

1 Samuel 16:1-3: The Character of the King of Kings - Part 1

This morning we finally get to a point in the narrative of 1 Samuel where we have hope. It is here that we are introduced to king David. And although Saul will be around for quite some time to come - mostly as the antagonist to David, with David the book transitions substantially.

This section is one of the most well known in the book - the secret anointing of David, the passage that makes so clear to us that God looks not on the outward appearance of a man like we do, but God evaluates the inner man. He sees the heart.

To be honest, there's so much going on in just these 13 verses, I wanted to break this section up into 2 parts so that we can properly cover the section. We'll look at it this week, then we'll pick it up in 2 weeks with Christmas in between.

To start off, there are many layers to this section. One layer is that David is a type of Christ. His story will prophetically match Jesus' own life in many ways. Many of the Psalms that David writes, Jesus actually quotes as pointing to himself. Here we see the prophet of God who is on a mission to anoint the King of Israel in a private ceremony.

You remember John the Baptist? He was a prophet of God who anointed Jesus in a private ceremony. Both John and Samuel were Nazarites - they drank no wine, never cut their hair, and didn't touch dead bodies. But do you remember why John came? Most people remember that he came to prepare the way for Jesus and preach repentance. That's true. But John says actually he came so that Jesus would be revealed.

John 1:31: ...But for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.

God had told John that through his baptism ministry the Messiah would be revealed. So the prophet of God revealed the King of Israel. And if you remember, at Jesus' baptism he was anointed. Not with oil, but with what? The Holy Spirit, who descended on Jesus like a dove.

By the way: Connections between Jesus and David are good and natural. Jesus makes them, the NT writers make them, when God promised the Messiah he promised that David would reign, God promised David that the Messiah would come from his lineage. So these are all good and natural connections between Jesus and David.

So one layer is that this is a picture, a type, of Jesus and John the Baptist to come.

Another layer is that we finally get to the good king. We've been dealing with Saul a long time. Saul who has been a continual disappointment from day one. He is not pure evil, of course, but he is certainly not the king anyone thought he would be. And instead now we have David who, as we read, has a heart felt desire to please the Lord. He really is a breath of fresh air in a lot of ways.

But what we're going to find out is that David is a sinner just like us. He is a man after God's own heart but he's also a man after Adam's own flesh. What we need to remember is that although David is a good king, and a model king, and in many ways a type of Jesus to come, he is a sinful man in need of constant forgiveness just like the rest of us.

If you step back and look at David's life, what's interesting is that David is almost continually an upstanding model of godliness until he actually begins to reign as king. All the time Saul is king we see nothing but over-the-top godliness and patience. But the moment he begins to reign there is turmoil. And that turmoil really doesn't stop all the days he is king.

Which is really points to the third layer here: that God is actually the hero of this story. A lot of times we think this is the story of David. You'll read books about the model life of David - how we should live like him and act like him. David becomes our hero and our guy. And that's not the worst thing in the world. There's a lot about David's life that is commendable and worthy of imitating.

But we always need to keep in mind that this is the story of God. And it always has been. It was the story of God working among his people when Saul was king and it's the story of God as David is king. It is God working among sinful people to save his people and bring himself glory.

And that's really what we see here. Samuel's not out trying to figure out what's next and plotting and praying about what to do. No, it's God who comes to Samuel and says "get over it, I've already got another guy lined up. Saul didn't ruin my plan." This is God's work among his people to bring them salvation. As much as David is chosen to be king, the whole section is about God. It's where God essentially says: you guys had your turn to pick a king, now it's my turn. You guys messed it up big time, now it's my turn to get it right.

And where most of Israel would have cast their vote to pick Saul to be king, no one would have picked David. He was the youngest and the smallest. He was so low on the social totem pole that his family didn't even call him to the house when the prophet of God showed up. That'd be like being so low on the familial totem pole that your parents tell you to go wash the dogs while Alastair Begg or John MacArthur or John Piper or whoever your favorite preacher is comes over to your house. That's pretty low on the totem pole.

No one would have guessed David would be king. But that's who God had chosen. What I want to do this morning is look at the character, not of David, but of God as he works in this situation. We'll break this up into 2 parts. So what do we learn about God in this section?

