

# Donkeys and the Providence of a Sovereign God

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[ 0 : 00 ] I have a Bible with you.

Open it up, if you would, to 1 Samuel! 1 Samuel and find chapter 9. My text for tonight is a rather lengthy one, really. It's not going to take us a long time to work through it.

But it takes up all of chapter 9 and the first 16 verses of chapter 10. Sit back, get comfortable. Listen as I read the passage, because I do want to read the passage all the way through here at the beginning.

There was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bekaroth, the son of Aphia, the Benjamite, a mighty man of power, really a wealthy man.

And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. Sherry and I have four choice and handsome sons.

[ 1 : 19 ] We're hoping they will all turn out better than Saul did. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel.

From his shoulders upward, he was taller than any of the people. You understand, just a little bit of a heads up.

Why this description of him? I think it's going to become clear as we move along, as we study the life of Saul. Now, the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost.

And Kish said to his son Saul, Please take one of the servants with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys. So he passed through the mountains of Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha, but they did not find them.

Then they passed through the land of Sha'alim, and they were not there. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find them. When they had come to the land of Zuth, Saul said to his servant who was with him, Come, let us return, lest my father cease caring about the donkeys and become worried about us.

[ 2 : 34 ] And he said to him, Look now, there is in this city, and this is the servant speaking, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man. All that he says surely comes to pass, so let us go there.

Perhaps he can show us the way that we should go. Then Saul said to his servant, But look, if we go, what shall we bring to the man? For the bread in our vessels is all gone, and there is no present to bring to the man of God.

What do we have? And the servant answered, Saul again, and said, Look, I have here at hand one-fourth of a shekel of silver. I will give that to the man of God to tell us our way.

And I thought, you know, this is really a pretty good arrangement. So next time you come, visit with the pastor. You know, get a word from the pastor. Bring some silver.

Okay, just kidding. Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus, Come, let us go to the seer. For he who is now called the prophet was formerly called a seer.

[ 3 : 44 ] Then Saul said to his servant, Well said, come, let us go. So they went to the city where the man of God was. As they went up the hill to the city, they met some young women going out to draw water, and said to them, Is the seer here?

And they answered them and said, Yes, there he is, just ahead of you. Hurry now, for today he came to this city, because there is a sacrifice of the people today on the high place.

And as soon as you come into the city, you will surely find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice.

Afterward, those who are invited will eat. Now, therefore, go up, for about this time you will find him. So they went up to the city. As they were coming into the city, there was Samuel coming out toward them on this side, up the high place.

Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, Tomorrow, about this time, I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over my people Israel, that he may save my people from the hand of the Philistines.

[ 4 : 53 ] For I have looked upon my people, because their cry has come to me. So when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said to him, There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you.

This one shall reign over my people. Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate and said, Please tell me, where is the seer's house?

Samuel answered Saul and said, I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today and tomorrow, and I will let you go, and will tell you all that is in your heart.

But as for your donkeys, not sure how he found out about the donkeys, as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not be anxious about them, for they have been found.

And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you, and on all your father's house? And Saul answered and said, Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel?

[ 5 : 54 ] Am I family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me? Now Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall and had them sit in the place of honor among those who were invited.

There were about thirty persons. And Samuel said to the cook, Bring the portion which I gave you, of which I said to you, Set it apart. So the cook took up the thigh with its upper part and set it before Saul.

And Samuel said, Here it is. What was kept back? It was set apart for you. Eat, for until this time it has been kept for you since I said I invited the people.

So Saul ate with Samuel that day. And they had come down from the high place into the city.

Samuel spoke with Saul on the top of the house. They arose early and it was about the dawning of the day that Samuel called to Saul on the top of the house saying, Get up that I may send you on your way.

And Saul arose and both of them went outside, he and Samuel. As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Tell the servant to go on ahead of us.

[ 7 : 05 ] And he went on, But you stand here a while that I may announce to you the word of God. And Samuel took a flask of oil, poured it on his head, kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord has anointed you commander over his inheritance?

When you have departed from me today, you will find two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin of Zelah, and they will say to you, The donkeys which you went to look for have been found, and now your father has ceased caring about the donkeys and is worrying about you, saying, What shall I do about my son?

Then you shall go on forward from there and come to the terebinth tree of Tabor. There three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine.

And they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall receive from their hands. After that, you shall come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is, and it will happen when you have come there to the city that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with the stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them, and they will be prophesying.

Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. And let it be when these signs come to you that you do as the occasion demands, for God is with you.

[ 8 : 37 ] You shall go down before me to Gilgal, and surely I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and make sacrifices of peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait till I come to you and show you what you should do.

So it was when he had turned his back to go from Samuel that God gave him another heart, and all those signs came to pass that day. When they came there to the hill, there was a group of prophets to meet him.

Then the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. And it happened when all who knew him formerly saw that he indeed prophesied among the prophets, the people said to one another, What is this that has come upon the son of Kish?

Is Saul also among the prophets? Then a man from there answered and said, But who is their father? Therefore it became a proverb, Is Saul also among the prophets?

And when he had finished prophesying, he went to the high place. Then Saul's uncle said to him and his servant, Where did you go? So he said, To look for the donkeys.

[ 9 : 43 ] When we saw that they were nowhere to be found, we went to Samuel. And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, please, what Samuel said to you. So Saul said to the uncle, He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found.

But about the matter of the kingdom, he did not tell him what Samuel had said. All right. That's a long text to read. Sorry about that.

A lot of ground, of course, that we could cover. We could really approach this by kind of nitpicking and looking at every movement of this thing and every detail of this thing. And there are just a lot of elements in the story that we just really can't answer.

We don't really know some of these kind of strange things other than to say some very general things about what this passage tells us about God.

About God. One who has called Saul and through Samuel will anoint Saul to be the first king of Israel. Now, selected as my title for tonight's message and we could say our subject.

[ 10 : 50 ] Kind of in this kind of short phrase. Donkeys and the Providence of a Sovereign God. That's a pretty good title. Donkeys and the Providence of a Sovereign God.

Because they go together here. Saul went out looking for donkeys. Donkeys that had run away. And this event or the donkeys running away and being lost is what has set the entire story in motion.

And in the course of the story, we see very clearly the providence of a Sovereign God. Now, I want to kind of bring us up to date here and remember as we studied last time, that was really a couple of weeks ago.

In chapter 8, remember, the people of Israel, what did they want? They wanted a king. Remember? It was just two weeks ago. We do remember that though.

They wanted a king. In fact, in verse 5 of chapter 8, they came to Samuel and kind of, in essence, said, you know, we're sorry to have to put it this way, Samuel, but you're old.

[ 11 : 56 ] That's what they said to him. You're getting old, getting older, you're not going to be around much longer, and added to that problem, your sons, they're greedy, they're corrupt, corrupt judges, and so here's what we want, Samuel.

We want a king. Make us a king to judge us like the other nations. We want a king just like all the other nations around us. In fact, a little bit later in the chapter, you remember, and I'll remind you in verse 19, they demanded it.

They said, we will have a king over us. Samuel got a little bit out of shape, remember. Thought they were rejecting his leadership, went to God about it, and God said, they're not rejecting you, they're rejecting me as their king.

And so, God led Samuel to give them a warning, and so he warned them, but they wouldn't, would have none of it. They said, we will have a king. And then, and get this, they said this, that we also may be like all the other nations.

All right? So we studied that last time, and you remember, Samuel warned them. He said, in effect, be careful what you ask for, because you just might get it. In effect, they're going to get it.

[ 13 : 11 ] And he even told them what they would get. They would get big government. They would get burdensome taxation. They would get confiscation of their property, you know, eminent domain.

They would get the military draft. They would get wars. And that comes along with kings. It comes along with governments. And so, Samuel warned them about these things, but they would have none of that.

We will have a king. So, Israel got all of those things that Samuel warned them about, and more when they got their first king by the name of Saul.

And the Bible says of Saul, as we kind of move into the introduction to Saul here in chapter 9, the Bible says, of Saul, there was not a more handsome person among the children of Israel.

Not one more handsome. But, you know, handsome does not make a person good. Right? It doesn't make a person good. As my grandma used to say, handsome is as handsome does.

[ 14 : 20 ] Right? That old adage is true. And the Bible also says this of Saul, from his shoulders upward, he was taller than any of the people. So, head and shoulders above everyone else.

This is a tall, good-looking guy. But a tall and good-looking guy does not necessarily make a good leader of a nation. And true here with Saul.

In fact, we don't have to read very far. We have to read a little bit further than we did tonight. Really, just within the next few verses of where I left off in the reading of the passage, we see Samuel was about to present Saul to the people.

