

## THE ANOINTING OF DAVID

### *I Samuel 16*

The teachers should reread I Samuel 13 and 15 to recall what was the weakness of Saul. With all but the youngest children, it would be well to review briefly the two incidents in which Saul disobeyed Samuel, and to point out how they indicate Saul's tendency to judge by appearances. This is the most important lesson for the young people in connection with the change from Saul to David.

---

#### **Doctrinal Points**

*We need a spiritual understanding of truth to direct our lives.*

---

#### **Notes for Parents**

The story of Saul's reign over Israel teaches us that we cannot rely upon appearances to guide our judgment of what we should and should not do. Saul meant well and he was a strong and eager leader, but he was not wise. Like many young people—and many older ones who have never really grown up—he was in too much of a hurry to get things done and not willing to believe that the Lord really knew better than he did at all times. He recognized Samuel as the Lord's prophet, but he did not pay strict attention to Samuel's instructions and obey them. How hard it is for all of us to obey the simple command, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him"! The Lord always knows the right time and the right way. It is for us to learn and do His will.

I Samuel 16:7 gives us the key to the difference between Saul and David, not only in the Bible story but in our own lives: "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Every good thing the Lord gives us and also every unwelcome thing He permits to

come to us can bring us to a better state of heart if we will use it in the right way.

But deep changes do not take place all at once. Saul remained on the throne for a long time after David was anointed and although, as our chapter tells us, he loved David greatly at first, he later came to hate him and even tried more than once to kill him. When we are young and inexperienced, we form habits of thought and feeling which are very hard to break even after we have acknowledged that other ways are higher and better. All that is selfish in us rises up to oppose the change. But once we see the higher principle, the Lord's spirit "departs from Saul and enters into David," and if we keep trying, the Lord will give us victory in the end.

David had many faults, but he obeyed the voice of the Lord. Under him all the enemies of Israel were conquered, Jerusalem was taken and the ark of the Lord brought there, and the borders of Israel were extended more widely than ever before. And David was also "the sweet Psalmist of Israel." Many of the Psalms were given through him. And further, when the Lord came into the world, He chose to take on a finite humanity from the line of David and to be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.

---

### Primary

Tell the children that Saul could not keep the kingship because, although he meant well, he was in too much of a hurry and would not do exactly as Samuel told him to do. Little children often have this same failing. Then center the lesson around the difference between Saul and David, David's occupation as a shepherd and his skill in playing the harp, and finally the meaning of anointing. Read aloud I Samuel 16:6-7 to show that even Samuel was tempted to judge by outward appearance. Tell them that David did not actually become king for some time, that Saul later became jealous of him and even tried to kill him, but that David was always Saul's friend, and mourned for him when he died.

When Saul was first told by Samuel that he was to be king, he was very humble and wondered why he should have been chosen. But after all the people had welcomed him as king and after he

had, with the Lord's help, been successful in his first battles, he began to think too well of himself. As we say today, "his head was turned" by success. He forgot that Samuel was the one who spoke for the Lord, and he thought he did not have to obey Samuel.

Now the Lord tells Samuel to anoint a new king.

Where does he send him?

What do you know about Bethlehem?

Why did Samuel think Jesse's oldest son must be the new king?

What did the Lord tell Samuel?

How many of Jesse's sons were rejected?

Why was his youngest son David not present?

What did David look like?

What happened to him when Samuel anointed him?

What happened to Saul at the same time?

David is called "the sweet psalmist of Israel."

Most of the Psalms were given through him.

David did not become king immediately after he was anointed. Saul was still on the throne and David had to prove himself to the people before they could accept him. Let us read how this proving started. Read I Samuel 16:14-23.

---

### Junior

Show the class where Bethlehem is on the map and make the connection with the Lord's birth. Read aloud Luke 2:1-4. Review the meaning of anointing. Stress the correspondence of the ass and the sheep in connection with the first appearance of Saul and of David in the story. Compare Saul and David as to their qualifications for the kingship. Connect David with the book of Psalms.

Saul was brave and he meant well, but he was hasty and impatient. He wanted to follow his own judgment instead of doing what Samuel told him to do, although he knew that Samuel was the Lord's prophet. So, although Saul won his first battles, he soon began to lose, and Samuel was sent to tell him that the kingdom would be taken from him.

