

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,
3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 6A

FIRST SAMUEL

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

Man can never be outside of God's will even when he has sinned. If man is not in God's desiderative will, then he will be under His punitive will. In the case of Israel's demand for a king, God will now fulfil Israel's desire and give them a king.

This section describes the choice of and the private anointing of Saul as the first king of Israel. We see the providential hand of God working out His plan and purpose as the drama unfolds: the young man seeking his father's lost donkeys (9:1-5), the meeting with the prophet of God (9:6-21), the fellowship meal with Samuel and introduction to the people (9:22-24), and the meeting with Samuel on the housetop (9:25-27).

This seemingly innocuous beginning of a young man's life will turn out to be the beginning of the monarchy of Israel for the next 400 years.

COMMENTARY

Saul, the Benjamite—vv. 1-2

We are now introduced to Kish, a descendant of Benjamin (the youngest of the 12 sons of

Jacob). Jacob's prophecy concerning his son, Benjamin, was that he would "raven" (take away something by force) as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour his prey, and at night he shall divide his spoil" (Genesis 49:27). After claiming the Promised Land (Canaan), the Benjamites were allotted the land which was between Ephraim in the north and Judah in the south. They were situated between the two most prominent tribes of Israel. When the nation was divided into two, Ephraim became the leading tribe in the north, and Judah the south. Although the Benjamites was one of the smallest tribes of Israel (Numbers 1:36, 37), the people were great warriors, and they played an important part in the history of their nation (Judges 20:13-16; 1 Chronicles 12:1, 2).

Kish and his family lived in Gibeah (1 Samuel 10:26) which was about five miles from Ramah (where Samuel lived). Kish was a man of strength, wealth and power. He had lands, animals and servants. It was obvious that Kish and his family were well-known to the people in Gibeah and the surrounding areas. Saul was his son. Saul was physically well-built and tall. He stood head and shoulder above all the other people. If he was in a crowd, no one could miss him. He was also good looking. So outwardly, Saul was the people's choice.

**Saul Looks for His Father's
Asses—vv. 3-5**

The asses of Kish were lost. Kish told his son, Saul, to take a servant and go look for the asses. He could have ordered some of his best and trusted servants to look for them. It was not clear why he

assigned the task to Saul. The donkeys were valuable in those days. They were used for transporting goods and for travelling from one place to another. Saul obediently left the comforts of his home and went to look for the donkeys with his servant. He might have thought that it was not too difficult a job and that it would not take long to locate them.

He passed through the hilly land of Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha (about 12 kilometres) and then southwards through the land of Shalim. He then went further southwards into the land of Benjamin but there was still no sign of the asses. When they were in the region of Zuph, which was near Ramah (Samuel's hometown), Saul wanted to call off the search. He told his servant that they should return home lest his father become worried. This showed that Saul was a considerate and filial son.

The apparent innocent incident of the lost asses would be used of God for the calling of Saul into the monarchy. There is no accident in the plan of God. All things work together according to His sovereign plan.

Saul Meets Samuel—vv. 6-10

Saul's servant told him that in the city (they were near Ramah), there lived "a man of God" -- an honourable man and a true prophet because all that he had said had come to pass. The servant suggested that they go to him as he might be able to show them where to find the donkeys. It is strange that Saul did not know about Samuel the prophet. This suggests that Saul kept to himself in the home of his father and

mind his own business. It also suggests that Kish and his family were not religious and that they were more interested and involved in their own pursuits. Saul asked his servant what they could bring for the man of God -- it was customary at that time to bring gifts when seeking counsel but they had nothing. Likewise, we should never meet God empty handed. It pays to remember this when we go to church every Lord's Day.

The bread which they had taken with them had already been consumed. The servant answered that he had a quarter of a shekel of silver (a shekel weighs about 0.403 ounces). Saul responded, "Well said; come let us go" (9:10). And, they went into the city where the man of God lived. So likewise, we should never meet God empty-handed when we go to church every Lord's Day.

God prepared the Meeting—vv. 11-17

When Saul and his servant went up the hill to the city, young maidens were coming out to draw water. The houses were usually built on the hills or on higher ground with the wells at the foot-hills. It was the women's duty in those days to draw water from the wells. The timing was perfect. When Saul and his servant were going up the hill, these young women were coming out to draw water. It gave them an opportunity to ask the whereabouts of "the man of God" (9:11). The young women answered that they could not have come at a better time because "the man of God" was coming to the city on that very day to officiate a sacrifice of the people "in the high

place.”¹ The young maidens even instructed them on what they should do so that they would not miss meeting Samuel. They were told to get going straightaway! So Saul and his servant went up into the city. As they were going up, Samuel was just coming out to go to the high place, and they met face to face.

The LORD providentially prepared for this meeting between Samuel and Saul -- the LORD had told Samuel that the next day about the same time he would meet a man whom He would send – “a man out of the land of Benjamin” (9:15, 16a) – and he was to “anoint him captain”. The word for “anoint” in Hebrew is “mashach”, and the recipient of the anointing was referred to as the “anointed one”.² Samuel was to anoint Saul as “captain” (Hebrew, *nagiyd*) or “prince” but not as “king”. The wording was deliberate because the LORD (YAHWEH) is the King of Israel. The specific purpose of anointing Saul as prince was to save the Israelites from the Philistines (9:16). The LORD had looked upon His people and had heard their cry unto Him.

