

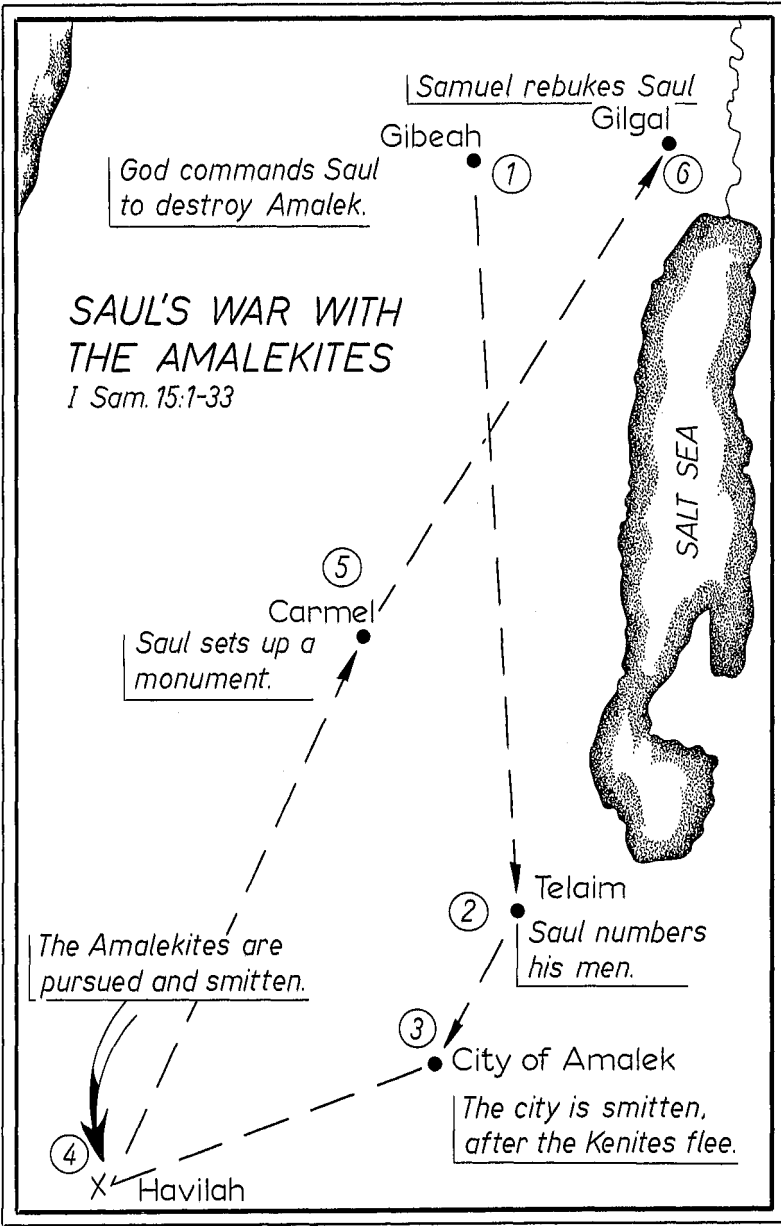
STUDIES IN SAMUEL

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 16

- Vv. 1-6 *Samuel goes to Bethlehem.* Bethlehem was south of Samuel's home in Ramah, and located in the heart of the land of the tribe of Judah. His arrival in the city aroused the curiosity of the people and might easily incite the wrath of the king, but he informed the people that he was on a mission of peace and summoned them to a sacrifice.
- Vv. 7-13 *Samuel anoints David.* Jesse, a man of Judah and a resident of Bethlehem, was called to the feast. Samuel sought a replacement of Saul from among his sons, but it was only when David was called from the fields that the Lord made known to Samuel that David was to become the Lord's anointed. Samuel then poured oil from his anointing horn, thus signifying that David was God's chosen vessel.
- Vv. 14-18 *Saul seeks a musician.* In fits of acute melancholia, afflicted as he was with an evil spirit, Saul sought the soothing effects of music. His courtiers knew of David's ability in this realm and suggested that he be summoned to the king's court.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. "*Man looketh on the outward appearance*" (v. 7a). Eliab, Jesse's oldest son, made a striking appearance. This was one of Saul's chief qualifications for the office of king. Saul stood head and shoulders above all the other men in Israel (I Samuel 9:2). When Samuel saw Eliab, he thought surely this was the man for the job. Samuel did not know Eliab's nature (see 17:28). He did not know that he was not suited to the task.





