

The Christ Must Suffer II

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Date: 29 January 2012

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[0 : 00] Well now you'll find it helpful if you take your Bible with two hands and open to 1 Samuel chapter 22, sorry 21, page 244.

And when you get there, if you'd keep one hand there please and open Luke 24. This is a plot to stop you holding hands with your neighbour.

No, it's not really. I want to start in Luke 24. We only have three chapters to cover in Samuel. So I want to start in Luke 24 which is one of the happiest chapters in the Bible. As you know, the day of resurrection where Jesus appears to his disciples and shows them the new resurrected body.

And there's this sense of open wide wonder. I can't believe in excitement about the chapter. I think one of the verses Luke says that they disbelieve for joy.

[1 : 09] But you know that Luke 24 is not just a happy ending, a light story. As Jesus himself points out. And I want to read in Luke 24 a few verses. From verse 44, Jesus is teaching his disciples on the day of resurrection.

These are my words, he said, that I spoke to you while I was still with you. That everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Then he opened their mind to understand the scriptures speaking about the Old Testament. And said to them, and here's Jesus' summary of the Old Testament. Thus it is written that the Christ must suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.

And that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem. Very important to Jesus on the day of resurrection to help his people read the Old Testament.

And he says the whole Old Testament, the law of Moses, the Psalms and the prophets, in every part and all of it is fulfilled in me.

[2 : 21] And he says the message of the Old Testament is three things. That the Messiah, the Christ must suffer, must rise and must be preached. And I think we're probably good with the second two, aren't we?

The Christ must rise and the Christ must be preached. But where in the Old Testament does it say that the Messiah must suffer? Why must the Messiah suffer?

And why must anyone suffer for that reason? Have you ever thought about this? But why did Jesus face such bitterness and hostility? His family said that he was mad.

The clergy said he was demon possessed. He was driven out of towns. And this week I've gone through the Gospels and there are about a dozen attempts to kill Jesus before he gets to the cross. It's very clear in Jesus' mind though that all his sufferings in his life come to bear on one event, on his crucifixion. Let me read you three verses in Luke's Gospel.

[3 : 20] Luke 9, 22, he says to his disciples, In Luke 17, he says, speaking about his second coming.

First, he says, he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. And then as he administers the Last Supper in Luke 22, Jesus says, I've earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

And you may know this, but the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, are dominated by Jesus' suffering. If you look on the front of your parish life notes, you're only allowed to take them out for just this moment.

You're not allowed to write shopping items on parish life notes. I had a friend who was preaching once and said that as a joke in his sermon. And there was a woman writing a shopping list as he said it and she never came back.

It's a true story, I'm sorry. If you just look down at those first list of numbers, they are the percentages of the written Gospels committed to the passion, the suffering of Jesus in Jerusalem, his crucifixion.

[4 : 40] And they average out at about a third of the Gospel. A whole third of the Gospel on the last few days of Jesus' life. Don't you think this is a strange way to start a religion?

If Jesus thinks the Old Testament so clearly and definitely teaches that the Messiah must suffer, where does it teach that?

I mean, there are a couple of verses in Isaiah, aren't there? You know, he was pierced for our transgressions, by his stripes we have been healed. But where does the Old Testament, if Jesus is convinced that this is one of the core messages of the Old Testament, where does it come from? Well, let's go back to 1 Samuel. I think this is the point of the book of 1 Samuel. The last third of the book of Samuel is the story of David on the run.

He is a fugitive. There is a manhunt by King Saul for David. And it's not here in the Old Testament for our entertainment or our historical interest only.

[5 : 52] The very size of this book and the material shows something of its importance. More importantly, there are seven psalms, which I've also put on the front of the parish life notes, which should not be in your hands right now.

You should put it down. There are seven psalms that David wrote during this time. Actually, there are probably many more, but we know that there are seven, because he puts superscriptions on them.

During this time of great agony for David, David, as you remember, is the Lord's anointed. Do you remember the prophet anointed him? That's what Messiah means, anoint.

That's what the word Christ is. David is the Lord's Messiah. And these chapters are the story of the suffering of the Messiah. More than that.