He's already anointed him in private and now he's going to present Saul to the people but he couldn't find him. Do you remember this part of the story? Couldn't find him. Nowhere to be found. In fact, God had to tell Samuel where to find him. And where was he? He was hiding out. Hiding behind the stuff, some translations say. Baggage or luggage or whatever it was.

[15:23] Hiding out behind there. You know, this giant among men. You know, more handsome than any other man in the kingdom. Head and shoulders above every other man. He's hiding out behind the luggage.

Alright, so just because you're taller than everybody doesn't necessarily make you brave, courageous, and a good leader of a nation. And so God is going to give Israel what they deserve. They ask for it. They're going to get it. But they're not going to necessarily want what they get in the long run eventually. Saul is going to be a dismal failure as a king.

But they wanted one like all the other nations and that's what God gave them and so he's going to teach them a hard lesson. Alright, so that kind of gets us up to speed in the way that the Bible introduces us to Saul.

And so our text from there on is going to reveal how God brought Saul to the throne in a very strange way. I mean, nearly every part of this that we read is weird, strange.

[16:27] And so this is how God brought Saul to the throne and it's incredible how all this worked out. So I want you to notice three things and really three things about God throughout this passage because we see God's hand in all of this.

The first one is God's mastery. His mastery. He is the master of everything that is going on here. His mastery.

Now, think about it. As I read the story and if you've read it before you're kind of familiar with the story and the things that happened and you may have come away from this story with a lot of questions and you certainly are cognizant of the fact that some of this is just strange.

But as you come away from the story, if you were God, don't you think you would have done it differently? I mean, maybe a little less complicated.

Now, of course, you're not God. I'm not God. But I'm just thinking that all I would really need is to know that God has chosen Saul to be Israel's king.

[17:38] If it's just that one little tidbit of knowledge and apparently God had already told Samuel, at least he was going to meet the king at a certain place. But if God just told me who it was, then, you know, with that little bit of knowledge and I think that I could have come up with a much simpler way to bring Saul and Samuel together so that Saul could be anointed and become king.

I mean, really, why not just send Samuel over to Kish's house, you know, Saul's home? Why not just send Samuel over there and, you know, and then tell Kish that God has chosen one of his sons to be the king of Israel and then so he should parade all of his sons before Samuel so that Samuel can get a good look at these guys and then make an informed decision?

That sound familiar? I mean, you know, that's like it happened later when Jesse, when Samuel went to Jesse's house when he was looking for a replacement for Saul.

That's how it worked. That seems pretty simple. Just send Samuel over there to the house. Why go through this, you know, kind of weird, kind of complicated thing?

Well, God just chose to do it that way. That's the simple answer. He didn't choose to do it the way that you and I might do it. We're trying to think of some simple way, some logical way, but God chooses a different way.

[19:08] God chooses to reveal, rather, he chooses to reveal his mastery of all of the events of life. That's what he's choosing to do here. His mastery, his sovereignty, and he's choosing to reveal that through, really, a very mundane set of circumstances.

I said they were kind of weird and complicated, but really, it's a very kind of mundane thing. Now, think of it. God reveals his sovereign providence through some lost donkeys.

Some donkeys that got out of their pen or fence or whatever, corral, whatever they were in. God chooses to show his mastery of all events of life through this search for lost donkeys.

I mean, you can't get a more mundane type of thing than some lost donkeys. And yet, really, we often think that God's providence, we believe in God's providence, his sovereign providence, but we usually think of it working through big and grandiose events.

you know, great events and for great things that God wants to do. We don't usually associate God's sovereign providence, his mastery of all events.

[ 20 : 30 ] We don't usually associate that. We even look for it in mundane things, little things, seemingly insignificant things. But it is just another day on the farm here at the house of Kish.

I mean, I didn't grow up on a farm. Maybe some of you did. You know, maybe you did and you had cows or you had chickens or you had pigs, whatever. Or maybe you know of somebody. I mean, I'm just thinking that this is just a pretty normal thing.

Animals get loose. You've got to go find them. You know, maybe it's the cows or maybe it's the donkeys or somebody leaves the gate open and some of them get out and, you know, you've got to go find them.

So it's just another day at the farm. See, that's what's striking to me about this story. God is revealing, going to reveal his incredible sovereignty in all events and moving people to meet people and to bring about his purposes and he does it through letting some donkeys loose so that, you know, Kish would have to get one of his sons to go look for the donkeys and God caused Kish to give that task to his son Saul.

It's just another day on the farm. And then for the next, I don't know, I think 20 some odd verses, we read about Saul's search for the donkeys which, by the way, he never finds.

