

Samuel Anoints Saul

God directs Samuel to anoint Saul, a tall and handsome Benjamite, as Israel's first king. But the choice comes with both promise and warning.

1 Samuel 9:1-27 • 1 Samuel 10:1-27

CHARACTERS: Samuel, Saul, Kish

THEMES: God's sovereignty, Anointing, Leadership, Obedience, Humility

THERE WAS A Benjamite named Kish who had a son named Saul, as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel. He was a head taller than anyone else—the kind of man who looked like a king.

When Kish's donkeys were lost, he sent Saul and a servant to find them. They searched through the hill country but found nothing. Finally, near Zuph, the servant suggested, 'Look, there is a man of God in this town; he is highly respected, and everything he says comes true. Let's go there now. Perhaps he will tell us what way to take.'

Unknown to Saul, the day before his arrival, the Lord had revealed to Samuel: 'About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him ruler over my people Israel; he will deliver them from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked on my people, for their cry has reached me.'

When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the Lord said, 'This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people.'

Saul approached Samuel in the gateway. 'Would you please tell me where the seer's house is?'

'I am the seer,' Samuel replied. 'Go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you are to eat with me. As for the donkeys you lost three days

ago, do not worry about them; they have been found. And to whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you and your whole family line?'

Saul answered, 'But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?'

His response showed genuine humility. Saul did not yet know he was being chosen as king, but even at the suggestion of honor, he protested his unworthiness. It was an attractive quality—one that sadly would not last.

Samuel brought Saul into the hall, seated him at the head of those invited, and gave him the place of honor. The next morning, Samuel sent the servant ahead and said to Saul, 'Stand here for a while, so that I may give you a message from God.'

Then Samuel took a flask of olive oil, poured it on Saul's head, and kissed him. 'Has not the Lord anointed you ruler over his inheritance? The Spirit of the Lord will come powerfully upon you, and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.'

Samuel gave Saul specific signs that would confirm his anointing—signs that all came to pass exactly as predicted. When Saul met a procession of prophets, the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he prophesied among them. People who knew him were astonished: 'What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?'

Later, Samuel summoned all Israel to Mizpah for the public selection of their king. The lots fell to the tribe of Benjamin, then to the family of Matri, and finally to Saul son of Kish. But when they looked for him, he was nowhere to be found. They inquired of the Lord, 'Has the man come here yet?'

The Lord said, 'Yes, he has hidden himself among the supplies.'

They ran and brought him out. As he stood among the people, he was a head taller than any of the others. Samuel said to the people, 'Do you see the man the Lord has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.'

Then the people shouted, 'Long live the king!'

Samuel explained the rights and duties of kingship, wrote them in a book, and deposited it before the Lord. Then he sent everyone home. Saul also went to his home in Gibeah, accompanied by valiant men whose hearts God had touched.

But not everyone was pleased. Some troublemakers said, 'How can this fellow save us?' They despised him and brought him no gifts. But Saul kept silent, showing wisdom and restraint.

Israel had its king—anointed by God, empowered by the Spirit, confirmed by signs and public selection. Saul began with humility, spiritual experience, and divine calling. Everything necessary for success was in place. But time would tell whether Saul would trust the God who had chosen him or rely on his own strength. The anointing was only the beginning; obedience would determine the outcome.