In the New Testament, both Jesus and the rest of the New Testament writers use the psalms of David, perhaps more than any other thing in the Old Testament, to connect Jesus' suffering with David's experience in these psalms.

[6 : 54] Remember on the cross, Jesus says, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? It's a direct quote from Psalm 22. Jesus links his death and his identity with David's experience of running from Saul.

It's not that these stories are an allegory where we just cast aside the historical details and make some sort of moral application. The details are important.

David's suffering is real. But if you read the psalms and if you read the New Testament, the psalms point in this direction, that the experience of David is the experience of God's Messiah.

And so we understand Jesus. The whole context of meaning and God's intention for the true Messiah comes from these passages in the Scriptures. That's why the Old Testament reveals the Messiah must suffer.

And as we look through these chapters, we're only going to do two and a half of them today, in the next few weeks, we ought to expect to understand the Gospel more deeply. We ought to understand the meaning of Jesus' suffering and his death and his resurrection.

[8 : 01] So let's go back to 1 Samuel, shall we? 1 Samuel 21, 22 and halfway through 23. Last week, I counted nine attempts on David's life by Saul.

He's on the run. And the shape of the passage goes like this. The first incident is David with the priests, a Himalek at Nob. Then there are three stories on the run.

Then there is Saul with the priests and David with the last priest. So it's like a kind of a sandwich like that. All right? So we begin in chapter 21, verses 1 to 9.

And there's all sorts of cute names you could call this. A hobnobbing at Nob with the priest of God. Verses 1 to 9. Whatever. David runs from the court of Saul and he heads straight to the city of Nob, which is the city of the priests.

There are 85 priests of God in Israel. The tabernacle has gone from Shiloh to this city of Nob and it's quite a large city. And David is hungry. He's on the run.

[9 : 07] And he's completely defenceless and he's on his own. And when he meets up with the Himalek, the priest, he does not tell him the truth. He doesn't tell him the whole truth, that he's on the run from Saul. He doesn't tell the Himalek, I'm putting your life in danger by coming here.

But he asks the priest to inquire of the Lord for him and he asks for bread. And the only bread that's there is the holy bread, the bread that's in the tabernacle for the priests. And the Himalek shows remarkable flexibility.

And he says, here, I've got this. You take it. And he treats God's Messiah with honour. And David says, if you've got any weapons, perhaps. And in verse 9, the priest says, well, the sword of Goliath of Philistine, who you struck down in the valley of Elah.

It's wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it. There's none but that here.

And David said, there is none like it. Give it to me. Remember Goliath's sword, this great big sword? It's a very big sword. You may know that in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus refers to this incident. And he says, he's been accused of something again.

[10:15] And Jesus says to his accusers, have you not read what David did when he was hungry? And it refers to this. And then he says, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

And I only mention that because I just want to reinforce with you that Jesus thinks and Jesus says, I'm doing what David did.

That the story with David points to me. And if you want to understand me, you read. Have you not read? I am the greater David. And the only other thing in this incident is verse 7.

There's a certain man of the servants of Saul who was there, detained before the Lord. His name is Doeg, the Edomite, the chief of Saul's herdsmen. He belongs to the enemies of God's people. He's the chief shepherd of Saul's people.

And like all the servants of Saul, he's been ordered to kill David from chapter 19. And we'll come across him later. So that's the first scene with the priests.

[11:13] Now we have three stories on the run. Three fugitive stories. And it's very interesting to see what happens, you see, because looking at the map from your side, if I'm in Israel here, this way is east, isn't it?

Thank you. That's right. This way is west. If you're looking at the map. Here's Israel. On the west is Philistine.

Philistine territory, right? And on the east is Moab. So we have three running stories. And the first one, David runs. He goes right out of Israel to Gath, which is a Philistine city.

Second story, he's back in Israel in a cave. And the third story, he's out here to the east in Moab.

Okay? So let's look at them together. In verses 10 to 15, the Messiah goes to Gath.

Do you remember this is one of the five cities of the Philistines? These are the guys whom David had been fighting very successfully and plundering. And what's worse, this is the home of Goliath.

