

# 1 Samuel 22 - David's Flight to Adullam, Moab, Hereth; Saul's Slaughter of the Priests at Nob; Abiathar Takes the Ephod to David

IV. Transition from the house of Saul to the house of David (1 Samuel 16:1—31:13)

(3) David in exile from the pursuing Saul (21:1—29:11)

(C) David becomes a leader of the men at Adullam (22:1-2)

(D) David leaves his mother and father in Moab (22:3-4a)

(E) David stays at Masada (22:4b-5a)

(F) David hides in the Hereth forest while Saul slaughters the priests at Nob (22:5b-23)

## 1 Samuel 22

(C) David becomes a leader of the men at Adullam (22:1-2)

1 So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of **Adullam**; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard *about it*, they went down there to him.

1 So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard *of it*, they went down there to him.

1 David left from there and escaped to the Cave of Adullam. His brothers and all his father's family heard about this and went down to him there.

1 David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him.

- "...Adullam" - "Refuge" or "Closed in Place"

— Located 1-2 miles south of the Elah Valley, where David killed Goliath

— There are many huge caves in the limestone hills of the area, several of which can accommodate over 400 people

- Apparently, David's family joined David in exile, no longer safe from Saul in Bethlehem

— If Saul would attack his own family (20:33), there was no telling what he might do to David's family

— In the East it was not uncommon for a whole family to be put to death for the fault of one member, and the massacre at Nob showed David's family what they might expect

David assembled a loyal band of followers at the cave of Adullam, a crowd of 400 men that eventually grew to 600 (23:13). His experiences in the cave are found in Ps 54 and 142. It was during this time that David wrote Psalm 142.

2 Then everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was **discontented** gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him.

2 Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him.

2 Everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was malcontent gathered around him, and he became their leader. There were about 400 men with him.

2 And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

- "...discontented" - "bitter of soul"

- The beginning of a group who would later be David's "mighty men," who were heroically loyal to God's king (2 Sam 23:8-39)

— Certainly this "motley crew" illustrates the kind of people who flee to Christ for refuge (Cf. Matt 11:28; John 7:37): people in distress or in debt (because of our sins); people discontented with life. David's band was small and despised, but to them belonged the kingdom!

— In mercy, God calls individuals from every background and experience to enter into a right relationship with Him and to be transformed by His grace through faith in His Son.

(D) David leaves his mother and father in Moab (22:3-4a)

3 And David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother come *and stay* with you until I know what God will do for me."

3 And David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother come *and stay* with you until I know what God will do for me."

3 David went from there to Mizpah of Moab, and he told the king of Moab, "Please let my father and mother come and stay with you until I know what God is going to do for me."

3 And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me.

- David was able to get protection for his parents at Moab since his family (through Ruth) came from there. How thoughtful of David to care for his loved ones (Cf. John 19:26-27).

— Like Gath, Moab was one of Saul's enemies (Cf. 14:47), and would have been willing to support anyone who would weaken Saul

(E) David stays at Masada (22:4b-5a)

4 Then he left them with the king of Moab; and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.

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4 David left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time David was in the stronghold.

4 And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold.

(F) David hides in the Hereth forest while Saul slaughters the priests at Nob (22:5b-23)

5 But Gad the prophet said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; leave, and go into the land of Judah." So David left and went into the forest of Hereth.

5 The prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.

5 The prophet Gad told David, "Don't remain in the stronghold. Go and enter the territory of Judah." So David left and went into the forest of Hereth.

5 And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.

- Gad is here mentioned for the first time; he later became David's seer (2 Sam 24:11)

— He rebuked David for his sin of the census and wrote a history of the reign of David (1 Chr 29:29)

— From 2 Chr 29:25 it appears that he was concerned with the arrangement of the temple service

6 Then Saul heard that David and the men who were with him had been discovered. Now Saul was in Gibeah, sitting under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing in front of him.

6 Then Saul heard that David and the men who were with him had been discovered. Now Saul was sitting in Gibeah, under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing around him.

