

# 1 Samuel 21:10-22:23

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Chapter 21, verse 10. And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish, the king of Gath. And the servants of Achish said to him, Is not this David the king of the land?

Did they not sing to one another of him in dances? Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish, the king of Gath.

So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard. Then Achish said to his servants, Behold, you see the man is mad.

Why then have you brought him to me? Do I lack madmen? That you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?

David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Abdullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. And everyone who was in distress and everyone who was in debt and everyone who was bitter in soul gathered to him.

[ 1 : 1 6 ] And he became commander over them, and there were with him about four hundred men. And David went from there to Mitzpah of Moab. And he said to the king of Moab, Please, let my father and my mother stay with you till I know what God will do for me.

And he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. Then the prophet Gad said to David, Do not remain in the stronghold.

Depart and go into the land of Judah. So David departed and went into the forest of Hareth. Now Saul heard that David was discovered and the men who were with him.

Saul was sitting at Gebeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him. And Saul said to his servants who stood about him, Hear now, people of Benjamin, will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards?

Will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, that all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse.

[ 2 : 3 3 ] None of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in wait as at this day. Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who stood by the servants of Saul, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub.

And he inquired of the Lord for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine. Then the king sent to summon Ahimelech, the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests who were at Nob and all of them came to the king.

And Saul said, Hear now, son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I am, my lord. And Saul said to him, Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he has risen against me to lie in wait as at this day?

Then Ahimelech answered the king, And who among all your servants is so faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law and captain over your bodyguard and honored in your house?

Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? No. Let not the king impute anything to his servant or to all the house of my father, for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little.

[ 4 : 08 ] And the king said, You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house. And the king said to the guard who stood about him, Turn and kill the priests of the Lord, because their hand also is with David.

And they knew that he fled and did not disclose it to me. But the servants of the king would not put out their hand to strike the priests of the Lord. Then the king said to Doeg, You turn and strike the priests.

And Doeg the Edomite turned and struck down the priests, and he killed on that day 85 persons who wore the linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword, both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep, he put to the sword.

But one of the sons of Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the Lord.

And David said to Abiathar, I knew on that day when Doeg the Edomite was there that he would surely tell Saul, I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house.

[ 5 : 25 ] Stay with me. Do not be afraid. For he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Well, in our summer series, we have seen in the earlier chapters what we could call the choosing of two kings.

The people choosing Saul and then Samuel choosing, in a sense, David. And then we move to an emerging conflict between the kings.

We saw how that began to unfold from chapter 17 all the way until last week. Today, I want us to see the text in front of us in this light, the contrast between two kings.

Remember, both of these kings, Saul and David, have been anointed. Saul having already, by this point in the narrative, been rejected by God.

[ 6 : 52 ] And David, not yet having even begun. His reign under God. So the contrast here is the characteristics of their rule.

And it's been narrated very carefully to lay the marks of one king and his kingdom over and against the other.

Take a look. Chapter 21.10 through 22.5. David is the one that is presented.

And notice the first mark of his kingship. He is on the run and always in weakness. Did you happen to notice the narrator's carefully crafted way of presenting David as a king on the run?

It really began last week at the end of chapter 20 when he left Jonathan and the narrator gave you these words, and he rose, that is David, he rose and departed.

[ 8 : 08 ] And it mentioned in chapter 21, verse 1, that he came to Nob. But by the opening verse of our text today, the narrator says, And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish, the king of Gath.

He's moved some 20 or so miles. And then look at chapter 22 and verse 1. David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam.

Another 20 or so mile run. By verse 3 in the text, it reads, And David went from there to Mitzpah of Moab.

He's now made his way all along the Dead Sea and underneath and out of the promised land into Moab some 50 miles. Or the close of verse 5, So David departed and went into the forest of Harath.

Or in the Septuagint translation of the word forest, City. The city or the forest of Harath. The narrator is depicting that the rule of David, his kingship, is marked by being on the run and ever in weakness.

[ 9 : 27 ] In fact, for the next 17 chapters, this changing of landscape by the identification of geographic towns will take place.

David will be moving another 15 or so times before 2 Samuel 5, he arrives at Horeb and actually commences his reign over the people.

The first characteristic that we see then of David's kingship is that there's nothing fixed about it. It lacks permanency.

It is marked by weakness. It's a bit like the Continental Congress during the American Revolution, always trying to stay one step ahead of General Howe on the move.

It's ironic. God is with the anointed who, at a human level, has nothing going for Him.

[ 10 : 37 ] The Lord's anointed. This is not like a kingship that we are used to. He has no form or appearance that we would be attracted to Him.

