He had provided; 'I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint him whom I name unto thee', v.3. Samuel was used to the

procedure. This was how it had been with Saul; compare 'behold the man whom I spoke to thee of! This same shall reign over my people', 9.17.

But who, outside of Samuel himself, understood the full significance of what was happening that day – including David's actual anointing by Samuel (which took place 'in the midst of his brethren', v.13²⁷)?

(a) *Did Jesse?* Samuel's explicit statement to Jesse, 'the Lord hath not chosen these' indicates that Jesse knew that something was going on over and above the actual sacrifice and ceremonial meal. The statement *suggests* that Samuel had made known the true purpose of his coming to Jesse, and that Jesse at least knew what was afoot.

(b) *Did Eliab and the other six brothers?* Eliab's later reaction to David's arrival at the battlefield *suggests* that he wasn't in on the secret; 'Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle', 17.28. These are hardly the words of someone who knows, on the authority of Samuel, that he is addressing Israel's future king!

(c) *Did David?* Did David himself understand the significance of Samuel's action when he anointed him? Certainly there is no record of any solemn words of appointment such as Samuel had once expressed to Saul; 'Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because *the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?*', 1 Sam. 10.1. On the other hand, we have no record of David being later told – by Samuel or the Lord Himself – that the anointing at Bethlehem had in fact been for kingship, and yet David betrayed no evidence of shock or surprise when Jonathan, Saul and Abigail later expressed the confidence that he would one day be king.²⁸

We are explicitly told that nobody other than Samuel and Saul had been present when Saul had been anointed with oil, 9.27-10.1. So it is *just possible* that the significance of David's anointing by Samuel wouldn't have struck any of his family. But it is by no means unlikely that the details of Saul's anointing had become public knowledge after his formal acceptance as king by the people, 10.24. In which case, the significance of David's similar anointing could hardly have escaped those who witnessed it.

It is *just possible* that everyone apart from Samuel concluded that the Lord had simply chosen who it was should have the honour of sitting next to Samuel at the sacrificial meal. Or that Samuel had simply informed Jesse that one of his family was to be marked out as chosen by the Lord, but without specifying for what purpose or particular work. Might Samuel have deemed it safer for David that neither he nor anyone else grasped the significance of his anointing? (Remember Samuel's own anxiety in v.2.)

If Samuel had kept secret the true meaning of David's anointing, the family might have even have jumped to the conclusion (always a dangerous thing!) that David's anointing had something to do with consecration to the company of prophets over whom Samuel presided, 10.10; 19.20.

In the end, I don't know who understood what. As far as I am aware, the Spirit of God has remained silent on the matter. Personally I suspect that at least Jesse and David were in on the secret – but I cannot pretend to be sure.

Verse 11. 'And Samuel said unto Jesse, *Are here all thy children?*' Samuel had a problem. He knew that 'the Lord hath not chosen' any of Jesse's sons then present, vv.8-10. Given the Lord's specific revelation in v.1, 'I have provided me a king *among his sons*', there was only one explanation. And so Samuel asks the inevitable question, 'Are all the young men²⁹ here?' – literally translated.

'*There remaineth yet the youngest*'. It seems that Jesse had seen no point in inviting his youngest³⁰ son to the sacrifice.³¹ David was probably about 15 years old at the time – old enough to be entrusted by his father to keep the sheep alone, but still the youngest of the eight sons of 'old' Jesse, 17.12. (David was only 30 years of age when he began to reign.³²) As it happened, God's choice of the youngest was altogether in keeping with His choice on many other occasions; for example, He had respect to Abel not Cain; to Jacob not Esau, to Joseph above all his older brothers, to Ephraim above Manasseh, to Moses above Aaron; and to Gideon, who was the youngest in his father's house.

This is the first historical reference to David in the Bible, and Jesse's comment about him is wonderfully fitting for David's character and future role – 'He keepeth ('tends', 'shepherds') the sheep'.

When we first met Saul, he was searching for his father's asses (9.2-3 – and he failed to find them!); when we first meet David, he is tending his father's sheep (and was always faithful to his charge; c.f. 17.20 – risking, if need be, his own life for that of a single lamb from his father's flock, 17.34-35).³³

God had clearly over-ruled David's preparation for his later leadership role over Israel – as He once had over-ruled Moses' preparation for a similar role, Exod. 2.15-3.1. Both the people of Israel and Nathan the prophet noted the connection: 'All the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, The Lord said to thee, Thou shalt feed ('shepherd' – same word as 1 Sam. 16.11) my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain³⁴ over Israel', 2 Sam 5.1-2; 'So shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler³⁵ over my people, over Israel', 7.8.³⁶ One of the later psalmists stated it poetically: 'He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed ('shepherd') Jacob his people, and Israel His inheritance. So he fed ('shepherded') them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands', Psa. 78. 70-72.³⁷

In the Jewish canon the two books of Samuel are one.³⁸ Interestingly, the last story in this joint-book demonstrates that David had his shepherd heart right to the end: 'David spake unto the Lord when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but *these sheep*, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house', 2 Sam. 24.17.

Keeping the sheep meant that David had time to think – and to sing. Whereas the shepherds at Bethlehem, 'the city of David', would – a thousand years later – hear a heavenly host praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest', Luke 2.13, David heard no angelic chant – it was only his own song, to the accompaniment of his own

harp, which broke the stillness of the night air in one of the fields there. Perhaps here he composed and sang words not dissimilar to those sung by the angels, 'Give unto the Lord glory ... give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name', Psa. 29.1-2.

While looking *after* his father's sheep, David could look *at* his God's creation. During such times, no doubt, God formed and developed in David both an appreciation of His workmanship and a heart that could express such sentiments as, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork' ... When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? ... The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters ... thy rod and thy staff they comfort me', Psa. 8.3-4; 19.1; 23.1-2,4.

It seems that David's talent on the harp became known through the neighbourhood. And so it was that, when Saul's officials suggested that the king use music as the well-known remedy for mental troubles, such as those from which the king suffered on account of the 'evil spirit', a 'young man' in attendance, probably a native of the area around Bethlehem, was able from personal knowledge to recommend David as one 'cunning in playing', v.16.

'Send and fetch him', Samuel ordered – and made it clear that nobody would be enjoying even one mouthful of the sacrificial meal until Jesse's youngest arrived! The rule was simple – 'No shepherd-lad, no food'.

Verse 12. *'And he sent, and brought him in'*. The day had begun as every other day for young David. It was another day for keeping sheep. No bright light broke from heaven other than the sun rising over the distant purple hills of Moab. But then ... a breathless messenger suddenly raced onto the quiet pastoral scene with news of Samuel's arrival and of the prophet's refusal to eat the sacrificial meal until he – David – had first joined the assembled guests.

When David was brought in, the Lord informed Samuel, 'This is he' – much as, on an earlier occasion, he had informed him concerning Saul, 'Behold, the man of whom I spake to thee', 9.17.

But why David?³⁹ Yes, David may have been a shepherd, but after all there were a lot of shepherds – and many no doubt around Bethlehem. Yes, David may have been young, but there were plenty of young men around. Yes, David may have been good-looking and of a healthily ruddy complexion,⁴⁰ but so no doubt were a lot of other young men. Why then this particular good-looking young shepherd? The Lord had already spelt out to Samuel what distinguished David from the others and made him special to God – 'The Lord hath sought him a man *after his own heart*', 13.14.

Verse 13. *'Then Samuel took the horn of oil'*. Now at last the prophet could empty his horn of oil.

'Anointed him'. Remember that there had been three stages in *Saul's* appointment as king : (a) *Saul's private anointing* by God through His prophet, 10.1; (b) the *public identification* of Saul through the casting of lots, 10.17-24, and (c) the *formal proclamation* of Saul's kingship, 11.14, 15. So too there were three stages in the case of *David* : (a) *David's private anointing* by Samuel, 16.13; (b) his *anointed by 'the men of Judah'*, 2 Sam. 2.4, and (c) his *anointing as king over all Israel*, 2 Sam. 5.3.

