

1st Samuel

Lesson 14

(5) The Prepared Prophet

(a) The Expectation of Saul (9:15-16)

Furthermore, the surprises are never surprising with the LORD. In this case, we come to the prepared prophet with the expectation of Saul. Verse 15.

“Now a day before Saul’s coming, the LORD had revealed this to Samuel saying,¹⁶ “About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over My people Israel; and he will deliver My people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have regarded My people, because their cry has come to Me.” (9:15-16)

The LORD had foretold his prophet Samuel of the events of this day. He had heard the people make the request of Samuel for a king. He had warned the people through Samuel about the problems with an earthly king. Yet, He had prepared Saul well in advance of this moment in time and revealed Saul’s coming to Samuel before Saul’s arrival.

(b) The Attention to Saul (9:17)

Before Saul spoke with Samuel, the LORD drew Samuel’s attention to Saul. Verse 17.

“When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, “Behold, the man of whom I spoke to you! This one shall rule over My people.” (9:17)

I wish I could have seen the face of Samuel as he looked up to see the long tall Saul, more handsome than any other man in Israel. I wonder, did he smile at Saul as the LORD spoke to him?

(c) The Question of Saul (9:18)

Then we hear the question of Saul. Verse 18.

“Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, “Please tell me where the seer’s house is.” (9:18)

It is an interesting question by Saul. The woman had already pointed out Samuel to Saul with his servant as being the seer. Perhaps in reverence, Saul asked for Samuel’s home rather than if Samuel was the seer.

(d) The Invitation for Saul (9:19)

But Samuel did not miss a beat. He had heard from the LORD, and he gave an invitation to Saul. Verse 19.

“Samuel answered Saul and said, “I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and in the morning I will let you go, and will tell you all that is on your mind.” (9:19)

Wonderfully, Samuel offered Saul and his servant a meal, a night’s lodging, and the answers to all his questions, even before Saul asked for anything more than just the location of the seer’s home.

(e) The Solution for Saul (9:20-21)

Then the writer tells us of the solution for Saul. He goes ahead and tells Saul about his father’s donkeys. Verse 20.

“As for your donkeys which were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father’s household?”²¹ Saul replied, “Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me in this way?” (9:20-21)

Three important things are taking place in this passage. First, when Kish sent Saul to find the donkeys, the donkeys were found within three days and already back at home. Saul had no doubt

been gone longer than three days. Samuel told Saul this on the morning of the second day after Saul had eaten and spent the night with Samuel. That was part of two days. Saul could not have left Gibeah, traveled north through the land of Ephraim, turned left to journey across the mountains of Ephraim to the land of the foxes, and then searched the western portion of the land of Benjamin in just one day. Therefore, Samuel told Saul that his father's donkeys were found on the third day after they were lost. We do not know how many days the donkeys were lost before Saul was sent. A hard and fast rule on how long the donkeys were gone cannot be said. It can be said that the donkeys were found in three days after Kish began to look for them.

Second, Samuel spoke with such divine and wonderful words to Saul, taking him back. How could Samuel speak to Saul in such a way? Why would Samuel speak to Saul like this? After all, as we have mentioned before in our study of this chapter, Saul's family was the least of all the families in the tribe of Benjamin.

All of that led to the third point. Saul questioned Samuel's reasoning for addressing him with such divine and wonderful words. Evidently, Saul did not think of himself worthy of such glorious words. But it was because he was chosen by the LORD to be worthy.

(f) The Preparation for Saul (9:22-24)

Little did Saul know about Samuel, but Samuel knew about Saul. The LORD told Samuel that Saul was coming. The preparation for Saul was made by Samuel in expectation of Saul's arrival. Verse 22.

"Then Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall and gave them a place at the head of those who were invited, who were about thirty men. ²³ Samuel said to the cook, 'Bring the portion that I gave you, concerning which I said to you, 'Set it aside.' " ²⁴ Then the cook took up the leg with what was on it and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, 'Here is what has been reserved! Set it before you and eat, because it has been kept for you until the appointed time, since I said I have invited the people.'" So Saul ate with Samuel that day." (9:22-24)

Banquets such as this do not just happen out of the blue. Before Saul arrived in Ramah, Samuel had taken a choice piece of meat to the cook and made plans for this banquet before Saul's anointing. The fact of the matter is, as yet, Samuel has not told Saul that he is the first human king of Israel. Saul and his servant ate the food in the banquet hall up at the high place where the people in need could join the priests to eat when they were hungry. But more than that, before the arrival of Saul in the city of Ramah, Samuel had invited guests to join in the banquet. We must wonder what they all knew about Saul. What had Samuel told them as the reason to come and dine?

(g) The Conversation with Saul (9:25-27)

After Saul and all had completed the meal, Saul, the servant, and Samuel retreated to the rooftop. There a conversation with Saul took place. Verse 25.

"When they came down from the high place into the city, Samuel spoke with Saul on the roof. ²⁶ And they arose early; and at daybreak Samuel called to Saul on the roof, saying, 'Get up, that I may send you away.'" So Saul arose, and both he and Samuel went out into the street. ²⁷ As they were going down to the edge of the city, Samuel said to Saul, 'Say to the servant that he might go ahead of us and pass on, but you remain standing now, that I may proclaim the word of God to you.'" (9:25-27)

In this passage, the writer does not tell us what Samuel said to Saul on the rooftop that night. However, it was in the safety of the rooftop that they spent the night. More than likely, they were on the rooftop of Samuel's own home in Ramah. In those days, if a person lived in a mudbrick home or some other sturdy construction, the roof was where sleeping occurred most of the year when weather permitted.