The second mark of His rule, though, moving from this moment where He moves out of Gath and then into a cave of Adullam, is that He attracts what you could call outliers and outcasts.

He attracts one-off kind of people and outcasts among them. Look at the three, what I call the three D's of those who come to David in verse 2 of chapter 22.

And everyone who was in distress and everyone who was in debt means that you might have been there too. And everyone who was bitter in soul or my text marks that with the word discontented.

Those who are distressed, indebted, and discontented with the present regime, with the rule that they were under.

[ 11 : 54 ] They had no place in the values of King Saul. They were on their own. They were outliers and outcasts. Most likely men like David who needed to be on the run.

That is not to say though that that group lacked distinction. There's an interesting moment by the end of 2 Samuel 23 where you have this narrator's assembly of those who began to gather with David at the cave of Adullam.

They were called David's mighty men. Chief among them and one of these here now gathered near him was one who killed 800 people in battle.

800. One man, 800. In a day without drones. Man-to-man combat. 800.

Another who fought so long and hard without losing his own life that by the end of the day of war could not undo his hand from the grip of the sword.

[ 13 : 13 ] Almost as the sword in his arm had become one as he slew those who were in opposition of David. Others who are listed there, even Uriah the Hittite, this great man of valor who later David would betray among him.

There were 37 mighty men in all. In fact, 2 Samuel 23 shows you the kind of men they were. David at one point in hiding very near Adullam where he is here now longed for a drink of water from his hometown in Bethlehem.

He must have had good water. Like Lake Michigan water. Now, some of you are old enough to remember what our water was like before Lake Michigan water. I'll always remember going down to Central Illinois to visit my grandmother in Tuscola and drinking Central Illinois water.

It had a different flavor. I was always glad to be home to get hometown water. Well, David evidently was the iron and the things in the water where he was in Adullam were not like that of Bethlehem.

And he said, oh, for a glass of water from my hometown. Three of these guys overheard it. His hometown at that point though was behind enemy lines.

[ 14 : 44 ] And these three risked their lives, get on the other side, the back side of Saul, go to the well in Bethlehem, draw water, somehow bring enough back for him, and say, David, here's water from your hometown.

And what did he do with it? He poured it out on the ground, humbled by their service and their loyalty. For he knew that if he drank the water, it would indicate to them and to all his men, my need for my water is certainly worthy of your risking of your life.

And he wouldn't do it. In other words, they honored him and yet he honored them. So these distressed, indebted, discontent, were distinguished people who were loyal, who were all in, who would do anything for their king.

the third mark of David's reign put forward in the narrative isn't that he was just on the run and ever in weakness, or that he attracted outliers and outcasts, but look at verses 3 and 4.

He gave himself to the protection of others and a persistent dependence upon God. Verse 3 and 4, David went from there to Mizpah of Moab and he said to the king of Moab, please let my father and my mother stay with you till I know what God will do for me.

[ 16 : 25 ] He was concerned to protect those who were in his charge, his very parents.

And he was also dependent upon what God would do for him. he would not enter into his reign above radar before God made that happen.

Let me wait and see what God will do for me. Now look, by way of contrast, the narrator now begins to take up the characteristics of Saul's rule.

They're on display beginning at verse 6. It runs all the way through verse 19. king. He is a very different kind of king.

First characteristic, this is not a man on the run and in weakness. This is a man who's on top of the world and is surrounded by strength. Look at the way the narrator puts it.

[ 17 : 27 ] Verse 6, Now Saul heard that David was discovered and the men who were with him. Here's what the narrator says. He wants you to envision this. Saul was sitting at Gebeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand and all his servants were standing about him.

That's the mark of his rule. Gebeah. Traditionally, the place is found within the allotment given to the tribe of Benjamin.

by strategy for any military endeavor. This location is 2,754 feet above sea level with a big open plain on top.

This is the place you want to defend your kingdom from. Gebeah, according to chapter 1534, was the place where Saul, in a sense, lived during his reign.

This is his capital, as it were. And if you think about the numbers of men that were housed here, in 13.2, it mentions Jonathan at this place with a thousand men at a time when 3,000 were under the reign of Saul.

[ 18 : 51 ] So they were somehow, this is a large enough military encampment to house between one and 4,000 people. Here's Saul, says the narrator. sitting on top with all his servants, spear in his hand under the shade of the tamarisk tree.

What's the second characteristic of Saul's rule? Well, it's intimidation. Whereas David attracts people to him who were on the outskirts of life, Saul intimidates those who almost seem to be mercenary in army form, almost as if they are nothing more than hired hell.

