

1 SAMUEL 16-24

16 - David is anointed King

Samuel is put in a difficult position by God. He is asked to anoint a future king while the current king is still in office. How will this be received? God assures him that all will be fine. Samuel also assures the inhabitants of Bethlehem (David's town) that he has come in peace.

Samuel asks to see all of Jesse's sons. There are 7 plus David who is the youngest. Samuel goes through all of them, from oldest to youngest, trying to discern God's choice for future King. The oldest, Eliab, appears tall in stature and very good looking (reminiscent of Saul). But the word Samuel gets from God is clear - God looks not on appearances, but into the heart. God needs a king who will be faithful, not one who will draw attention and look impressive.

Once David is anointed, we are told that the Spirit of leadership possesses him. The problem is that the same Spirit of divine leadership that possesses David is also taken away from Saul. In the vacuum, an evil spirit takes up residence in Saul. In modern terms, Saul is beginning to display signs of mental imbalance - manic-depressive states, paranoia, and so forth. He is unstable. Ironically, the man who is now anointed King (in secret) is called upon to help relieve Saul of his inner torment.... through music. Among David's numerous gifts (as we shall see as the story unfolds) there is also the ability to make beautiful music.

Also, in spite of his youthfulness, David clearly has some knowledge of the military arts. Otherwise, he would not have been called upon to be an armour-bearer. Such a job would entail some protective role vis-à-vis the King in battle.

17 - David and Goliath

David has also got the gift of courage, in fact, the audacity of taking incredible risks. The reason for his anger toward the Philistines appears to be focused on defending God's honour. Goliath, the Philistine champion is not just challenging the Israelites, but their God. David will defend God's honour at all costs. David's advantage is not his size or military skill (Goliath is supposedly over 9 feet tall, and a seasoned warrior). Rather, David's advantage is his skill and agility with a sling shot, as well as his courage under fire. He does not miss his opportunity. He hits Goliath in a part of his body not protected - the part of his forehead below his helmet. As part of the humiliating defeat, David strips Goliath of his armour and weapons, and cuts off his head with Goliath's own sword. The Philistines flee, for they interpret this turn of events as the hand of God against them. The Israelites make a great slaughter of them and gain all their stockpile of weapons and food supplies.

At this point in our story, Saul is hugely grateful to David and commits to rewarding him with money and the hand of his daughter in marriage. It is only when David becomes

increasingly popular as a young warrior and hero that Saul's paranoia and jealousy get the better of him.

18 - 24

Several things happen over the course of these chapters.

- 1) David marries Saul's daughter. She, like most everyone else, falls in love with David. Even those closest to Saul respect David and want to see him succeed. Even though he is still young and unseasoned, no one in the army or in Saul's household resists his leadership and quick rise to stardom.
- 2) Saul's paranoia and jealousy become worse. Even though he eases his desire to kill David on several occasions, his overall disposition is one of scheming and plotting to kill him. The more David eludes and escapes him, the more people support David, and the more David succeeds in all he does, the more Saul wants him dead. Saul is so driven in pursuing this goal, that he is ready to kill anyone and everyone who may be supporting David. Saul is turning into a bloody tyrant. Even his own, most loyal son Jonathan, is the object of Saul's suspicion and accusation as he is mistrusted as a David supporter.
- 3) Jonathan, Saul's son, is difficult to comprehend. Even though he is fiercely loyal to his father, he falls in love with David, so much so, that he will do everything in his power, even give up his life to protect and promote David's rise to power. One would think that Jonathan deserves to succeed his father as king. But David is the chosen one and Jonathan fully supports this choice. He is glad to be second after David. On several occasions he saves David's life. He also makes a covenant with David, several times, by which he assures David of his total loyalty and trust, but also gets from David complete commitment about the future welfare of his family. Jonathan is the human embodiment of God's grace to David, and God's grace in general. He is a man of integrity, honour and unconditional, sacrificial love. He is righteous to a fault, and he bears no jealousy or rivalry toward David whatsoever. In the midst of all the killing and treachery of this book, Jonathan stands out as the embodiment of sacrificial love and trustworthiness. It makes his final end much more tragic.