

1SAMUEL 16: 1 The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite; for I have provided a king for myself among his sons."

Samuel is sent from Ramah to Bethlehem, to anoint David, 1Sam 16:1-13. The Spirit of the Lord departs from Saul, and an evil spirit comes upon him, 1Sam 16:14. His servants exhort him to get a skillful harper to play before him, 1Sam 16:15, 1Sam 16:16. He is pleased with the counsel, and desires them to find such a person, 1Sam 16:17. They recommend David, 1Sam 16:18. He is sent for, comes, plays before Saul, and finds favor in his sight, 1Sam 16:19-23.

Verse 1

Fill thine horn with oil - Horns appear to have been the ancient drinking vessels of all nations; and we may suppose that most persons who had to travel much, always carried one with them, for the purpose of taking up water from the fountains to quench their thirst. Such a horn had Samuel; and on this occasion he was commanded to fill it with oil, for the purpose of consecrating a king over Israel from among the sons of Jesse.

1SAMUEL 16: 2 Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, I have come to sacrifice to the LORD."

Verse 2

Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice - This was strictly true; Samuel did offer a sacrifice; and it does not appear that he could have done the work which God designed, unless he had offered this sacrifice, and called the elders of the people together, and thus collected Jesse's sons. But he did not tell the principal design of his coming; had he done so, it would have produced evil and no good: and though no man, in any circumstances, should ever tell a lie, yet in all circumstances he is not obliged to tell the whole truth, though in every circumstance he must tell nothing but the truth, and in every case so tell the truth that the hearer shall not believe a lie by it.

1SAMUEL 16: 3 Call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. You shall anoint to me him whom I name to you."

Verse 3

Call Jesse to the sacrifice - The common custom was, after the blood of the victim had been poured out to God, and the fat burnt, to feast on the flesh of the sacrifice. This appears to have been the case in all, except in the whole burnt-offering; this was entirely consumed.

1SAMUEL 16: 4 Samuel did that which the LORD spoke, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come peaceably?"

Verse 4

The elders of the town trembled at his coming - They knew he was a prophet of the Lord, and they were afraid that he was now come to denounce some judgments of the Most High against their city.

1SAMUEL 16: 5 He said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." He sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

Verse 5

Sanctify yourselves - Change your clothes, and wash your bodies in pure water, and prepare your minds by meditation, reflection, and prayer; that, being in the spirit of sacrifice, ye may offer acceptably to the Lord.

1SAMUEL 16: 6 When they had come, he looked at Eliab, and said, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him."

1SAMUEL 16: 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Don't look on his face, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for I see not as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Verse 7

Man looketh on the outward appearance - And it is well he should, and confine his looks to that; for when he pretends to sound the heart, he usurps the prerogative of God.

In what way were these communications made from God to Samuel? It must have been by direct inspirations into his heart. But what a state of holy familiarity does this argue between God and the prophet! I believe Moses himself was not more highly favored than Samuel.

1SAMUEL 16: 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."

1SAMUEL 16: 9 Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. He said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."

1SAMUEL 16: 10 Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."

Verse 10

Seven of his sons - This certainly was not done publicly; Samuel, Jesse, and his children, must have been in a private apartment, previously to the public feast on the sacrifice; for Samuel says, 1Sam 16:11, We will not sit down till he (David) come.

1SAMUEL 16: 11 Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your children here?" He said, "There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is keeping the sheep." Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him; for we will not sit down until he comes here."

1SAMUEL 16: 12 He sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful face, and goodly to look on. The LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he."

Verse 12

He was ruddy - I believe the word here means red-haired, he had golden locks. Hair of this kind is ever associated with a delicate skin and florid complexion.

1SAMUEL 16: 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily on David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

Verse 13

The Spirit of the Lord came upon David - God qualified him to be governor of his people, by infusing such graces as wisdom, prudence, counsel, courage, liberality, and magnanimity.

1SAMUEL 16: 14 Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

Verse 14

The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul - He was thrown into such a state of mind by the judgments of God, as to be deprived of any regal qualities which he before possessed. God seems to have taken what gifts he had, and given them to David; and then the evil spirit came upon Saul; for what God fills not, the devil will.

An evil spirit from the Lord - The evil spirit was either immediately sent from the Lord, or permitted to come. Whether this was a diabolic possession, or a mere mental malady, the learned are not agreed; it seems to have partaken of both. That Saul had fallen into a deep melancholy, there is little doubt; that the devil might work more effectually on such a state of mind, there can be but little question. There is an old proverb, Satan delights to fish in troubled waters; and Saul's situation of mind gave him many advantages.

The theory of Dr. Scheuchzer, in his *Physica Sacra*, on the malady of Saul, is allowed to be very ingenious. It is in substance as follows: Health consists in a moderate tension of the fibres, which

permits all the fluids to have an entire freedom of circulation, and to the spirits, that of diffusing themselves through all the limbs; on the contrary, disease consists in tensions of the fibres morbidly weak or morbidly strong. This latter seems to have been the case of Saul; and as the undulations of the air which convey sound communicate themselves to and through the most solid bodies, it is easy to suppose that by the modulations of music all the fibres of his body, which were under the influence of the morbidly increased tension, might be so relaxed as to be brought back into their natural state, and thus permit the re-establishment of a free and gentle circulation of the fluids, and consequently of the animal spirits, and thus induce calmness and tranquillity of mind. I believe this theory to be correct, and I should find no difficulty to amplify and to illustrate the subject. Even a skillful playing upon the harp was one means to bring a disordered state of the nervous and fibrous system into a capacity of affording such uninterrupted tranquillity to the mind as to render it capable of receiving the prophetic influence; see the case of Elisha, 2Kgs 3:14, 2Kgs 3:15. It has been said: - "Music hath charms to sooth the savage breast."