A stream from Elisha's fountain
close to ancient Jericho

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2. "*The Lord looketh on the heart*" (v. 7b). God knows a man's motives. He can know his thoughts. These count much more than the size of his physical frame. Often God chooses things that the world would despise to be vessels of His power and grace (I Corinthians 1:27-29). For that reason, man must be careful lest he be found fighting against God when it is evident that the choice has been made.

David chosen as Saul's Successor, 16:1-18.

Samuel Goes to Bethlehem. 16:1-6

And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

2 And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear *it*, he will kill me. And the Lord said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord.

3 And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me *him* whom I name unto thee.

4 And Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Beth-lehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

5 And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

6 And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed *is* before me.

1. *Why did Samuel mourn for Saul?* 16:1

Samuel loved Saul. Samuel had addressed Saul with love when he first saw him (I Samuel 9:19 ff). He had des-

cribed Saul as the one for whom all Israel desired (I Samuel 9:20). The very coronation of Saul was filled with emotion. Samuel had felt rejected by the people. God had assured Samuel that the people had rejected God himself. Samuel had promised to pray for the people. He had anointed Saul, and it was very natural that he should be grieved at the ignominious failure of the first king.

2. *Whose son was David?* 16:2

David was the son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite. The name, Jesse, belongs to this man alone in the Old Testament. Its etymology is obscure. Bethlehem is a well-known town of Judah, and it was located five miles south of Jerusalem on a site where a town still flourishes under its ancient name. David had seven brothers, all of whom were considered by the prophet as he came to select one for anointing king over Israel. At the close of the Book of Ruth, a note is made that David was a great-grandson of Ruth. In this passage we note that Boaz, the husband of Ruth, begat Obed; Obed begat Jesse; Jesse begat David (Ruth 4:18-22).

3. *Why was Samuel afraid of Saul?* 16:2

Saul was still king and could execute his enemies. His nature had changed. He was no longer the humble young man who had hid himself in the baggage when the people came to anoint him king. He was more like King Herod, whose nature was such that all Jerusalem was afraid when the wise men had caused the king to fear (Matthew 2:1 ff).

Saul might be possessed of evil spirits and seek to kill Samuel even as he later threw his javelin a number of times at David. Samuel loved Saul, and Saul had clung to Samuel when they parted. There was no way for Samuel to know, however, if Saul would be kindly disposed towards him.

4. Did God tell Samuel to lie? 16:2b

Samuel was afraid of going to Bethlehem to anoint David as king. He was afraid that Saul might try to kill him as he later tried to kill David. Edward J. Young, in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*, says that it might appear that the Lord (16:2) commanded that Samuel tell a lie as to his purpose in going to Bethlehem, but Samuel was, as a matter of fact, going to Bethlehem to sacrifice. There was no need to tell the entire truth upon this occasion. If Samuel had been asked, "Are you going to Bethlehem in order to anoint David as king," and in answer had said to Saul, "I am going only to sacrifice, then Samuel would have been guilty of dissimulation and so also would be the Lord. Such, however, was not the case. There is a vast difference between dissimulation or acting under false pretenses and not telling the entire truth. There was no point in Samuel's revealing at this time the principal object of his mission. Dr. Young goes on to quote a passage from Calvin's *Commentary* where Calvin said that there was no dissimulation or falsehood in this since God really wishes his prophet to find safety under the pretense of the sacrifice. The sacrifice was therefore really offered, and the prophet was protected, thereby so that he was not exposed to any danger until the time the full revelation arrived. Once we admit, as we are compelled to, the genuineness of the Lord's intention for Samuel to sacrifice, the difficulty disappears. It is of the very nature of God not to lie. God himself cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18), and God never commands any of His servants to lie. God can kill and has on a number of occasions struck people dead. God may command His servants to kill their enemies, but He never will command His servants to lie. God himself does not lie, and He does not wish those who believe in Him to lie.

