

1st Samuel

Lesson 34

(xv) Where Samuel Went (15:34-35)

After Samuel finished off the job that Saul left incomplete, we see where Samuel went. Verse 34.

“Then Samuel went to Ramah, but Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul.” Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death; for Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.” (15:34-35)

Alas, Samuel never saw Saul again for the rest of his life here on earth. Neither did Saul see Samuel until the last day of Saul’s life. How can that be? Not to get too far ahead in the story, but it is crucial to understand at this place in the study that in the last chapter of this book, Saul will go to a witch and ask her to conjure up the spirit of Samuel. Samuel will arrive at the surprise of the witch and everyone else. Samuel will ask Saul, “why have you awoken me from my peaceful rest.” Then Samuel will tell Saul that he will die that day in battle. That is the scene as to how Samuel did not see Saul for the rest of his life here on earth and how Saul did not see Samuel again until the last day Saul was alive.

This last passage is an interesting time marker for the writing of this whole book, from chapter 8 to the end. The writers, whom I believe to be the prophet Gad, and the prophet Nathan, will complete the rest of the book. Gad’s record will encompass the story with an eyewitness account of David. Nathan’s record will contain the story with an eyewitness account of Saul. I will prove that point as we progress through the passages. Concerning this passage, we know that this story in chapter 15 had to be recorded after the death of King Saul. He had to have known about the end of Samuel’s life and also the death of Saul. Therefore, we can assume that the rest of the book of 1st Samuel was also written after the death of Saul, during the reign of King David. As we will see at the time of the death of King Saul, David grieved his death even though Saul was a thorn in David’s side and seeking to kill David. King David will be known as the kind of man who would want King Saul’s story recorded for the nation of Israel.

Finally, the same writer who said, “*I regret that I have made Saul king*” in 15:10 says, “*And the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel,*” in this verse. The Hebrew word is *nacham*, and it expresses the LORD’s sorrow for what Saul had done. As Keil and Delitzsch’s Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament states about this verse, “... *this does not express any changeableness in the divine nature, but simply the sorrow of the divine love at the rebellion of sinners....*” A literal translation of the Hebrew would be better translated, “*And Yahweh was sorrowful for what King Saul made over Israel.*”

Chapter 16

2. The Story of the Anointing of David as the Next King

a) To the City of Bethlehem (16:1-2a)

Samuel had left Saul at Gilgal, not to see him again in this life. He will see him again after his death, but that is a story we will cover in detail at the end of this book. Samuel had anointed Saul to be king about twenty years earlier; it was now time for Samuel to anoint the next king who will take Saul’s place about twenty years in the future. We come to the story of the anointing of David as the next king and the LORD leading Samuel to the city of Bethlehem. Chapter 16, verse 1.

“Now the LORD said to Samuel, ‘How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons.’”² But Samuel said, “How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” (16:1-2a)

The LORD saw the grief of Samuel concerning Saul. Samuel had invested much in Saul, but repeatedly Saul was a disappointment to Samuel. He was also a disappointment to the LORD, but the LORD knew he would be before He selected Saul. Nothing surprises the LORD. It must have been a long journey home for Samuel. It was the same distance in miles, and Samuel had made the trip from Gilgal to Ramah many times. Sometimes the length of a journey is measured in grief. I never will forget when I rode in a funeral procession for the first time as a child. I had walked the route from my home to the school many times. I walked past the church and then to the school many times. The cemetery was just past the school. I looked at it every day from the playground. But on that funeral day, a whole line of cars followed each other from the church to the graveyard. The tires rolled along so slow, hardly turning at all. I remember thinking that I could have walked from home to school and back many times in the span of that ride to the cemetery. But Samuel was on foot. Did he walk a little slower that day because he reflected on Saul? Did he stop more often to rest because the grief overcame him so much? Or, did he march home as quick as he could, shut the door and sit in utter despair over the sin of Saul? How long was he there before the LORD spoke to him? We do not know the answers to any of these questions. All we know is that Samuel was grieving. He was grieving over Saul. But notice, the LORD said to Samuel, *“I have rejected him from being king over Israel.”* It was not Samuel’s doing; it was the LORD’s. It was the LORD’s divine choice. Why did the LORD remind Samuel of that point? It was because the LORD had another job for Samuel. *“Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons.”* The LORD had an assignment for Samuel, and it was time for Samuel to put away his grief and get on with the divine job.

Samuel answered the LORD with a strange answer. *“How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me.”* We are at a loss as to why Samuel had any fear of Saul, even the fear of death at the hands of Saul. It would seem that it would be Saul who would be afraid of Samuel instead. Samuel had anointed Saul, intervened to correct Saul at times. Surely, Saul knew that the LORD had His hand on Samuel and directed his every move. Saul also knew that the LORD did not speak with him personally and all the direction of the LORD to Saul came through Samuel. That direction had ended at Gilgal. Then we come to Samuel and why he was afraid of Saul. Was Samuel’s trust in the LORD wavering? Even amid all the leadership of the LORD in our lives today, circumstances arise that cause us to waiver in our trust in the LORD at times. Such feelings and emotions are just normal to all humans. Samuel’s response to the LORD reflected his natural humanity coming to the surface. We must remember that Samuel’s ministry circuit regularly took him to Saul’s hometown, and staying away from Saul would be difficult. In addition, all of the towns and villages involved in this story are not far apart. Samuel was probably right in his overall assessment that Saul was probably going to find out about the anointing of another king.

