

The Christ Must Suffer II

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[0 : 00] If you're new here, my name's Aaron. I'm the minister here for the evening service. Make sure you come and say hi to me at some point. Alright, Samuel 21, 22, half of 23.

Probably best to open your Bibles, I'll be following it pretty closely here. So these three chapters are like a long, you know like the long chase scene sort of at the end of the movie.

And these chase scenes tend to hold our attention because we want the good person to win and usually there's been some kind of injustice that needs to be righted and invariably it's the good guy that is suffering in some way and we kind of resonate with this because we like these movies because the world is full of injustice and suffering and good people suffer.

And we want some tidy resolution to this. And so the movies give us that, which is great. But the real world isn't quite as tidy as that. And in the midst of suffering we are left asking, why?

Why? And the Bible does not ignore this reality. There's lots of suffering in the Bible. It's a big theme. Israel and Egypt. Israel and Babylon. Job.

[1 : 19] Tons of the Psalms. Obviously, you know, one of the high points of Scripture, the crucifixion, where Christ on the cross says, My God, my God, why?

Now I said last week that Jesus deals with suffering pretty head on. He says on many occasions, The Christ must suffer. But why?

Why is that the case? Why must he suffer? Well, these chapters here help us to understand that. So let's walk through them.

I'll be looking at it in six scenes. Six scenes. Okay. Scene one. Beginning of chapter 21. So verses one to nine.

So David is a fugitive, right? You heard that from the first reading. He's a fugitive. He's on the run from Saul. He's got no weapons, no food. So he heads to the wonderfully named town of Nob, which in the Hebrew is pronounced, it's still actually Nob, actually.

[2 : 24] So it's not a great name. But there's this priest there called Ahimelech. And the priest is scared, it says. We don't know why the priest is scared, but he's scared for some reason. David is not sure whether he can trust this guy.

So he fabricates this story about being on a secret mission for Saul. And said he'd need some food. So Ahimelech says, Well, we've got the special bread, which is just for the priests. But I guess I can give it to you, as long as your men are ritualistically clean.

And David says, Totally. They're totally clean. Nothing to see here. No problems here. David has no men. All right? He's by himself. Okay. So the priest is making this huge exception.

And we don't know why, except perhaps that it was because it was David, and he was quite famous. And then David says to the priest, Listen, you don't happen to have any weapons here in the temple, do you?

And the priest says, Well, actually, we do. We've got this, we've got Goliath's sword, the one that, you know, the one that you use to cut off Goliath's head. And David is like, That's perfect. You know, I'll take it, right?

[3 : 27] Now, in the middle of this first episode, we get introduced to this guy with the ominous name of Doeg, which you know, I don't know what that means, but it's probably something really bad, right?

And so he's just kind of, all we get is this one line that says, He's there, he's kind of watching the whole thing. Now, this is on a side note. What do we do with the fact that, that David totally fabricated this story?

What do we do with the fact that David lied to a priest, who was seemingly quite a, you know, kind of a good guy? Well, the short answer is, we do nothing about it.

I read all these commentaries, and I don't know, like 20 commentaries or something, and you could split them in half based on how they approach this little bit here. Some guys say, or some guys and girls commentators, they say, you know what?

David lied. He misled people. This is sinful. This is an awful thing. It's terrible. Blah, blah, blah. Other people are like, you know what?

[4 : 31] David was incredibly resourceful and clever, and he's a great guy. You know, slap him on the back. I think, look, I just think they're both wrong. I just think, I'm not going to do anything with it, because the text does nothing with it.

The text makes, passes no moral judgment on David, and so, I'm not going to spend any time on it. David, David, at the end, one of the, towards the end of our readings, it says that he really regrets what happened because of what Saul does as a result.

Apart from that, it doesn't say much about it. And any kind of, when we become, when we approach a text with, excessive, excessive, scrupulosity, that's probably a word, we, we can, we can fail to see the main point.

And the main point is this, you know, David is on the run, he's hungry, he's defenseless, he's in a terrible situation, he manages to get some bread, which he should never have been given, he gets his famous sword, you know, the path of David is one of suffering, but God is with him.

That's, that's basically the kind of the, the main gist of, the main gist of that first little scene. Okay, scene two. David is off again, this is verses 10 to 15. David is off again, he's, he's out of this town, and he goes to Gath.

[5 : 56] Now, can anyone tell me, why that is, a really odd move? Why is it so odd? Goliath, that's Goliath's hometown.

So, David is actually going to a Philistine city here. So, David, who, in a, what appears to be a very interesting manoeuvre, David, who is famous for killing Philistines, goes to the hometown of Goliath, who he has killed, he walks in the front door, carrying Goliath's sword.

Now, you know, like it, I can only, you can speculate that, he's thinking, well, perhaps I won't get recognised. Or, this is the last place in the world, Saul would look.

You know, which is reasonable, I guess. Perhaps it's a commentary on the fact that, David's, life is so messed up, right now. He is in such rough shape, that the safest place for him to be, is in the hometown of Goliath.

