

Exegetical Notes – 1 Samuel 9:1-27

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship
101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320
610-384-1375
charleshjensen@aol.com

1 Samuel 9:1-27

(Samuel was Israel's Judge for 20 years. During his reign as judge, Israel prospered and lived in peace. In this passage we approach the end of Samuel's time as Israel's leader. Monarchy, as opposed to Theocracy, is the normal form of government for nations during this time. Israel is the only theocracy. The people of Israel desire to be "Woke," they want to be like all the other people of the world. Though Samuel opposed the idea on Monarchy, God told him to warn the people of the costs of having a human king, but He told Samuel to grant their request.)

Verses 1-2

¹ There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bekorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin. ² Kish had a son named Saul, as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and he was a head taller than anyone else.

- The focus of the story shifts from Samuel, Israel's judge, to Saul, the son of Kish. Kish was a man of standing in Israel. He was from the Hebrew tribe of Benjamin. Saul was a good looking man who was tall.

Verses 3-10

³ Now the donkeys belonging to Saul's father Kish were lost, and Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of the servants with you and go and look for the donkeys." ⁴ So he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and through the area around Shalisha, but they did not find them. They went on into the district of Shaalim, but the donkeys were not there. Then he passed through the territory of Benjamin, but they did not find them.

⁵ When they reached the district of Zuph, Saul said to the servant who was with him, "Come, let's go back, or my father will stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about us."

⁶ ***But the servant replied, “Look, in this town there is a man of God; he is highly respected, and everything he says comes true. Let’s go there now. Perhaps he will tell us what way to take.”***

⁷ ***Saul said to his servant, “If we go, what can we give the man? The food in our sacks is gone. We have no gift to take to the man of God. What do we have?”***

⁸ ***The servant answered him again. “Look,” he said, “I have a quarter of a shekel of silver. I will give it to the man of God so that he will tell us what way to take.”***⁹ ***(Formerly in Israel, if someone went to inquire of God, they would say, “Come, let us go to the seer,” because the prophet of today used to be called a seer.)***

¹⁰ ***“Good,” Saul said to his servant. “Come, let’s go.” So they set out for the town where the man of God was.***

- Somehow, the donkeys which belong to Kish had gotten lost. We do not know how. We do not know the number of lost donkeys. Saul was sent by his father to search for the lost donkeys.
- Saul searched high and low for the donkeys for some time. He traveled far and wide but was unable to find the donkeys. As he had been gone a long time, he worried that his father would become worried about him. His supplies were exhausted, so he decided to return to his father’s house.
- As he was passing Ramah, the city where Samuel lived, Saul’s servant reminded Saul that there was a “seer,” a prophet, a man who served God who lived in Ramah. The servant suggested that they go to the prophet’s house to see if he could direct them to the donkeys. The custom was to give the prophet a gift when he was consulted on a matter, but Saul’s resources were depleted. The servant had some money which he was willing to give to the prophet. So, Saul and his servant set off to consult with Samuel about the donkeys.
- The Hebrew word translated “God” in these verses is a plural noun. It is customary for the Hebrews to refer to YHWH using an honorific plural. But it is also possible to translate the word as a regular plural, “gods.” Saul clearly does not know that he is going to see Samuel. Did he think he was going to consult with someone who was of YHWH or not? We cannot be sure.

Verses 11-13

¹¹ ***As they were going up the hill to the town, they met some young women coming out to draw water, and they asked them, “Is the seer here?”***

¹² “He is,” they answered. “He’s ahead of you. Hurry now; he has just come to our town today, for the people have a sacrifice at the high place. ¹³ As soon as you enter the town, you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. The people will not begin eating until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward, those who are invited will eat. Go up now; you should find him about this time.”

- As Saul approached Ramah, he met a woman who was coming out of the town to draw water. He asked her if the prophet was at home. She told him that he was and that if Saul hurried he could consult with the prophet before a festival began.

Verses 14-17

¹⁴ They went up to the town, and as they were entering it, there was Samuel, coming toward them on his way up to the high place.

¹⁵ Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed this to Samuel: ¹⁶ “About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him ruler over my people Israel; he will deliver them from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked on my people, for their cry has reached me.”

¹⁷ When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the LORD said to him, “This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people.”

- Saul hurried into Ramah. When he entered the city, he ran into Samuel who was on his way to the place where the festival would be held.
- The day before this meeting, YHWH had spoke to Samuel telling him that he would meet a young man from the tribe of Benjamin the next day. Samuel was to anoint this young man to become Israel’s first king in answer to the peoples’ cries for a king.
- As Saul approached Samuel, YHWH told Samuel that this young man was the one he was to anoint king.

Verses 18-20

¹⁸ Saul approached Samuel in the gateway and asked, “Would you please tell me where the seer’s house is?”

¹⁹ “I am the seer,” Samuel replied. “Go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you are to eat with me, and in the morning I will send you on your way and will tell you all that is in your heart. ²⁰ As for the donkeys you lost three days

ago, do not worry about them; they have been found. And to whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you and your whole family line?"

- Samuel told Saul to go to the festival, for Saul was to be Samuel's guest at the feast. He told Saul that he was to spend the night with him. In the morning he would explain all that was happening to Saul. He also told Saul that the donkeys he sought had been found. He told Saul that he was the answer to Israel's prayers.

Verses 21-27

²¹ Saul answered, "But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?"

²² Then Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the hall and seated them at the head of those who were invited—about thirty in number. ²³ Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the piece of meat I gave you, the one I told you to lay aside."

²⁴ So the cook took up the thigh with what was on it and set it in front of Saul. Samuel said, "Here is what has been kept for you. Eat, because it was set aside for you for this occasion from the time I said, 'I have invited guests.'" And Saul dined with Samuel that day.

²⁵ After they came down from the high place to the town, Samuel talked with Saul on the roof of his house. ²⁶ They rose about daybreak, and Samuel called to Saul on the roof, "Get ready, and I will send you on your way." When Saul got ready, he and Samuel went outside together. ²⁷ As they were going down to the edge of the town, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to go on ahead of us"—and the servant did so—"but you stay here for a while, so that I may give you a message from God."

- Saul was entirely befuddled by Samuel's greeting and the honor which was shown to him. He did not know what was going on.
- Samuel took him to the hall in which the feast was being held and extended to Saul the rights of a very special guest. After the feast, Samuel took Saul to his house. That night they talked together privately.
- In the morning, as Saul was about to leave, Samuel told Saul to send his servant away so that they could again speak privately. Samuel told Saul that he had a special message for Saul from YHWH.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon based on 1 Samuel 9:1-27. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. All rights are reserved by Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)