6 When Saul heard that David and the men who were with him had been found, he was sitting in Gibeah, under the tamarisk tree on the hill, with his spear in his hand. All his officials were standing around him.

6 When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that were with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him;)

- Here is a vivid description of an ancient council, such as met to deliberate on affairs of state and to administer justice

7 Saul said to his servants who were standing in front of him, "Hear now, **you Benjaminites!** Will the son of Jesse really give all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds?"

7 Saul said to his servants who stood around him, "Hear now, O Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse also give to all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds?"

7 Saul told his officials who were standing around him, "Listen, men of Benjamin! Will Jesse's son also give fields and vineyards to all of you? Will he make all of you officers over thousands and officers over hundreds?"

7 Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds;

- "...you Benjamites" - shows how isolated the tribes still were, and that for the most part Saul was surrounded by members of his own tribe

— He apparently had no palace and no elaborate court. His men were strictly Benjamites.

- Saul implied that David would be as narrow in his tribal affiliations as Saul was, and David was not a Benjamite. However, as it turned out, David went the other way and risked losing the loyalty of Judah.

8 For all of you have conspired against me so that there is no one who informs me when my son makes a *covenant* with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you who cares about me or informs me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in ambush, as *it is* this day."

8 For all of you have conspired against me so that there is no one who discloses to me when my son makes a *covenant* with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you who is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in ambush, as *it is* this day."

8 But all of you have conspired against me, and no one tells me about my son's covenant with Jesse's son. None of you feels sorry for me and tells me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in wait, as he's doing this day."

8 That all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me,

or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

- Saul continued to respond to his loss of the throne and loss of the Spirit (16:14) with twisted fear and failing logic instead of repentance

— Immersed in pride that fuels his self-pity, he alleged that his kinsmen conspired against him by keeping silent to help David

— Saul often showed signs of paranoia, such as claiming that Jonathan had encouraged David to ambush him. There is no indication that Jonathan had done this.

9 Then Doeg the Edomite, who was standing in front of the servants of Saul, responded and said, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.

9 Then Doeg the Edomite, who was standing by the servants of Saul, said, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.

9 Then Doeg the Edomite, who was in charge of Saul's servants answered: "I saw Jesse's son coming to Nob to Ahitub's son Ahimelech.

9 Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.

10 And he inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

10 He inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

10 Ahimelech inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

10 And he enquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.

11 Then the king sent a messenger to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's household, the priests who were in Nob; and all of them came to the king.

11 Then the king sent someone to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's household, the priests who were in Nob; and all of them came to the king.

11 The king sent for Ahitub's son Ahimelech the priest and for all his father's family who were priests at Nob. All of them came to the king.

11 Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that were in Nob: and they came all of them to the king.

12 Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub." And he replied, "Here I am, my lord."

12 Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub." And he answered, "Here I am, my lord."

12 Saul said, "Listen, son of Ahitub!"

And he said, "Here I am, your majesty."

12 And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I am, my lord.

13 Saul then said to him, "Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me, in that you have given him bread and a sword, and have inquired of God for him, so that he would rise up against me by lying in ambush as *it is* this day?"

13 Saul then said to him, "Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he would rise up against me by lying in ambush as *it is* this day?"

13 Then Saul asked him, "Why have you conspired against me—you and Jesse's son—by giving him food and a sword, and by inquiring of God for him, so he can rise up against me to lie in wait, as he's doing today?"

**13** And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast enquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

**14** Then Ahimelech answered the king and said, "And who among all your servants is as faithful as David, the king's *own* son-in-law, who is commander over your bodyguard, and is honored in your house?"

**14** Then Ahimelech answered the king and said, "And who among all your servants is as faithful as David, even the king's son-in-law, who is captain over your guard, and is honored in your house?"

**14** Ahimelech answered the king, "Who among all your officials is as faithful as David? He is the king's son-in-law, the captain of your bodyguard, and he's honored in your household."

**14** Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?

- Ahimelech appealed to Saul on David's behalf just as Jonathan had done earlier (Cf. 17:4-5); however this time, Saul did not respond to reasonable persuasion

15 Did I *just* begin to inquire of God for him today? Far be it from me! Do not let the king impute anything against his servant *or* against any of the household of my father, because your servant knows nothing at all of this whole affair."

