

David's Wilderness Experiences (Part 3)

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[0 : 00] Let's take our Bibles tonight. We'll get back to our study of 1 Samuel.

! And tonight we will be in chapter 22.! We finished last time, a couple of weeks ago, by getting all the way through verse 5 of chapter 22. And now we're ready for verse 6.

And we're going to take the rest of the chapter tonight. So I want to go ahead and read the entire chapter to begin with. And then we'll take a look at it. So starting with verse 6, 1 Samuel chapter 22. When Saul heard that David and his men who were with him had been discovered, and then you have this kind of break in the flow here.

Now Saul was staying in Gibeah under the tamarisk tree in Ramah with his spear in his hand and all his servants standing about him. And then we get back to how it began with verse 6.

[1 : 14] Then Saul said to his servants, that is when he heard that David has been seen, he said to his servants who stood about him, Hear now, you 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?

All of you have conspired against me. And there is no one who reveals to me that my son has made a covenant with the son of Jesse. That is Jonathan, remember, he and David made a covenant with one another.

And so you didn't reveal this to me. And there is not one of you who is sorry for me or reveals to me that my son has stirred up my servant, that's David, against me to lie in wait as it is this day.

Then answered Doeg. Remember we were introduced to Doeg last time, just kind of in passing, and that pretty typical way for the author to give us a heads up that you're going to see this guy again. Well, we'll see him here tonight in this passage. And so in verse 9, Then answered Doeg, the Edomite, who was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse going to Nob, to Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub.

[2 : 37] And he inquired of the Lord for him, gave him provisions, gave him the sword of Goliath, the Philistine. So the king sent to call Ahimelech, the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house.

The priests who were in Nob, and they all came to the king. So they've all been summoned, summonsed. And Saul said, Hear now, son of Ahitub.

He answered, Here I am, my lord. Then 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 the Lord for him, that he should rise against me to lie in wait as it is this day?

So Ahimelech answered the king and said, And who among all your servants is as faithful as David? Who is the king's son-in-law, who goes at your bidding and is honorable in your house? Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? For be it for me, let not the king impute anything to his servant or to any in the house of my father.

[3 : 50] For your servant knew nothing of all this, little or much. And the king said, You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house. Then the king said to the guards who stood about him, Turn and kill the priests of the Lord, because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled and did not tell it to me.

But the servants of the king would not lift their hands to strike the priests of the Lord. And the king said to Doeg, You turn and kill the priests. So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck the priests and killed on that day 85 men who wore a linen ephod.

Also Nob, the city of the priests, he struck with the edge of the sword both men and women, children and nursing infants, oxen and donkeys and sheep with the edge of the sword.

Now 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 Lord's priests.

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

[5 : 14] Stay with me, do not fear, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. But with me you shall be safe.

Okay, so chapter 21, which we've already covered, or that chapter we have finished, going all the way through to chapter 29, comprises really a single unit in 1 Samuel.

And I've called it David's wilderness wanderings. And really that's a pretty good description of it. Because David is in exile.

He's gone from the palace of the king as one of Saul's servants. In fact, he had charge over Saul's bodyguards. And he would play his music and soothe Saul and all those things.

He was beloved. He was in the palace. So he went from the palace of the king to exile in the wilderness. So David is a fugitive for the first time.

[6 : 21] He's a fugitive. He's Israel's, one of Israel's most wanted in that sense, or at least Saul wants him. And so David is on the run, on the run from the wrath of King Saul, whose paranoia, which we're going to be seeing here tonight, his paranoia, Saul's paranoia concerning David, has absolutely poisoned his heart.

And so we're going to see several things about Saul. The focus in this passage is Saul. Even though there are other principal characters in the story, certainly David is there.

Abie Athar, the priest, is in there. And also this Doeg. But the principal character here is Saul. And so we want to look at Saul.

Now, what have we seen so far? We have seen David relying upon those who were devoted in the kingdom. That was the first thing we looked at. David relied upon the faithful Ahimelech, the high priest there in Nob, to give him provision.

That is to give him food, remember, and to give him protection. He handed over to him the sword of Goliath, which was rightfully David's to begin with. But also, we didn't mention this last time.

[7 : 40] It's not mentioned in chapter 21, but it is mentioned here in chapter 22. Ahimelech also gave prayer, gave David prayer, which is what we learn here in our text.

In verse 13, it says that he inquired of God for David. That is, he interceded for David in prayer. All right, so David relied upon the devoted, the devoted Ahimelech.

