

Samuel meets David's family (1 Samuel 16)

Samuel was a prophet and like Moses all those years before him he passed on God's words to God's people.

The Israelites had settled down in the land where they were now living and, over the years, God had given the Israelites people to lead them, like Moses and Joshua had done years before. They were not kings because God was the king of his people. They were leaders who asked God to show them how they should lead his people. The Israelites looked around them at other groups of people who had human kings and they decided that they wanted a human king. God had warned the people, through the words of a song that he had given to Moses and Joshua, that this would happen – that the Israelites would not always stay close to God.

So, God had given them the human king they wanted and he was called Saul. Samuel the prophet watched Saul being king of the Israelites and he saw that King Saul followed God closely at first but he was not always good. That's the way with humans. We are often more interested in ourselves than in God or other people.

The job of a prophet was to pass on God's word to God's people. The prophet Samuel had a difficult job to do – he went to King Saul and told him that he was not being a good king because he was not asking God to guide him. It can't have been easy to give that message to the king but it was very important.

God was not pleased with King Saul and he decided to make another man king. God had another special job for Samuel. God told Samuel to go and see a man named Jesse in Bethlehem, because he had chosen one of Jesse's sons to be the new king instead of Saul.

Jesse had eight sons. The oldest was a grown up man and then there were the others who were a bit younger right down to the youngest who was still a boy.

Samuel arrived at Jesse's house in Bethlehem and he saw Jesse's sons, one by one. The first one that Samuel saw was Eliab and he looked big and strong but God told Samuel he wasn't the right one. The next son that Samuel saw was Abinadab and Samuel thought it might be him but God said it wasn't. Next there was Shammah but God said to Samuel that it wasn't him either. One by one Samuel met the next four sons one at a time and, each time, God said that this wasn't the one, even if Samuel thought he looked like a kingly type of guy! Not one of these seven young men was going to be king and that was all the sons that Samuel could see.

Samuel turned to Jesse and asked if he had met all his sons. "Is this the lot?" he asked. Jesse turned to Samuel and explained that he did have another son called David. David was his youngest son and he was still a boy. It was his job to look after the sheep in the fields. That's where David was at that moment - in the field looking after the sheep.

Samuel was a bit surprised.....a boy still.....could this be the one? He asked if somebody could go and fetch David. So someone went to fetch David and brought him home.

And God said to Samuel – "Yes this is the one!"

So God picked David to be the king for the people of Israel and, as a sign of this special job, Samuel poured some special oil over David's head. His family were watching when this happened and they probably wondered what was going on! It would be a while before they would see that their little brother had a very special job to do.