Now the Lord tells Samuel to anoint a new king. The new king was to be very different from Saul. The Lord said He would choose

a man after His own heart (I Samuel 13:14). David was to be a great warrior also, even greater than Saul, but he had other qualities which Saul did not have.

Where was David's home?

Who else long afterward was born in Bethlehem?

Look up Luke 2:1-4 to see why Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem. They were both descendants of David. And the Lord was to be called, among other things, "the son of David."

What was Saul doing when Samuel first met him?

What was David doing when Samuel found him?

All the animals in the Bible correspond to—or represent—various affections or "likings" that we have. The ass pictures the liking for reasoning from the way things seem on the outside. The sheep pictures innocence, which is the desire to depend on the Lord for guidance, so that we may be sure not to do harm to anyone. Suppose you have a chance to beat someone in a game by cheating a little. What difference would it make whether you were "looking for asses" or "keeping sheep"? Ask your teacher to help you answer this question.

What happened to David when he was anointed?

What happened to Saul at the same time?

The anointing of David by Samuel was a sign that the Lord's power had been transferred from Saul to David, but David was to have many experiences before the death of Saul would open the way for all the people to recognize him as king. Throughout this time David was loyal to Saul and did all he could to help him, although Saul soon became jealous of David because the people liked him. Saul came to hate David and even tried to kill him more than once.

What was the first way in which David helped Saul?

Have you ever seen a harp?\* It is one of the stringed instruments. Several musical instruments are mentioned in the Bible, and Swe-

---

\*The small Biblical "harp" or lyre should not be confused with the large, intricate instrument used in a modern symphony orchestra. —Ed.

denborg tells us that they picture different ways of expressing our love for the Lord.

What musical instrument was used in the capture of Jericho?

Is that a stringed instrument?

David was to be the great fighting king of Israel. Under him all the enemies within the Holy Land were conquered and the borders of Israel were extended farther than at any other time. Jerusalem was captured and made the capital of the country, and the ark was brought there and placed in a new tabernacle on Mount Zion. But David was always a musician also. He is called “the sweet psalmist of Israel.” Many of the Psalms were given through him. They are called “Psalms of David,” but he himself, when he was about to die, said: “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.” (II Samuel 23:2)

---

### Intermediate

The fallacy of judging from appearances should be stressed. These children are at the age when they form hasty judgments and are very sure they are right. Through the stories of Saul’s mistakes and the difference between Saul and David, they can be led to realize that there is a higher kind of judgment into which they will grow later, and this will be a great help to their parents in dealing with them.

As we read the story of Saul and his hasty and unwise actions, we see how our natural reason fails at crucial points. Everything Saul did seemed reasonable to him, and he could not believe that what Samuel told him to do was really wiser. Judging things by their outward appearance and always looking to the immediate external results as the test of what is best, our natural reason cannot deal with inner problems or wholly trust the wisdom of the Lord’s commands. It is always saying of spiritual truth: “I can’t see how this can be so.”

David as king also represents the rule of truth, but it is truth understood in a deeper and more spiritual way. When our natural reason is seen to be faulty, we look for some deeper understanding

to guide us. The character of this deeper understanding, which is pictured by David, appears from his occupation. He was a shepherd. That is, the deeper understanding of truth is founded on a desire to cherish and protect innocence, which is essentially the desire and willingness to be led by the Lord, and not merely, like the natural reason pictured by Saul, on a desire to reach a “common-sense” answer to our problems. You remember that Saul, when Samuel met him, was looking for his father’s asses. Look up the correspondence of the ass and the lamb.

As soon as David was anointed, the power from the Lord departed from Saul. Just as soon as we have seen that we must think from spiritual principles, we begin to find a great deal wrong with common sense. But Saul is still acting as king. We cannot change our habits of thought in a moment.

At first, Saul was aware of his new position only by his recurring “black moods,” and David was able to be his armorbearer and to soothe him with his music. Several musical instruments are mentioned in the Bible, and Swedenborg tells that they picture different ways of expressing our love for the Lord. Wind instruments are symbolic of simple and direct expressions of affection, but stringed instruments stand for expressions of it by means of truths. David was to be called “the sweet psalmist of Israel,” and many of the Psalms were written through him. The book of Psalms is usually referred to by Swedenborg as the book of David.