'And the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward'.⁴¹ In one sense this was when the real anointing took place. For in one sense the oil on the head⁴² was simply the outward and external sign of this spiritual and inward reality.⁴³ Samuel administered the oil; the Lord bestowed His Spirit.⁴⁴ The point is, that, if God chooses David for kingship, He will equip him for that work. We can rest assured that, if He appoints His servant to a task, He will give him all he needs to fulfill that task.

We often read in the Old Testament of the Spirit of God (or 'the Spirit of the Lord') coming upon individuals. This was usually for some specific purpose or task – the common element being that of empowerment, whether for impressive physical exploits or for the communication of God's word. The coming of the Spirit of the Lord upon David was distinguished from other cases in that it was 'from that day forward'.⁴⁵ There are no references to the Spirit of the Lord coming on David again – in contrast, for example, to Saul, on whom the Spirit is said to have 'come' more than once, 10.10; 11.6. Indeed, we find David later fearing that God might remove His Holy Spirit from him, 'Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me', Psa. 51.11.⁴⁶ All this suggests that David experienced a more permanent and sustained empowerment than was the usual pattern in the Old Testament.

'Upon David'. David has been referred to prophetically on several occasions before, stretching back to chapter 13 (see 13.14, 15.28) – but not by name. This is in fact the first mention of his name.⁴⁷

Though anointed now (by both Samuel and the Lord), it would be at least 20 years before David actually obtained the kingdom.⁴⁸ For perhaps 10 of those years, he was called on to endure the most severe trials – being envied, hated, persecuted, outlawed, and hunted like a partridge on the mountains. But David's time keeping sheep, in the court of Saul, and fleeing from Saul, wasn't just 'waiting time' – and it was certainly not 'wasted time'. It was 'training time' – in David's case, 'training for reigning' and for kingship.⁴⁹

'So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah'. From this point on, Samuel – who until now has played a leading role in the narrative – fades into the background and becomes a minor figure with little to add actively to the progress of events. His anointing of David was really the climax and capstone of his career. Now he largely retires from view and leaves the stage. Compare the words of John the Baptist, some time after he witnessed the Holy Spirit coming on David's (and, more to the point, God's) 'Son': 'He must increase, but I must decrease', John 3.30. Am I as ready to stand aside that people may 'see Jesus only'?

Verses 14-23 A king troubled.

Verse 14. *'But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul'*. This is the only time of which I know that 'the Spirit of the Lord' is specifically said to have left someone. And He left Saul indefinitely – in contrast to the 'evil spirit from the Lord' which left him only temporarily and then returned, e.g. 16.23; 18.10; 19.9. (We do read, 19.23, of the Spirit of

God coming on Saul once again. But that was to overpower him with a 'prophetic' experience to enable David to escape from him.)

This action completes the account of the transfer of spiritual power to David from Saul – following 'the Spirit of the Lord' coming on David, v.13. By his persistent disobedience, Saul caused to depart from him (a) 'the Spirit of the Lord', 16.14, (b) the Lord Himself – 'the Lord was ... departed from Saul', 18.12, and (c) the Lord's mercy (loving-kindness) – the Lord of hosts later said concerning David, 'my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul', 2 Sam. 7.15. How sad that the man to whom it was said, 'God is with thee', 10.7, was forced to recognise that the Lord 'was departed' from him, 18.12.

But there was worse to come.

'And an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him'.⁵⁰ The departure of the Spirit of the Lord did not leave a vacuum in Saul. The void was immediately filled by an 'evil spirit'. In all likelihood the word 'evil' here refers, as often in scripture, to that which brings pain, misery, distress, disaster or calamity – rather than to that which is morally evil or sinful.⁵¹ Compare, in connection with the plagues of Egypt, 'He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending *evil* angels among them', Psa. 78.49 – a reference to angelic involvement in the plagues; these were 'angels of adversity', who brought distress and destruction.⁵²

This 'harmful' spirit – this 'spirit of distress' – 'terrified' Saul – 'filled him with alarm' – rather than 'troubled him', as in the AV. And it did so repeatedly and continually, 16.14-16; 18.10; 19.9. Note that Saul's servants used the participle, 'keeps terrifying you', v.15 – that is, on the occasions when the spirit came on Saul, it was continuously active.

We read on only one other occasion in the Old Testament of 'a spirit of distress' which emanated from the Lord. This was the 'evil spirit' which the Lord sent between Abimelech (the rebellious and murderous son of Gideon) and the men of Shechem, to sow discord and disruption, Judg. 9.23.

Both in the case of Abimelech and of Saul the 'evil spirit' was sent in response to – and as punishment for – sin. Note that, in Saul's case, the evil spirit terrorized him only after those sins which led to his forfeiting the kingship, chapters 13 and 15. On the earlier occasion it had been both Abimelech and the Shechemites who had sinned, Judg. 9.1-9, and the spirit was therefore sent 'between' them – in distinction to this spirit simply coming 'on' Saul.

It is interesting to note that the only occasions where God is said to sent forth a 'spirit of distress' both involved early kingship in Israel – note 'all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo ... and *made Abimelech king*', Judg. 9.6. Abimelech was 'king' over at least a portion of Israel for three years, having seized the kingship illegitimately. Saul came to power through the illegitimate motives of those who demanded a king. In one sense, Abimelech and Saul were the first two human 'kings' in Israel. And both proved themselves wholly unworthy of the office.⁵³

In Saul's case, the 'spirit of distress' caused his mental disturbance – at times driving him to the point of insanity. But scripture is clear that Saul's fits of depression and raging madness were distinct from the spirit itself. The spirit was personal and active – as witness the fact that coming of this spirit is set over against the departure of the Spirit of the Lord in v.13. And we are not to imagine that all of Saul's later sinful actions were the result of this exchange of Spirit/spirit. Indeed, we recall that Saul's two great 'kingdom-depriving' sins were committed before the exchange. Nor was the 'spirit of distress' constantly tormenting Saul – its attacks were intermittent – the spirit came and went. It is important not to miss seeing the providential hand of God behind all this. Because, had it not been for His sending the 'spirit of distress', David would not have had the opening which he did into Saul's court, vv.16-23.

Verse 15. *'Servants'*. The word 'servant' ('*ebed*') was used to describe an 'attendant' or 'officer' in royal circles in Israel. The title was conferred on high officials and has been found inscribed on their seals. It was often used by someone speaking to a superior – as in v.16.

'Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth you'. This was obvious to Saul's servants, but not, seemingly, to Saul. Sometimes our true spiritual condition is far more apparent to others than it is to ourselves; see Hosea's comments about the northern kingdom, 'Strangers have devoured his strength, and *he knoweth it not*. yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet *he knoweth not*', Hos. 7.9⁵⁴; and those of the Amen Himself to the church of the Laodiceans, 'Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and *knowest not* that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked', Rev. 3.17. Lord, open my eyes to see myself as Thou dost see me!

Verse 16. *'Let our lord now command thy servants ... to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp ... when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well'*. Saul's servants recognized that music could sometimes soothe a tormented soul like Saul's. The powerful influence exerted by music over the mind was recognised from very early times.⁵⁵ The wise men of Greece recommended music to soothe a person's passions – even to curb and control social disturbances. Elisha called for a minstrel to prepare him for prophetic inspiration, 'And Elisha said (to Ahab) ... now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him', 2 Kings 3.14-15. In one sense, our passage comes to us as something of a warning about the kind of music to which we listen, and its influence upon us. There is undoubtedly a harmful type of music even as there is a helpful type of music – and attaching some form of 'spiritual' lyrics will do nothing to affect the underlying message of the music – whether that is aggression or anything else. Seneca records how Pythagoras quieted the agitation of the mind with a harp.⁵⁶ And in this case too it was David's playing a harp⁵⁷ which calmed Saul's demonic fits.

Verse 17. *'Provide ('see') me a man'*. Compare *God's* statement to Samuel, 'I have provided ('seen') me a king', v.1. David was chosen by God on the ground of his spiritual character (a heart like God's); he was chosen by Saul on the grounds of his musical ability.