David also risked the dangerous. Remember, we looked at a couple of these things last time. David risked the dangers of the city of Gath, that Philistine city, the home of their champion, the giant Goliath, whom David had slain.

So he risked that. And then, third, he rallied the discontented, some of the discontented in the kingdom, specifically those citizens of David's own kind of homeland, his tribe, the people of Judah. And so David rallied those people to himself that were his kin. And chapter 22, verse 2 says, Everyone who, because of Saul, I think we're to assume it's because of Saul, everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented, gathered to him, gathered to David, which I think is kind of a foreshadowing, a precursor to David's kingdom.

[9 : 11] He now ruled 400 people who had rallied to David's leadership. And so now we're ready for number four, and that is David realized the devastation, the devastation of Saul.

And this is a tragic story. And this part of the story reveals a lot about Saul, a lot about who he was really in his heart, who he had been all along in his heart.

And as a result, what Saul had become in his life as the first ruler of Israel.

So I want us to see six things very quickly tonight out of this passage. And all about Saul, right? He's the focus here in this passage.

We learn a lot about him. The first thing is this. Saul's delusional personality. He's delusional. And we see this in verses 6 and 7.

[10 : 23] In fact, look at that again. Let me just read it very quickly. Verse 6, when Saul heard that David and his men with him had been discovered. And then we have this.

Now Saul was staying in Gibeah. Now focus on every part of this. He's in Gibeah under a tamarisk tree in Ramah. And I'll explain that word Ramah here in a moment.

With his spear in his hand and all his servants standing about him. And then Saul said to his servants who stood with him, Hear now you Benjamites.

Will the son of Jesse, will he give every one of you fields and vineyards and make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds? Now what we see here in these two verses, Saul's

delusional.

I mean this is really interesting. Think about the kingdom has already been taken from him. Effectively it's been taken from him. It's been given to David.

[11:28] Samuel has already anointed David to be king over Israel. And so in a very real sense, Saul is kind of a lame duck king, remember.

And yet Saul is going through all the motions of kingship and he's doing so with the grandest show possible. That's what we can glean from this very brief description.

Verse 6 paints that picture for us. And it's a picture of Saul's delusion. And so here he is. He's conducting royal business as king in the open for all to see.

Here I'm king. Come to me. He's out there in the open. And he's acting very keenly. He's sitting on a hill.

High above all of his subjects. He even says that his servants are all around him there. I said just get the visual here. Now I said he's sitting on a hill.

[12:31] But as I read the passage a moment ago, at least out of the New King James, that doesn't seem to be what the Bible says there. But actually the word *rhema* can either mean a place, and there is a place called *rhema* outside of Bethlehem, or it can mean in the Hebrew it means a high place, a hill.

And that's the usage here. In fact, most of the translations, New American Standard, ESV, NIV I think even, has it translated hill.

So he's in Gibeah, out in the open, sitting on a hill, sitting high above everyone else. This description is given to us for purpose.

It's to reveal Saul's delusion that he's holding on to this kingship even though it has now been taken from him. So he's sitting on a hill, and to add a kind of a spiritual element to the whole scene, the Bible says here that he's sitting under a type of tree that the people of Israel would associate with worship of Yahweh.

And so he's kind of adding a spiritual element here. It's a tamarisk tree. And in Genesis chapter 21 verse 33, the Bible says, Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

[14:06] And so from that point on, it forever became kind of a symbol of a place of worship, a very sacred place of worship for Yahweh based upon its history.

So get this in your minds. Here's Saul conducting royal business as king, out in the open for all to see, on a high place, a hill, where everyone else is beneath him, under him.

And he's sitting under a sacred tree. In fact, it doesn't say, but I wouldn't be surprised if Saul didn't have the tree planted there, or transplanted there just for this particular occasion.

And then he sits there with his spear in hand. And all of his servants are standing about him.

You see this kind of staged picture here that Saul has put together. God has torn the kingdom from him, and he acts as though nothing has changed.

[15:08] In fact, he's so tenaciously holding on to his kingship that he is going to kill anyone that stands in his way, especially David. All right, so Saul's delusional personality.

Second, we see Saul's deranged paranoia. His paranoia. I mean, Saul is a classic paranoia.

And he's deranged. In the first place, why is Saul sitting there with his spear in his hand? You say, well, I don't know.

Why else other than he's afraid to be without it? You know, he's so full of paranoia. I mean, he's king. His servants, his bodyguards are all around him.

What is he afraid of? But the fact is, Saul seems always to have that spear in his hand. Let me just remind you of several places in Scripture.

