

David's Wilderness Experiences (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] 1 Samuel chapter 21.

Let's look at the first nine verses of chapter 21. Now David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech was afraid when he met David and said to him, Why are you alone? No one is with you. So David said to Ahimelech the priest, The king has ordered me on some business and said to me, Do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you, or what I have commanded you.

And I have directed my young men to such and such a place. Now therefore, what have you on hand? Give me five loaves of bread in my hand, or whatever can be found.

And the priest answered David and said, There is no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread. If the young men have at least kept themselves from women.

[1 : 26] Then David answered the priest and said to him, Truly, women have been kept from us about three days since I came out. And the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in effect common, even though it was consecrated in the vessel this day.

So the priest gave him holy bread. For there was no bread there, but the showbread, which had been taken from before the Lord, in order to put hot bread in its place on the day when it was taken away.

Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord, and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chief of the herdsmen who belonged to Saul.

And David said to Ahimelech, Is there not here on hand a spear or a sword? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.

So the priest said, The sword of Goliath, the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, there it is, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod.

[2 : 40] If you will take that, take it, for there is no other except that one here. And David said, There is none like it. Give it to me. All right, so that's as far, I think, as we'll get here tonight.

This actually is just the beginning of a really lengthy section of Scripture in 1 Samuel, or section or part of 1 Samuel, that really goes on for the next nine chapters, counting this chapter.

So that's a large part of 1 Samuel, and we could accurately call it, and so I'm going to call it David's wilderness experience, or experiences, I guess, because he had many of them during this time.

What we read here tonight, what I read here tonight, is just one, one of many experiences that David is going to have that will be recorded for us over the next nine chapters.

You see, Israel, Israel, and this, I think, is an interesting comparison to make. Israel, the people of Israel, had a wilderness experience.

[3 : 52] They did before they came out, or after they came out of Egypt, after the exodus of Egypt. They had a wilderness experience after leaving Egypt and its wicked, murderous king, the Pharaoh of Egypt.

And David now, David will have a wilderness experience for quite a lengthy time that we could say after his exodus, exodus from the household of Saul.

So after his exodus and his escape from the wicked, murderous king, king of Israel, which, of course, Saul.

And the parallel here, I think, naturally creates anticipation in the reader. I think that's the idea here. Because, you see, just as God judged Pharaoh delivering Israel out of his murderous hands or from his murderous intentions, God will eventually judge King Saul, delivering David once and for all from his murderous intentions.

You can kind of see the parallel there. And we could also say just as Israel went from their wilderness wanderings to the land God had repeatedly promised for them, in a similar way, David

too will go from his wilderness, kind of wilderness wanderings, his time of exile, eventually to his promised land, which will be kingship over Israel.

[5 : 40] God had promised him numerous times that he would be the king. And I think we could also draw another parallel here. God used the wilderness to prepare his people Israel for their promised land.

He used that time for time of preparation. Similarly, God will use the wilderness time for David to prepare him, to prepare him for his promise, the promise given to him, which again is kingship, kingship over Israel.

And so I think the writer of 1 Samuel is using this to prepare the reader. We know that this is happening to David and so we know out there in the near future certain things are going to happen just as God allowed Israel to have a time of wilderness experience, wilderness wanderings, because out in front of them is the promised land.

And it really is a principle, I think, that God often uses for all of his children. And so, you know, instead of thanking the Lord and getting all we can out of those wilderness experiences that God allows us to go through, we kind of bite, kick, and scream, and scratch, and complain, and we think, you know, God is a million miles away and how could God allow me to have this kind of time in my life?

I mean, I'm one of his children. I mean, how could God do this to me? And instead of actually embracing the reality that even in the wilderness we belong to him.

[7 : 27] And especially in the wilderness, God is preparing us for something. All right, so, David is on the run. That's what we have. I mean, that's what we looked at last time, a long time ago, whenever it was.

And now we're getting back to this. David flees. He's now in exile. And so, chapter 21 all the way through the end of chapter 29, we have David on the run.

David is a fugitive. David is Israel's most wanted. Though really, it's primarily King Saul who wants him. In fact, it's really unclear as to how much of this was known by the people of Israel.

that this hatred of Saul for David and the attempts of Saul upon David's life. Now, many didn't know it, but it's difficult to know, uncertain whether everybody knew this.