Verse 18. *'Then answered one of the servants'⁵⁸, 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'. Here again we detect the working of God's providence. As a means of getting David into Saul's court, God so overruled matters that, through sheer chance (as men would judge it), one of Saul's 'young men' knew enough about David to recommend him as someone who would meet Saul's needs admirably.⁵⁹

The young man characterised the 'son of Jesse' as:

(a) an accomplished musician – 'one who knows how to play'.

(b) a very competent individual – 'a mighty valiant man' (AV) probably signifies rather 'a very capable man'.⁶⁰

(c) a warrior – 'a man of war' – in all likelihood based on David's earlier exploits when, single-handed, he had slain wild beasts which dared to attack the flock he tended. The courage and strength he displayed as a young man was sufficient to earn him a reputation of someone possessing the qualities of a warrior.

(d) articulate – 'prudent in matters' (AV) is literally 'understanding/skilful in speech'.

(e) handsome – 'a comely person' (AV) is 'a man of form'.⁶¹

(f) blessed with the Lord's presence – 'the Lord is with him'. Note the conclusion of the account of David's rise to kingship over all Israel; 'David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him', 2 Sam. 5.10. That is, the Lord's presence and blessing marked David from our first introduction to him in 1 Sam. 16 right through until he was fully installed as Israel's king.⁶²

Verse 19. *'Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep'*. The reference to David being with 'the sheep' tells us that, either v.18 doesn't record everything which Saul's servant told him about David, or, perhaps more likely, that the actual message sent to Jesse came from Saul's servants, who knew more about David than the king himself knew – or needed to. Certainly when Saul authorised the summons being sent to Jesse he little thought that he was inviting to his court the very one of whom Samuel had said, 'The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, better than thou', 15.28! It is ironic that the rejected king – from whom the Spirit of the Lord had recently departed – unknowingly seeks relief and help from the newly anointed king – upon whom the Spirit of the Lord had recently come. But then, 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will', Prov.21.1. We rest today in that very confidence.

Verse 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'*.⁶³ Jesse was clearly a believer in the truth later expressed by David's son Solomon, 'A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men', Prov. 18.16.⁶⁴ Did Jesse wonder as he 'sent' David on his way whether, in the light of David's anointing in v. 13, things were already beginning to move? And what, we wonder, did David think as he walked beside the laden ass? Was he in any way nervous that Saul may somehow have learned of that anointing, and that he may be walking into a trap? Well, whatever Jesse wondered or David thought, we know that both David's short-term and long-term future were safely in the hand of God.

Verse 21. *'David came to Saul ... and he loved him greatly'*. Saul instantly took a great liking to David. He 'loved' him – just as later Saul's son Jonathan, daughter Michal, all his servants and even 'all Israel and Judah' would come to love him, 18. 1,16, 20, 22.

'He became his armourbearer'. Not that Saul had only one armour-bearer. Note that Joab had no less than ten, 'And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him', 2 Sam. 18.15. David became one of Saul's armour-bearers. Later David refused to go to meet Goliath in Saul's 'armour', 17.38 – a case of Saul's 'armour-bearer' declining the offer of being Saul's 'armour-wearer'! David may have carried it for Saul – but he never had occasion to 'prove' it.

Verse 22. *'Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me'*. Young David was now conscripted into government service. This was Saul's way of working; 'when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him', 14.52.

Verse 23. *'When the evil spirit from God was upon Saul ... David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him'*. As Saul listened, his own spirit became tranquil as the spirit of distress lifted from him. But just as clouds lifted from a mountain only temporarily and would gather again, so spirit of distress would return, 18.10. Alas for Saul, although we are told that 'the evil spirit departed from him', we are not told that the Spirit of the Lord returned to him. And so, though Saul's immediate problem was alleviated and the symptoms removed, his real problem remained – the disease remained. David's music certainly helped but it wasn't a cure. Let us never mistake the enjoyment of music, hymns and spiritual songs for some kind of guarantee that we are necessarily experiencing God's blessing, or spiritual victory in our lives.

And so it was that, under God's providential hand, David entered Saul's court, with every opportunity to familiarise himself by daily observation with the ways of the court, the protocol of royalty and the affairs of the kingdom – and thereby receive on-the-job training for the day when he would become king – and this without arousing any suspicion on Saul's part that his young harpist/armour-bearer was God's chosen and anointed king over His people. How marvellously God, working unnoticed behind the scenes, brings His purpose to pass! And He still does this in 2005!

If Jesse had understood the significance of what had happened back in vv.6-13, I guess he must have smiled to himself when David was so soon summoned by Saul to the royal court for a permanent position. But Jesse would never have dreamt that, when – on the very next occasion he features in the story – he again sends young David with food – that time down to the valley of Elah with food for his three oldest brothers and cheeseburgers for their unit commander, the sparks were really going to fly!

Endnotes

¹ See Jeroboam I, 1 Kings 14.8, Abijam, 1 Kings 15.3, Asa, 1 Kings 15.11, Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. 17.3, Amaziah, 2 Kings 14.3, Ahaz, 2 Kings 16.2//2 Chron. 28.1, and Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18.3//2 Chron. 29.2.

² Dale Ralph Davis quotes Marc Bloch, who, in turn drawing upon Father Delehay, cites an apt example: 'Anyone reading that the church observes a holiday for two of its servants both of whom died in Italy on the very same day, that the conversion of each was brought about by the reading of the Lives of the Saints, that each founded a religious order dedicated to the same patron, and finally that both of these orders were suppressed by popes bearing the same name — anyone reading all this would be tempted to assert that a single individual, duplicated through error, had been entered in the martyrology under two different names. Nevertheless, it is quite true that, similarly converted to the religious life by the example of saintly biographies, St. John Colombini established the Order of Jesuates and Ignatius Loyola that of the Jesuits; that both of them died on July 31, the former near Siena in 1367, the latter at Rome in 1556; that the Jesuates were dissolved by Pope Clement IX and the Jesuits by Clement XIV. If the example is stimulating, it is certainly not unique' (*The Historian's Craft* [New York: Vintage, 1953], 123).

³ 2 Sam. 5.10 concludes with the expression 'the Lord God of hosts was with him'; compare 'the Lord is with him', 1 Sam. 16.18.

⁴ Although 2 Kings begins somewhat similarly, the corresponding phrase sits differently in the verse - 'Then Moab rebelled after the death of Ahab'. The justification for the book division is therefore not so strong.

⁵ 'In the preceding ages it had been made known that the Son of God was to become incarnate, for none but a divine person could bruise the Serpent's head (compare Jude), and He was to do so by becoming the woman's "Seed" (Gen. 3.15). To Abraham God had made known that the Redeemer should (according to the flesh) descend from him — as would kings. In the days of Moses and Aaron much had been typically intimated concerning the Redeemer's priestly office and ministry. But now it pleased God to announce that particular person in all the tribes of Israel from which Christ was to proceed, namely, David. From the days of Abraham, and onwards for a thousand years, the providential dealings of God had mainly respected that people from whom the Christ was to proceed. But now attention is focused on that particular person from whence He was to spring. It pleased God at this time to single out the specific man of whom Christ was to come, namely, David. 'I have found David My servant; with My holy oil have I anointed him' (Psa. 89.20). Out of all the thousands of Abraham's descendants, a most honourable mark of distinction was placed upon the son of Jesse by anointing him to be king over his people. This was a notable step toward advancing the work of redemption', A. W. Pink.

'God's planting the root, whence that branch of righteousness was afterwards to spring up, that was to be the everlasting King ... and therefore this everlasting King is called the *branch from the stem of Jesse*: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa. 11.1). "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper" (Jer. 23.5). So Christ, in the New Testament, is called "the root and offspring of David" (Rev.22.16)', 'Work of Redemption', Jonathan Edwards, 1757.

⁶ See this word translated 'very wrath' in 18.8; 20.7; 2 Sam. 3.8; 13.21. 'This word is related to a rare Aramaic root meaning "to cause fire to burn" ... The Hebrew verb is always used in reference to anger', TWOT, Vol 1, page 322. See also NIDOTTE, Vol.2, pages 265-267.

⁷ Just as Jacob later 'mourned for his son (Joseph) many days', Gen. 37.24 — believing him to be dead. Although in both cases (Jacob and Samuel), the old man who 'mourned' died some time before the one for whom he 'mourned'.