We might say that David’s playing before Saul was a form of reasoning from love. Have you ever been cross and irritable with your mother, for example, and suddenly come to yourself through the single thought of how much you really love her? Our love for the Lord, if we take time to express it, will cure many “black moods.” This is one of the special uses of the regular reading of the Word and of prayer. They make all our selfish reasonings seem unworthy—as they are. When the Lord came into the world, He came as divine truth to show us how to live. So He was born of the line of David and was called “the son of David.” And He was born in David’s birthplace, Bethlehem. The word *Bethlehem* means



“house of bread,” and Swedenborg tells us that Bethlehem corresponds to “truth from good.”

The description of David given in verse 18 of our chapter is interesting. The first impression that we get of him at the time of his anointing (verses 11 and 12) is that of a young boy, but here he is called “a mighty valiant man, and a man of war.” To worldly people spiritual truths often seem beautiful but childish. It is only when we have come into displeasure with ourselves and recognize our need of help and comfort, as Saul did when the “evil spirit” was upon him, that we can feel the power of spiritual truth. David was to be the fighting king who overcame all the enemies of Israel within the Holy Land. He trusted in the Lord instead of in himself, and so the Lord’s power could be with him. If we trust in the Lord and obey Him, He can give us victory over all our inner foes.

*Basic Correspondences*

David	=	the rule of divine truth as seen by our spiritual reason
Bethlehem	=	truth from good
musical instruments	=	expression by truths, as in words

---

**Senior**

The transition from Saul to David is beyond the actual experience even of the Seniors, but they can understand its meaning, and it will help to prepare them to meet the failure which will inevitably attend many of their early efforts to lead the Christian life as they see it. It may also soften a little the hardness of their early judgments and give them a more sympathetic understanding of the point of view of older people. The correspondence of the harp and its occurrence here will be interesting for discussion. The quotation from the *Apocalypse Explained* at the end of the lesson gives the basis for this discussion.

With every one of us who is developing spiritually the time comes when he sees clearly that he can no longer be satisfied with the rule of his natural reason. He must have a new “king,” a deeper and more spiritual understanding of the truth, to direct his life. For we deeply want to “be good.” We do not want to do harm, as we are always unintentionally doing when our natural reason is on

the throne. This desire to be good, to be led by the Lord instead of by self, is represented by the fact that David, when he was called by Samuel, was tending his father's sheep, just as the character of Saul's kingship was pictured by his search for his father's asses. Our own understanding, based on what we see around us in the world, is not enough to lead us against any of our deeper enemies. Like Saul, it is hasty and impatient, and unwilling to acknowledge as evil anything that "looks good." The story of Saul's failures is told especially in chapters 13 and 15.

David's home was in Bethlehem, the "house of bread," which Swedenborg tells us represents "truth from good." That is, the primary desire to be good and to do good enables us to see truth more deeply and so to detect and dispel those deeper evils which the natural reason overlooks or condones. Living under this new principle we shall not, when we face a decision, say, "What will produce the most immediate external results?" but, "What will be really right in the Lord's sight?"

The anointing of David pictures our first recognition that this deeper rational is our true "king." But there is a long way to go before David becomes king in fact. Habits of thought and feeling are hard to change. Saul is still on the throne. The spirit of the Lord has departed from him, but Saul still directs Israel. In the Bible story there is a long struggle ahead between Saul and David. This is characteristic of our period of transition from very young manhood and womanhood to real maturity. We see the true order of life, but the habits of youth cling to us and let go with great reluctance.

In the first realization of the weakness of our natural reason, pictured by Saul's dark moods, we welcome the comfort which the higher reason brings. So David at first became Saul's armor-bearer and soothed him with his harp. But as soon as we begin to see that our natural reason must actually be dethroned and the higher reason become dominant in our lives, all the hells in us rise up and try to destroy the new king. Saul was to make several attempts to kill David. Yet David always helped Saul, and mourned



for him when he was killed. Older people look back upon their lives and wish they could have kept their first energy and self-confidence and at the same time gained the wisdom of maturity. But this cannot be. The two states are distinct. One does not develop out of the other. David was not Saul's son. He was not even his younger brother, as Isaac was the younger half-brother of Ishmael. He came of an entirely different line. Each of the two types of rule has its own time and place in our lives.

---

### Adult

Discussion should center in the difference between Saul and David, in the meaning of the continuance of Saul's reign after David was anointed, and in the meaning of the fact that David was not of Saul's line.

