

# **BaptistWay Bible Series for April 16: God's penetrating gaze reveals the heart**

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### **God's penetrating gaze reveals the heart**

- 1 Samuel 16:1-13; 21-23

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Looks can be deceiving, both negatively and positively. For instance, we have established all sorts of criteria to decide what people fit what occupation. Yet, once in a while, someone comes along who just doesn't fit the mold, and succeeds. But we also see the "prototype" fail.

The problem is we are using the wrong mold when we should be using God's mold. Samuel was reminded of this when he was again pressed into service to find a king for Israel.

Chapter 16 opens with the Lord's rebuke of Samuel for his continued mourning of Saul, which was first mentioned at the end of chapter 15. However much time transpired between these verses, the mourning had gone on long enough. The Lord reminded Samuel this should cease; Saul

had been rejected. Instead, Samuel was to be about the task of anointing Saul's successor.



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This time, rather than the prospective king coming to Samuel, the Lord sent Samuel to the next king. The Lord led Samuel specifically to the house of Jesse in Bethlehem.

At first, Samuel feared Saul's wrath if he found out. The Lord directed Samuel to take a heifer for sacrifice. This might have been a cover if in fact Samuel encountered Saul. But we also see that the sacrifice would serve as the context for identifying and anointing the next king of Israel. For Samuel was to invite Jesse to the sacrifice as well.

Whether sharing Samuel's fear about Saul's anger or being concerned Samuel's arrival might mean a negative word from the Lord, the elders of the town "trembled when they met him" (v. 4). They wanted to know Samuel's intentions ("Do you come in peace?"). He did, Samuel reassured them, inviting them to the sacrifice. Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them.

Jumping to conclusions, it would seem, Samuel declared Eliab the "Lord's anointed" as soon as he saw him. Samuel seemingly still had the description of Saul in his mind. The Lord's rebuke alludes to as much in his correction of Samuel. He warned Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him," meaning Eliab (v. 7, see 9:2 and

10:23 for Saul's description; and 15:23, 26; and 16:1 for Saul's rejection). The Lord then gave Samuel criteria to consider in the selection process. Rather, than follow human standards, what is on the outside, Samuel was to follow God's standard, a person's heart, what is on the inside.

Employing this new standard, Samuel assessed each of Jesse's sons as they passed by him, each time declaring, "The Lord has not chosen this one."

After seven of Jesse's sons passed by, Samuel turned to Jesse and asked if he had any more sons. Jesse acknowledged there was another son. But apparently, David did not fit Jesse's mold, for he did not initially present him before Samuel. He was the youngest and was outside tending sheep (v. 11).

Two things come to mind with this description of David (not named until verse 13). First, "youngest" could also be understood as "smallest," a clear contrast to Saul, who was tall. Second, the author(s) may have used Jesse's comment about David's tending sheep as prelude to his service as shepherd king over Israel.

At Samuel's request, Jesse sent for David. When David arrived, the Lord called Samuel to action: "Rise and anoint him; he is the one" (v. 12). Unlike previously dealings with David's brothers, Samuel did not make this selection on his own. So there in the presence of David's brothers, Samuel poured the oil on David, anointed him as king. Simultaneously, the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.

Without further fanfare, Samuel returned to Ramah.

A word about David's appearance seems in order. While the Lord declared appearance was not to be a factor in selecting a king, verse 12 does give a physical description of David. He was ruddy (think Esau in Genesis 25:25), with "a fine appearance" (literally, beautiful eyes) and "handsome features" (think Joseph in Genesis 39:6). It should be noted, however, that David's

physical appearance was coincidental to his selection as king, not the basis of it.

The rest of the chapter describes how David and Saul met. Verses 14-20 record the torment Saul endured from time to time from an evil spirit. With language indicating the ancient belief that God was directly responsible for both the good and evil, both the narrator and Saul's men refer to this torment as coming from Lord (vv. 14-15).

Their proposed solution to ease Saul's pain was to call for a musician who could play the harp. One of the men mentioned he knew someone. It was David, son of Jesse (v. 18). The man further described David as brave, a warrior, articulate and fine-looking. But most importantly, "the Lord is with him." Saul sent for Jesse and requested David's service. Jesse sent David along with some offerings.

Saul liked David so much he brought him on full time (vv. 21-22) as one of his armor-bearers. And whenever called upon, David would play the harp to relieve Saul's torment.

Unbeknownst to Saul, his replacement had arrived.

Saul saw David in the mold of a servant; the Lord saw him in the mold of a king.

### **Discussion questions**

- When have appearances deceived you?
- What did God see in David's heart that led to his anointing by Samuel?
- What might God see in you that you do not see in yourself?



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