⁸ See 'Kingdom of Priests', pages 149-150.

⁹ For Samuel's deep love and concern for the people, see 12.23.

¹⁰ Note the emphasis on Saul having 'rejected the word of the Lord'. This was crucial. Samuel had deliberately inaugurated the reign of Saul in the context of a renewal of the covenant with the Lord, 1 Sam. 11.14-12.25. This was of fundamental importance. In Israel, kingship was subordinate to the covenant. Israel's king was not autonomous. He was obligated to read and obey the law of Israel's (and his) Great King, the Lord Himself, Deut. 17.18-20 — and His word through His prophets, 1 Sam 12.23; 13.13 (see 10.8 with 13.8-10); 15.1, 11, 23; 2 Sam 12.7-13). Yet Saul acted as if he was the ultimate and supreme authority in Israel. No longer 'little in his own eyes', 15.17, he felt sufficiently self-confident to amend and re-interpret the clear 'word of the Lord'. Hence his rejection by the Lord and the necessity for a replacement. By way of contrast, once able to, David is to be found regularly 'enquiring of God'.

¹¹ In the Lord Jesus, God has provided both 'the Lamb' and the King'!

¹² The root word occurs nine times in 1 Sam. 16; seven times as a verb [vv.1, 17 ('provide'), 6 ('looked on'), 7 ('look/looketh - three times in all), 18 ('seen')] and twice as a noun [vv. 7 ('appearance'), 12 ('to look to')]. In many ways it pinpoints the theme of the chapter — God's choice and the basis for it. What Samuel 'looked on' was Eliab's 'appearance' — but then what man 'looks on' is not what God 'looks on', vv.6-7.

¹³ The word translated 'captain' (*nāgîd*) signifies a leader, the 'man at the top'; it is also used as a royal designation. It is used earlier of Saul; 'thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel', 9.16, and 'the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance', 10.1. It is used several times of David, 13.14; 25.39 ('ruler', AV); 2 Sam. 5.2; 7.8 ('ruler', AV). Also, among others, of Solomon, 1 Kings 1.35 ('ruler', AV), and Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20.5. It is also used of the Lord Jesus, 'unto the Messiah the Prince (*nāgîd*)', Dan 9.25.

¹⁴ Compare Paul's quotation, 'He gave testimony and said, I have found David the sons of Jesse, a man after mine own heart'.

¹⁵ Note that much the same (Samuel's presence at a sacrifice and communal 'fellowship' meal¹⁵) had happened in connection with the anointing of Saul, 9.11-10.1.

¹⁶ This goes further than simply withholding information – of not saying everything we know or think. God doesn't do that – nor should we. If we don't like some lady's shoes, we are under no compulsion to tell her so! And, if the potatoes are a little salty, it is often politic to 'hold one's peace'! More seriously, there may well be occasions when it is right not to disclose everything one knows about the nature of another's illness. And to always speak one's mind is likely only to multiply strife and quarrels. In all such circumstances, we need to ask, 'Would it be a good thing – or a bad thing – for this particular person to be told this particular thing at this particular time?' There are obviously times when it is right and best not to volunteer unnecessary information – i.e. not to tell the *whole* truth.

But here Samuel is told, by suppressing known information, to actually create a wrong impression – namely, that to sacrifice was the real reason for his visit. Yet the One who tells him to do so is the God of truth - who requires truth in the inward parts. Perhaps an illustration can help us. I imagine a young man turning up at the front door of the house of a young woman to whom he has taken a liking. He arrives armed with a bunch of flowers for her mother. When the father comes to door, the young man mumbles that he knew it was the mother's birthday and that he has brought her some flowers. The true reason for his visit is, of course that he is hoping to see the daughter. A case of telling 'the truth and nothing but the truth' – but not 'the whole truth'.

I suggest that such a scheme should be used only in exceptional circumstances. Our normal practice should be to say and do nothing which is likely to create a false impression.

¹⁷ 'Agag' may have been a common name among the Amalekite kings; compare Num. 24.7.

¹⁸ Actually, one of the elders put the question; the word 'said' is singular.

¹⁹ 'Do you come in peace?' was a common enough question when someone had some reason to be nervous: 'Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably', 1 Kings 2.13; 'when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?', 2 Kings 9.22.

²⁰ Compare, 'When the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and *sanctified them* – his sons and daughters', Job 1.5.

²¹ See NIDOTTE, Vol. 3, pages 884-885.

²² Donald W. McCullough, 'The Trivialization of God', NavPress, 1995, page 57.

²³ We know that Jesse had eight sons in all, 17.12; compare 'seven of his sons' excluding David, 16.10. But, when the Book of Chronicles lists and numbers Jesse's sons, David is listed as the last of seven, 1 Chron. 2.13-15. The most likely explanation is that one of David's seven older brothers died without offspring and is therefore omitted from the genealogy in Chronicles. When writing his version of 1 Samuel 16, Josephus lists only those sons recorded by name in 1 Chron. 2, showing David as having only six older brothers. But Josephus was probably simply bending the account of 1 Samuel 16 to fit with that in Chronicles. Both the Hebrew text (of 1 Sam. 16 and 1 Sam. 17) and the Septuagint (of 1 Sam. 16.10) assert that David had seven older brothers.

²⁴ Compare the prodigious size of Og king of Bashan, Deut. 3.11. (Og's 'bedstead' may possibly have been a black sarcophagus, 'many of which have been found in that country', Expositors Bible Commentary on Deut. 3.11. But see End-note 8 to chapter 17.)

²⁵ The expression 'on the outward appearance' renders the Hebrew word for 'on the eyes'. And it is David's 'eyes' which are later noticed, v.12. But we should not read too much into this. The 'eyes' are clearly used figuratively to denote 'appearance or look' – see, for instance, concerning the manna, 'and the eyes thereof as the eyes of coriander seed', Num. 11.7 lit. The expression probably refers to how someone or something looks to the eyes of others, rather than to the idea that it is a person's eyes which we normally look at. That is, the expression denotes 'that which is seen by the eyes'.

²⁶ Two of David's own sons later provided a further commentary on the truth of 1 Sam. 16.7: 'in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as *Absalom* for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him', 2 Sam.14.26, and, of *Adonijah*, 'he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom', 1 Kings 1.6.

²⁷ 'Some observe that the words may be rendered, "anointed him *from* the midst of his brethren"; that is, he took him apart from them, and anointed him', John Gill. (Isa. 4.4 may be an example.) But in by far the majority of occurrences of the Hebrew word it means '*in* the midst', 'among' or 'within'.

²⁸ It is just possible that 1 Chron. 11.3 indicates that God's revelation to Samuel in 1 Sam. 16.1 was made known at an early stage – but this is far from certain.

²⁹ This is not one of the usual words for 'sons' or 'children'. It is used to describe Saul's 'servant' through chapters 9 and 10, and Jonathan's 'young man' in chapter 14. Note also 'whose son art thou, thou *young man*?', 17.58.

³⁰ The word 'youngest', 1 Sam. 16.11, is often used to signify the 'smallest'; see the 'little' petition, 1 Kings 2.23; 'little' cake, 17.13; and 'little' cloud, 18.44. The Septuagint renders the word by 'μικρός' – meaning small, little, insignificant. In our passage David is therefore introduced by a word which deliberately sets him in contrast to the height of Eliab's stature.

³¹ It is just possible that there was more to David's absence than his age. Some have suggested that Jesse didn't think as highly of David as he did of his other sons – based largely on the fact that his father didn't even mention him by name, 1 Sam. 16.11, and on David's later words, 'When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up', Psa. 27.10. Was David, they ask, a neglected child who his father regarded more as a hired help than as a son? (Contrast Luke 15. 18-24.) Personally, I think this is stretching David's words in Psalm 27. But, if there is any truth in the suggestion, it adds point to David's consideration for his parents' welfare evident in 22. 3-4.

³² 'All the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord : and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years', 2 Sam. 5.3-4.

³³ It may be of interest to note that, on account of the criterion 'whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is cloven-footed', Lev. 11.3, sheep were deemed 'clean' animals and asses 'unclean' in the dietary laws of Israel.