Swedenborg tells us in several places that David represents "The Lord in respect to Divine truth." He has a good deal to say of David in this connection (AE 205 and elsewhere). We know that inmosty the whole of the Old Testament treats of the Lord's life and that all the leading figures in it represent the Lord in one or another aspect. We should, therefore, think of David and others as representative figures whose external lives were ruled over by divine providence in such a way that their record in the Scriptures might, through correspondence, express divine truth for all men in all times. There was a real David, a man like other men, compounded of good and evil, an individual soul just as important to the Lord as any other soul and no more. Of him we know little. But of David, the actor in the great drama of Scripture, we are told much. The many prophecies in which the Lord is connected with David all refer to David in this representative character; so we need not be confused by the statements that the Lord was "of David's line" and "the Son of David." The Lord Himself pointed this out to the Pharisees in Matthew 22:41-46.

In our study, however, we are trying consistently to relate the Scripture story to our own lives as well as to the Lord's life. So we must try to see what David means in us. The three great kings all

represent the rule of divine truth, but on successively higher levels. Saul, as we have seen, represents divine truth apprehended in an external and necessarily superficial way. David pictures a more spiritual understanding of truth—“The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart.” “For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” Everything about David places his meaning on the spiritual plane of the mind. He is a “mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters [or in speech]”; yet he is called while guarding sheep, signifying the protecting of innocent affections. He is a “cunning player on the harp,” the symbol of “spiritual truth” (AC 419). Later we shall find that he overcomes Israel’s internal enemies, at last occupies Jerusalem, and brings the ark there.

Divine truth does not change, but our understanding of it changes. We must pass from our first natural and external understanding to a spiritual understanding of it which will enable us to see through appearances, to expose and correct deeper evils, and to set our internal house in order. When the results of our first efforts to apply truth to life are unsatisfactory, we must realize that the truth has not failed, but that our understanding of it is inadequate and that we must seek a deeper understanding. If our desire to do good remains steadfast, we shall be led, in our search for a new “king,” to Bethlehem, the “house of bread,” which Swedenborg tells us signifies “the spiritual of the celestial” (AC 4594) or “the truth of good.” This is the same place to which the Wise Men were led to find the Incarnate Word. That is, by patient effort and with the Lord’s guidance, our good desire will lead us to an understanding of truth which will enable our desire to accomplish corresponding good results.

This change in our understanding of truth is not accomplished in a moment. In I Samuel 15:35 we read, “And the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.” We know that this again is the language of appearance. The Lord does not change His mind, but our apprehension of His will with regard to our conduct does

change. So in the letter of the story He tells Samuel to cease mourning for Saul, to fill his horn with oil, and go to Bethlehem to anoint the new king. When we realize that our understanding of truth has been too superficial and has led us to make mistakes, we recognize the necessity of a new understanding, and the Lord's love working in us discovers and anoints a new "king." But we cannot at once remove Saul. The habits of judgment which we have formed are still dear to us; in the ordinary affairs of life they still hold sway. Only in critical cases do we seek out and depend upon the new leader. Nor is our new understanding sufficiently developed to take immediate control. It must be tried out over a long period until we come to trust it fully. So Saul continues to reign, and David, although anointed king, becomes recognized only gradually. But the spirit of the Lord has departed from Saul and is with David. We are conscious of the lack in our old understanding and of the fact that we have transferred the real authority to the new.

The first relationship between Saul and David is interesting in its suggestions. Swedenborg says, "Because the 'harp' signifies confession from spiritual truths, and spiritual truths are those by which angels of the Lord's spiritual kingdom are affected, and which disperse the falsities of evil, Saul's evil spirit was driven away by David's playing." (AE 323<sup>12</sup>) Saul at first loved David greatly and made him his armorbearer. It seems at first as if the old understanding and the new can go hand in hand, as if we can keep our familiar judgments as to right and wrong, only employing the new deeper insight to cleanse them of their obvious falsities and to bolster them up in their attacks upon evil. Sometimes, for example, one who has been brought up believing a strictly literal acceptance of the Scriptures and is used to drawing certain obvious lessons from the letter, may be led—through attacks on his faith which he cannot meet—to accept a spiritual interpretation of the Word. He sees that it is true, and uses it to cope with particular perplexities and doubts; yet he clings to his old ideas of the literal sense wherever it has proved satisfactory to him, and for a long time refuses to recognize that the whole must be interpreted according to its

spiritual meaning. Or, a young person who has found himself mistaken in some of his judgments sees that a higher principle will help him to revise those particular judgments; yet he hesitates to apply it to other judgments in which he has not been forced to admit himself mistaken.