15 Did I *just* begin to inquire of God for him today? Far be it from me! Do not let the king impute anything to his servant *or* to any of the household of my father, for your servant

knows nothing at all of this whole affair."

15 Is today the first time I inquired of God for him? Absolutely not! The king shouldn't accuse his servant, or any of my father's family of anything, because your servant didn't know anything at all about this."

15 Did I then begin to enquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute any thing unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more.

- Sounds like the answer of an innocent man...

— However Saul's self-interest had festered to a frenzy, and he would not, possibly could not, accept reason and truth

16 But the king said, "You shall certainly die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's household!"

16 But the king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's household!"

16 The king said, "Ahimelech, you will surely die, you and all your father's family!"

**16** And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house.

- This punishment was far too severe; the only crime Saul charged them with was simply failing to tell Saul where David was

— In addition, the Mosaic Law forbid putting children to death for the sins of their parents (Deut 24:16)

17 And the king said to the guards who were attending him, "Turn around and put the priests of the LORD to death, because their hand also is with David and because they knew that he was fleeing and did not inform me." But the servants of the king were unwilling to reach out with their hands to attack the priests of the LORD.

17 And the king said to the guards who were attending him, "Turn around and put the priests of the LORD to death, because their hand also is with David and because they knew that he was fleeing and did not reveal it to me." But the servants of the king were not willing to put forth their hands to attack the priests of the LORD.

17 The king told the guards, who were standing beside him, "Turn and kill the priests of the LORD because they supported David, and because they knew he was fleeing, but didn't inform me." But the officials of the king did not want to lift their hands to attack the priests of the LORD.

17 And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD; because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD.

- Saul ordered all the priests at Nob to be slaughtered, because of their failure to inform Saul of David's whereabouts

— Saul's soldiers had too much respect for the priesthood to slay the anointed servants of the Lord (Cf. 14:41-46); they also surely realized that Saul's order was irrational

18 Then the king said to Doeg, "You, turn around and attack the priests!" And Doeg the Edomite turned around and attacked the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod.

18 Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn around and attack the priests." And Doeg the Edomite turned around and attacked the priests, and he killed that day eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod.

18 Then the king told Doeg, "You turn and attack the priests." Doeg the Edomite turned and attacked the priests. That day he killed eighty-five men who carry the linen ephod.

18 And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod.

- Doeg the Edomite was a foreigner, with much less respect for the Mosaic law than Saul's officers

— Saul and Doeg were unsatisfied by this hideous crime, so Doeg went on to kill all men, women and children, and animals, while Saul looked on

— Saul acted from fear of losing prominence and power; Doeg acted to gain these things for himself

— Josephus wrote that Doeg killed 385 priests, as does the LXX. In another place, Josephus wrote that Saul slaughtered "300 priests and prophets" on this occasion, "as if he were endeavoring in some sort to render the temple (tabernacle) destitute of both priests and prophets..." [6:12:7]

19 He also struck Nob the city of the priests with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and infants; *he* also *struck* oxen, donkeys, and sheep with the edge of the sword.

19 And he struck Nob the city of the priests with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and infants; also oxen, donkeys, and sheep *he struck* with the edge of the sword.

19 He attacked the priestly town of Nob with the sword. Men and women, children and infants, oxen, donkeys and sheep were put to the sword.

19 And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

- In the madness of his self-willed fury, Saul wreaked havoc upon an innocent city, within the confines of his own tribe
  - Contrast this slaughter with the vengeance he failed to execute upon the Amalekites, a guilty heathen nation, at the command of God (15:3)
  - This slaughter was a fulfillment of God's prophecy to Eli that his house would be judged (Cf. 2:30-36)
- Saul's murder of the innocent priests at Nob shows to what extent people will go once they have rejected the Lord. Saul was a liar and a murderer, just like Satan (John 8:44).
  - Saul treated the Benjamite city of Nob like an enemy city that had been put under the "ban" (Cf. 15:3)
- Doeg was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau (Gen 25:30), so his hatred for David and the priests is but another stage in the battle between Esau and Jacob (the Everlasting Hatred, Cf. Gen 25:22)
- David's presence at Nob brought death to these people, so his deception only resulted in tragedy