5. *Where was Bethlehem? 16:4*

Bethlehem was in the hill country of Judah. It was about ten miles south of the city of Jerusalem. It lay on a hill that made it visible for miles around as travelers came to it. Later it was the place of the inn where Mary gave birth to the Christ-child. It was the home of Naomi, who had gone with her husband, Elimelech, to the land of Moab when it was a time of famine in their own land in the days of the judges (Ruth 1:1 ff).

Bethlehem was the home of Boaz, who married Ruth, the widow of Mahlon, and daughter-in-law of Naomi. It was Ruth who gave birth then to Obed by Boaz, and Obed was the father of Jesse. This is the old home of the family of David.

6. *Why were the elders afraid? 16:4b*

The elders of the city came out to meet Samuel, and they were trembling. They asked him if he were coming in peace. These elders would be afraid because a visit from the judge of Israel might mean that there was trouble stirring. When Elijah went to the widow of Zarephath, she accused him of coming to bring her sins to remembrance (I Kings 17:18). This is a natural reaction of sinful people when they stand in the presence of one who is righteous and holy. Quite often the judge or the prophet would come to a community to pronounce judgment upon them. This must have been the thought of the elders of Bethlehem when they came out to meet Samuel.

7. *In what ways did Samuel sanctify Jesse and his sons?*

16:5

God's people never enter lightly into an act of worship. When the people of Israel came to Mt. Sinai under the leadership of Moses, they were given three days to prepare for the receiving of the law. On that occasion we read, "And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third

day: come not at your wives" (Exodus 19:14, 15). Not every occasion would be as filled with meaning as the receiving of the Ten Commandments, but every act of worship is a time to meet the Holy God; and it should not be entered into lightly. No doubt Samuel urged the men of Jesse's house to prepare their hearts, minds, and bodies for the sacrifice which they were to offer. The preparations may well have included the washing of their garments and even the abstaining from connubial relations. When the people of Israel were preparing to cross over into the promised land under the leadership of Joshua, they were given a similar three-day period in which to prepare vic-tuals themselves (Joshua 1:11). Of course, it would be necessary for the household of Jesse to prepare the sacri-ficial animals as they were getting ready for the sacrifice. All of this would be a part of "sanctification" of Jesse and his sons.

8. *Who was Jesse's oldest son?* 16:6

Eliab was the name given to Jesse's oldest son in the book of Samuel. In the book of I Chronicles (27:18), however, he is called *Elibu*. The word *Elibu* means, "He is my God," and the name is given to a number of different people in the Old Testament, including one of Job's friends (Job 32:3). *Eliab* is a word meaning, "God is father." It is generally supposed that the name Elihu is given to him after he became known and officially recognized as the head of the tribe of Judah. This is noted in the passage of Chronicles.

This oldest brother of David made such a good appear-ance that Samuel thought surely this one was the one whom God had chosen. He is quite active in the later history recorded in the Bible. He was contemptuous of David when David went down to the camp of the army (I Samuel 17:28). His daughter, Abigail, married her second cousin, Rehoboam, and bore him three children (II Chron-icles 11:18, 19).

9. *What is the meaning of the "Lord's anointed"?* 16:6b

The Greeks translated this word with the word which is the background for the English word *christ*. It would not be amiss to say that this is the Lord's christ. God had exalted the kingship by anointing the kings as the priests had been anointed earlier. Later we find that the prophets were anointed. These are the chosen men of God, and point forward to Him who is indeed the Lord's Anointed—Prophet, Priest, and King.

Samuel Anoints David. 16:7-13

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.

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

9 Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

10, Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these.

11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all *thy* children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he *was* ruddy, *and* withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this *is* he.