1) God is actively interested in the political affairs. Read 15:35

I don't say this to make some sort of political statement. But I think a lot of times we think God is uninterested in rulers and politics and how the government works. Almost as though his sovereignty is a cold sovereignty in the political world where he just sort of appoints whoever he wants and really has no emotional or relational investment in kings and rulers.

But that's not true. We saw several times in the last chapter where God was sorry he had made Saul king. Not in the sense that he made a mistake - God never makes mistakes. But in the sense that he was sad and grieved by what had become of Saul.

By the way, how does that work? How is it that God can feel regret or sorrow if he knows everything and ordains everything? How is that possible?

Every analogy is imperfect, I know. But we have similar situations we go through. Have you ever had to do something you knew was right, but also knew was hard? The rightness doesn't make it easier. If you've ever had to put a pet down because they are old or suffering and you know that just because you've planned to do it, doesn't erase all the emotion.

Have you ever played board game and at some point in the game you realized: I'm not going to win. This isn't going to happen for me, there's no chance. Does that information erase all the feelings of sorrow or frustration? Of course not. You know you're not going to win, your loss hasn't happened just yet, but it will happen. But that doesn't erase the emotions.

People who show no emotion when others are harmed are called sociopaths. God is not a sociopath. He is the most emotionally balanced person there is. He always has the proper emotional response to every situation because he alone rightly understands it and rightly carries out history to its end.

So just because God knows and ordains the future doesn't erase his emotions about a situation. God has real emotions: anger, sadness, grief, rejoicing. God is a person, after all. Three persons, one God. And he experiences emotions just like we do.

And his grief in this situation reminds us that God does actively look on the affairs of the governing authorities around us with emotional investment. He has ordained governing authorities to carry out justice, to reduce oppression, reward righteous behavior, punish evil. He is grieved when they don't do that and he will ultimately hold them accountable.

Dan. 2:21: He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;

He even cares about the souls of our leaders. **1 Tim. 2:1-4** says that we are to pray for kings and all in authority. Why? Because God desires all people to be saved. His point is just that God wants all types of people to be saved: kings and governing authorities included. People we might think God has no concern about, God actually has eternal concern about.

All that to say, God does actually care about - and grieves over - poor leadership.

2) God wants us to be balanced emotionally. **Read 1-2**

So the second point is that God wants us to be balanced emotionally. That sounds a lot like pop psychology and fluffy feel good nonsense. But it is true actually. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ we are to have proper emotional responses to situations and when we don't, God is not pleased.

Rom 12:15: We are to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who what? Weep.

Cry with them. When the body of Christ is in pain it should cause us pain. When the body of Christ has victory we should sing God's praises.

"Joy isn't an emotion! Happiness is an emotion." That might be true to some extent, but why is it when you're depressed that you don't feel like being joyful? Joy assumes an **emotional** response not because of a situation, but in spite of a situation.

Did you know we're supposed to hate? That's an emotion. We don't hate people, but we hate evil. (**Rom. 12:9**)

Spouses are to have intimate passion for each other. **Proverbs 5:18-19:** We are to rejoice in the wife of our youth and be intoxicated in her love.

We are to feel shame over sin and immoral behavior (**1 Cor. 15:34**). And often depression is caused by unconfessed sin **Psalms 32:3-4:** For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For night and day your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of the summer."

Although most of the time that we are angry it's a result of sin, there is such a thing as righteous anger. God has made us as emotional beings. We're not robots. Emotionless Christians are not more mature, in fact they may be as immature as Christians who are continually on an emotional rollercoaster.

Here the emotion is grief. And grief all by itself is not bad. Samuel is grieving the loss of Saul's dynasty as king. Why was he grieving? What was the big deal?

Well, to some extent Samuel knew that Saul was the dawning of a new type of government in Israel. From being ruled by judges to a formal monarchy, Saul was the very first king. And Samuel was instrumental in the transition. He had endorsed Saul, he had anointed him, he had defended him, rebuked him, invested in him. And here Samuel was at the end of his life and rather than seeing Israel set to go after he was gone, he was back at square one.