[12:28] So you get the picture? David is running. He's got his bread rolls with him and he's got this, you would not call it a concealed weapon. A Goliath sword whom he killed. And he goes to Gath.

And my first response is, what was he thinking going to Gath? What are they going to do to him? Verse 11. The servants of Achish, who was the king of Gath, said to King, Is not this David the king of the land?

And then they remember the little country and western tune that everyone sang about him. And David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish, the king of Gath.

It is amazing that the Philistine servants of the Philistine king of Achish confess David to be Messiah, the king of the land. And they join this increasing chorus of voices, Jonathan and Michael. But David realises he is in deep trouble. This is the only time in all of David's life he expresses great fear of his enemies. So what does he do?

[13:36] He does the slobbering strategy. He pretends insanity, slobbering and tagging the city walls. And Achish buys it. He says, listen, I've got enough nutbars here in Gath.

I don't need another one. And the question is, did David do right? Does he do right by going to Gath and deceiving the king? And you may be interested to know.

You may not be interested to know. But the commentators divide right down the middle. I have half my commentators go this way and half the commentators I read go this way.

Some say David is disobedient. He's reckless. He's unethical. Others say he's brilliant, resourceful and faithful. Well, you'll have to decide for yourself because I can't say.

But I do think there's something deeper going on here. And we'll come to in just a moment. And what I'll come to is David. We have two Psalms written by David in Gath.

[14:35] And they give us a clue, I think. So that's the first run story from Gath. The second story, chapter 22, verses 1 and 2. He goes back into Israel, into the cave. Messiah in a cave.

Let me just read those two verses. David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down to him there. And everyone who was in distress and debt and discontent gathered to him. And he became captain over them. And there were with him about 400 men. 400 men who were not the pick of the crop. They were in distress and debt and discontent. They're the same kind of people who Jesus often draws to himself. And they gather to David at the cave of Adullam. And I don't think we're meant to think of these men as malcontents feeding on their grievances.

They are disillusioned with the reign of Saul. They're looking for the Lord's Messiah. Disillusionment can do that for you. And they gather to David, which is a shepherd word.

[15:38] And amongst them are his mum and dad and brothers. The same brothers who refused to believe him at first. Now, because of God's choice of David as Messiah, their lives are at risk.

And then the third move, verses 3 to 5 of 22, he goes to Moab. David takes his family and the 400 losers. And he treks all the way across Israel to the country of Moab, which is east of Israel. Why Moab? Because David's great-grandmama was Ruth. A Moabite woman. The very book before 1 Samuel is the story of tremendous suffering and death.

And in the midst of it, Ruth comes to faith in Israel's God. And marries Boaz and they have a child, Obed, who has a child, Jesse, who has a child, David.

So now God's Messiah returns to his extended family to protect his parents, to protect his own parents. And at the end of these three fugitive stories, in verse 5, the prophet Gad, who is amongst the 400 now, says to David, don't remain here in the stronghold.

[16:56] Go back into Judah. Before we come to the last scene, I think I just want to make a comment about God's strange way with suffering. You remember we began by talking about the Messiah must suffer.

Well, here in the story of Ruth, we see God's way. In the midst of the suffering of David, the suffering of Ruth is used by God to protect not only the Messiah, but the Messiah's family. She had no idea this would happen. She's long dead. She had no idea that one of her descendants would be Jesus the Christ. You see, in the Old Testament and throughout the Bible, suffering is not just there, not just to make us stronger.

It's not just somehow the tough get going. It's not that good will come of it and, you know, we'll try and look for meaning in it. It's not just, you know, it's part of the human condition.

We should just give in to it. But that in the hands of God, suffering can have saving purpose. And I don't think we always see. I don't think we see in our life always what God is doing.

[18:04] And that is the thing with choosing to identify with God's Messiah. When you identify with God's Messiah, as David's family did and as this 400 did, it brings you into a community that affects your relationships.

Even it can have a radical impact on families. You know, Saul's family is completely divided simply because Saul refused to acknowledge the Lord. The Lord's anointed. But David's family does acknowledge David as the Lord's anointed and it puts them in great danger.

