

FIRST SAMUEL
A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 9

- Vv. 1- 5 *Saul's search for his father's asses.* God knew of Israel's demand for a king. He also knew where to find a man who would meet the people's requirements as a leader. His background was one of humble nature, but his appearance was impressive. As the reader of the Bible meets him, he is on an expedition to find the lost animals of his father.
- Vv. 6-10 *Saul seeks the seer.* A man who was called a prophet in Israel had formerly been called a seer. The seer was the kind of man who would be able to give answers to all kinds of hard questions. The servant who was with Saul was especially insistent that they employ the services of such a man. They thought he could help find the asses.
- Vv. 11-21 *Saul and Samuel meet.* God had told Samuel that Saul would come to him. The two met as Samuel was in a nearby city to lead the people in a sacrifice. Samuel announced to Saul that he should become king of Israel, but Saul could hardly believe it.
- Vv. 22-27 *Samuel honors Saul.* Samuel gave Saul a place of honor at the sacrifice. The best portion of the sacrificial animal had been set aside. Samuel ordered this to be put before Saul.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Life situations often demand the counsel of a man of God.* God's ministers are servants of all. Like the Master Himself, they should seek to serve and not to be served. Those who are men and women of faith will often seek out these men of God for their good offices. No burden is so great that they cannot be of some

assistance, and no problem is so small that they will not stoop to help.

2. *God exalts the humble.* Saul described himself as being “. . . of the smallest of the tribes of Israel” (9:21). He was amazed that Samuel had intimated that the desire of all Israel was upon him. If he had remained as humble as this, he might have been a great leader. When he lost this humility and disobeyed God, he was rejected as king. When he was humble, God’s prophet exalted him by giving him a place of honor at the feast and prophesying good about him.

Saul’s Search For His Father’s Asses. 9:1-5

Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name *was* Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.

2 And he had a son, whose name *was* Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and *there was* not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward *he was* higher than any of the people.

3 And the asses of Kish Saul’s father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses.

4 And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found *them* not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and *there they were* not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found *them* not.

5 *And* when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that *was* with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave *caring* for the asses, and take thought for us.

1. *Whose son was Saul? 9:1*

Saul was the son of Kish. The elaborate genealogy of

Kish, the Benjaminite, and the minute description of the figure of his son, Saul, are intended to indicate at the very outset the importance to which Saul attained in relation to the people of Israel. Kish was the son of Abiel (cf. 14:51). I Chronicles 8:33 and 9:39 give Ner as the ancestor of Kish; but the difference there is in naming not the father but the grandfather. *Kish* means a man of property (see Ruth 2:1). The town of Kish was Gibeah of Benjamin. We conjecture that he was a man of some important position in the community.

2. *What was the appearance of Saul?* 9:2

Saul was in the prime of life and strong. He was not in his adolescence nor immature. So long as his father lived, he would be under his authority; and there is no necessary contradiction between the language used here and the later account, according to which Saul had a son already grown. The name of Saul is probably abbreviated from a longer form meaning *Asked-of-God*. In contrast with his father, he would be, of course, a "young man," i.e., in the full vigor of youth. It may even be said that no one equalled him in beauty. "From his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people." Such a figure as this was well adapted to commend him to the people as their king. Size and beauty were highly valued in rulers as signs of manly strength.

3. *What occasioned Saul's first meeting with Samuel?*
9:3-10

Kish's she-asses had strayed, and Saul went with his servants through the mountains of Ephraim in search of the animals. Saul was ready to leave the fruitless search when his servant suggested that they consult Samuel, "the man of God," who was in the vicinity.

4. *Where is Shalisha?* 9:4

Nothing is given to indicate the meaning of the name of the town or its exact location. The context indicates that it would not be right to consult a prophet without a gift

to give him; and he knew that their supplies were exhausted and was without knowledge of what present they might take him. The servant replied that he had a quarter of a shekel of money, a small coin containing about sixty grains of silver. The objection was met, and Saul consented to go to Samuel in the nearby town. Their supplies had been exhausted, but they may have been circling around without going far from home. It was probably near Mt. Ephraim, and the name means "triangular." Reference is made to Baal-shalisha (II Kings 4:42).