[ 21 : 58 ] Never finds them. Which tells me that the search for the donkeys is no big deal. It's not really important. finding some donkeys.

It's just what got things set in motion and God set things in motion to move people and events to accomplish his purpose. And so then after a fruitless search for these donkeys that produces no results, I think you can read between the lines and get the sense that Saul is frustrated with this whole thing.

He's tired of it. Tired of the search. I mean, you do see a little blurb there about food. They don't have any bread so the food is all gone. And Saul is now concerned for his father.

Father's going to stop worrying about the donkeys and now he's going to start worrying about me. Which later, God effectively says through someone who's kind of prophesying all of this.

Alright, but God has made sure that their search, I mean, they search a lot of places. But God is directing them in their search and he makes sure that they are led in their search to a particular place where he has brought Samuel, God's prophet, God's leader of Israel in these days, the last of the judges.

[ 23 : 25 ] So he's orchestrated this to bring them together and Saul's manservant somehow knows about this, quote, seer, this prophet, this man of God who has a reputation that what he says comes true, that he knows things.

He doesn't apparently know his name. Don't know anything, but he just heard about the guy. And so they just happened then to meet Samuel. Alright?

Just happened to. On the road going into the city. You know, they meet these ladies going out to get water and say, is there a seer here? And as a matter of fact, he's just right up the road here. I mean, you're in luck.

He's here today. And you just go up this road and you'll see him. You'll meet him. And so they go up the road to the city and Samuel's coming out of the city at the same time and they meet one another and Samuel's all ready for them.

And why shouldn't he be? Because God has already spoken into his ear about Saul. We know that Samuel knows a whole lot more than you would expect him to know about Saul, about the donkeys and all those things and he mentions that.

[ 24 : 34 ] Not a word in here about Saul revealing the purpose of their searching, their journey and what they need from Samuel even before they get to that. Samuel is telling Saul everything about him.

And verse 15 says, The Lord had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, Tomorrow about this same time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin and you shall anoint him commander or king over my people Israel that he may save my people from the hand of the Philistines.

So God knew when the donkeys would get loose. He knew when Kish would get his son out of bed and get his man serving and go out looking for the donkey. He knew how the different places he would go and how long it would take and he knew that he would arrive at the place where Samuel was at the precise time so that Samuel and Saul could meet together and then that would lead to Samuel anointing Saul to be king and so forth.

You know the rest of the story because we just read it a moment ago. God's mastery is just so clear in this story. That's clear I think in nearly every place you read in scripture.

And if we believe in the sovereignty of God and I think you do don't you? Believe in the sovereignty of God then you know should know that there are no accidents.

[ 25 : 55 ] There are no happenstances. There are no chance occurrences. God knows all ends.

God knows all possible scenarios. God knows all contingencies. absolutely God is in the big things, the big decisions like marriages and financial decisions and jobs and health decisions.

He's in those big things absolutely and it's probably there that we quite often see the hand of God and his providence moving. But God is also in the little things too.

Mundane things. God guides and moves and manipulates even in the little things. God is in every decision. He's in every set of circumstances. God is everywhere and in everything big and small.

Proverbs 16.9 Proverbs 16.9 says a man's heart actually the word is more literally better translated mind or thoughts a man's mind or thoughts plan his way but the Lord directs his steps.

[ 27 : 02 ] That's the providence of God God's mastery. second God's mercy God's mercy again the narrator tells us and I read this a moment ago but I'm going to read it again verse 15 now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came saying tomorrow about this time I will send a man from the land of Benjamin and you shall anoint him essentially king over my people Israel but then look at the rest of it that he may save my people from the Philistine the Philistines never were conquered people in this time many battles many victories but they were in the land and living in the land they were somewhat at this point flexing their muscle becoming more and more overbearing and ruling over God's people and they needed to be saved from the Philistine so he said he may save my people from the

Philistines for I have looked upon my people this mercy just all through this I have looked upon my people because their cry has come to me someone has said that our sins do not dry up the fountain of God's mercy now think about it Israel they've rejected God and that's what that's what is behind all of this this desire to have a king like every other nation God is their king okay now God had in his plan to have a king under him but officially God is the king it's it's a theocracy but they had rejected God rejected it and so Israel wanted a king like all the other nations not only that but they wanted to be just like the other nation oh the lure of sin you know and this this whole kind of adage that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence it's just such a lure an allurements to the pathway of sin because it looks so good looks so sweet looks so beneficial looks so prosperous and enjoyable and all