[16:11] In chapter 18, verse 10, the Bible says, The distressing spirit from God came upon Saul. Remember when that happened. So David played music with his hand, as at other times, but there was a spear in Saul's hand.

You know, quite a comparison there between what's in David's hand and what's in Saul's hand. David is playing music, and Saul has a sword in his hand.

So he's got a sword in his hand here in that passage. You skip to the next chapter. In chapter 19, verse 9, again, there are a similar set of circumstances. Now the distressing spirit from the Lord came upon Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand.

I say he had a spear in his hand then, too. And David was playing music with his hand, with his hand. Again, contrast between what's in their hands. And then in chapter 20, verse 33, Jonathan had questioned his father, you might remember, about why he would want to kill David. Didn't seem to be any reason for that. And what did Saul do? He cast a spear at his own son. Now he had that spear in his hand. Had it there always, ready to use it.

[17:23] And he did use it on many occasions. And then, of course, here in our passage, right here, we have the spear in his hand. A little bit later in the book, in chapter 26, in verse 7, David, you might remember this story.

We'll get to it by and by. But David and Abishai, one of his mighty men, they snuck into Saul's camp while he and his men were sleeping.

Remember? Remember? And the Bible says Saul lay sleeping within the trench, that area of the camp, kind of with everybody surrounding him, protecting him. He's sleeping and his spear stuck in the ground by his head.

All right. So he's never too far from his spear. And I, you know, I think David couldn't resist. He took the spear. He stole it. And later gave it back to him.

All right. So this, I think, was evidence, just the first of several things, evidence of Saul's paranoia. But there's more, much more.

[18:26] Looking again at verse 7, Then Saul said to his servants who stood about him, Hear now, you Benjamites. What tribe was Saul from? Benjamin.

All right. These were his own kinsmen. And, by the way, it seems that Saul trusted his own kin to be his bodyguards, to serve him, protect him over those of other tribes.

And he had given authority only to those he thought he could trust. But did he trust them? So he says, Hear, O Benjamites. And notice what he says in verse 7.

Later in verse 7, Will the son of Jesse, by the way, continues to put it that way, never uses the name David, just wanting to speak his name.

Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards and make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds? All right.

[19:23] What's he doing here? I mean, did he really trust them? His own kin? No, he's bribing them. He's paying them off. He's promising payment for their loyalty.

And he's using scare tactics to keep them on his side. He's afraid they're going to desert him. And so he uses this kind of scare tactic. You know, if David becomes king, is he going to give you fields and vineyards?

Is he going to make you captains and captains over thousands? Is he going to give you places of authority in his kingdom? You see, the paranoia that is absolutely poisoning Saul's heart.

But this is still only the tip of the iceberg. Because look what he says to his own kin, the people of his own tribe, the Benjamites, in verse 8.

All of you have conspired against me. You're all against me. And there's no one who reveals to me that my son has made a covenant with the son of Jesse. Again, that's David.

[20:27] There's not one of you who is sorry for me. Poor guy. Everybody's against me. Nobody likes me.

Everybody's out to get me. Everybody's conspiring against me. This is Saul, see. And he's even paranoid about his own son, isn't he? Jonathan.

He said, There is not one of you who has revealed to me that my son, my own son, has stirred up my servant against me. Stirred up David against me.

See, his paranoia had even poisoned his faith in his own son. He said, My son has stirred up, that means encouraged, provoked, my servant David, that's David, against me.

Even my own son has done this. Nobody for me. Everybody's against me. Such a deranged way of thinking. Such paranoia. And his paranoia had even led Saul to think that David wanted to murder him.

[21:37] He was out to kill him. In fact, he's even now hiding someplace to pounce on me. That's what is meant in the latter part of the verse. He said, My servant David is against me to lie in wait.

That is, to ambush me. As it is this day. That is, this very day. He may be crouched behind some wall, some rock, some bush.

He's ready. And my own son has encouraged him to do this. I mean, none of this is true. Such paranoia. And then third, Saul's distorted perspective.

He had a distorted perspective. He could only see it one way. And it wasn't the right way. Look at verse 9 again and following. Then answered Doeg, the Edomite.

So here's Doeg. He's going to tell him all about David and him going to the priests of Nob and what they did for him. And so he divulges that secret there.

[22 : 41] And so, verse 11. So the king sent to call Ahimelech, the priest. So he gets Ahimelech. He summons him, the son of Ahitab. And all his father's house, his whole household, they must come.

