

**Samuel – God's obedient servant**  
(Following God's instructions when we would rather not.)

**Introduction:** God has entrusted his faithful servant Samuel with the task of anointing the young, tall, and handsome Saul to be Israel's first king. When the people first approached him asking for a king (chap 8:6), Samuel was displeased. But, instead of complaining or pouting, he did the one thing we should all learn to do; **he prayed to the Lord**. God explained to Samuel how His people had rejected Him and for Samuel to warn them of what they were getting into. Samuel poured out his heart warning Israel but they refused to heed his advice. Once again Samuel turns to the Lord and He tells Samuel what must have been saddening to him, "Listen to them and give them a king." Samuel knows, through his Godly insight, what the outcome is going to be. Yet he is obedient in every way to God's direction. He has met Saul and his servant, told Saul about the lost donkeys, and told him of God's plan for him. He has fed them, hosted them overnight, being gracious and caring in all he has done. Now, it is the next morning and he must finish God's instruction by anointing Saul and try to prepare him for what is to come within the next seven days. After anointing him, he gives him some instructions for some very specific reasons. He wants Saul to know that all that happens to him in the next few days is ordered by Yahweh, the God of his ancestors.

**Read the entire passage (9:26 to 10:16).** In this passage Samuel gives Saul specific information and instructions that will prove to him that God intends for him to become the leader of Israel. However, most of what Saul is to do is passive and not of an active nature on his part. Samuel, on the other hand, is actively involved in the process of Saul's transformation/preparation for kingship.

Look at how Samuel maintains control of all that happens but under the direction of the Lord at all times. Samuel does not seek power, recognition, or any gain of any kind. His sole objective is to be obedient to Yahweh. In turn, in every instance we have seen, God always shows incredible respect for Samuel by always explaining His reasons for doing what He does.

**Q. 1. Chap 9, Verses 26 & 27 & Chap 10, Verse 1, The Anointing of Saul**

**(a) What was the significance of anointing Saul?**

God had commanded that the ordination of Levitical priests and the consecration of items of worship were to be accomplished by the anointing with oil as described in Lev. 8:10-12, & 30. Also see Num. 7:1

**(b) How was it different from any prior Israelite anointing?**

Heretofore anointings were strictly spiritual whereas this seems to be political. Saul is not being anointed to be a priest but instead to be a king. However, the anointing represents an intended and direct submission to Yahweh's sovereignty. God's plan for Saul (even knowing that he will fail) is to be as He directed in Deut. 17:14-20. God's plan for the Israelite king was to be a servant king; one whom would learn to revere the Lord.

**Q. 2. Verse 2, Signs from God of a physical nature; the two men at Zelzah near Rachel's Tomb.**

**(a) Samuel, the seer, knew about the two men. Who might have the two men have been?**

Rachel died near Bethlehem (Ephrath) and is believed to have been buried there. The tomb referred to in the text is likely a shrine (cenotaph)/monument, built across the border in the land of Benjamin to honor Rachel as the matriarch of the Tribe of Benjamin. Although the text does not so state, the two men may have been messengers sent by Kish waiting at the border, watching the road for Saul and his servant. They knew that the donkeys had been found and that Kish was worried about Saul. There is no further mention of the encounter other than we are told in verse 9 that, "all these signs were fulfilled that day."

**Q. 3. Verses 3-8, Signs from God of a spiritual nature: Bethel, Gilbeah of God, and Gilgal.**

**(a) What stands out about Samuel's instructions to Saul?**

Samuel, in a sense, is himself prophesying in his instructions to Saul. The first eight verses of chapter 10 contain the longest recorded narrative by Samuel to an individual person. His foreknowledge of the coming events has come directly from God. Samuel faithfully informs and instructs Saul of what to expect and what to do. I think it is important to notice that Samuel faithfully, without prejudice, relays the information on to Saul.

**(b) Why did the three men going up to Bethel give Saul two loaves of their bread?**

The three men were on their way to sacrifice. The three young goats were for the sacrifice for each individual man. The three loaves of bread were a thank-you offering for the priest(s). The wine was probably for their own use. However, the three men, divinely inspired, would recognize and greet Saul as a person of God's anointing; one to whom a gift should be given, and of course his servant with him. Again, verse 9 is the confirmation the event took place.

**(c) What was to happen at Gilbeah of God?**

Saul was to meet a procession of prophets coming down from the "High Place" prophesying and playing musical instruments. Three things were to happen to Saul

1. The Spirit of the Lord was to come upon him in power.
2. He was to prophesy with the other prophets
3. He would be changed.

In reading several commentaries it seems that the group of prophets is attending a school wherein they are being taught the law by someone directly under Samuel's supervision. They may have just graduated or reached an academic milestone resulting in their jubilant celebration in which they are singing, playing instruments, and reciting their acquired knowledge of the law; prophesying in other words. The spirit of the Lord would come upon Saul and he would instantly join in prophesying with the students, having acquired the same knowledge of the law as the others but received through the Holy Spirit. This experience would change him into a different person.