I mean it's the allurements of sin so the lure of sin and yet at the same time oh the mercy of God mercy of God he's hurt his people they need to be delivered and God is going to have mercy upon them and give them a king that would at least win some battles and he will lead them the mercy of God and yet there's something else here too it's interesting verse 17 so when Samuel saw Saul kind of hard to say real fast saw Saul the Lord said to him there he is the man of whom I spoke to you this one now notice this phrase here you some of you might have another translation anybody have the ESV here several of you so you're going to know there's quite a difference here and I'm going to point that out here in a minute this one in the new king james says this one shall reign over my people that's pretty straightforward on the surface reign over my people

I was going to be king so kings reign and so what's unusual about this but the word reign reign over my people in the new american standards some of you have that it's translated rule this one shall rule over my people and again I mean that makes sense he's going to be king he's going to rule he's going to reign the ESV very literal in this particular place really very literal translation ESV very fine translation ESV translates this word that's rendered reign or rule it translates it restrain and that is a very literal translation of the word that's used in the Hebrew text now that says something a little different I guess you could see how how you could come up with reign or rule from the concept of restrain but literally it's restrain he it is who shall restrain my people that's interesting the idea is here that they want a king like all the other nations and why because they have rejected

Yahweh God they're moving away from serving worshiping obeying the one true God their Yahweh God they and so they want a king like all the other nations and want to be like all the other nations Israel's moving in the wrong direction they're moving in a direction that's diametrically opposed to God and his word but God gives them a king that will actually restrain them from that movement restrain them from greater levels of sin and rebellion and rejection of God God see God is not going to let them just be like all the other nations not going to let them and again God is not going to give them all that they want okay but he is going to give them what they need what they need like [ 33 : 04 ] Adrian Rogers used to say God only wants for you what you would want for yourself if you had enough sense to want it boys like that and it's so true so God in his mercy gives them someone to restrain them to restrain them from wanton levels of idolatry greater levels of idolatry and in a sense though Saul is going to ultimately be a very miserable king and failure God does use him to restrain them and it's the mercy of God so God's mastery God's mercy and then third and finally God's mystery God's mastery God's mercy God's mystery and I don't need to spend a lot of time on this the text is full of the mysterious ways of God

God now I've already talked a little bit about them in relation to his mastery of things his providence his sovereignty over things but there's some mystery here a lot of mystery in this that really are difficult to understand but God's ways are mysterious and so according to the story Saul gets there meets Samuel and Samuel takes him to this banquet where there's going to be a sacrifice as well as a meal and Samuel is the one that's going to bring the blessing and so he takes Saul there Saul is invited to that and he's given a place of honor certainly all this is mystery to Saul what and some of the other things that Samuel said to Saul you know and Saul is very perplexed I mean I'm just Benjamite least of all the tribes my family is the least of all the and so Saul is given a place of honor at the table he's given the best cut of meat and sounds like from the description pretty good size cut of meat of course he's a big guy got a big appetite so he's given the best he's given a bed for good night's rest and so forth then the next morning

Samuel conducts a kind of private anointing ceremony Samuel they're all alone together and Samuel takes out the vial of oil and he anoints Saul to be king but it's private and then Samuel gives Saul three signs the mysterious signs and these are signs that are meant to confirm Saul that he's the one God's anointed his Messiah not used in the official sense of the Messiah the same mystery that kind of shrouds Saul coming to the throne and these things that are used to confirm God's word God's purposes for him see a parallel with those things

God did to confirm his anointed with a capital A his Messiah and just look at them again just real quickly and just run through these because some of these you might have some questions about starting with verse 2 of chapter 10 so Samuel he says when you have departed for me today you will find here's the first sign you will find two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah and they will say to you Sam is going to tell you exactly what they're going to say they're going to say to you the donkeys which you went to look for have been found and now your father has ceased caring about the donkeys and is worrying about you saying what shall I do about my son very thing that Saul was worried about so there's sign number one he's going to be walking on his way home and he's going to be in the land of Benjamin he's going to meet these people at Rachel's tomb and they're going to tell him about the donkeys mysterious thing how would Samuel know this how could all this be orchestrated in perfect timing yet it is this is sign number one then you shall go on forward from there here's sign number two we'll go forward from there and come to the terebinth tree of Tabor there three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you one carrying three young goats another carrying three loaves of bread another carrying a skin of wine minute detail and they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread which you shall receive from their hands there's sign number two all right now he's telling Saul all this on the front end this hasn't happened yet here's sign number three after that you shall come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is and that's a key point here the