5. *Where was the land of Shalim? 9:4 b*

The word Shalim means "foxes." A place is mentioned by this name only with regard to Saul's passing through it in looking for his father's animals. Many commentaries consider this to be a reference to the land of Shual, which was near Ophrah (13:17). Ophrah was the home of Gideon (Judges 6:11), and would be located in the tribe of Manasseh west of the Jordan and six miles southwest of Shechem. Suggestions are therefore made that this Ophrah is another form of Ephraim and located in the land of Benjamin (II Chronicles 13:19). The mention of the name meaning "foxes" reminds the Bible reader of the incident of Samson's catching foxes down in Philistia near the territory of Dan (Judges 15:3-6). Although we cannot be sure of the exact location of this place, we are impressed with the fact that Saul wandered back and forth through the center of Palestine looking for his father's lost animals.

Saul Seeks The Seer. 9:6-10

6 And he said unto him, Behold now, *there is* in this city a man of God, and *he is* an honorable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go.

7 Then said Saul to his servant, But behold, *if* we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our

vessels, and *there is* not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?

8 And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: *that* will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way.

9 (Beforetime in Isarel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for *be that is now called* a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.)

10 Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God *was*.

6. *Who was the man of God?* 9:6

Saul's servant must have known of Samuel's being in the area. His reference was to Samuel himself, for it was he whom they met when they looked for the "man of God." Evidently they had confidence in his ability to give advice and direction in all kinds of life's situations. To speak of a "man of God" was to refer to a prophet. They were true men of God. Many unnamed prophets are known only in this way (I Samuel 2:27; I Kings 13:1). Even Moses is described by this phrase (Deuteronomy 33:1) as if there were no more honorable title.

7. *Why did they want to bring a present to Samuel?* 9:7

Saul knew that he did not have any kind of victuals to give to the man of God. He evidently did not have any money, for he took the fourth part of the shekel of silver which his servant had to give to Samuel. Such concern indicates that it was customary for the Israelites to give a little something to their prophets. Such a practice helps us to understand the meaning of the priest in Israel who told Amos to go on back to Judah to prophesy and "there eat bread" (Amos 7:12). It has ever been God's ordinance that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel. It was not right to muzzle the oxen which tread the grain (Deuteronomy 25:4; I Corinthians 9:9; I Timothy 5:18).

8. *What is the meaning of the two words for a prophet?*
9:9

The Hebrew word used most often to describe a prophet is a word that means "to announce" or "to declare." The primary idea of the prophet is one who utters a communication. A popular definition of a prophet is "one who speaks for another." Two other Hebrew words are used to name the prophet. Both of these mean "one who sees." In this verse one of these other two words is used and is translated "seer." The three words occur together in I Chronicles 29:29, where they seem to be in contrast with one another. When the book of Samuel was written, the word prophet was most common, but earlier the other word had been used quite often. Radical critics take this to be an indication of the fact that the book was not written until a long time after the events had happened. A man's lifetime is long enough for different words to come into popular use. In less than a generation a word may fall into disuse, and this is not evidence enough to take the authorship of the book away from Samuel and give it to a later author. The two words help us to understand the functions of a prophet. Saul evidently went to the man whom he thought could "see" and tell him where he could find his father's asses.

Samuel and Saul Meet. 9:11-21

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11 *And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here?*

12 *And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, he is before you; make haste now, for he came today to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people today in the high place:*

13 *As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straight-way find him, before he go up to the high place to eat:*

for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; *and* afterwards they eat that be bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him.

14 And they went up into the city: *and* when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place.

15 Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying,

16 Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him *to be* captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

17 And when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people.

18 Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house *is*.

19 And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I *am* the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me today, and tomorrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that *is* in thine heart.

20 And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom *is* all the desire of Israel? *Is it* not on thee, and on all thy father's house?

21 And Saul answered and said, *Am* not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

9. *Did Samuel know Saul was coming? 9:11-17*

On the day before the meeting, Jehovah had told Samuel that the man whom he was to anoint as captain over his people was coming to him. God in His overruling provi-

dence directed Saul's way so that he came to Samuel. God's displeasure at the desire of the people was really a displeasure with the state of their heart from which the desire had sprung. Since the Philistines were making fresh attacks upon Israel, God was directing the affairs of His kingdom so that a strong deliverer would be raised up from among them.

10. *What was the high place? 9:12*

The name of the town Ramah means "a high place." About three miles north of Gibeah and six miles from Jerusalem a high hill rises from the right side of the road. This is crowned with the village called Er Ram. This is taken to be the site of ancient Ramah. Israel's Canaanite neighbors had high places where they planted groves and set up images and idols. There is no evidence that Israel was falling into these idolatrous practices, but no doubt they would build an altar in a prominent place. It thus would be known as "high place."