³⁴ See note 12 above.

³⁵ See note 12 above.

³⁶ Compare, 'I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd', Ezek. 34.23.

³⁷ The metaphors of 'Shepherd' and 'flock' standing for 'King' and 'people' respectively were common in the ancient world. For example, the prologue to the Code of Hammurapi, eighteenth century B.C., refers to the king of Babylon as 'Shepherd'. In one sense, therefore, Jesse might be said to be speaking beyond himself. In his words, 'He keepeth the sheep', Jesse could be said to be introducing David onto the stage as Israel's future king.

³⁸ 'In the Jewish canon the two books of Samuel were originally one. There is no break in the Masoretic Text between 1 and 2 Samuel, and the Masoretic notes at the end of 2 Samuel give a total of 1,506 verses for the entire corpus and point to 1 Samuel 28:24 as the middle verse of the "book"', Ronald Youngblood in the Expositors Bible Commentary, Introduction to 1 and 2 Samuel, Title.

³⁹ In many ways God's choice was unexpected – and that not only because of David's age and very ordinary size. Even the place from which David came was unexceptional. 'Bethlehem Ephrathah' was 'little (least) among the thousands of Judah', Micah 5.2. But, as the apostle Paul said, 'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are', 1 Cor. 1.27, 28. And why? 'That no flesh should glory in his presence', v.29. God is jealous of His own honour, and is therefore pleased both to choose and to use the most unlikely and unpromising instruments.

⁴⁰ David was 'ruddy'. Does this refer to his complexion or the colour of his hair? Would reddish-brown hair have been regarded as a feature of good-looks? Note that 'the beloved' in the Song of Solomon is described as 'white and ruddy' yet his hair was 'black as a raven', Song of Solomon 5.10-11 – no 'grey hairs' here, Hosea 7.9! Assuming that the reference there is to Solomon himself, it is unlikely that the father of a man with bushy black hair would have had reddish-brown hair. Apart from which, would the goat's hair have fooled anybody, 1 Sam. 19.13,16? (Whereas if the goat had been black ... !) It seems more likely that David was reddish-brown in body (as Esau when he was born, Gen. 25.25); see the statement of Jeremiah about the Nazarites, 'They were more ruddy in body than rubies', Lam.4.7.

⁴¹ The Spirit hadn't come immediately on Saul – although He did come on him later during the day of Saul's anointing, 10.1, 6, 10.

⁴² Priests were anointed with oil, Exod. 28.41; 29.7; 30.30; Lev. 4.5; 6.20, 22; 16.32; Num. 3.3 etc. Prophets were (at least on occasions) also anointed, 'The Lord said unto Elijah, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room', 1 Kings 19.15-16.

⁴³ The visible symbol of the Holy Spirit coming upon David was the anointing oil on his head. The visible symbol of the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus was the 'bodily shape like a dove' that descended from heaven, Luke 3.22. The visible symbol of the Holy Spirit coming upon the early disciples was the tongues of fire that sat on each of them, Acts 2.1-4.

⁴⁴ See, 'the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me', Isa. 61.1.

⁴⁵ Contrast Saul's 'from that day and forward' – 'Saul eyed David from that day and forward', 18.9.

⁴⁶ Possibly influenced by what he had witnessed in the case of Saul.

⁴⁷ 'The name is conjectured to come from 'dôd' ('beloved'), but the etymology is uncertain', TWOT, Vol.1, page 184.

⁴⁸ Compare how God promised Abraham a son, Gen. 12.3, some twenty-five years before He performed His promise, Gen. 12.3; 21.2; Rom. 4.19.

⁴⁹ Not unlike the situation of God's people today, 2 Tim. 2.12; Rev. 1.6 etc. The story is told about a group of tourists visiting a picturesque village, who walked by an old man sitting beside a fence. In a rather patronizing way, one tourist asked, 'Have there ever been any great men born in this village?' The old man replied, 'Nope, only babies!' (Leonard Ravenhill in 'The Last Days Newsletter') The tourist's shallow question received a profound answer. There are no instant heroes – whether in the world or in the kingdom of God. Maturity takes time to grow! As Paul made clear, the right to exercise spiritual leadership must be earned; 'not a novice', 1 Tim. 3.6, and 'lay hands suddenly on no man', 5.22.

⁵⁰ The 'evil spirit' is said to be 'from the Lord' – but not, and never, 'of the Lord'. Only the Holy Spirit Himself is named 'the Spirit of the Lord' and 'the Spirit of God'.

⁵¹ Compare, for example, 'Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it', Amos 3.6 – where 'evil' clearly denotes physical 'evil' – disaster or calamity and not moral evil, James 1. 13. The same clearly holds true in 'I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things', Isa. 45.7. 'In ... 1 Sam.16.14-16, 23 ... the word qualifies the noun (spirits), not to indicate that they were demonic, but that they brought distress', TWOT, Vol.2, page 856. Angels are termed 'spirits' in, by way of example, Heb. 1.14 (c.f. Heb. 1. 7 from Psa. 104.4).

⁵² Note also the 'lying spirit' which the Lord 'put' in the mouth of the false prophets' to lure Ahab to his well-deserved end, 1 Kings 22.19-23.

⁵³ See further 'The Transfer Of Power From Saul To David In 1 Sam 16.13-14' by David M. Howard, Jr. (The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, 32/4 (December 1989) 473-483.)

⁵⁴ Israel failed to recognize the damaging effect of the inroads of foreigners with their licentious cultic practices. In the same way that hair turning gray indicates aging, so Israel was becoming old and feeble – but failed to notice it.

⁵⁵ Extending back before the flood. Gen. 4.21 speaks of Tubal, who was sixth in descent from Cain. (The line of Cain ceased, of course, at the flood.) The word for Tubal's 'harp' is the same for David's in 1 Sam. 16.16, 23.

⁵⁶ Seneca de Ira, l. 3. c. 9.

⁵⁷ 'All the musical instruments mentioned in the Psalms are known from excavations or references before the eighth century (BCE)', 'Archeology and the Bible', Wiseman and Yamauchi, page 32.

⁵⁸ Literally 'one of the young men'; a different Hebrew word than that rendered 'servants' in vv.15-16. Possibly this 'young man' was much nearer David's age than many of Saul's 'servants' – i.e. his officials and attendants.

⁵⁹ Compare the remarkable chain of 'natural' circumstances which transported Joseph from the house of Jacob to be 'over all the land of Egypt', Gen. 41.43!

⁶⁰ 'A mighty valiant man' - 'gibbôr hayil' – 'depending on the context ... can mean someone who is exceptionally strong and/or valiant, someone who is exceptionally capable and/or industrious (1 Kings 11.28), or someone who is wealthy (1 Sam. 9.1; 2 Kings 15.20), sometimes one who possesses a large amount of land (Ruth 2.1)", NIDOTTE, Vol. 1, pages 810-811. Note its use also to describe *very able men* for the work of the service of the house of God', 1 Chron. 9.13, and 'the man Jeroboam' as '*a mighty man of valour*: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph', 1 Kings 11.28. The expression is used too of Saul's father, Kish, 9.1. It is used to describe any very able and energetic man, but often one who is strong, vigorous, accomplishes great feats, and has a reputation for outstanding bravery. The description of Doeg as a 'mighty man' (gibbôr) in Psa. 52.1 quite likely has the sense of a 'big shot'.