This has been literally proved: a musician was brought to play on his instrument while they were feeding a savage lion in the tower of London; the beast immediately left his food, came towards the grating of his den, and began to move in such a way as to show himself affected by the music. The musician ceased, and the lion returned to his food; he recommenced, and the lion left off his prey, and was so affected as to seem by his motions to dance with delight. This was repeatedly tried, and the effects were still the same.

1SAMUEL 16: 15 Saul's servants said to him, "See now, an evil spirit from God troubles you.

1SAMUEL 16: 16 Let our lord now command your servants who are before you, to seek out a man who is a skilful player on the harp. It shall happen, when the evil spirit from God is on you, that he shall play with his hand, and you shall be well."

1SAMUEL 16: 17 Saul said to his servants, "Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring him to me."

1SAMUEL 16: 18 Then one of the young men answered, and said, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skilful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a comely person; and the LORD is with him."

Verse 18

I have seen a son of Jesse - Dr. Warburton supposes the story is anticipated from 1Sam 16:14-23, and that the true chronology of this part of David's life is the following: -

1. David is anointed by Samuel;
2. Carries provisions to his brethren in the army;
3. Fights with and kills Goliath;
4. Is received into the king's court,
5. Contracts a friendship with Jonathan;
6. Incurs Saul's jealousy;

7. Retires to his father's house;
8. Is after some time sent for by Saul to sooth his melancholy with his harp;
9. Again excites Saul's jealousy, who endeavors to smite him with his javelin.

This anticipation between the 14th and 23d verse comes in, in the order of time, between 1Sam 16:9 and 1Sam 16:10, 1Sam 18:9, 1Sam 18:10, where the breach is apparent.

1SAMUEL 16: 19 Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me David your son, who is with the sheep."

1SAMUEL 16: 20 Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a young goat, and sent them by David his son to Saul.

Verse 20

Took an ass laden with bread - He must send a present to Saul to introduce his son, and this was probably the best he had. Dr. Warburton pleads still farther on the propriety of his rectification of the chronology in this place. David had at this time vanquished the Philistine, was become a favourite with the people, had excited Saul's jealousy, and retired to shun its effects. In the interim Saul was seized with the disorder in question, and is recommended by his servants to try the effects of music. They were acquainted with David's skill on the harp, and likewise with Saul's bad disposition towards him; the point was delicate, it required to be managed with address, and therefore they recommend David in this artful manner: "As you must have one constantly in attendance, both in court and on your military expeditions; to be always at hand on occasion, the son of Jesse will become both stations well; he will strengthen your camp and adorn your court, for he is a tried soldier and of a graceful presence. You have nothing to fear from his ambition, for you saw with what prudence he went into voluntary banishment when his popularity had incurred your displeasure." Accordingly Saul is prevailed on, David is sent for, and succeeds with his music; this dissipates all former umbrage, and, as one who is ever to be in attendance, he is made Saul's armor-bearer. This sunshine still continued till his great successes awakened Saul's jealousy afresh, and then the lifted javelin was to strike off all obligations. Thus we see what light is thrown upon the whole history by the supposition of an anticipation in the latter part of this chapter; an anticipation the most natural, proper, and necessary, for the purpose of the historian. Thus reasons Bishop Warburton, and with very considerable plausibility, though the intelligent reader may still have his doubts.

1SAMUEL 16: 21 David came to Saul, and stood before him. He loved him greatly; and he became his armour bearer.

1SAMUEL 16: 22 Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Please let David stand before me; for he has found favour in my sight."

1SAMUEL 16: 23 When the spirit from God was on Saul, David took the harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

Verse 23

The evil spirit from God - The word evil is not in the common Hebrew text, but it is in the Vulgate, Septuagint, Targum, Syriac, and Arabic, and in eight of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., which present the text thus: רוח אלהים רעה ruach Elohim raah, spiritus Domini malus, the evil spirit of God. The Septuagint leave out Θεου, of God, and have πνευμα πονηρον, the evil spirit. The Targum says, The evil spirit from before the Lord; and the Arabic has it. The evil spirit by the permission of God; this is at least the sense.

And the evil spirit departed from him - The Targum says, And the evil spirit descended up from off him. This considers the malady of Saul to be more than a natural disease.

There are several difficulties in this chapter; those of the chronology are pretty well cleared, in the opinion of some, by the observations of Bishop Warburton; but there is still something more to be done to make this point entirely satisfactory. Saul's evil spirit, and the influence of music upon it, are not easily accounted for. I have considered his malady to be of a mixed kind, natural and diabolical; there is too much of apparent nature in it to permit us to believe it was all spiritual, and there is too much of apparent supernatural influence to suffer us to believe that it was all natural.