Habits once formed, whether mental or physical, are hard to break, and Saul lingers on the throne a long time, at first friendly to David and then actively antagonistic to him when he realizes that David must eventually wholly supplant him. Yet once David is anointed, his power gradually increases and Saul's power wanes. Saul's son, however friendly to David he may be, cannot occupy the throne. Even the best and truest offspring of our natural understanding can serve only as a temporary help to the establishment of the higher judgment. We are reminded of the Lord's words concerning John the Baptist: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." There is the same discrete degree between the natural and the spiritual understanding of truth that there is between reformation and regeneration.

---

### From the Writings of Swedenborg

*Apocalypse Explained*, n. 205: "By 'David' in the Word the Lord is meant, because by 'kings' in the Word the Lord in respect to Divine truth is represented, and by 'priests' there the Lord in respect to Divine good. The Lord is represented especially by King David, because David had much care of the matters of the church, and also wrote the Psalms. . . . That David might represent the Lord in respect to Divine truth, the Lord was willing to be born of the house of David, and also to be called 'the Son of David,' 'his Root and Offspring,' also 'the Root of Jesse.' But when the Lord put off the human from the mother, and put on the Human from the Father, which is the Divine Human, He was no longer David's son."

*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 419: "As celestial things are the holy things of love and the derivative goods, so spiritual things are the truths and goods of faith; for it belongs to faith to understand not only what is true, but also what is good. The knowledges of faith involve both. But to be such as faith teaches is cel-

estial. As faith involves both of these, they are signified by two instruments, the harp [lyre] and the organ [Panpipe or syrinx]. The harp, as everyone knows, is a stringed instrument, and therefore signifies spiritual truth; but the organ, being intermediate between a stringed instrument and a wind instrument, signifies spiritual good.”

*Apocalypse Explained*, n. 323: “. . . the ‘harp,’ as being confession from spiritual truths. This is signified by ‘harps,’ because the harp was a stringed instrument, and by such instruments spiritual things, or those that are of truth, are signified, while wind instruments signify celestial things, or those that are of good. Such things are signified by musical instruments because of their sounds, for sound corresponds to the affections; moreover in heaven affections are perceived by sounds; and because there are various affections, and various sounds are produced by musical instruments, therefore these instruments, by correspondence and consequent agreement, signify affections. In general, stringed instruments signify such things as belong to the affections of truth, and wind instruments such as belong to the affections of good; or, what is the same, some instruments belong to the spiritual class, and some to the celestial class . . . Because the ‘harp’ signifies confession from spiritual truths, and spiritual truths are those by which angels who are in the Lord’s spiritual kingdom are affected, and which disperse the falsities of evil, and with these the spirits themselves who are in them; so: ‘When the evil spirit was upon Saul, David took a harp and played with his hand; and so rest was given to Saul, and the evil spirit departed from him’ (I Samuel 16:23). This was done because kings represented the Lord in respect to the spiritual kingdom, and therefore signified spiritual truths; but Saul then represented the falsities that are opposed to these truths; and these were dispersed by the sound of the harp, because the ‘harp’ signified the spiritual affection of truth. This then took place because with the sons of Israel all things were representative and thus significative; it is otherwise at this day.”

---

### Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- J. What did the Lord tell Samuel about Saul and his line? *to lose kingdom*  
P. Where did the Lord send Samuel to find a new king? *Bethlehem*  
P. Who else was born in Bethlehem? *Jesus, also Benjamin*  
P. What did Samuel think when he saw Jesse’s eldest son? *here was the one*  
P. What did the Lord tell him? *not this one*  
J. How many sons of Jesse did the Lord reject? *seven*  
P. What was David doing when they sent for him? *tending sheep*

- J. What happened to David when he was anointed? *spirit of Lord came on him*
- J. What happened to Saul at the same time? *evil spirit troubled him*
- P. What did David look like? *ruddy, handsome*
- J. What other qualities did he have? *warrior, poet, obedient to God*
- P. On what instrument did David play? *lyre (harp)*
- J. How did David come to Saul's attention? *soothed with music*
- J. What position did Saul give him? *armorbearer*
- J. What book in the Bible was written in part through David? *Psalms*
- I. To what does David correspond? *truth understood spiritually ruling in life*
- S. What is pictured by Saul's continuing on the throne after David was anointed? *old habits hard to change*