Everything he had worked for and all of his credibility were gone. You younger folks probably can't relate to that, but maybe some of you older folks can. Everything you've spent your life on, everything you've invested in, the person you thought you could rely on - all gone. Your legacy, your influence gone. Standing at the end of life wondering: what was that all about? That was Samuel.

And here's what God says. **Read 1**

So, time is up on grieving. And here's the interesting thing: just 1 verse ago God was grieving. He regretted that he had made Saul king. But now he's rebuking Samuel. What's up with that?

What's up with that is that while it's okay to grieve - God grieves, the Holy Spirit grieves, even Jesus is deeply troubled in his soul before the crucifixion. What's not okay is continual, unending, inconsolable grief. When our lives are defined by any one emotion it's usually because we have an improper understanding of who God is.

The apostle Paul touched on inappropriate grief in **1 Thes. 4:13**: We do not want you to grieve as others who have no hope.

Christians are to grieve, but not like those who have no hope. Sometimes those who have no hope have zero grief at all. They don't mourn when they should. That's not right. But neither is it right to have unending grief, inconsolable grief. Where our lives are defined by constant loss and sorrow.

Why were the Thessalonians grieving like that? Because they had wrong theology. We don't know exactly what it was: maybe they thought they'd never see their deceased Christian brothers again, or maybe they thought their deceased Christian brothers wouldn't be part of the resurrection. But whatever it was they were grieving because of wrong theology.

Here, Samuel is grieving because of wrong theology. He's in this self-pity, woe-is-me thing and God's saying: "Don't you know I have a plan? Don't you know I'm sovereign? Saul is done, but I've already got someone else." Samuel is grieving uncontrollably because he's forgotten that God is in control.

God has provided for himself a king. That's a cool phrase. God doesn't need someone else to figure this out. God isn't bound by human achievement or human failure. God's done this on his own. This is already in the works, this is already the plan, God's already set this in motion.

Now, listen, it really is okay to grieve. Some losses are deep. Loss of a family member, loss of a job, some injustice has happened that seriously shaped our lives. And sometimes grief isn't just crying, sometimes it's bitterness and anger and jealousy. This rebuke is **not** for those whose loss is fresh and you're trying to work through it and bring God glory in the midst of it.

This is rebuke is for those who carry grief around like a ball and chain for years and decades. And listen, this is often a rebuke we need to hear. Sometimes we can get so hung up on stuff we forget that the God we serve is actually sovereign. The tragedy we faced didn't catch God by surprise in fact he sovereignty brought it to pass. Even the bad things God orchestrates for his glory.

Rom 8:28: All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

All things, not just the easy ones. Every bad thing, every tragedy, every injustice, God will work for his glory. See, our God isn't a small God who only rules over the good things. Our God is so big he rules over the hard things too and gets glory from them.

Isa. 45:7: I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and I create calamity. I am the Lord who does all these things.

Our God is so powerful he can orchestrate it such that the brutal murder of his own Son brings many sons to glory and brings him infinite praise.

That's why Paul can say: We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed. (**2 Cor. 4:7-9**), How can he say that? Because the suffering he faces in his clay jar of a body shows the all surpassing power of God by advancing the gospel anyway.

Listen, if you're in a season of mourning, then be sure to grieve. And take courage that the Holy Spirit will comfort you. And while some grieve longer than others, if you're persisting in grief make sure you're looking to God who is sovereign over your loss.

3) God will make a way for obedience to happen. **Read 2-3**

So if we're honest, this is kind of a bee's nest of a passage. I don't know if you caught it or not, but it almost seems as though God is being deceitful. It's almost like God is giving Samuel a cover story for the real reason he's heading to Bethlehem.

You have to remember that Saul has already been told that the kingdom will be taken away from him. He doesn't know when or how, but he knows it will happen. He also knows that when Samuel anointed him he did it in secret, Remember that? Saul was looking for donkeys, met up with Samuel, and on the way back home Samuel turned him aside and anointed him as king over Israel. As we'll see in coming chapters, Saul is paranoid and has spies all throughout the land of Israel. It's not too hard to imagine he has someone checking in on Samuel regularly. And if Samuel is taking off with a horn filled with oil, that's a dead giveaway that he's out to anoint the next king.