And as well as the priests who were in Nob, and there were quite a few of them. We find out about how many there are here in just a minute. And they all came to the king. So they are all summoned to stand before the king.

And Saul said, hear now, son of Ahitab. And he answered, here I am, my lord.

And Saul said, hear now. Then Saul said to him, why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse? And he relates this whole thing. And he's being encouraged to ambush me.

So Ahimelech answered the king. And he said, and understand this is kind of a trial. Ahimelech is on trial before Saul.

[23 : 46] Saul is judge and jury here. So Ahimelech answers. He's allowed to answer the king. And he says, and who among all your servants is as faithful as David? Who is the king's son-in-law?

David is the king's son-in-law, remember? Who goes at your bidding. That he is in charge of some of your household. Saul, literally, that's the reference here.

David was in charge of the bodyguards of Saul in the palace. He was his armor bearer. So what's Ahimelech doing here?

He's reminding him. I mean, this is who David is. He goes at your bidding and is honorable in your house. And then in verse 15, he says, So he's giving a defense here, isn't it?

It's a very convincing defense. It's all true, as a matter of fact. And really, we could kind of pick out of that kind of four major points of defense that Ahimelech makes for himself.

[25 : 08] In first place, Ahimelech provided five truths about David that he wanted to remind Saul about. All right, it's kind of a five-fold defense of David.

He is your servant. He is loyal to you. He is your son-in-law. He is the captain of your bodyguard. He is highly respected in your household. You have nothing to fear from him.

Well, this is Ahimelech giving his defense. And then second, Ahimelech characterized his priestly actions toward David as just a normal, routine work of the priesthood.

He wasn't doing anything out of the ordinary. He's saying, everything I did for David, I do for others. It's my role as one of the Lord's priests.

Reminded Saul about that. Now, you know, he did inquire of the Lord for David. Anything wrong with that? You have to wonder, how could Saul or anyone be against David because he wanted to seek God's will?

[26 : 20] You think he would be for that? I mean, if he had the right perspective on this, he would be. But his perspective is distorted. It's poisoned.

And then the third defense, Ahimelech affirmed his loyalty to Saul. I'm your servant. You're my Lord. And then finally, Ahimelech denied any involvement whatsoever in David's alleged plot against the throne. He denied that. He said, I didn't know anything about it.

My family didn't know anything about it. See, for your servant, he said, knew nothing of all this. Little or much. I didn't even know the littlest part of it. Had no idea about this.

That's a pretty good defense. Well, how did Saul respond to that? He could only see it one way. He had a distorted perspective on David.

[27 : 21] And therefore, that perspective, by extension, carried over to any who would help David. And so if David is against me and conspiring against me, then all those who help David are conspiring against me.

That was his distorted perspective on this whole thing. It's unreasonable. Which led to a fourth thing. And that is what I would call Saul's devastating proclamation.

Verse 16. And the king said, this is Saul said, you shall surely die. Ahimelech. You and all your father's house.

Now, that's... I mean, think about it. Everybody in your household will die. The judgment will fall upon your whole family.

And so, verse 17. Then the king said to the guards, his bodyguards, who stood about him, Turn and kill the priests of the Lord, because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled and did not tell it to me.

[28 : 28] So, he just basically said everything that Ahimelech has said is a lie. Saul held his own court.

Judge and jury. And really, it came down, by the way, to the testimony of one witness. And a foreigner to boot. Doeg, the Edomite.

Came down to one witness. And two witnesses are required in the law. But just one witness. And so, he condemned Ahimelech and his family to be put to death.

And really, you know that more than just his family were put to death. And then, something I think strange.

Something we wouldn't really expect. Though actually, this is the second time this has happened in Saul's career as a king. But look at it. But the servants of the king, his bodyguards, would not lift their hands to strike the priests of the Lord.

[29 : 32] They wouldn't do it. They defied the king. Now, what we should remember here is, until recently, these very same bodyguards were under the command of David.

In Saul's household. And also, according to chapter 21, verse 5, they were very devout, devout followers of the Lord, of Yahweh God.

And also, it's obvious that they could not believe that David was conspiring against the king to kill the king. They couldn't believe that. They knew David. He was their leader.

And not just because he was placed in charge of them and over them. But they had a tremendous respect for David. So, there's no way they would believe this. And therefore, they could not believe. Since they could not believe that David was conspiring against Saul. They could not believe that Ahimelech was sympathetic to David's conspiracy either. So, they just wouldn't do it.