The Momentous Meeting —vv. 18-27

Heeding the words of the young maidens, Saul made his way to the gate of the city where he met

¹The HIGH PLACE is usually used of Canaanite altars where they worship their idols. But in the context here it is used of an altar that was made for sacrifices to the LORD.

²The Hebrew word “mashach” meaning the anointed one is transliterated in Greek as “Messiah.” But the Greek word for the “anointed one” is “christos”, hence we have the word “Christ” as the Anointed One.

Samuel but, at the time, he did not know who Samuel was. Saul asked Samuel, “Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer’s house is (in those days a prophet of God was also called a seer)?” (9:18). Samuel identified himself to Saul and told him to proceed before him to the “high place” (the altar). He also invited Saul to dine with him in the feast after the sacrifice on that day. He told Saul that he could leave the following day and that he would tell him all that he wanted to know. Samuel also informed Saul that his asses had been found. This was to demonstrate to Saul that he was indeed a seer as he was able to “see” things.

Then Samuel told Saul that he “is all the desire of Israel” -- this phrase was significant as it was used to refer to royalty. It must have surprised Saul, who understood the implication of the phrase, for he politely protested. He replied that he was from the tribe of Benjamin which was the least of all the other tribes and that his family was the least of all the other families in the tribe. He wanted to know why Samuel spoke to him in that manner. Unknown to Saul, Samuel was seeking to arouse his curiosity and to lead him to an understanding of God’s purpose for him.

Samuel took Saul and his servant to the place where the feast was to be held. There were many other people. Samuel gave Saul the highest seat of honour amongst all those who were invited to the feast. There were about 30 people. Samuel called for the cook and told him to bring the portion of meat which he had given to him and which he had told him to “set it by thee” (to reserve for him) (9:23).

The cook brought the “shoulder” (the thigh) and set it before Saul. Then Samuel said to Saul, “Behold that which is left (that means, reserved)! is set it before thee, and eat: for unto this time hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people.” (9:24). Saul must have been mystified at the honour accorded to him. The right thigh of the animal was usually the priest’s portion and the left thigh the royal portion. Through this, Samuel again indicated to Saul that he was “all the desire of Israel”.

After dinner, Samuel, Saul and his servant came down to the city (9:25). Samuel had a long talk with Saul “on the top of the house”. The content of the conversation was not revealed. The following morning, Samuel woke Saul up so that he could set off for home (9:26). Once again Samuel accorded to Saul the honour – he walked him to the city gate and sent him off. As they were approaching the edge of the city, Samuel told Saul to stand still for a while with him for he wanted to tell him the word of God (9:27). The servant went ahead of them. Samuel wanted the anointing to be a private affair.

PRACTICAL VALUE

The people of Israel cried out to Samuel and demanded for a king to reign over them. The LORD saw this as a rejection of Him as their King. In His permissive will, He granted the people’s desire for a king.

We were introduced to Saul -- a goodly, humble, friendly and wealthy man-- who lived a quiet life and kept busy with the affairs of his father. He did not even know

Samuel, the man of God, who was so well-known among the other tribes.

Saul was an unknown to the nation of Israel, but he was the LORD’s choice as the first ruler of Israel. His filial duty brought him into contact with Samuel from whom he learned that he was to be the ruler of Israel. God works in mysterious and marvellous ways. Here was one who was totally obscure but specifically chosen because of his character, conduct, modesty and filial piety.

We observe how the LORD intervened in the affairs of men to reveal His plan and purpose. God is the same yesterday, today and forever. He still works today in His mysterious and marvellous ways but only those who walk in His ways would be able to discern His leading and guidance. It is not enough to read, know and recite His Words. We must live out His word in our daily lives. We must learn to trust and obey Him and know that our lives are in His hands.

Samuel’s gradual preparation of Saul as the ruler of Israel is most instructive. He did not hurry through the revelation of God’s plan to Saul. He sought to gradually introduce Saul to the people according to the honour that one day would be given to him.

It was true that Saul was modest when Samuel first indicated that he would be made ruler of Israel but what must follow was total loyalty and submission to the will of God. Modesty is a virtue but we must be aware that it is sometimes used as a subtle means of gaining selfish ends. In the case of Saul, the modesty and humility

appeared genuine. However, only time could tell if he would remain loyal to the LORD. AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 1 Samuel 9:1-5; Genesis 49:27; Joshua 18:11.

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 9:6-14; Ephesians 1:1; Romans 8:28.

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 9:15-27; 1 Corinthians 2:9-12.

Thursday: 1 Samuel 9:1-27.

Friday: 1 Samuel 9:1-27.

Analysis

Text	Practical Value
1 Samuel 9:1-10	
1 Samuel 9:11-17	
1 Samuel 9:18-27	

Discussion Questions

1. What can we learn about Saul's character from 1 Samuel 9:1-21?

2. What observation can we make regarding an apparently innocent incident which turns out to be a fulfilment of God's purposes in 1 Samuel 9:1-14?

3. What was the significance of Samuel putting Saul in the highest seat of honour at the meal?

4. Would you come before God empty handed when you worship Him?

5. Why was the calling or anointing of Saul a private affair?