So interestingly, Saul now has the role of King Herod. He's the illegitimate king who is paranoid about the true king of the Jews reigning over him. Samuel knows he's probably being watched, so God gives him a way out through a cover story of making a sacrifice.

This passage, by the way, is a classic passage in Christian ethics because the sacrifice is just a cover. The true reason for leaving is anointing David. So this seems a little shady. The question becomes: Is it ever okay to lie? Just last week I said that half truths are full lies. Here God is telling Samuel he need only tell Saul about the sacrifice so he doesn't get killed.

The contemporary equivalent to this is if you're in 1940s Germany secretly hiding Jews in your attic so they don't get thrown in a gas chamber and the Nazi police show up at your door and ask you if you have Jews inside, are we obligated as Christians to tell the truth? If you say yes, you and the Jews are dead. If you say no, you've lied and might get away with it. Of course, they might search the house and find out anyway. Christians tend to be really bad liars.

What do you do? Are you obligated to tell the truth in a situation where death is on the line? Let me give you some passages to think about.

The prophet Obadiah hid 100 prophets from king Ahab in caves (**1 Kings 18:1-4**) - he wasn't about to tell Ahab where they were because Ahab wanted to kill them. Obadiah saved their lives by hiding them.

The Hebrew midwives in Egypt were blessed by God with big families when they refused to kill the Hebrew babies in Egypt and seemingly lied to Pharaoh about the reason (**Exodus 1:15-22**). God: you save my children, I'll give you lots of children.

Rahab lied to leaders of Jericho about the Jewish spies that were hiding on her roof and yet she was commended for her faith. (**Heb. 11:31**)

Herod told the wise men to tell him where Jesus was so he could worship him. Yeah, right. They didn't obey. In fact they never came back and financed Joseph, Mary and Jesus's trip to Egypt with the gold frankincense and myrrh.

It seems as though there are situations in the Bible where there is a hierarchy of commands. If your donkey falls into a pit on the Sabbath do you go rescue it even though that's considered work? Jesus would say yes. What about your son or daughter? Again, yes.

Does this mean: "Well, if I can lie to the Nazis I can lie to the US government when it comes to income tax information?" Of course not. Usually the times where exceptions are made in the Bible is when it's a life and death situation usually to save someone else. And even then that's not always the case.

Stephen didn't back down from telling people the gospel even though he knew they'd probably stone him to death in **Acts 7**. He didn't deny Jesus in order to escape death. He confessed Jesus and died for him.

And of course Jesus himself gave Pilate and the Sanhedrin **way** more information than they expected when he claimed not only to be the Christ but that he would ascend to the right hand of God in power where he would reign over them and judge them, all the while having legions of angels at his instant disposal. He didn't have to tell them all that. But then he wouldn't have been crucified if he didn't.

So what we seem to see in the Bible is that there are very rare situations where it doesn't seem as though we are obligated to tell murderers the truth when it's a life and death situation. This doesn't mean we can pick and choose which commands we want to obey and go the course of moral relativism. On the contrary, it shows that God values all life and there are rare exceptions to divulging all the information we know.

God is also not a liar nor does he promote lies. **Num. 23:19:** God is not a man that he should lie. Jesus said he is the way the what? Truth and the life (**John 14:6**). We know these things but often need to be reminded of them when we come up to passages like this.

To be honest, we don't find ourselves in these ethical situations hardly ever. But believers in China, India, Middle East, Europe often have to weigh these things because lives are on the line.

I'm sure you'll talk about this at lunch. I've probably changed my mind back and forth on this a handful of times. So you'll have plenty of time to digest this. What I want to make sure you hear me say clearly is **not** that God is okay with lying. God is not okay with lying. But God is ultimately concerned with the lives of people who are made in his image and there are times where we are not obligated to lead innocent people to the slaughter.

One thing we know is that God will always make a way for obedience. We never have to sin. And, in fact, Samuel never does. He does offer the sacrifice and he does anoint David.

Even in those times where the situation is life and death, God will always honor our commitment to preserve the life of those made in his image.

Pray