11. *What city was this? 9:14*

Samuel evidently did not live in the town where Saul met him. He had only come to it in order to hold a sacrificial feast as he did in Bethlehem (I Samuel 16:1). This is true even though Samuel did honor Saul by having him as his guest. They appeared to sleep under the same roof, but both were probably guests in another man's home. Some commentators assume that he had a house at his command for any time that he might be in the area, such as was provided for Elisha (II Kings 4). The town where Saul met Samuel was probably southwest of Bethlehem.

12. *Why was Saul anointed king? 9:16*

God had told Samuel that he was sending a man to him. This man was to be anointed "captain" over Israel. God was doing this in order to save His people out of the land of the Philistines. This makes Saul's call to the office of king similar to the call of Moses to be the leader of his people when they were in captivity in Egypt.

13. *Why was Samuel in the gate of the city?* 9:18

The prophet was evidently greeting the people who came to the city for the sacrificial feast. The custom of the people was to congregate in the broad area near the entrance of the city. Much of their business was conducted here, and many incidental and providential meetings have occurred here (Genesis 19:1).

14. *How did Samuel prepare Saul for the anointing?*
9:18 ff.

At the feast that night, Saul was Samuel's guest and greatly honored. As they retired, Samuel promised that on the morrow he would tell Saul all that was on his heart. This included more than the safety of the animals for which he had been seeking, inasmuch as Samuel told Saul all these things immediately. As they talked, Samuel asked a perplexing question that brought a humble answer from Saul. Samuel said, "To whom belong the desirable things of Israel? It is not to thee and to thy father's house?" Saul replied that he was a member of the least of Israel's tribes and that his clan was least among his tribesmen. All this must have caused Saul a sleepless night pondering all that had taken place.

Samuel Honors Saul. 9:22-27

22 And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them in the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which *were* about thirty persons.

23 And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee.

24 And the cook took up the shoulder, and *that* which *was* upon it, and *set it* before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! *set it* before thee, *and* eat: for unto this time hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.

25 And as they were come down from the high place into the city, *Samuel* communed with Saul upon the top of the house.

26 And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad.

27 *And* as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God.

15. *Why did Samuel reserve a piece of meat for Saul?*
9:23, 24

Samuel had already addressed Saul as the most outstanding Israelite of his time. To signify his honor for Saul he had reserved the best part of the sacrificial animal for Saul. Some understand this reference to that "which was upon it," to that broth which was poured over it. No doubt it was that which was attached to it. A strange interpretation has made this to be the kidney and that which was over it, but the kidney was to be burned upon the altar in the case of all the slain sacrifices (Leviticus 3:4). Only the flesh of the animals offered in sacrifice was used in the sacrificial meal. What was attached to the leg must have been the fat upon the flesh. The leg is the largest and best portion and was a piece of honor for Saul (Genesis 43:34).

16. *Why were they on the top of the house?* 9:25

Palestinian houses had flat roofs. They were places for retirement for private conversation (Deuteronomy 22:8). It was while he was on the housetop that Peter received a vision to go to the Gentiles (Acts 10:9), and many other references are made to activities of this kind on the roof of the houses.

17. *Why was Samuel secretive about anointing Saul?* 9:26

Samuel wanted Saul to get away early in the morning. Boaz had urged Ruth to leave his threshing floor "before one could know another" (Ruth 3:14). Samuel did not allow Saul's servant to hear the conversation. Samuel may have entered into private conversation concerning the moral degradation of the people, their clamor for the king, the oppression of the heathen, the inability of the Israelites to stand against their foes, the necessity for a conversion of the people and the need for a leader who was devoted to God. Such discussions are best conducted in secret when they concern only two particular individuals.

CHAPTER 9 IN REVIEW

1. Whose son was Saul? _____
2. Of what tribe was Saul? _____
3. Where was Saul's home? _____
4. For what was Saul searching when he met Samuel? _____
5. What was the old name for a prophet? _____
6. Did Samuel know Saul was coming to meet him? _____
7. Was Samuel in his home when he anointed Saul? _____
8. Who was with Saul when he met Samuel? _____
9. On what kind of occasion was Saul anointed? _____
10. In what part of the house were Samuel and Saul when they conversed? _____