⁶¹ Ironically, the same Hebrew word is preceded by a negative particle in its description of the Son of David as one who had 'no beauty' that He should be desired, Isa. 53.2. That is, Messiah's true beauty was hidden from His people because they looked at Him entirely from a human standpoint. David's 'beauty' was external and physical. But when Isaiah reports Israel as saying that 'there is no beauty that we should desire him', he is not speaking of our Lord's physical appearance – about which scripture tells us nothing. Isaiah is referring rather to the fact that, when He came, Jesus possessed none of the outward characteristics for which Israel were looking. They expected the Messiah to come as a temporal conqueror and prince, appearing in great pomp and grandeur, to deliver them from the Roman yoke and restore their nation to its former splendour and glory. But what did they see? They saw nothing in Jesus that corresponded to their expectations. They saw no royal robes, no diadems on His brow, no magnificent retinue in attendance, no men of earthly rank and status to support His cause. They saw only a Galilean tradesman, accompanied by a small band of untutored followers and supported by a group of pious women. He offered them none of the external insignia of royalty which they associated with the coming Messiah. In terms of His immediate family background Jesus' mother was a poor virgin and His supposed father was a lowly carpenter, Matt.13.55. In terms of the place where the Lord Jesus grew up, Nazareth was an insignificant and despised town of Nazareth; 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?', was the question of Nathaniel, John 1.46. Remember too that the ruling Jewish council were similarly unimpressed with the fact that the Lord came from Galilee; 'Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet', were their angry and dismissive words to Nicodemus, John 7.52. To the men in the synagogue of Nazareth, He was simply, 'the carpenter, the son of Mary', Mark 6.3. In these ways, He had no 'beauty' – no 'form' – that they should desire Him.

⁶² This feature of David's life comes very much to the fore in chapter 18; see 18.12; 18.14; 18.28.

⁶³ These were staple items of food. See, 'There shall meet thee three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine: And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands', 10.3-4. Jesse's gift for Saul stands in contrast to 'the sons of Belial', who had once 'despised him, and brought him no presents', 10.27.

⁶⁴ See too the cases of Jacob, 'I will appease him with the present that goeth before me', Gen. 32.20, and Abigail, 1 Sam. 25.27.

DID GOD ORIGINALLY INTEND ISRAEL TO HAVE A HUMAN KING?

The issue is far from straight-forward. Many passages view kingship in Israel in a positive light, whereas there are passages which view it (or, at the very least, view the kingship of Saul) very much in a negative light.

First, the passages which view the existence of an earthly king in Israel in a positive way.

A. It seems that it had been God's intention and purpose for Israel to have a king from the days of the patriarchs. Note that 'kings' (the plural showing that the words have more than Messiah Himself in mind) are mentioned in the context of promise - and therefore represent, not that which God simply allows, but God's own purpose. Scripture therefore suggests that it was God's gracious intention all along to provide Israel with a king :

(a) 'Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and **kings shall come out of thee**. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God' Gen. 17.3-8.

(b) 'And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; **kings of people shall be of her**', Gen. 17.16.

(c) 'God said unto him (Jacob), I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and **kings shall come out of thy loins**; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land', Gen. 35.11-12.

That is, the provision of kings in Israel are portrayed as much a part of God's gracious promise as the references to making a nation/nations or the giving of the land.

(d) '**The sceptre** shall not depart from Judah, Nor **the ruler's staff** from between his feet, Until Shiloh [or, 'he to whom it belongs'] comes', Gen. 49.10 NASB.

(e) 'I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and **a Sceptre** shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab ... Out of Jacob shall come **he that shall have dominion**', Num. 24.17-19 (Balaam's fourth oracle). ('The "star" (v. 17) was a common symbol for a king in biblical and non-biblical ancient Near Eastern literature (cf. Isa. 14.12; Ezek. 32.7; Rev. 22.16). This identification finds support in the reference to the "sceptre" in the next line (cf. Gen. 49.10; Amos 1.5, 8; Ps. 45.6)', Dr Constable's notes on Num. 24.15-19.)

(f) Both Hannah and the prophet of 1 Sam. 2.27 refer to God's anointed king :

- 'The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto **his king**, and exalt the horn of **his anointed**', 1 Sam. 2.10.
- 'And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord ... I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before **mine anointed** for ever', 1 Sam. 2.27, 35.

These references to an anointed king show that *the people of Israel in general* were looking forward to the fulfilment of God's promises to the patriarchs.

Note Kirkpatrick's comments on Hannah's words, "The idea of a king was not altogether novel to the Israelite mind. The promise to Abraham spoke of kings among his posterity (Gen. xvii. 6): the Mosaic legislation prescribes the method of election and the duty of the king (Deut. xvii.14-20): Gideon had been invited to establish a hereditary monarchy (Jud. viii.22). Anointing too was recognized as the regular rite of admission to the office (Jud. ix.8). Amid the prevalent anarchy and growing disintegration of the nation, amid internal corruption and external attack, the desire for a king was probably taking definite shape in the popular mind" (*The First Book of Samuel*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896], 55-56).

(g) See also the comment made throughout the last section of the book of Judges that there was '**no king in Israel**', 17.6; 18.1; 19.1; 21.25.¹ Does this suggest that the absence of a human king was a major cause of the apostasy, disunity and disorder of that period? Might this look on therefore to God's intention to provide Israel with a king in due course? That is, to appoint a king of His own choice (and 'after His own heart') and in His own chosen time?

B. The Lord, in His developing revelation, revealed His eternal plan of using kingship as a key feature in messianic prophecy and fulfillment. Clearly it was God's intention that His Messiah should rule as King. See, for example :

(i) When Scripture speaks of God's purpose to send the One 'whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting', it specifically identifies Him as the One who 'is to be **ruler in Israel**', Micah 5.2.

(ii) 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, **thy King** cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass', Zech. 9.9; quoted in Matt. 21. 5.

(iii) '**The man** whose name is the Branch ... shall bear the glory, and shall sit and **rule upon His throne**', Zech. 6.13. It seems reasonable to assume that this refers to the promised Davidic throne over Israel.

(iv) The words of Gabriel to Mary : 'He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him **the throne of his father David**: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end', Luke 1.32-33; compare Psa. 89.3-4; 20-29, 35-37.

(v) The Lord's reference to '**the Son of man**' as '**the King**' on 'the **throne** of His glory', Matt. 25.31, 34. (Although this throne is of wider application than the throne of David.)

The Lord Jesus was **of the seed** of David, Rom. 1.3; 2 Tim. 2.8, and was known as **the Son** of David, Matt. 1.1; 9.27; 15.22; 20.30, 31; 21.9, 15, and **the Root and Offspring** of David, Rev. 5.5; 22.16. That is, He is linked to David from the beginning, Matt. 1.1, to the end of the New Testament, Rev. 22.16. (Note : 'Root' in Rev. 22.16 signifies, not that Jesus is the source and origin of David, but that He comes of David's line; compare 'root of Jesse', Isa. 11.10 with Isa. 11. 1. It is, however, true of course that He is David's 'Lord' as well as his 'Son', Matt. 22.41-46).

Second, the passages which view the existence of an earthly king in Israel in a negative way.

A. The most obvious - and most important - passages are in 1 Sam. 8, 10 and 12; namely :

'All the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. The thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And **the Lord said** unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but **they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them**. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee', 8.4-8.

'Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said ...ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles', 8.10,18-20.

'And Samuel called the people together unto the Lord to Mizpeh; And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you: And **ye have this day rejected your God**, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and **ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us**', 10.17-19.

'And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you ... Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the Lord, which he did to you and to your fathers. When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place. And when they forgat the Lord their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king

of Moab, and they fought against them. And they cried unto the Lord, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee. And the Lord sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe. And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, **ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the Lord your God was your king.** Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the Lord hath set a king over you', 12.1,7-13.

'Is it not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that **your wickedness is great**, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, **in asking you a king** ... all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for **we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king**', 12.17,19.

Comments on 1 Sam. 8-12 :

(i) The demand for a king was intelligible – though not excusable. (Note that in effect they *demand* – rather than simply request a king.) There was a strong *internal* reason for the demand; namely, the prospect of suffering a perverted judgeship under Samuel's sons, 8.1-5. There was also a strong *external* reason for the demand; the very real threat posed by the Ammonites under Nahash their king, 12.12.

It seems clear that, as far as the *internal* reason was concerned, Samuel had precipitated Israel's demand by making his sons 'judges', 8.1 - presumably with a view to them taking over from him as he grew older. That is, to take over his functions as judge - though not, of course, his role as a prophet - which was not hereditary. Samuel argues his own unquestionable integrity, vv.2-6, because Israel had effectively rejected him as judge as well as God as King - 'make us a king to judge us like all the nations', v.5.

