

1 Samuel 15:34-16:13 – Yahweh sees according to the heart

1. Establishing a Dynasty

What does it take to build a dynasty?

That is, what does it take to build a sequence of successive rulers, or leaders?

For example, in British history, what does it take to build a dynasty of kings/queens of England?

The dynasty of the house of Windsor – started in 1901 and continues today.

From King Edward VII to Queen Elizabeth II – a dynasty remembered for.. stability?

Or American History, the Bush family is considered

‘the most successful political dynasty in American History’ – George H.W Bush, George W. Bush.

And now Jeb Bush is a presidential candidate...

On the other side of the fence, the Clinton family,

or should I say Hilary is seeking to build a dynasty too.

As for Australia – all we really care about is sporting dynasties – can you tell me sporting dynasties?

The St George Rugby League Club won 11 premierships in a row – 1956-1966.

The Australian Davis Cup tennis team won 15 championships between 1950-1967.

The Australian Cricket Team dominated from 1996 through to 2007.

Not to mention the Queensland State of Origin team, nor the unbeatable All Blacks...

But what does it take to build a dynasty?

Let's be more specific – what kind of person would you need,

what qualities, what type of character?

The tenacity of Steve Waugh? The sublime skill of Ken Rosewall?

The fierce determination of Hilary Clinton?

The accounting acumen of Jim Greenwood?

As we turn to the next episode in the book of Samuel,

There is an embryonic dynasty – the reign of Saul and his line, as king of Israel,

And it seems that Saul has the qualities that you look for in building a dynasty of kings...

Strong, a head taller than everyone else. Physically imposing...

His mere physical presence commanded respect...

2. The Way of Kings: Not Seen & Rejected vs. Seen & Chosen (15:34-16:1)

And yet, in the opening verses from our O.T reading today. << v. 35 >>

God grieved making Saul king, more God regretted, God repented that he had made Saul king.

What caused this reaction by God? How could God change in his attitude to Saul?

Well, we need to go back to the context of Ch 15 – where Saul was given direct instructions by God.
<< The aftermath – 15:17-23 >>

Saul's primary failure is to disobey the word of God.

Taking his own initiative, going directly against God's directive – he spares the best sheep and cattle
With supposedly the best of intention – "to sacrifice to Yahweh and Gilgal".

However, obedience to the voice of Yahweh takes precedence over sacrifice.

Let's just pause and reflect on this for a moment.

What is true for the leader of God's people, the king of Israel, is equally true for all humanity.

No matter how sincere, how genuine the offering that is made to God,

The prerequisite for coming before God is obedience to his word.

In fact, God does not delight in sacrifices, nor offerings, but in those who obey his voice.

So, Saul is rejected as King of Israel for the primary failure of obeying God's voice.

Even though Saul had the best sacrifices to offer, the best sheep, the best cattle.

Saul will no longer be seen by Samuel until his death.

In stark contrast, then, God "sees" a king from the tribe of Benjamin, one of Jesse's sons. << v. 1 >>

Literally Yahweh "sees" from Jesse's sons for himself a king.

Flowing out from this revelation comes an explicit question and an implicit question.

The explicit question Samuel asks – "How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me!" –valid point!

The implicit question – what makes this son of Jesse so different? What exactly does God see?

3. The Sacrifice & The Elders (16:2-5)

In answer to the explicit question–

Samuel goes to Bethlehem under the directive of offering a sacrifice

This is somewhat ironic considering that Saul's offering was rejected because of his obedience.

So the elders Meet Samuel fearful that the prophet has come to pronounce judgement.

However, Samuel has come to offer a sacrifice to Yahweh,

And therefore the elders are to consecrate themselves

The elders are to cause themselves to be set apart, according to procedures laid out in the law.

But whilst the elders are to consecrate themselves,

Samuel, himself, consecrates Jesse and his sons, who are invited guests...

4. How to Choose The King (16:6-10)

We expect the next thing to happen is Samuel sacrificing on behalf the elders.
Instead Jesse's sons proceed to 'pass by' Samuel as the new king is appointed.

And there is a very telling directive that distinguishes how God chooses a king and how humanity chooses a king.

Now, this is probably the most well-known verse in the book of Samuel.
But this is also the most misunderstood verse in the book of Samuel. << v. 7 >>

For the last phrase literally reads – “Not as man sees – for man sees according to the eyes,
But Yahweh sees according to the heart”

Now, we automatically read this verse as talking about the point of destination.
That humans see the destination point – like the outward appearance of Eliab.
And we then automatically think God examines the destination point of the heart,
rather than the physical appearance.