Because when you identify with the Messiah, I'm sorry to tell you this, but you share his suffering. But he also shares with you his salvation and protection and purpose.

So, the priests, the three running stories. And now we come back to the priests again. And this time, I've called this chapter 22, 6 to 20, the madness of King Saul.

You see in verse 6, we're back in the court of King Saul. David's out running in the forest and hiding in the cave. Saul's there out in the open, sitting on his chair, under his tamarisk tree, on the top of the hill, all his servants around him.

[19:16] And he has the spear in his right hand. The same spear that he tried to skewer David with three times. The same spear that he tried to kill his own son, Jonathan, with. And he is filled with a murderous rage.

He's heard that David's been seen at the sanctuary at Nob and he's furious. Listen to his speech, verse 7. Hear now, people of Benjamin, the son of Jesse. Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards?

Will he make you commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, that all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes covenant with the son. No one of you is sorry for me or discloses to me my son is dead off against the sermons of light wake as at this day.

It's wonderful, isn't it? It's one of the first times outside the Garden of Eden that someone plays the victim card so skillfully. Nobody understands me. Nobody loves me. He points out to these, haven't I given you your wealth?

I mean, doesn't nepotism count for something, you guys? It's a deadly paranoia. And Doeg sees his chance. He sees, because he saw David with Ahimelech and he speaks up.

[20 : 29] And so Saul summons Ahimelech and all the priests, 85 in total. Verse 13. Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword and inquired of God, so that he's risen against me and to lie in wait as at this day?

And as Carolyn read, Ahimelech's defence is a lovely testimony to his own innocence. It's the first time in 1 Samuel we get a really good priest. And his innocence depends entirely on David's innocence.

Because he is identified with the Lord's Messiah, in the eyes of Saul, everyone who identifies with the Lord's Messiah must die. And then in verse 17, Saul orders his guard to execute the priests and they won't do it.

They cannot do it. These are the priests of God. In the Old Testament, the priests belong to God. You couldn't lay a finger on them. They were God's representatives. It's unbelievable that Saul should order their execution.

And while his men won't do it, Doeg is more than happy to. And in a classic case of overkill, he slaughters the priests, and then he goes to the city of Nob and slaughters every living thing.

[21 : 50] And in that, Saul becomes Pharaoh. Saul becomes Herod. He is the enemy of God's people, precisely because he will not acknowledge God's Messiah.

But one priest escapes, verse 22, Abiathar. And when he comes to David, David said, I knew on that day when Doeg the Edomite was there, he would surely tell Saul, I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house.

Stay with me. Do not be afraid. For he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me, you will be in safekeeping. If you identify with the Lord's Messiah, your life is caught up with his.

And even though Saul looks like he's the one in security, true security, true safekeeping, will be found with the Lord's Messiah. And then we come to the last episode, which is 23, 1 to 14.

And I've got to pause and say, how are we doing at this stage? It's the first time I've ever seen a children's talk where there needed to be a bathroom break. Thinking maybe we should do that here.

[23 : 01] Now, if you leave now, we know what you're going to do. So stay with us. And now, here is David with the priest, the only priest left, Abiathar. And I've called this Messiah at Prayer with the priest of God.

This is a beautiful section. David hears that the city of Keilah, one of the Israeli cities, is under attack from the Philistines. What's the first thing he does? He doesn't rip out his sword, doesn't plan a battle strategy.

He prays. It's a wonderful picture. He's acting as God's Christ. He's a willing and suffering saviour. And in the midst of trying to run from Saul, he takes a massive risk because he approaches God and asks whether this is the right thing to do.

Dealing with the Philistines was supposed to be Saul's job. But all Saul can think of is killing David. So the first thing David does here is he inquires of the Lord, which is a technical term for how you consulted God through the priest.

It's exactly what Saul should have been doing. But Saul did not listen. He would not listen. He blocked his ear to the word of God. You remember in weeks past. That's what always happens if we block our ears to the word of God.

[24 : 19] God will stop speaking to you. If God is silent in your life, it's always because you've stopped listening. David inquires of the Lord and the Lord says, go.

And he takes it to his men and he says, it's a lovely moment. The men, the 400 losers. That's not my phrase, by the way. That's what one of the commentators calls them. They say to him, look, David, is this really a good idea?