Note how Samuel tackles the *external* reason in 12.7-12. He argues that the Lord Himself had shown that He was more than capable of sorting out any foes who oppressed Israel; citing the deliverances under Moses/Aaron, Gideon, Barak (the Septuagint substitute for 'Bedan'), Jephthah and himself (just possibly this should read 'Samson' with some of the versions); compare 10.18-19. The Lord had proven Himself able to save His people in the past from all their enemies by 'sending' deliverers, vv.8,11, when His people 'cried' to him, vv.8,10, and confessed their sins, repented, and sought His help. So the threat posed by Nahash provided absolutely no justification for them putting their trust in some earthly king - to 'go out before us, and fight our battles', 8.20! And yet Israel's response to this recent military threat was, Samuel reports, 'Ye said *unto me*', v.12, rather than - following the wise precedent of their fathers - crying '*unto the Lord*', vv.8,10.

(ii) At first reading, it may appear as if only the elders of Israel were demanding a king, v.4, but, as the incident develops, it is clear that the people in general are fully behind the demand, vv. 7, 10, 19, 21-22.

(iii) There appear to be several strands to the people's demand : (a) that of the *kind* of king which Israel wanted, (b) their *reason* for wanting a king, and (iii) the timing (that is, when they demanded one). It was certainly not God's will for Israel to have a king in the way and at the time they were asking for one. The elders of Israel asked Samuel to give them a "king like the nations" around them, v. 20. They wanted a king to fight their battles – notably in the face of the Ammonite threat, 1 Sam. 12.12 – and be to them a symbol of national unity. This request betrayed their rejection of the Lord's kingship, 8.7; 10.19; 12.12, 17; it was effectively a denial of their covenant with the Lord. In effect, as the Lord saw it, 8.7, they were 'firing' Him as well as Samuel! The ark of God was out of commission and Samuel was soon to be, and so the Israelites wanted a king in whom they can place their trust.

(iv) Although God appointed Saul, in the final analysis Saul didn't represent God's choice, but the people's. It was David, not Saul, who was the man after God's own heart, 1 Sam 13.14. The Israelites had already specified the kind of man they wanted—one who would go out before them and fight their battles, 1 Sam. 8.20. So God picked out a man for them who came nearest to fulfilling their idea of what a king should be. That is, God 'chose' Saul as the individual who met the job specification for the kind of king whom the people had chosen, 10.24 (compare Deut. 17.15); 12.13. Israel's sin was that they anticipated the purpose of God and insisted on the king of their choice instead of waiting for God, in His own time, to give them the king of His choice – whose heart would beat in rhythm with the heart of God and who would obey Him.

B. Other possible 'negative' passages :

(i) Deut. 17.14-20. Apart from one incidental reference in chapter 28, this is the only passage in the Law-code which refers to Israel having a king.

It does not come in the form of a command but is based on the supposition that the people will want a king, 'When thou ... shalt say, *I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me*', v.14. The passage is expressed in a neutral form; God is not said to approve/endorse the people's determination, nor to explicitly

disapprove/reject it – simply to regulate it by specifying the kind of king they must set over them. (The reference in chapter 28 reinforces the point that it was Israel's choice to have a king; 'thy king *which thou shalt set over thee*', 28.36.)

Nevertheless 1 Sam. 8 makes it clear that the stated motive here – of conformity to the nations around – did in fact meet with God's strong disapproval, 1 Sam. 8.7-8.

(ii) 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. *I will be thy king*: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? *I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath*', Hos.13.9-11.

It seems likely that this passage has Saul principally in view. God acceded to His people's demand for a king, but it angered Him because it expressed their reluctance to trust Him. When Saul's repeated disobedience roused God's wrath, the Lord removed him. The later kings of the Northern Kingdom were also being removed because they followed the pattern of disobedience set by Saul.

Summary

Many passages view kingship in Israel in a positive light, whereas there are sections which view it (or, at the very least, view the kingship of Saul) very much in a negative light.

Only two interpretations appear to do justice to all of the data.

1. It *wasn't* God's *original* intention that there should be any human king in Israel; that it was His intention that He alone and always would be Israel's only King. But that He caught up the sin of the people in demanding a king, 1 Sam. 12.17, into His own purpose of good for them - thereby turning 'the curse into a blessing', Neh. 13.2. That is, in His own sovereign manner, God over-ruled Israel's sinful demand for their ultimate blessing - partly in providing them with good kings (such as David, Hezekiah and Josiah), but mainly in decreeing that, ultimately, David's Son and Lord, would come and would occupy 'the throne of His father David' and 'reign over the house of Jacob for ever', Luke 1.32-33.

In other words, we are to regard the sin of Israel in demanding an earthly king along similar lines to the way we regard the sin of Adam and Eve - as an event which ran counter to God's stated will, but which, in His inscrutable wisdom and sovereign purpose, He has over-ruled to bring untold blessing to His own. And, just as the redeeming Lamb was foreknown before the foundation of the world, 1 Pet. 1.18-20, and His people were chosen in Him before ever sin entered the world, Eph. 1.4, so the future anointing of kings - and, in particular, *the King* (the Lord Jesus) - was known and prophesied before ever Israel demanded a king like the nations around them. In this way, Israel having a king - although never part of God's original intention for them - was 'over-ruled' by God, both for their ultimate good and for His own glory.

2. It *always was* God's intention and purpose that there should be kings in Israel, and that, in due course, the Messiah (His 'anointed') should be King over Israel. If the people had not prematurely, and for entirely the wrong reasons, demanded a king, God would - in His own time - have raised up David 'to fulfil all' His will, Acts 13.22, and to establish that royal line which would reach its climax and conclusion in 'the Son of David'.

In my view, the weight of the evidence (see in particular the passages detailed in the 'positive' section and the comments (iii) and (iv) on 1 Sam. 8-12 above) favours the second interpretation.

*For those who do not have access to **Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology**, I reproduce below the relevant - and interesting - article included there. (The EDBT is freely available on the internet at : <http://bible.crosswalk.com/Dictionaries/BakersEvangelicalDictionary/bed.cgi?number=T410>)*

"There is a strong and conspicuous emphasis on the kingship of God, the "Great King" who rules over his people (Exod 15:18; Deut 33:5; 1 Sam 8:7; 12:12; 1 Chron 17:14; 28:5; Psalm 114:2). God's kingship, however, contrasts with that of Israel's rulers in that God's rule is not limited to the nation of Israel. While he is king over his people in a special sense, by virtue of his covenantal relationship to them, his kingship is at the same time universal, extending to all nations and peoples and even the natural environment.

It is not warranted to assert, as some have, that the title of king was not ascribed to Yahweh prior to the time of the Israelite monarchy. To do this requires the late dating of explicit statements of Yahweh's kingship in texts such as Exodus 15:18; Numbers 23:21; Deuteronomy 33:5; Judges 8:23; and 1 Samuel 8:7; 10:19; 12:12. To do this also denies the close relationship that exists between the establishment of the Sinai covenant and the acknowledgment of Yahweh's kingship over Israel. Parallels in literary structure between the

Sinai covenant and certain international treaties drawn up by the kings of the Hittite Empire in the fourteenth century b.c. show that in the Sinai covenant Yahweh assumes the role of the Great King, and Israel, that of his vassal. All of this suggests, very clearly, that Israel recognized Yahweh as her Great King long before kingship was established in Jerusalem.

This recognition has caused other contemporary scholars (Mendenhall, McKenzie) to suggest that the establishment of human kingship in Israel was a rebellion against divine rule and represented an alien paganizing development in the social structure of ancient Israel. For these scholars the establishment of the monarchy represented a return to the social model of the old Bronze Age paganism of the Canaanites, and a rejection of religious foundations derived from the Mosaic formulations of the Sinai covenant.

This approach, however, does violence to the many positive biblical statements concerning God's design for the institution of kingship in the context of this sovereign plan for the redemption of his people, and ultimately for the universal triumph of peace and justice on the earth. Kingship in Israel was not unanticipated. God had even provided for it in antecedent revelation. Abraham was told that "kings" would arise among his descendants (Gen 17:6). Jacob said that royalty would arise from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10). Moses provided for the eventual rise of kingship in Israel when he gave the "law of the king" (Deut 17:14-20) as part of the renewal of the covenant in the Plains of Moab just before Israel's entrance in the promised land. So it is clear that in God's purpose it was right and proper for Israel to have a king. To question this erodes the institutional basis of the messianic hope that arose in connection with the failure of Israel's kings to function as God had instructed.