**(d) What was Saul to do afterwards and for the next week or so?**

Samuel tells Saul that when all the events of which he has told him have occurred, Saul should go about his normal routine, doing whatever needs to be done, knowing that God is with you. Up to this point, in all of the three occurrences of “signs from God” all that is required from Saul is to show up. Not until the signs are fulfilled is Saul to given license to take any actions. Saul is also to go to Gilgal and wait for Samuel’s arrival in seven days. Samuel will make sacrifices and offerings and also mentor Saul to become king; telling him what he needs to know and do.

**Q. 4. Verses 9-12, Saul’s departure and the three encounters.**

**(a) What was the change that took place in Saul’s heart?**

The different translations and commentaries describe the change as Saul being given a *new* heart, *another* heart, a *different* heart, a *changed* heart, and a *changed attitude*. I think a changed attitude best describes what happened to Saul. Back in Chapter 9, verse 21 Saul is almost scoffing at the idea that he could be “Captain or Leader” due to being a Benjamite. But now Saul is quiet and possibly introspective. We do not even hear him speak or say anything other than the prophesying until the conversation with his uncle.

**(b) Saul prophesies. What is the reaction of the bystanders?**

When they reached Gilbeah Saul prophesied with the prophets just as Samuel had said would happen. What seems interesting is that the writer devotes only a portion of a one sentence to Saul’s Divine experience. It is the reaction of the bystanders upon which the writer places the focus. Some of the bystanders knew Saul and for him to be among the prophets and especially to be speaking in the manner as them was completely out of character. Based on Saul’s lack of knowledge regarding Samuel prior to having met him, and the astonishment of the bystanders now, Saul had not shown any significant interest of spiritual things in the past. The reference to his father Kish seems to reflect that the whole family had an overall lack of interest in God.

**(c) In verse 12, to what is the man (who lived there in the town) referring regarding “their father”?**

It is possible that the man is making a derogatory remark about the entire group of prophets and singling out Saul and his association with the group. Keep in mind that Israel is no longer focused on Yahweh but are looking for a mortal king. The prophets and the study of the Law is no longer held in a place of respect. The people are no longer seeking Yahweh. The man is implying that Saul can’t be a prophet because of his lineage. Furthermore, if he is truly a prophet then Kish cannot be his father thus implying immorality. Either way, it is obvious that the bystanders have no insight into what is really happening.

**Q. 5. Verses 13-16, Saul encounters his uncle.**

**(a) What did Saul do after prophesying?**

After prophesying Saul goes to the high place. Some commentaries believe this reference to the “high place” is the place of worship. Other narratives believe it to his father’s home. However, it seems entirely plausible that in light of all that has happened Saul feels the need to worship. After all, his heart has been changed to some extent. He may have given a loaf of bread to the priest.....who knows??

**(b) What stands out regarding Saul’s encounter with his uncle?**

We are not given to know where Saul encountered his uncle. If Saul had returned home it would seem that his uncle would know all about the lost donkeys and why Saul was gone. If he met his uncle along the road as a coincidence his uncle may not have known where Saul had been. Whether the uncle was interrogating Saul or innocently inquiring we do not know. However, Saul only tells his uncle what Samuel said about the lost donkeys. He reveals nothing else.

**(c) Why does Saul not tell his uncle about the anointing?**

The reason Saul may have not told his uncle about the anointing and the encounters could be one of several reasons. He may have been a bit bewildered by all that has happened or he may just not want to talk about it. Samuel may have told him not to talk about it to anyone until they could meet at Gilgal. However, the writer has been pretty explicit about what Saul is to do and it seems that any instructions regarding Saul to remain silent would have been recorded. Another reason for Saul not telling his uncle may very well have been directly related to the “change” imparted to Saul’s heart by the Lord. It may be that Saul felt an inner need to have time to reflect upon all that had taken place over the last couple days similar to how Mary reacted on the night Jesus was born. Luke 2:19 “But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.” Saul was still in the middle of this process and Samuel would be meeting him in a few days with further instructions.

**Summary:**

Although this passage relates the encounters Saul experienced as foretold (to verify that God had divinely inspired them all) nothing would have happened without the obedience of Samuel responding to God’s instructions. The overlying theme seems to be the diligent effort of Samuel to ensure that God’s plan is accomplished. Samuel never questions Yahweh’s instructions or leading. Even in his old age he is just as responsive to God’s call as when he was a boy. When Samuel has questions or is displeased he goes straight to the Lord for answers. (Chapter 8, verse 6)

**Where do we go in times of uncertainty or displeasure with our circumstances?**

**How do we react to the Lord’s direction in our lives when it doesn’t fit our plan?**

**How do we mentor or uplift those whom God sends into our lives?**