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

10. *Who were Jesse's seven sons? 16:10*

Eliab was the first to pass before him, and in I Chronicles we learn that Abinadab and Shammah were also sons of Jesse. So were Nethanel, Raddai, Ozem, and David himself. These are listed in I Chronicles 2:13-15. According to I Samuel 17:12, Jesse had eight sons. This count in Chronicles, which agrees with that in I Samuel 16:8-12, may be reconciled with the enumeration in I Samuel 17:12 on the supposition that one of the sons died without posterity, hence he was not listed in the passage in Chronicles.

11. *Who was anointed to take Saul's place? 16:11*

Samuel was sent to David. After the seven sons of Jesse had been presented, and the Lord had not pointed out any one of them as the chosen one, Samuel was prompted to ask if these were all. David was absent, having been sent into the field to tend the flock. A full description of his person is given as the narrator tells of his entrance. The adjective "ruddy" is used at times to denote the reddish color of the hair, which was regarded as a mark of beauty in lands where the hair is generally black. All that is said of him indicates how eminently he was fitted, so far as his looks and his figure were concerned, for the office to which the Lord had chosen him. Along with the anointing, the Spirit of Jehovah came upon David from that day forward.

12. *What did Samuel experience in selecting the one to be anointed? 16:12*

Samuel came to Bethlehem and was met by the elders of the city. He sanctified Jesse and his sons. In attempting to find the son God had chosen to anoint king, all seven of the sons of Jesse were brought before Samuel. Having been told by the word of God that none of these seven was the right one, Samuel asked Jesse if these were all of his sons. He was informed that there was one more, the youngest, who was watching over the sheep. Samuel told

Jesse to fetch him, and that they would not so much as eat until he had come. When David was brought to Samuel, Samuel was told of God that this was the right one. 13. *Did David's brothers know he was to be king? 16:12, 13*

There is nothing recorded concerning any words of Samuel to David at the time of the anointing and in explanation of its meaning, as in the case of Saul (10:1). In all probability Samuel said nothing at the time, since, according to verse two, he had good reason for keeping the matter secret, not only on his own account, but still more for David's sake; so that even the brethren of David who were present knew nothing of the meaning and the object of the anointing, but many have imagined that Samuel merely intended to consecrate David as a pupil of the prophets. Immediately following the account of the anointing, we read this brief note, "So Samuel arose and went to Ramah." At the same time, we can hardly suppose that Samuel left Jesse and even David in uncertainty as to the object of his mission and of the anointing which he had performed. He may have communicated all this to both of them, without letting the other sons know. It by no means follows that because David remained with his father and kept the sheep as before that his calling to be king must have been unknown to him. In the anointing which he had received he did not discern either the necessity or obligation to appear openly as the anointed of the Lord. After receiving the Spirit of the Lord in consequence of the anointing, he left the further development of the matter to the Lord in childlike submission, assured that He would prepare and show him the way to the throne in His own good time.

Saul Seeks a Musician. 16:14-23

14 But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.

15 And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.

16 Let our lord now command thy servants, *which are* before thee, to seek out a man, *who is* a cunning player on a harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

17 And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring *him* to me.

18 Then answered one of the servants and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, *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.

19 Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, *which is* with the sheep.

20 And Jesse took an ass *laden* with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent *them* by David his son unto Saul.

21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armor-bearer.

22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favor in my sight.

23 And it came to pass, when the *evil* spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

14. *What was the evil spirit which came upon Saul? 16:14*

Jamiesson says that he had lost everything and was irritable. Matthew Henry said that he grew fretful and peevish and discontented, timorous and suspicious, ever and anon starting and trembling. Josephus says that he was as if he had been choked or strangled, and a perfect demoniac by fits. This made him unfit for business, precipitate in his counsels, the contempt of his enemies, and

a burden to all about him. The affliction was a divine visitation, apparently mental perturbation. It is described as an "evil spirit from Jehovah." It is difficult to discover the exact idea. There is no trace of a belief in the existence of evil spirits, in our sense of the word. We conclude that the spirit thought of as the agency of evil is a higher evil power, which took possession of him, and not only deprived him of his peace of mind, but stirred up his feelings, ideas, imagination, and thoughts. It is from Jehovah, because God sent it as a punishment.