So, I guess I can't say that David was Israel's most wanted. He certainly was Saul's most wanted criminal in his mind. And he not only wanted to capture him, he wanted him dead.

[8 : 40] And really, next time, we're going to see just how serious Saul was about that and the tragic results of that, not for David, but for some of those that he came in contact with.

All right, now, looking at the text and looking not only what we're looking at tonight, but really what we'll see tonight and next Sunday night, we're going to see three things, actually.

And here's the first thing. David relied upon those who were devoted to the Lord, or in this case, a specific one who was devoted to the Lord.

So here it is in the short version. David relied upon the devoted. David relied upon the devoted.

Verse 1 begins this way, Now David came to Nob.

Interesting name for a town. I don't know that there are any names like that for towns in the United States. I mean, I've come across some pretty weird names for states or towns.

[9 : 47] I'm remembering one down in Texas. The name of the town was Cut and Shoot. That fits Texas, doesn't it? I don't know anything about the town or anything about the origin of the name, but Cut and Shoot is quite strange.

But Nob is unusual. Now over in Arkansas there is Bald Nob. Okay? So pretty close. I don't know if there's any correlation between Bald Nob and the town of Nob here in the Bible.

Probably not. But Nob was a real city. We even know where it was. It was a city kind of northwest of Jerusalem. Nob apparently had a significant number of the descendants of Aaron.

Aaron, that is Moses' brother. Aaron the priest, the first high priest. priest. And there were a number of descendants of Aaron in Nob.

That is a number of priests in Nob. In fact, a lot of priests in Nob. We're going to find out just how many when we get to chapter 22 and we discover what Saul did with those priests.

[10 : 53] And there were a bunch of them there. And it was at Nob where there was located a sacred kind of worship center. That's what we would call it today.

A sacred shrine to Yahweh worship in Nob. That's why there were so many priests there. It was also a city of refuge under the kingship of Saul.

And it was at Nob that a high priestly descendant of Aaron resided. Some would even say he was the high priest in this time. And his name was Ahimelech.

Ahimelech. And so in verse 1 the Bible says here that David came to Nob to Ahimelech. I mean he went there because of Ahimelech. The priest.

So he came to Nob to Ahimelech. Now David could have gone and quite naturally if you think about it especially as you go back in time here and discover the relationship between David and Samuel and on occasions earlier when Samuel protected David and was David's ally one might think that David would have gone to the home of Samuel to seek refuge from Saul to seek protection and safety and so forth.

[12:15] But of course that would have been the first place Saul would have looked when he would begin to pursue David. David could I guess could have hid out in seclusion found some place where you know he could make a good hideout from Saul and eventually he will do that actually for a time but the problem was he needed provision needed provision and first and not just provision as we discover in this story this part of the story tonight he needed some weapons he needed some protection and so that's why he went to Ahimelech so he turned then to a trusted servant of the Lord devoted worshipper of Yahweh devoted to his word Ahimelech Ahimelech the high priest so as we read on in the story we discover that Ahimelech is no fool he's pretty smart he knows something's not right here and so he would perhaps not have known that David had fled the household of Saul maybe that news had not arrived to him very likely had not so he didn't know that but he would know that something about this just doesn't smell right because here's

David he's all alone and so how does Ahimelech react well verse 1 again says and Ahimelech was afraid he was afraid when he met David now perhaps he if he had not heard and likely had not heard that David had just recently fled Saul's household going into exile but I think he probably had heard of Saul's displeasure toward David and perhaps maybe not to the point that Saul would have him killed murdered but he apparently knew something about this and that's why he was afraid because here's David David is here all alone and so he knew it would be unusual for David to come alone and not have an entourage with him in fact very likely David had visited Ahimelech before this was a familiar place

I mean after all there was a very important very key worship center there for Yahweh worship and Ahimelech was the high priest and David undoubtedly had been there before we know Saul had been there before and so David likely had accompanied Saul when Saul would visit Nob and so here's Ahimelech meeting with David David's all alone something not right about this and so he said to him why are you alone so he's doing a little interrogation we'll find out what's going on here why are you alone no one is with you not only are you here alone without Saul which would have been unusual to Ahimelech but you wouldn't even have anyone with you you're here all alone now how does David answer how does he answer Ahimelech answer his question and how he did I think is very interesting verse 2 look at that again so David said to

