

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Saul's lineage and description; he is sent by his father to seek some lost asses, 1 Samuel 9:1-5. Not finding them, he purposes to go and consult Samuel concerning the proper method of proceeding, 1 Samuel 9:6-14. The Lord informs Samuel that he should anoint Saul king, 1 Samuel 9:15, 1 Samuel 9:16. Samuel invites Saul to dine with him, and informs him that the asses are found; and gives him an intimation that he is to be king, 1 Samuel 9:17-21. Saul dines with Samuel, and afterwards he is taken to the house-top, where both commune together, 1 Samuel 9:22-27.

Verse 1

A mighty man of power - Literally, a strong man; this appears to be the only power he possessed; and the physical strength of the father may account for the extraordinary size of the son. See 1 Samuel 9:2.

Verse 2

From his shoulders and upwards - It was probably from this very circumstance that he was chosen for king; for, where kings were elective, in all ancient times great respect was paid to personal appearance.

Verse 3

The asses of Kish - were lost - What a wonderful train of occurrences were connected in order to bring Saul to the throne of Israel! Every thing seems to go on according to the common course of events, and yet all conspired to favor the election of a man to the kingdom who certainly did not come there by the approbation of God.

Asses grow to great perfection in the East; and at this time, as there were no horses in Judea, they were very useful; and on them kings and princes rode.

Verse 5

Were come to the land of Zuph - Calmet supposes that Saul and his servant went from Gibeah to Shalisha, in the tribe of Dan; from thence to Shalim, near to Jerusalem; and thence, traversing the tribe of Benjamin, they purposed to return to Gibeah; but passing through the land of Zuph, in which Ramatha, the country of Samuel, was situated, they determined to call on this prophet to gain some directions from him; the whole of this circuit he supposes to have amounted to no more than about twenty-five leagues, or three days' journey. We do not know where the places were situated which are here mentioned: the Targum translates thus: "And he passed through the mount of the house of Ephraim, and went into the southern land, but did not meet with them. And he passed through the land of Mathbera, but they were not there; and he passed through the land of the tribe of Benjamin, but did not find them; then they came into the land where the prophet of the Lord dwelt. And Saul said to his servant, etc."

Verse 7

There is not a present to bring to the man of God - We are not to suppose from this that the prophets took money to predict future events: Saul only refers to an invariable custom, that no man approached a superior without a present of some kind or other. We have often seen this before; even God, who needs nothing, would not that his people should approach him with empty hands. It is very common in Bengal for a person, who is desirous of asking a favor from a superior, to take a present of fruits or sweetmeats in his hand. If not accepted, the feelings of the offerer are greatly wounded. The making of presents to appease a superior is also very common in Bengal. - Ward's Customs.

Verse 8

The fourth part of a shekel of silver - We find from the preceding verse, that the bread or provisions which they had brought with them for their journey was expended, else a part of that would have been thought a suitable present; and here the fourth part of a shekel of silver, about ninepence of our money, was deemed sufficient: therefore the present was intended more as a token of respect than as an emolument.

Verse 9

Beforetime in Israel - This passage could not have been a part of this book originally: but we have already conjectured that Samuel, or some contemporary author, wrote the memoranda, out of which a later author compiled this book. This hypothesis, sufficiently reasonable in itself, solves all difficulties of this kind.

Was beforetime called a seer - The word seer, "רֹאֵה" (roeh), occurs for the first time in this place; it literally signifies a person who Sees; particularly preternatural sights. A seer and a prophet were the same in most

these things to Samuel.

And on whom is all the desire of Israel? - Saul understood this as implying that he was chosen to be king.

Verse 21

Am not I a Benjamite - This speech of Saul is exceedingly modest; he was now becomingly humble; but who can bear elevation and prosperity? The tribe of Benjamin had not yet recovered its strength, after the ruinous war it had with the other tribes, Judges 20:29-46.

Verse 22

Brought them into the parlour - It might as well be called kitchen; it was the place where they sat down to feast.

Verse 23

Said unto the cook - טָבַח (tabbach), here rendered cook; the singular of טָבַחַת (tabbachoth), female cooks, 1 Samuel 8:13, from the root (tabach), to slay or butcher. Probably the butcher is here meant.

Verse 24

The shoulder, and that which was upon it - Probably the shoulder was covered with a part of the caul, that it might be the better roasted. The Targum has it the shoulder and its thigh; not only the shoulder merely, but the fore-leg bone to the knee; perhaps the whole fore-quarter. Why was the shoulder set before Saul? Not because it was the best part, but because it was an emblem of the government to which he was now called. See Isaiah 9:6: And the government shall be upon his Shoulder.

Verse 25

Upon the top of the house - All the houses in the East were flat-roofed; on these people walked, talked, and frequently slept, for the sake of fresh and cooling air.

Verse 26

Called Saul to the top of the house - Saul had no doubt slept there all night; and now, it being the break of day, Samuel called to Saul on the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. There was no calling him to the house-top a second time he was sleeping there, and Samuel called him up.

Verse 27

As they were going down - So it appears that Saul arose immediately, and Samuel accompanied him out of the town, and sent the servant on that he might show Saul the word, the counsel or design, of the Lord. What this was we shall see in the following chapter, 1 Samuel 10 (note).