Look at the language that he brings to them. Hear now, verse 7, O people of Benjamin. And then he just lets into them.

Is Jesse, the son of Jesse, going to give you anything? Is he going to give you charge over anything? I almost envision him looking at the commander of a thousand and saying, is he going to let you rule over a thousand?

And then looking at the leaders of a hundred, is he going to let you rule over a hundred? Is he going to go with you? And yet you, all you tribe of Benjamin, no one has disclosed to me that my own son is in league with David.

[ 20 : 18 ] This is the language of intimidation. Saul, by this point in the narrative, he has all the signs, the growing signs, that when it's full blown, can almost be described as a paranoid megalomaniac.

I looked up that word to see what are the characteristics of that kind of earthly ruler. You'll find things like delusions of greatness, lack of empathy, a need to have others fear him, mood swings.

David's had these, I mean Saul's had these, haven't he? We're not talking about mood swings that you and I might get. He's throwing spears at his son and other things. This kind of a leader poses as one who has great self-esteem and ego, but in actual fact has a low self-esteem and a very fragile ego.

That is Saul when you begin to see him and as you're soon going to see, a tendency toward violence. What a difference in the way he relates to his people.

He's tyrannical. The third characteristic, look at him in contrast to David who protects his parents and is waiting upon God.

[ 21 : 41 ] Saul is given to violence. He actually takes out the entire town of Nob, which was a priestly town.

It must have been the Levites in a sense lived there having no proportion of land. This was a set-off place where the priests who would labor for all the people began to live together, to raise their families, to perform the sacrifices on behalf of the people.

This town of Nob reminds me of kind of a rural setting for an Ellis Peters novel. If you've ever read any of Ellis Peters, Wither, Sleuth, Brother, Cadfail, if you haven't read them, you should.

But it reminds me of this kind of pastoral scene with pastors and these 85 priests and their families.

It almost has a sense of quietude, a life of learning, of reading, of studying, this kind of old world priestly village.

[ 22 : 55 ] They are all summoned to meet with Saul on top. I mean, what a contrast of audiences. Upwards of 4,000 warriors in full dress, ready for war, and this little band of quiet, scholarly Levites making their way up to meet the head of the nation.

And there they stand without any chance of protecting themselves. And Saul is given to violence. He wants them completely destroyed on the basis of what Doeg, the Edomite, has disclosed.

What a sad, ironic twist when you think that Saul, early in ministry, was given directives by a priest, Samuel, to slay all the sheep of the enemy.

And he would not do it. And now, he is prepared to slay all the priests and go on in life without God.

I mean, the guard here is stunning. The guard won't do it. They will not do it because the guard is aware of the significance of the act even if Saul is not.

[ 24 : 32 ] Think of the role of the priesthood in Israel. And if you haven't read much of the Bible, you'll need to know that the priesthood develops all the way back at a time when Israel is let free from Egypt.

And Aaron is the first great high priest and his sons are enlisted under him and they are given these linen ephods where they were something that they would wear front and back over their robes with all the names of the tribes representing the people of Israel on their shoulders and the priesthood would offer sacrifices for sin.

And in the book of Numbers, God articulates to the people that the Levites are a gift of God to you. God's gift to you. Because the role of the priesthood was necessary for the substitution of sin by blood.

So the significance is this. This isn't just take out 85 guys who are with my enemy. No. The significance is greater than that. Do away with the priesthood.

You do away with God's provision of setting aside for sin. That's what Saul was ready to do. Amazing.

[ 25 : 54 ] Modern day examples of this kind of rule are everywhere. Let me just put it to you this way. You will know someone who rules like Saul in contrast to those who would minister in the name of Jesus by those who would do away with the need for blood and the necessity of atonement.

They are everywhere. the religionists today in our own country pervade the land who would do away with the need of a mediator for they say God is not like that.

This primitive sacrifice of animals for blood or even Jesus himself being a blood sacrifice and atonement for sin. No. They will have none of it.

they are just like Saul. The guard won't do it so the deed of death is eventually carried out by Doeg the Edomite who is a pagan standing in the midst of the assembly and his actual role chapter 21 7 was to look out for all the king sheep the herdsmen he kills them all save one and that's where the final vignette in the story comes look at 20 to 23 there's a brief narrative gloss of a lone figure fleeing from that height at Gebeah scrambling down those many feet hiding behind rock or bush or wherever or whatever would give him cover he flees the violent despotic rule of Saul and he takes refuge if it could really be called refuge under