[ 38 : 30 ] Philistine garrison and it will happen when you have come there to the city that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with the stringed instrument with a stringed instrument a tambourine a flute and a harp before that there's some Pentecostals they're just out of their worship service and they will be prophesying now by the way a little confusing here prophesying with instruments well the word actually means they're musicians and they play instruments and somehow there's an association with prophesying or worshipping in this sense not in foretelling events like Samuel was a prophet these are not prophets in that official sense they're

musicians and maybe that helps us understand a little bit better about what happens next and the spirit of the Lord will come upon you and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man

Saul is going to be able to join in with them play with them instruments God's going to give him that ability to do that you say well why these are confirmatory signs for Saul that what Samuel had said to Saul about God's purpose for him that he's going to be king that that is true that's truly from God and so he's giving him signs here he's going to be turned into another man he's not going to be himself he's going to be different and let it be when these signs come to you that you do as occasion demands for God is with you now we'll stop right there come back to that in a minute but let's think again about this becoming another man in fact I think it even says this twice it's changed it's changed do not think for one minute that Saul has been converted we're going to find out later that that's not true of so not a true believer this means that the spirit has come upon him for this particular time for a purpose and that's how the

Holy Spirit worked in the Old Testament it's not until the New Testament after Pentecost that the Holy Spirit came in and dwelled and dwelled a believer in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came and went the Holy Spirit would anoint and come upon certain people for a task and that's what is happening here the Holy Spirit has come upon Saul made him a different person so that he could serve God in this capacity a little bit later he's going to have a different spirit Saul is and we'll get to that by and by so here are these three sides they're mysterious I mean what do we make sense of this we don't have to make sense of it this is God working in mysterious ways to bring about his purposes and one of those purposes is to confirm to Saul that he is indeed the one selected by God to be the first king of Israel now I mentioned and this is kind of a side note it says here that let it be when these signs come to you that you shall do as the occasion demands now what would that be what occasion if you back up a little bit you see where he went he went to a place where there's a Philistine garrison and it could possibly be

I'm not going to press this too strongly but it could be that God meant that you'll do what the occasion demands I've called you I've given you three signs to confirm it here's a Philistine garrison lead God's people and destroy them be a leader right now did Saul do that no he didn't I think it's kind of the first kind of indication of Saul's character and his courage even though God had chosen him and God's going to use him and certainly is going to use him mightily even in battle but here's Saul's first opportunity and God is saying you know here's a good opportunity here's the right place here Philistine garrison you do what's appropriate for this occasion Saul didn't didn't do it right so he went on his way and God has confirmed all of this to him and God has moved in this mysterious kind of way to identify his king the king he has selected the first king in answer to the people's request to be the king like every other nation

I want to wrap this up by saying you know God's way to bring his anointed king strange mysterious but God's way of bringing his anointed king the Messiah into the world was even more mysterious more mysterious God's selection of who the mother would be peasant girl whole dynamic of the virgin birth being with child before she knew Joseph this is mysterious like the song what a strange way what a strange way the shepherds the wise men the Herod Herod's attempt to kill kill the Messiah the journey into Egypt the fulfilled prophecy and several other things that were done in order to fulfill prophecy and God God is working in a very mysterious way to bring about his purpose in this case the

[ 44 : 44 ] Messiah the anointed with a capital A in the late 1700s a man by the name of William Cowper wrote a hymn wrote a number of hymns actually and this I think was his last one to write you'll be familiar with some of the words because the words we sing today to more modern more contemporary tune the words go like this God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform he plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm deep in unfathomable minds of never failing skill he treasures up his bright designs and works his sovereign will ye fearful saints fresh courage take the clouds ye so much dread are big with mercy and shall break in blessings on your head judge not the

Lord by feeble sense but trust him for his grace behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face his purposes will ripen fast upholding every hour the bud may have a bitter taste but sweet will be the flower blind unbelief is sure to err and scan his work in vain God is his own interpreter he will make it plain tremendous words depth of words and really helps define all that going on in this chapter in 1 Samuel God working his mastery over all events and all things his mercy for God's

people even though they had sinned we can relate to that and the mystery mystery of God mystery  
of his ways that we can't explain and yet those mysterious ways  
God uses to confirm that what he says is true what he says is true