Samuel’s assignment was located in the town of Bethlehem with the family of Jesse. If you will remember, the tomb of Rachel is located north of the town of Ramah, the hometown of Samuel in the tribal area of Benjamin. However, if you have ever visited the tomb of Rachel, you did so in the town of Bethlehem. Was the name of the village of Ramah changed to Bethlehem at some time, and our Scripture translators have interchanged the names? No. Ramah was located in the tribal area of Benjamin; Bethlehem was located in the tribal area of Judah. Both were on the borders of their tribes; both were next to each other. Rachel’s tomb was north of Ramah. Next to Ramah, across the borderline, was Bethlehem. Today, because the tribal borders are non-existent, the name of Bethlehem has overtaken the whole area.

The point of this description is to make everyone aware that Samuel lived near the family of Jesse the Bethlehemite. Samuel must have known the whole history of Jesse's family. Samuel knew the story of Ruth and recorded all the details in his book by that name. At the end of the book of Ruth, Samuel included the genealogy of David all the way back to Ruth. The purpose of the book of Ruth in our Bible is to give us the heritage of King David. At this time in the story, David was old enough to tend the flocks by himself. But at this time, Samuel knew he was going to Jesse's home, but he did not know the name of Jesse's son that was to be anointed as yet.

(1) To Make a Sacrifice (16:2b-4a)

The LORD moved away from Samuel's fear to continue with His instructions for the anointing of the next king. Samuel was to prepare to make a sacrifice, verse 2b.

*"And the LORD said, 'Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 'You shall invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for Me the one whom I designate to you.'"*⁴ *So Samuel did what the LORD said, and came to Bethlehem."* (16:2b-4a)

The LORD instructed Samuel to provide a sacrifice and invite Jesse to the service. Samuel was a priest and had every right to offer the sacrifice. The sacrifice was to be a heifer. The mere mention of the word "heifer" was an instant indication of the kind of offering the LORD wanted so that every Jew who would read the book would understand. They would all understand until the Jewish faith was reworked by the rabbis in AD 70 when Titus destroyed the Temple. But as a Christian, we must look into the book of Leviticus to search out the answer. First, a "heifer" is a female cow. Second, what sacrifices listed in Leviticus allows a female cow. Here is the answer. Of all the variations of the offerings with the different animals that could be used for each, the "heifer," the female cow, was allowed for only one offering – the Sacrifice of Peace Offering. We have mention it before even in this study in 1st Samuel. A *Sacrifice of Peace Offering* is also called a *Sacrifice of Thanks Offering*. It is an offering in thanks to the LORD for what He has done. When Samuel makes the offering, it will be in thanks to the LORD for identification and anointing of the next king of Israel.

Here is how the offering will transpire. Samuel will place his hand on the head of the heifer, transferring any possible sin to the animal. He will cut the neck of the heifer and a priest helping him will catch some of the blood. The helper priest will sprinkle some of the blood on the altar and pour the rest at the base of the altar. Samuel will skin the animal and take the fat portions with the entrails, the two kidneys, the loins, the lobe of the liver and wash them before placing them on the altar to be burned to ashes. Samuel will give the hide to the helper priest. Then the rest of the heifer will be cooked to be eaten by the priests and all the invited guests.

(2) To Consecrate the People (16:4b-5)

Samuel acquired a heifer and made his way just a short distance to Bethlehem. He will need to invite guests to join him in his sacrifice of peace offering in thanking the LORD, and it will not take him long to find them. But the guests will need to be consecrated. Entering Bethlehem, the elders will approach Samuel. The instruction will come to consecrate the people. Verse 4b.

*"And the city elders came trembling to meet him and said, 'Do you come in peace?'"*⁵ *He said, 'In peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.'"* He also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice." (16:4b-5)

Samuel was afraid of Saul, but now we see that the elders of Bethlehem were afraid of Samuel. Perhaps, Samuel had no reason to be afraid of Saul because everyone was afraid of Samuel and that included Saul. Why were the elders afraid of Samuel? First, he was the last living judge who protected Israel. Perhaps the fear was out of respect for Samuel. But, second, and more likely, every Israelite knew that the LORD spoke one-on-one with Samuel and if he was coming to Bethlehem, off of his regular ministry circuit, he was coming for some big reason.

“Do you come in peace?” the elders ask. Samuel answered yes. He was coming to offer a sacrifice to the LORD. He did not have to tell them the kind of sacrifice because he was leading a heifer, and that meant that it was a sacrifice of peace or thanksgiving to the LORD. Immediately, the elders would have known that all was well. Because of the kind of sacrifice, the elders also knew a meal was in store for them. They were all invited by Samuel to the worship. But they needed to consecrate themselves before coming. If you ever look up the word consecrate in a regular dictionary, it will say something like *to make or declare something as being sacred*. But if you look the word up in theological books, it will always take you to the word *sanctify or sanctification*. Such is the case in this passage. The English word should have been translated *sanctify*. *“Sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.”* What does that mean? What did Samuel want the elders to do? Samuel was simply telling the elders to go home, wash yourselves clean, put on clean clothes, and come to the service.

The text tells us that *“He also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.”* It simply means that Samuel went to Jesse and invited him and his sons to the service, but they needed to clean up and wear their best clean clothes.