[30 : 33] And this, by the way, I mentioned a second time when Saul's subjects refused to carry out his orders. And you may remember way back there in chapter 14.

When Jonathan and one of his servants, they disobeyed the king's orders. Went over across the enemy lines and so forth. And as a result, brought a great victory.

But Saul then wanted to kill Jonathan. Wanted to put him to death. And it's interesting. In chapter 14, verse 45, the people said to Saul, Shall Jonathan die who has accomplished this great deliverance in Israel?

Certainly not. It won't be done. As the Lord lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground. So, they defied King Saul. He was a weak king anyway.

Okay. But they defied him. It was a foolish command. A ridiculous command. And they said, No, this isn't going to happen. And so, here we have the bodyguards of Saul who have been commanded by Saul to do something that's not only foolish, but worse than that.

[31 : 40] Wicked. And against God. Against the laws of God. And they would not do it. Wouldn't carry that out. But someone was there who would do it.

Would do the king's bidding. And so, fifth, Saul's demonic perpetration. Look at verses 18 and 19 again.

And the king said to Doeg, You turn and kill the priests. So, Doeg, the Edomite, turned and struck the priests and killed on that day 85 men who wore the linen ephod.

85 priests. Struck them dead. Now, he may have had some help. He may have had other servants not mentioned. That would be a day's work to kill 85 men, I would think.

And especially, I don't know that we are to assume that they just simply stood there and took it without any objection. So, but in the course of however this came about, he killed or had put to death 85 priests.

[32 : 46] But that's not all. Verse 19, also Nob, the city of the priests, he struck with the edge of the sword both men and women, children and nursing infants, oxen and donkeys and sheep with the edge of the sword.

He wiped them all out. Total annihilation of the people of this city. This city of priests. This place called Nob. Doeg did this.

Or he was in charge of this. But it wasn't just his own initiative. Saul had signed off on this. He had sanctioned this. He was doing the bidding of Saul the king.

Doeg's a foreigner. He's not a Jew. Not an Israelite. A foreigner. And Saul then perpetrated his demonic act upon his own priests.

Not to mention his own people. The priests of Yahweh God. And he did so through the willing servant of Doeg, the Edomite. So this is mass execution, isn't it?

[33 : 49] Which in the Hebrew is called harem. Harem. And it was authorized in the Torah, the law. Only, but only for those, for use against non-worshippers of Yahweh God.

And really, the place we find it is in relation to the Canaanites. But not against God's own people. So this is illegal according to the word of God, the law of God.

But that had mattered to Saul because of his hatred for David and anyone that would help him. And so that leads us to one more thing. And it really, I think, represents the final nail in Saul's coffin, really.

It's what I would call Saul's decisive punishment. His punishment. Verses 20 to 23. It may seem a little subtle when we look at this.

In fact, so subtle that it's easy to miss. But I want you to look, again, starting with verse 20. Now, one of the sons of Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David.

[35 : 04] So one priest got away. He is the son of Ahimelech. He is a descendant of Aaron. He's in the line of Aaronic priests.

And he gets away, the only one. And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the Lord's priests. And it's interesting, David's reaction.

David said to Abiathar, I knew that day when Doeg the Edomite was there that he would surely tell Saul, I have caused the death of all the persons of your father's house. This tells you something about the character of David.

He blames himself for being careless and allowing this to happen. But he says to Abiathar, stay here, stay with me. Do not fear.

For he who seeks my life seeks your life. But with me you shall be safe. Which I think also points to the character of David, the faith of David, to believe God's calling upon his life.

[36 : 01] He knew one day he would be king. And so he knew that if he stayed with him, he'd be safe. And he was. But now, what I want us to notice here is not just simply, you know, the providence of God in that he would preserve the priesthood here by allowing Abiathar to escape and to be protected by David.

And we certainly see the providence of God here. But it also represents something really more dire, much more dire, that is for Saul. When Abiathar joined with David, it left Saul without a true priest of the Lord.

That's a big deal. And also, according to chapter 23, verse 6, when Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, fled to David in Calah, that he went down with an ephod in his hand.

What does that mean? Well, the priestly ephod was used to discover God's will in given situations, to seek the will of God, the direction of God.

And so, think about this. The fact that David now had the priesthood on his side and Saul did not is significant.

[37 : 29] And the fact that David now had access to the will of God and Saul did not is significant. And it all reinforces the reality that Saul, as a result of his own actions, was now completely separated from God.

This is the worst of all of it. Completely separated from God, Saul's decisive punishment.
you