

David

A new king was needed in Israel. So the Lord sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as king in the place of Saul.

Samuel was met in Bethlehem by the elders of the town. He explained to them he had come to offer a sacrifice and he issued a special invitation to Jesse and his sons to join him for the sacrificial meal. When Jesse and his boys arrived, Samuel saw Eliab, Jesse's first-born, and thought, "Surely the LORD'S anointed stands here before the LORD". Samuel saw Eliab and thought he was the one God wanted to be king.

According to the Lord, Samuel picked Eliab because Samuel was looking "at the outward appearance". Evidently Eliab was tall, handsome, and muscular. He was the kind of person you would want as a king.

In 1501 the Italian artist Michelangelo sculpted a statue of a 16 year old King David. It's a huge statue, almost 17 feet tall, of a nearly perfect human form. David's arms are thick and rounded, bursting with power. His chest is almost triangular--tapering down from the broad shoulders to the muscular waist. His hips bulge with muscle, and his thighs and calves are packed with strength.

Is this the David we see in the Bible? Did Samuel see a superior specimen of manhood standing in front of him? The Bible says David had a fine appearance and handsome features. But, David was just a shepherd boy. From the outside, at least, there was nothing special about him, nothing to show him as being marked by God for great things.

The Lord Looks at the Heart

So why did the Lord pick David? What did God see in David that neither Samuel nor Jesse saw? We need to first talk about the will, the promises, and the eternal plan of God. Remember Jacob on his death-bed? He called for his sons and blessed them. He had a word for each of them and to Judah he said, "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. "

The anointing of David, the son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah, must be seen as a fulfillment of this promise. The Lord picked David, then, in order to remain true to His covenant promise. And, of course, this promise found its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ "the son of David, the son of Abraham".

Why else did the Lord pick David? What did God see in David that neither Samuel nor Jesse saw? A second answer is provided by our text. God Himself said: "The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

The Lord looked at David's heart and He liked what He saw. When Saul wrongfully took over the function of the priest by offering the sacrifice, Samuel announced that Saul

would be replaced as king by "a man after God's own heart". So the Lord looked at David and what did He see? He saw "a man after his own heart."

What does it mean to be "a man after God's own heart"? We find out by looking at David's psalms.

With his flock bedded down for the night, young David drew a weathered cloak around his shoulders and laid back on the grass of the hillside. With eyes full of awe and wonder, he lost himself in the great sea of stars. Softly, reverently, he began to sing:
(Ps 8:1) O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

Day after day David was with the sheep. He led, guided, protected, sheltered, watered, and fed them. Slowly it dawned on him that he was the sheep needing the tender care of a Shepherd:
(Ps 23:1-2) The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters ...

When storms came David was forced to find refuge in a cave or in the shelter of some great rock. He started thinking as the thunders crashed, the lightning flashed, and the rain poured down:
(Ps 18:2) The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

As David traveled with his flock of sheep in search of pasture and water he often found himself in unfamiliar territory. Or, the path split and he was not sure which way to take. This reminded him that God always points the way:
(Ps 32:8) I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

(Ps 119:105) Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
David was a man after God's own heart. God was David's constant companion. David loved God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. David put God first in his life and related everything in his life – everything he saw and heard, everything he felt, everything he did – to his relationship with the Lord.

What a picture Scripture paints: David and God, the young shepherd and the Great Shepherd, walking together through life.