

Knowing the end from the Beginning

- For Saul it just seemed another day on the farm!
 - his father Kish is in a bit of a state...
 - the donkeys have run off!
 - would Saul and a man go and look for them?
- But then the lost donkeys, a fruitless search, a servant's suggestion, and a prophet's hospitality lead to a sacred anointing in oil and the gaining of the kingdom!
 - but who would have known that when Saul was finishing his breakfast?
- *Samuel knew because had been told that 'tomorrow about this time' God would send a man to him (9:16).*
- Kish, Saul's father, was a well-to-do farmer with a solid Benjaminite pedigree
 - Saul, himself, was a handsome man
 - he would have easily won a Mr Israel contest!!
 - and if there had been a local **basketball** team, Saul would have been in it - **a head taller than everyone else**

No Coincidence

- In 9:3-27 we have an example of the way in which God directs things that appear to be nothing special to accomplish his purpose:
 - looking for lost donkeys in the hill country, not finding them, giving up, asking a seer for help and paying him a quarter shekel of silver for it...
 - it is all so ordinary and casual!
 - yet all was planned by God
 - **how do we know it wasn't all coincidence?**
 - **God told Samuel that this man would come on the morrow**
 - it wasn't all lackadaisical and haphazard!
- This doesn't just happen in major matters like choosing a king
 - it is always happening to each of God's people; it is just that no one may have been told beforehand
 - we may be able to trace God's hand as we look back over our lives, but not always
- **Why is God doing this here?**
 - because **he has taken pity on his people and he wants to deliver them from the Philistines**
 - Israel didn't deserve it
 - they were a foolish, stubborn people
 - there is no excuse for their God-denying sinfulness, **but God wants to show mercy towards them**
 - that is what God is like!
 - God sees Israel's cry for a king as idolatry, **but he also hears within it a cry for help and relief from distress**
 - Israel's stupidity cannot turn away God's compassion

Get ready, your majesty!

- With Saul's servant out of earshot, Samuel anoints Saul
 - this was one of a number of signs given to Saul to assure him of his office
 - at Rachel's tomb Saul would meet two men who tell him the donkeys are found, but Kish is now anxious about Saul's well-being
 - near the oak of Tabor three men would ask Saul how he was and would give him two loaves of bread
 - they will have three goats, three loaves and a skin of wine
 - when he gets home to Gibeah he will meet a group of prophets when the Lord will give his Spirit to Saul and he will join in their 'prophesying'

- All these signs came about as Samuel said they would
 - they dispel the idea of coincidence
 - the detail is too refined to have come from human insight
 - it shows the supernatural minutiae of God
 - they affirm to Saul that God's hand is in his anointing and gives authorisation to his kingship
- Saul also receives power of the Spirit and direction from the word of God
 - Saul may have power to defeat the Philistines, but he must always be obedient to God's word, which comes through Samuel
 - having God's power and presence must never lead us to deny his lordship by trampling upon his word
 - sometimes in the church we seek dramatic signs of the Spirit's power but have little enthusiasm for ordinary obedience of his word
- The writer doesn't detail how the word of Samuel is fulfilled except in the case of the third sign
 - he must have a special reason for doing this
 - you can imagine the stir it caused to see the shy country boy singing and proclaiming along with the prophets!
 - "What's going on? Has Saul become a prophet?" the people asked
 - it so astonished them that they coined a proverb - 'is even Saul among the prophets?'
 - it carries the same sense as saying, 'wonders will never cease'!!
- God frequently defies human expectations and gives the most unlikely people all they need to serve him
 - me!?!

Crown him!

- "Where have you been?" Saul's uncle asks him
 - "Looking for the donkeys," he replied. "Samuel told us the donkeys were found,"
 - end of conversation!
 - Saul's anointing was a secret matter
 - and yet throughout this narrative the word 'found' keeps being used
- Saul was the lost king
 - God knows what is happening, Samuel's been let in on the secret, but Saul seems a reluctant player!
 - hints here of his later lostness, lost to God and his path
 - has God made a mistake?
 - did God make a mistake when he called any of the hundreds of Christian leaders who have fallen by the wayside over the years?
 - did God make a mistake when he called us to follow him, and we let him down - didn't speak to someone of Christ, lost the rag with someone when we shouldn't have...?
- **NO!**
 - rather he trusts us to follow him - and doesn't force us!
- However, the day of public declaration and acknowledgement was called at Mizpah
 - Samuel rehearses all that has happened and then by a series of lots, Saul is chosen as king
 - that which God has already indicated comes about
 - and it is surprising that the king comes from little Benjamin
 - but Saul could not be found!
 - the Lord declares where he is
 - even here the people are dependent on him
- So are we - always, in everything!