David in the forest of Hareth it's almost humorous the way David's response it almost makes you laugh when you read David's response to him when David says to him when he arrives and he tells him the whole story David says what stay with me do not be afraid for he who seeks my life seeks your life alright I'm saying okay how's this good but in a sense what David's saying is hey look you don't have anything to fear you're here because everyone here he wants dead likewise and if you need an assembly of people who will guard you and protect you and keep you safe this is the only place to be stay with me and then he makes that pledge for with me you will have safe keeping I mean it's a pledge I mean David at this point isn't really capable of delivering that he's just said I'm responsible for the death of your whole town but you can bet your life on me well the man had nowhere else to go did he and one very important thing should not be missed where does the priesthood now reside the priesthood resides with David that is a big shift in the narrative

[ 29 : 30 ] David now in his company has the one who makes provision for sin and Saul is completely cut loose and on his own what a story what a contrast between two kings what are we to take away from it what are the implications for those who follow what is the significance of this for us well let me make just a couple of comments it's no secret and if you if you've studied the bible for any length of time you will begin to realize that the new testament writers view David as this forerunner!

to the one who will be Jesus so that even in Matthew's gospel the very new testament opens with an indication of a genealogy of Jesus who is the son of Abraham the son of David so the new testament begins by equating David and Jesus as the fulfillment or the successor of his rule and so that by the time Jesus his ministry comes and goes and the story of his death and resurrection and ascension is complete the apostles begin preaching and in the earliest sermons of Acts 2 and 3 they're speaking about how Jesus is fulfillment of the kingdom in a way that David wasn't now you have to understand that because then in some sense David is a type of the one who is to come so what are we to make of this story in the old testament in our day and as

Christian well isn't it interesting that the characteristics between Jesus's rule and David's rule are similar if not intended they fit well into what we know of Jesus's kingdom David was ever on the run always in weakness Jesus says the son of man has no place to lay his head he's identifying himself as one who though anointed lives in weakness just as David casts

Jesus will fulfill in a greater way than David the ability to protect to keep one safe he says come unto me everyone who's weary heavy laden I will give you rest rest the parallels the parallels are striking so let me ask you a question those of you who are beginning to come along to Holy Trinity for some time now or recently investigating the claims of this Christian faith have you ever considered making a fresh start with God by determining to take up with Jesus have you ever done that if not you can begin doing that today this could be a great day for you in one sense how do you read these old narratives I thought about reading these lesser characters and asking myself how are they responding to the king and in our narrative we have two drastically different responses you have

Doeg the Edomite and you have Abiathar the priest you want to be like the latter not the former the former takes all they can in this life they align themselves with power for the purpose of personal gain David will write a psalm you'll have to look it up later I think it's 52 or so where he talks about Doeg the Edomite and he says look you went for it all but you will be brought down by God and those who wait for God will be raised up and have it all you want to be in a sense like Abiathar he is your character in the narrative that provides a model for following what are the commands that

[ 34 : 45 ] David gives to him he says flee do not be afraid stay with me flee the rule that places itself above Jesus in any way shape or form flee that it won't deliver for you anyway don't be afraid there are many things to fear stay with me and I will provide you safe keeping I would encourage you to think of Jesus as a kind and worthy king even if he looks from the world's perspective rather impoverished in his ability to transform your life let alone a city he will protect you just as

David made an effort to protect his parents and he will save you not only from tyrannical rule but from death itself from sin think about your not the debt you have but think about the indebtedness to God that we have in that he has given us life but we have not always honored him as God and through Jesus we can begin to learn to do that rightly again think about your distresses and the things that are almost unwinding your life and think about the distressed relationship we have with God and how Jesus through his substitution and death on your behalf brings you into relationship with God and takes all that distressful relationship and wrath away think about your discontentedness with all that the world order can give and think about the well-being that is yours in Christ perhaps you can do that today for the first time or I would ask those of you who have been following

Jesus for some time is there any act of loyalty any act of mighty menness that you could offer your king any deed of daring it might be as daring as speaking of him well in the presence of those you fear the most well I did a deed of daring this week for Jesus oh really what deed of daring did you do I talked to someone I know and told them he's changed my life for some of us that's like going behind enemy lines and drawing water on a battlefield and bringing it back as a trophy we ought to have hundreds of trophies by next week that he would thank us for and be glad for our presence rather than all of our accomplishment well what wonderful narratives we have a contrast in kings one who is on the run who attracts outcasts and who protects the other who promises the world and will leave you without anything even your soul be like

Abiathar run hide your heart in him our heavenly father we thank you for these stories and we're amazed at how the scriptures when one begins to think of them as a whole have this cohesive nature to it help us to love you well and to follow our lord in whose name we pray amen to to to to to!