Now, of course, it doesn't work out like David expects, because he walks in the door, and everyone knows who he is. So, he meets up with this Philistine king, and what's really interesting, is this, these people call him the king of the land.

[7 : 21] I mean, they, they, they almost kind of revere him. They say, oh, you're, you're the king of the land, right now. Immediately, David realizes he's in trouble here. So, he's probably thinking, they're going to kill me. So, what does he do?

Well, in verse 13, so he changed his behavior before them, and pretended to be insane. That's sign language for insane, international.

Oh, thank you. What is it? Applause. Right, yeah, crazy applause, right? So, he pretends to be insane. He starts, like, tagging the place.

He just starts dribbling down his beard, right? So, and the king says, look, I've got enough crazy people around here. Just, you know, let him go. Again, let's, don't spend too much time on the deception here.

It's not the, it's not the point of it. The point of it is this, is that David, in Goliath's hometown, with Goliath's sword, well-known Philistine killer, is left unharmed.

[8 : 18] It's this miraculous kind of escape. And David actually wrote a couple of psalms about this, about how faithful God was to him, and his suffering, and in his drama.

Let me, let me read it, just a couple of verses from each one. Psalm 56. Did you read Psalm 56 at the start? Oh, it's all coming together. All right.

So, I'll just read the first few verses. And we know this is about this situation here, because the psalm is called, a psalm of David, when the Philistines sees him at Gath. Okay. It says this, be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me all day long, an attacker oppresses me, my enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly, when I'm afraid.

I put my trust in you, in God, whose word I praise, in God, I trust, I shall not be afraid, what can flesh do to me? It's great, eh? From Psalm 34.

O taste and see that the Lord is good. You know that line, I know you've heard that before. That's about this, it's about what's going on, with David, in Gath. O taste and see that the Lord is good.

[9 : 26] Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. O fear the Lord, you his saints. For those who fear him, have no lack. The young lions suffer wanton hunger, but those who seek the Lord, lack no good thing.

So David's at his lowest ebb, he is, he's suffering, he's struggling, but God is with him. He's put himself in these ridiculous situations, but he trusts in God.

Scene 3. This is chapter 22, 1 to 5. So Dave heads off to this cave in Adulam.

And people start gathering around him. About 400 people it says. It's got an interesting description of these people. Those in distress, those in debt, bitter. One commentator said he gathers 400 losers around him.

Probably not a fair assessment, I'd say. I think it's, he gathers people around him who are disillusioned with the rule of Saul. So David becomes this leader of anyone who's suffered some kind of loss or been mistreated.

[10 : 37] And I think what's interesting here is this picture of discipleship here. They are willing to share in his fate. And they end up being very, very loyal to him actually.

It's a cool picture of following Christ, I think. I'll come back to that. Okay. Scene 4. This is 6 to 19. This is, it gets pretty ugly here.

It tells the story of Saul who's sitting down, he's got a spear. You know the spear that he tried to kill David with three times and his own son with? He's got a spear and he's on this rant. He's ranting.

He's going, oh, you people, I've helped you out, I've been good to you, but I know you love David, basically, you know. I know you've been protecting David. You know, bring him to me, bring him to me, right?

And then there's this guy, Doeg, he pops up again. He's a random guy from the temple and he says, you know what, I've seen David with a priest, a Himalek. So Saul gets a Himalek and all his mates in and questions him and poor old Himalek just tells the truth.

[11 : 38] But Saul is so nuts at this point, so perverted by jealousy and envy, that he orders that all of the priests of Israel kill.

Now to demonstrate how crazy it was at this point, the soldiers in the court refused to obey him. So Doeg, the Edomite, who's obviously a bit of a keener, steps in and does the business. And then he goes to Himalek's town, wipes the place out, kills the priests, you know, kills the women, the children, all the livestock, completely destroys everything there.

So Saul has been on this trajectory of evil for a while now, but it looks like his, his kind of, his corruption is, complete at this point.

It's like when, you know, Darth Vader's mask gets put on at the end of, of the middle of, those movies. You know, there's that scene where the mask just, it's in the newer ones, right, and the mask goes out and then all of a sudden it's, you hear the thirt breathing, it's like there's this completeness of his evil, right?

So, so Saul has become the Antichrist. He is the Pharaoh. Saul is the Pharaoh. He is, you know, the Pharaoh, the Egyptian Pharaoh who killed the Israelites. He's become Herod, the guy that killed all the Jewish babies for fear that one of them would grow up to be a Jewish king.

[13 : 01] It is a complete turnaround. His job is to protect Israel from its enemies, right? He has become the enemy of his people.

Scene 5, chapter 22, 20 to 23. One priest escapes, one priest escapes and finds his way to David and David says this wonderful line in verse 23, stay with me, do not be afraid, with me you shall be in safekeeping.

This is a very important scene in terms of the fall of Saul and the rise of David. Saul is the destroyer of the priesthood. David is the saviour of the priesthood.

He's the one that's going to protect the last remaining priest. Saul is relying on this Edomite who are historically the enemies of God. David is now the only one that is receiving priestly advice.