When people refuse to submit to God's authority over them, they begin to die: spiritually, socially, psychologically, and physically (Rom 6:23). Eli and Saul both refused to submit to God's authority. Eli, the priest, put his family before God. Consequently God cut off his family. Even though David was the cause of 85 priests' deaths, this was one way God partially fulfilled the prophecy concerning Eli's descendants (2:27-36). God used David's folly to accomplish His will. So even in this David became a blessing. This in no way justifies David's lie (21:2), but it does show how even in his sin, David was used by God for blessing (Cf. Ps 76:10; Rom 6:1-2). Saul, the king, put himself before God. Therefore God cut off his life. Saul became increasingly paranoid, isolated from others, hateful toward his supporters as well as his enemies, and guilty of shedding innocent blood.

Conversely, when people submit to God's authority over them, they really begin to live (John 10:10). David submitted to God's authority over him. His sins, including deceiving Ahimelech, bore bad consequences for himself and others. Nevertheless God continued to bless and use David. He blessed him personally: David continued to rise to the throne. God also blessed him by using him to accomplish God's will, here the pruning of Eli's descendants.

Therefore we conclude that the most important issue is one of long-term authority, not incidental acts. Acts are important, but who is in control—God or self—is even more important. For a believer, the most important issue is authority. Believers can determine who is in control of our lives fairly easily by asking ourselves two test questions. Do I ask God for guidance, or do I ignore Him and make my own plans and decisions without

praying? And, do I submit to His Word, or do I disobey it, having ignored it or disregarded it?

**20** But one son of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled to David.

**20** But one son of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David.

**20** One man, Ahimelech's son Abiathar, a grandson of Ahitub, escaped and fled to David.

**20** And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David.

- Abiathar, one of the sons of Ahimelech (and a descendant of Eli), probably left in charge of the sanctuary at Nob, escaped the massacre and fled with the sacred ephod (23:6) to David at Adullam

— He shared in all David's wanderings and David made him a joint priest with Zadok

— From this time forward, the priesthood was with David rather than Saul

— Now, the king-elect and priest-elect became fellow fugitives from Saul

Psalm 52 provides insight into how David felt during this incident.

21 Abiathar informed David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD.

21 Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD.

21 Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD.

21 And Abiathar shewed David that Saul had slain the LORD'S priests.

22 Then David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would certainly tell Saul. I myself have turned against every person in your father's household.

22 Then David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have brought about *the death* of every person in your father's household.

22 David told Abiathar, "I knew on that day when Doeg the Edomite was there that he would certainly tell Saul! I'm responsible for the deaths of your father's whole family.

22 And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house.

- David, who would have defended God's priests with his life, knew his lies and deeds before Doeg had exposed Ahimelech to Saul's horrific revenge (Cf. 21:2)

23 Stay with me; do not be afraid, even though he who is seeking my life is seeking your life. For you are safe with me."

23 Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life, for you are safe with me."

23 Stay with me, and don't be afraid because the one who seeks my life, seeks your life. Indeed, you will be safe with me."

23 Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard.

- Saul was able to slay the priests, but he was not able to prevent Abiathar from fleeing to David with the ephod, the instrument for determining the will of God. Saul had no use for the ephod anyway...he was determined to do his own will!

- Abiathar later became a help to David (Cf. 23:9; 30:7)

- This period of persecution in David's life was a part of the preparation for the throne. He was already a great soldier; now he needed to suffer in the wilderness to learn not to trust men but to trust the Lord.

— All of us need "wilderness testings" to bring us closer to the Lord and to make us better equipped to serve Him

- Saul's persecution of David is an illustration of the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. It also pictures Satan's persecution of the church today:

— Saul was not the king, yet he was reigning; David was the king, but he was not yet on the throne

— Satan seems to be "reigning" today, but Christ is King and one day He will take His rightful throne