➤ **“Yahweh sees according to the heart” (v. 7 c.f. 13:14)**

However, the point being made is about the source, is about the origin of the examination.
That is, God is commenting about Eli and what Eli is looking for,
Rather than making a comment about Eliab and his physical appearance.
Eli is the one who sees with his eyes, and therefore thinks Eliab is a prime choice.

But contrast, God sees according to his own heart, as the source, the origin.
That is, God will appoint someone, according to his own purposes, his own plans, his own reasons.

And therefore, God is not choosing the next king
because of something he sees inside of that person,
that somehow the next king has some intrinsic virtue that causes God to choose him.
God chooses him because it is his will, his desire, his purpose, according to his heart.

Two outcomes flow out from this understanding.
First, the major difference between David's kingship and Saul's kingship is that
Saul's kingship is the one Israel wanted or desired.
Whereas David's kingship is the one Yahweh himself desired.
God's king will be of a radically different order to the king like all the other nations.
Second outcome, is that this makes sense of how David is chosen.

5. The Chosen King: The lad tending sheep (vv. 11-13)

And so, as we read on, Eliab is the first in the long line of rejected sons.

In fact, all seven sons of Jesse present 'pass before' Eli.

But there's one son left – the youngest, who has no right to claim any kind of importance.

The son that has been left behind to look after the sheep. << vv. 11-13 >>

David is chosen – ruddy, and with beautiful eyes

– which doesn't make sense if the prior explanation was all about the destination, the end point.

Why would God make a big point about it being about the destination of the heart,

And then turn around and give such a glowing description of David's appearance?

No. The point is that it's not about who David is, but it's about who God wants.

David is physically appealing, and yet, David is also the youngest son.

David has beautiful eyes, and yet, David is not counted worthy to be present.

David in fact is called "the unimportant" – not even a grown man, and yet chosen by God.

David will do great things – primarily because he is the one that God has chosen.

David's kingship will be radically different to Saul's kingship,

Because David is the king appointed according to God's own heart.

And because David is the king appointed according to God's own heart,

David is not put up on a pedestal of his own making.

David is not somehow morally superior, because of something innate in David's heart.

And therefore, when David flagrantly sins, it does not shock us, that he is fallible.

It does not shock us when he arranges to have

Uriah killed so that he can claim Bathsheba as his own wife.

Conversely, when David is on the run from Saul, when he is being hunted down,

When he is hiding in a cave, or pretending to be mad in order to escape Saul,

We should be not dismayed, but we should not be surprised,

Because God will work out his purposes to install David as king.

That even when it looks like David will be vanquished and Saul will triumph,

God will work out his purposes so that David is established and Saul rejected.

6. The Impossible King: From cradle to the grave (Luke 2:10-12 , Mark 15:39)

And therefore, from this understanding of David, as the king chosen by God after God's own heart,
There comes King David's greater Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The impossible king – the greatest of all, appointed king because he became the least of all.
The account of Jesus' birth sets the trajectory. << Luke 2:10-12>>

All of the physical signs that we would choose to symbolize God's ruler of the universe,
We'd expect an army of horses and chariots at the very least,
We'd hope for angelic warriors coming to earth to destroy all
But a helpless baby, wrapped in a feeding trough?
The weakest, the most dependent, the most fragile form of life?

That's the sign of God's king?

And if that isn't crazy enough, when that king grows into a man.
When that appointed "Saviour", "Anointed" one makes his play for power –
He intentionally ends up crucified, in the most humiliating form of torture at the time.
He intentionally becomes a weak, pathetic, play thing of the Roman army.

And yet, when Jesus hangs on the cross – what does the Roman centurion say?
"This man was God's son!" (Mark 15:39)

So whilst the rulers of Israel, whilst the governor at the time, all condemned this man.
This man was the king appointed after God's own heart.
More, this man was God come down to earth – who learnt obedience through suffering.
This is the paradoxical – servant king.
The impossible king - Servant of all, dying in our place, and yet Lord of all, conquering death itself.

7. The Foolish Followers (1Corinthians 1:26-30)

And therefore, the followers of this servant-king will not be known for their impressive ways. The kingdom of God will not appear to be this super-intelligent, super-sophisticated, super-genius collection of mega-brains.

No. Quite the opposite.

Paul writes to the church in Corinth this way << 1 Cor 1:26-31>>

God in his mercy has chosen us to be his foolish followers.

God has established his dynasty, through the Lord Jesus Christ, of ordinary,
less than ordinary people.

God chose people like you and me, so that we can not boast in our own superior intellect, rationality, civic duties, impressive C.V's.

No. God chose us, according to his own purposes, his own graciousness, his own love,

And therefore, as we reach out to the world, we boast not about ourselves,

But we boast in the Lord, of everything that he has done.

"It's not all about us, it's all about him"

Let's pray.