The question of the Old Testament's apparently ambivalent attitude toward the institution of the monarchy is rooted in the description of the rise of kingship in Israel (1 Sam. 8-12). The tension in these chapters is evident. On the one hand Samuel said that Israel had sinned in asking for a king (1 Sam 12:17-20). On the other hand the Lord told Samuel to give the people a king (1 Sam 8:7,2,22). Later, after Saul was chosen by lot, Samuel said, "Do you see the man the Lord has chosen?" The issue here is not whether kingship in itself was right or wrong for Israel. At issue was the kind of kingship Israel desired, and her reasons for wanting a king. The elders of Israel asked Samuel to give them a "king like the nations" around them (1 Sam 8:20a). They wanted a king to fight their battles and give them a symbol of national unity. This request betrayed their rejection of the kingship of Yahweh (1 Sam 8:7; 10:19; 12:12) and denial of the covenant. The Lord, however, told Samuel to give them a different sort of king. After warning them about what it would be like to have a king like the nations (1 Sam 8:11-18) Samuel defined how kingship was to function in Israel (1 Sam 10:25). This description was a supplement to the "law of the king" given by Moses (Deut 17:14-20). Samuel then inaugurated the reign of Saul, Israel's first king, in the context of a renewal of the covenant with Yahweh (1 Sam 11:14-12:25). This had enormous significance. Kingship was subordinated to covenant. Israel's king was to be a covenantal king. He was not autonomous. He was always obligated to submit to the law of Israel's (and his) Great King, Yahweh (Deut 17:18-20; 1 Sam 12:14) as well as to the word of the prophet (1 Sam 12:23; 13:13; 15:11, 23; 2 Sam 12:7-13).

Unfortunately Saul fell far short of living up to the requirements of his office. He disobeyed the word of the Lord and rebelled against the Lord (1 Sam. 13, 15). Because of this the Lord rejected him from being king (1 Sam 15:23), and sent Samuel to anoint David in his place (1 Sam. 16). David was an imperfect but true representative of the ideal of the covenantal king. David grievously sinned in the matter of Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11, 12), but in contrast to Saul when Nathan, the prophet, confronted him, he repented and sought the Lord's forgiveness (2 Sam 12:13; Psalm 51). Late in his reign he sinned again in taking the census of his fighting men, but again he sought the Lord's forgiveness (2 Sam 24). David is thus termed a "man after God's own heart" (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22), and the writer of Kings makes his reign the standard by which to assess the reigns of subsequent kings.

For the most part the history of the kings of Israel and Judah is a history of failure to live up to the covenantal ideal. All of the kings of the north are said to have "done evil in the eyes of the Lord" because they continued the worship of the golden calves in Bethel and Dan that had been begun by the northern kingdom's first king, Jeroboam 1 (1 Kings 12:26-33). Even among the kings of Judah, only Hezekiah and Josiah receive unqualified approval (2 Kings 18:3-7; 22:2).

This failure of the kings of both Israel and Judah to live up to the covenantal ideal provided the backdrop as Israel's prophets began to speak of a future king who would be a worthy occupant of the throne of David. As the profile of this king slowly develops it is clear that he will come as the fulfillment of the promise of an eternal dynasty to David (2 Sam 7; 23:1-7; Psalm 89; 132:11-12; Isa 55:3-5). He will not only be a descendant of David, but is also identified with deity (Isa 7:14; 9:6-7; Jer 23:5-6; Ezek 36:24-28). During his reign wars will cease and peace and justice will be established in the earth (Isa 2:1-5; 11:1-10; Amos 9:11-15). This future king came to be known as the "Messiah" (in Hebrew, "the anointed one") and longing for his appearance came to be known as messianic expectation.

In the New Testament the kingship theme is carried forward and its ambiguities resolved. Jesus is the one who fulfilled the royal messianic promises of the Old Testament. The Greek word translated "Christ" in our English versions of the Bible is a translation of the Hebrew term for Messiah (the anointed one). In the words of the angel who spoke to Mary: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32-33).

End-note

¹ Deuteronomy warns the people against doing 'what is right in their own eyes' in the sense of enjoying their sacrifices in places other than the one place which the Lord would choose:

'Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: And there ye shall eat before the Lord your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the Lord thy God hath blessed thee. Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, *every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes*. For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; Then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you', Deut. 12.5-11.

The emphasis in Deuteronomy is on doing what is right in the Lord's eyes:

'Thou shalt do *that which is right* and good *in the sight of the Lord*: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers', Deut. 6.18.

'Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh. Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do *that which is right in the sight of the Lord*', Deut. 12. 25-26.

'Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and *right in the sight of the Lord thy God*', Deut. 12.28.

'Thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do *that which is right in the eyes of the Lord thy God*', Deut. 13.18.

'So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt *do that which is right in the sight of the Lord*', Deut. 21.9.

KEY EVENTS AND DATES IN THE LIFE OF DAVID

Chronology of David's Life			
Event	Date	Age	Reference
Birth	1041	0	2 Sam. 5.4-5
Anointing by Samuel	1029	12	1 Sam. 16.1-13
Defeat of Goliath	1024	17	1 Sam. 17
Exile from Saul	1020-1011	21-30	1 Sam. 21—31
Anointing as King over Judah	1011	30	2 Sam. 2.1-4
Anointing as King over all Israel	1004	37	2 Sam. 5.1-3
Philistines Wars	1004	37	2 Sam. 5.17-25
Conquest of Jerusalem	1004	37	2 Sam. 5.6-10
Mephibosheth's Move to Jerusalem	996	45	2 Sam. 9.1-13
The Three Year Famine	996-993	45-48	2 Sam. 21.1-14
The Ammonite Wars	993-990	48-51	2 Sam. 10—12
Adultery and Murder	992	49	2 Sam. 11
Birth of Solomon	991	50	2 Sam. 12.24-25
Rape of Tamar	987	54	2 Sam. 13.1-22
Death of Amnon	985	56	2 Sam. 13.23-36
Exile of Absalom	985-982	56-59	2 Sam. 13.37-39
Absalom's Return to Jerusalem	982-980	59-61	2 Sam. 14.21-24
Construction of Palace	980-978	61-63	1 Chron. 15.1
Construction of Tabernacle	977	64	1 Chron. 15.1
Move of Ark to Jerusalem	977	64	2 Sam. 6.12-19
Absalom's Rebellion and David's Exile	976	65	2 Sam. 15—18
Rebellion of Sheba	976	65	2 Sam. 20.1-22
The Census	975	66	2 Sam. 24.1-17
Purchase of Temple Site	973	68	2 Sam. 24.18-25
The Davidic Covenant	973	68	2 Sam. 7
Co-regency with Solomon	973-971	68-70	1 Chron. 23.1
Rebellion of Adonijah	972	69	1 Kings 1.5-37
Coronation of Solomon	971	70	1 Chron. 29.22-23
Death	971	70	1 Kings 2.10-11

Reproduced in full from Dr Constable's notes on 1 Sam. 16-31, pages 62-63.

Dr Constable acknowledges that his table is 'based on' Table 5 on page 244 of 'Kingdom of Priests', Eugene H. Merrill, Baker Book House, 1987.

For the dates, see 'Kingdom of Priests', pages 192-194 and footnote 42 on page 211. Merrill anchors his data in the 'definitive work' of Edwin R. Thiele, 'The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings', Eerdmans, 1965, particularly pages 51-52.

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The quotes (normally amended or abridged) which appear in my notes are not usually attributed; there are far too many. The reader who consults the commentaries and reference books listed will soon spot some of these – particularly in the first eight commentaries and the first reference book.

I have also drawn on material from several theological journals; principally *Bibliotheca Sacra* and *Masters Seminary Journal* – these, together with many others, are available on CD ('The Theological Journal Library') from 'galaxie.com'.

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