I mean, you've got Goliath's sword. We don't have anything. In case you've forgotten, Saul and his real army are after us.

That's his job to do. Besides, the Philistines, they're very nasty and Goliath has some older brothers that are still fighting amongst them. And so David prays again and David and the 400 go and they save the people of Keilah.

Saul hears it and is enraged and sends the army to besiege Keilah. But before they get there, David hears and inquires of the priest. And he asks God, will the people of Keilah give me over to Saul?

[25 : 28] Here are the people he saved, the ungrateful wretches. And God says, yes, they'll give you over. And so David's on the run. And the episode finishes with that lovely little phrase at the end of verse 14, Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hands.

Well, at one level, you could just see this as a contrast between two kings, two kinds of kings, a bad king and a good king, couldn't you?

You know, Saul versus David. Saul, he kills his own people, not the Philistines. David saves his people from the Philistines. Faced with danger, Saul rants and raves.

Faced with danger, David prays. Faced with the word of God, Saul will not listen and kills the clergy. Faced with the word of God, David prays and obeys and saves the last clergy.

Saul brings death, David brings life. And in one sense, you could say, Saul is a picture of all that's secure in this world, everything this world has to offer. Fields and power and money and position.

[26 : 37] And it's a fantasy, of course, because God's true Messiah is the only one who can offer true safety. That's what salvation is. And it doesn't come through position and power and those kinds of things.

It comes through suffering. But I think the question you may be asking is, why doesn't God just get this over with? Why doesn't he just run Saul out of town?

And I think here are two things for us to take away, and I'll finish with these. The first is, that God's Messiah is a Messiah who suffers. On the front of the parish life notes, don't take it out, I wrote down the Psalms that are associated with this period in David's life.

And if you'd like to, read through them this afternoon. What stands out in these Psalms is that when he was in Gaff, he was deathly afraid.

He thought his time was up. But it was in that suffering that he learned to trust God in a way that he couldn't have in any other circumstance. Psalm 34, David says, I sought the Lord and he answered me and delivered me out of all my fears.

[27 : 51] This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of his troubles. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

It's the first time David ever speaks of God as a refuge, as a fortress. And I don't know whether it was right or wrong for him to go to Gaff, frankly. But it was at Gaff and these other places where God made David perfect through suffering.

And when he comes to Adullam, the cave of Adullam, there are two more Psalms written in the cave. And he's moved. He's now more confident. Psalm 57, Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge.

In the shadow of your wings I will take refuge till the storms of destruction bypass me. I cry out to God, Most High, who fulfills his purpose for me.

He's learning to trust God's word, God's stated purpose for him and risk his life on it. And in the cave, with the 400 snoring soldiers, he gets up before dawn with his harp and lyre and he says, I will awake the dawn.

[29 : 08] I will give thanks, O Lord, among the peoples. I will sing praises among the nations, for your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over the earth. I think that's why throughout this passage consistently and consecutively David seeks God.

But it isn't easy. It's very striking, isn't it? When he gets to the safety of Moab, Gad the prophet says to him, and I quote, do not remain in the stronghold, depart to go back in the land of Judah where Saul is.

It doesn't make any sense. Surely it would be better to wait in the stronghold until things die down. No. Because you see, the only problem being safe is that you cannot save anyone else.

You can't save anyone from the safety of Moab. So we have a Messiah who suffers. That's one thing to take away. And secondly, a Messiah who saves. At every step, God is forming his king who

is going to save by suffering.

[30 : 19] David is being trained to be the shepherd of his people. He gathers people as a shepherd does. He brings his family to safekeeping. He promises a buyer for the priest. Don't be afraid for those who seek my life.

Seek your life with me. You shall be in safekeeping. And he risks his life to save the people of Kilar. The Messiah must suffer. Why?

Why must he suffer? He suffers for us so that we'd be saved. And David's suffering, as we'll see more in the next weeks, points us to the greater David, to Jesus himself, who was also made perfect through suffering and has made us perfect through his suffering, who was identified with us so that we will identify with him and with his people.

Amen.