Be that as it may, when morning broke, Samuel awoke. In turn, Samuel woke Saul and his servant and took them to the street level, where Saul sent the servant ahead some distance to wait for Saul. Samuel was not finished with Saul. Saul needed to hear the Word of the LORD

concerning his future. We would have no idea if Saul knew about anything that was about to happen in the next few moments.

Chapter 10

(h) The Consecration of Saul (10:1)

As we come to chapter 10, Samuel had Saul where he wanted him. His servant had gone on ahead. It was time for Saul to hear the Word of the LORD, and it had to do with the consecration of Saul. Chapter 10, verse 1.

“Then Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it on his head, kissed him and said, “Has not the LORD anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?” (10:1)

How can it be that something so simple as pouring oil on a person’s head, a kiss, and an announcement could constitute a consecration by one person to be the king of Israel? But it did. Why? As Samuel reported, it was the LORD Who anointed Saul as the ruler over the LORD’s inheritance. How simple yet, powerful could it have been.

(i) The Separation from Saul Instruction

(i) To Find Two Men (10:2)

It was time for Samuel to send Saul away. It was time for the separation from the Benjamite. But Saul was not sent away without a prophecy from Samuel about his future. Samuel told him four things that were about to happen. First, he was to find two men. Verse 2.

“When you go from me today, then you will find two men close to Rachel’s tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you, ‘The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. Now behold, your father has ceased to be concerned about the donkeys and is anxious for you, saying, “What shall I do about my son?”’ (10:2)

Rachel was the wife of Jacob for whom he had labored fourteen years to have her as a wife. She was also the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph knew her as his mother, but Benjamin did not. She died giving birth to Benjamin. Rachel’s tomb is still with us today. She was buried on the border of what became the tribal area of Benjamin. The tomb is located at the northern entrance to Bethlehem, the place where the LORD Jesus will take on the flesh of man to be born as a babe many years in the future. When journeying to Jerusalem, you can go to the southern border of the city and look south. Bethlehem is just under five miles from Jerusalem. Because Jerusalem sits on a mountain, Bethlehem can be seen in the distance. Some might ask if Rachel’s tomb was on the border of Benjamin and Judah, how could her tomb be located south of Jerusalem, which was located in the tribal area of Judah. We have answered this dilemma many times in past studies, but we will address it again.

At this point in the storyline, the Canaanite tribe called the Jebusites controlled their great walled city called the Jebusite Citadel. It sat in the tribal area of Benjamin. At the urging of Joshua, as well as Joshua urging to all the tribes after their last full meeting together at Shiloh, every tribe was to return to their tribal area in



Tomb of Rachel

the Promised Land and destroy all the Canaanites. Benjamin did not attempt to take the Jebusite Citadel; therefore, the LORD did not defeat the citadel, and the Benjamites had to live with the Jebusites controlling a portion of their land for almost four hundred years to this point in the story. The Jebusite Citadel sat on the Benjamite border with the tribal area of Judah, divided by a ravine. On the Judah side of the ravine sat the old city of Salem, or Jerusalem, where Melchizedek was king during the days of Abraham. Even at that time, the Jebusites control the citadel across the ravine. The ravine is the point of this explanation. The ravine wanders south to the southwest around Jerusalem, causing the border of Benjamin's land to swirl around Jerusalem, which sat in Judah's land. South of the city, at Zelzah, in the tribal area of Benjamin, sat the town of Ramah, Samuel's home, the burial place of Rachel. When Rachel died, Jacob placed a pillar to mark her grave, which was still standing when Moses wrote the story of her death in Genesis 35:20. Later, in the first decade of the fourth century AD, a tomb was built over the stone pillar. It is still there today, but renovations have changed its looks completely. Being a holy site for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, it has been fortified for protection. It is so protected that it is unrecognizable from a distance.

Just south of Rachel's tomb was Samuel's home in the village of Ramah. Saul will need to pass by Rachel's tomb on his way north out of the city to return to his father's house up the road in Gibeah. At the tomb, Saul would meet two men who would tell him that his father's concerns for the donkeys had passed and that his father's concern was now for his traveling son.

(ii) To Find Three Men (10:3-4)

On up the road to Gibeah, Samuel told Saul he would find three men. Verse 3.

"Then you will go on further from there, and you will come as far as the oak of Tabor, and there three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a jug of wine;⁴ and they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from their hand." (10:3-4)

The *oak of Tabor* means *the oak of weeping*. This oak tree was near Bethel, where Deborah died and was buried. She was the nurse of Rebekah, Isaac's wife (Genesis 35:8). It is in this same Genesis passage where we learn that Jacob and his pregnant wife, Rachel, were traveling from Bethel down to Ramah when Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin (Genesis 8:16-20).

It would not be hard for Saul to notice these three men near the oak tree. There, the three men would be waiting with a meal and supplies for Saul's arrival and enjoyment. It was about sixteen miles from Ramah to Bethel. Therefore, it was perhaps where Saul would need to rest for the night before traveling on. Indeed, it was a wonderful place for Saul and his servant to have a meal.