This whole good king, bad king sort of scenario plays itself out in the next scene pretty vividly, I think. This is scene 6, chapter 23, 1 Samuel.

[14 : 13] David's in hiding with his little enemy and he hears about a village that's being attacked by the Philistines and two big things happen here. First one, he saves the village.

Second one, before he does that, he stays in constant contact with God. Wonderful picture. Compared to Saul who's, you know, killing the priests, David using the priests to stay in contact with God.

And in a summary of this conversation with God, it's David says, well, shall I defend the village? Shall I, you know, defend the village? God, yes you should. Okay, well I'll do that. Goodness, there seems to be quite a few of them.

Look, you'll be fine. Victory, no problems. David prays to God, well, should we stick around? No, no, no, don't stick around, Saul is coming. But won't the villagers help me?

No, no, no, they probably won't. They're going to actually sell you out. So should we leave? Yes, you should leave. Right-o. And that's basically the dialogue. It's this great picture of David in this conversation with God.

[15 : 18] Now, the last verse of our reading, and Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand. Now, I hope at this point you've seen the contrast.

Saul, mad with jealousy, the destroyer, the enemy of God, and David, the saviour, the servant of God. Okay, that's the story.

I've said many times this helps us to understand Jesus. But how does that, how does this understand, how does this help us understand Jesus? How does the fugitive king David do that? I mean, he's spending most of his time just trying not to be killed, which is not a great life.

How does this help us understand Jesus? Well, at the start I said Jesus said that Christ must suffer. Luke 24, right? So what is it about David's suffering that helps us understand Christ's statement?

That's the big question. How does this help us understand Christ's statement that Christ must suffer? Well, think about it.

[16 : 29] It's actually not that difficult. Why is David suffering? Why is he suffering? He's suffering because he is a threat to the existing power structures. He is a threat to Saul's kingship.

He is a threat to Saul's dynasty. That's why he's suffering. Why does Jesus suffer? Because he is a threat to the devil.

He is a threat to the religious powers of the day. He is a threat to the gods of our heart. When the real King David came on the scene, he came into conflict with the pretend king.

The conflict was just inevitable. Why does he suffer?

It shouldn't be a question. Of course he's going to suffer. He's in conflict with another enormous power. It's the same with Jesus. Why does the Christ suffer? Well, it's inevitable.

[17 : 30] Of course Christ was going to suffer. And why does this matter to you? I mean, at this point it just sounds like theology, right? I'm just giving you good theology. Take it.

Good theology. It's all there, right? What does it matter? You know, who cares? Well, it helps us put into perspective the question why is it hard to be a Christian in this age?

Well, it's hard to be a Christian because being a Christian means that we suffer. Because of the choice you have made to follow Jesus you will share in his sufferings.

It's inevitable. You know, the folks who left Saul and followed David to that cave, they became fugitives with David. You have become fugitives with Jesus.

From the outside it looks absolutely crazy because Saul had all the tangible power. He was the king, the people's choice, the pretend king, but he was the king.

[18 : 33] Enormous power, enormous influence, all these people around him. But you would be a fool to stay with Saul. And why is that?

Why would you be a fool to stay with Saul? Why would you be a fool to stay with this world? Well, the last part of the story makes it really clear. It's only David who is committed to protecting his people.

even as a fugitive, David protected his people, protected that village. It's only David that is committed to the defeat of God's people's enemies.

It's only David that wants to do God's will. Saul was deaf. Saul was deaf. Folks, I'll finish here.

If you are having a hard time at the moment and because being a Christian in Vancouver is really uncool. And if you're having a hard time with that, you're thinking of throwing the whole Christian thing in because for a variety of reasons, you know.

[19 : 36] the Christian morality is too difficult. You know. It's just too hard. Folks, if you throw that out and you just leave the church and you go out and you just become part of sort of normative culture, you are exchanging one set of values for another set of values, for one set of morals for another set of morals, for one set of standards for another set of standards.

And I'm telling you, I know that you fail in the Christian standards. We all do. You will fail in the world's standards as well. In the world's standards, the world's power structures, what counts as, you know, is, you know, looks and power and sex and money and all those things, you're going to fail.

Folks, it's better to fail with Jesus than it is to fail in the world. Maybe you're giving it in because it's just like, it's just like, oh, it's just...

You know, the world just seems so much more interesting so much more culture and cool stuff. Folks, you're crazy.

You're crazy. It looked just like that in Saul's day, didn't it? He had all the power. He had all the cool stuff going on. Here's David just trying to save himself from getting killed, having to beg for food, living in caves, always on the run.

[21 : 02] Folks, remain a fugitive with Jesus and share with him, you know, the hard things that that entails because only Jesus is committed to defeating your enemies of sin and death.

Only Jesus is committed to protecting you. I'll finish with these words. These are the words of David, the Messiah here. These are the words of Christ to you this evening.

These are the words that David said to the surviving priest, fleeing from what seemed like an invincible power. Verse 23, Stay with me. Do not be afraid.

With me, you will be safe. Amen. Amen.