15. *What was Saul's reaction to the servants' suggestion?*
16:17

Saul's servants, seeing him in such an evil state, suggested that he secure a musician to render such music as would bring him comfort. Music was known as a remedy, and the courtiers recommended that he seek a skillful harpist. The powerful influence exerted by music upon the state of mind was well known even in earliest times so that the wise men of ancient Greece recommended music to soothe the passions, to heal mental diseases, and even to chuck tumults among the people. Saul approved his courtiers' plan, and David was mentioned by one of Saul's attendants. Saul sent for David; and coming to court, David speedily established himself in the favor of the king.

16. *How could David be called a man of war?* 16:17, 18

The description of David as a "mighty man" and a "man of war" does not presuppose that David had already fought bravely in war, but may be perfectly explained from what David himself afterwards affirmed respecting his conflicts with lions and bears (17:34, 35). The courage and strength which he had then displayed furnished sufficient proofs of heroism for any one to discern in him the future warrior.

17. *Why did Saul send for David?* 16:19

Saul sent for David to be his attendant. David's name means "beloved," and he had a bubbling personality with

a great deal of talent. His name does not mean "chieftain," as some evidence from the Mari letters may indicate. Saul was not looking for a chieftain as some translations would suppose. He was looking for a man to play the harp before him, and to calm his troubled mind when the evil spirit came upon him.

18. *What presents did Jesse send to Saul? 16:20*

David's father sent an ass laden with bread, a bottle of wine, and a kid to Saul. The Septuagint translation does not show an ass laden with bread, but rather a bushel of bread. This change of translation was made in misreading a Hebrew word for a beast of burden as a homer, and ancient Israelite measure. The circumstances point to David's taking a beast of burden for these various provisions rather than his carrying such a load himself. Such humble gifts to a king indicate that Saul's court was very crude.

19. *What was Saul's attitude toward David? 16:21*

Saul was attracted to David from the first time he saw him. He had no idea that David had been anointed to succeed him. Had there been no jealousy, Saul would have loved David as his own son. It was only when he saw his real potentiality and popularity that Saul was afraid of David and jealous of him. These verses explain how the two men met for the first time. David hardly looked at Saul as a man to replace. He was simply conscientious about his work. His being in the court afforded him the opportunity to learn the responsibilities of a leader of the state. At the same time he was in a position to demonstrate his abilities and talents and thus prepare for the time when he would take over the full responsibilities of the government.

20. *Why did Saul want David to stand before him? 16:22*

Radical critics attack this verse and charge that it was interpolated. There is absolutely no reason for taking this verse out of the text. Its meaning affects the narrative

considerably. Saul evidently called David before him and gave him a short trial period of service. He passed the first examination with flying colors. Saul was attracted to David and loved him. Saul therefore sent word to Jesse and asked him to consider David his servant permanently. Here is an example of the kind of thing which Samuel said would happen when the people got a king. Samuel said that he would take their sons and appoint them for himself (I Samuel 8:11). Saul was not despotic but rather made a request of the father.

21. *What was David's service?* 16:23

David's principal services to Saul consisted mainly of his being with Saul when the evil spirit came upon him. This last verse indicates that his services were needed repeatedly. The Septuagint translates the verb in the way that lends itself to giving the idea of repeated activity. David did not have to do this only once when he was first called to administer to Saul. His services were needed repeatedly, and he was the means of sustaining Saul in his activities.

CHAPTER 16 IN REVIEW

1. To what town did God send Samuel to find a king? _____
2. Who was David's father? _____
3. Of what tribe was he? _____
4. Which purpose of his mission did Samuel announce? _____
5. What was David's "home town"? _____
6. Who was David's oldest brother? _____
7. Which other two of David's brothers were named? _____
8. How many brothers did David have altogether? _____
9. Where did Samuel go after anointing David? _____
10. On what musical instrument did David play? _____