Ahimelech the king has ordered me on some business that's an interesting answer but that's not all he said he said to me that is the king said to me do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you that's pretty convenient I'm on the business of the king and the king commanded me not to tell anybody about it or what I've commanded you and I have directed my young men to such and such a place so I would normally have people with me but I have I have directed them to stay at a certain place right now I mean the name of the place not important you know that's my business and I'm not supposed to tell you this is how David answers and so is David lying perhaps he is seems certain that he is

I mean had Saul sent him there on business did David have anybody with him and they were just you know probably encamped outside the city no now he's going to group some people with him pretty soon but he's all by himself did Saul send him on business did Saul say you can't tell anybody this is this is a secret it's a state secret you can't tell anybody this is my command to you I mean certainly seems that he's lying and he may be lying to protect the him elect thought about that I mean the less a him elect knows about the truth the better for him right so he may be lying to protect a him elect from Saul he may be lying in order to get a him elect to give him what he needs

[17:53] I mean that would be logical as well right he needs food he needs some protection weapons and so you know tell this lie so that him elect will help me I mean that's what it seems like doesn't it yet perhaps this is not a lie in fact I might suggest to you that in a sense in a very real sense David is actually telling the truth now I can't say that this was David's intent he may have

been lying just to protect himself so I can't be dogmatic about this but I would remind you or have you notice that David did not specify which king sent him on this mission David may have conveniently omitted the name of this king his king so that

Ahimelech would naturally assume that he's talking about Saul but David didn't say Saul I just want you to think think logically about this Ahimelech would make the assumption but David didn't say that but David may have been referring to another king and he said what king would that be the rightful king of Israel who is Yahweh God Yahweh God in fact there's a reason why we could say that for a number of places in 1st Samuel as you think back and early on in the book really we can even go back into the time of the judges but in chapter 8 verse 7 1st Samuel the Lord said he said speaking of Israel he said they have rejected me that

I should not reign over them remember they wanted a king like all the other nations and and God said to Samuel don't don't don't be bent out of shape they're not rejecting you they're rejecting me that I should not reign over them kings reign this was not to be a monarchy it was a theocracy God is king in fact in chapter 12 verse 12 of 1st Samuel Samuel himself rebuked the people of Israel and he said you said to me no but a king shall reign over us them meaning an earthly!

king and Samuel said when the Lord your God was your king and there are many other references in 1st Samuel and again going back into Judges that speaks of Yahweh as king and this was the thinking of Israel up until the time that thinking began to change and the people of Israel began to look around at the other nations and they wanted a king like those other kings but prior to that it was understood that God is our king and so I think it's probably safe to say that safe to assume that David was speaking of that king his true king and his king had sent him on a mission and his king would not want him to tell anybody what that was and and so forth so you know you can say David was lying or bending the truth or omitting important facts in the truth which is still a lie right or David may have just been referring to the king and a king Yahweh king and it's also I think still safe to assume and this I think we can definitely say that David was trying to spare Ahimelech the full truth so that he spared from Saul's wrath now if you have read on into 1st Samuel you know how that worked out it didn't exactly work out David should you know David should not have counted on Saul doing what was fair and what was right and we'll look at that next time we get into chapter 22 okay it's a sad sad story all right so David must rely upon those who are devoted in Israel and in this particular instance he is relying upon the devotion of Ahimelech Ahimelech his devotion to the Lord that Ahimelech would do the right thing and then

[22 : 49] David asks Ahimelech for two things doesn't he we could define him this way provision and protection he asked him for provision and protection or the means of protection that is he asked for food and he asked for weapons those two things and he needed these things before he could go further in his plans that God is leading him into so verse 3 says now therefore what have you on hand I mean what do you got around here got anything in the cupboards got any food here and David says give me five loaves all I want is five loaves of bread give those five loaves of bread in my hand or whatever can be found whatever you have all right so I think David could pretty much count on Ahimelech giving him what he asked for when it comes to food because this would be the custom of the day in fact really it was the custom of most civilized people from this time period all the way up into the

New Testament still the custom of many cultures in our world today that if a traveler comes to your house and he needs food you are honor bound to give that traveler food even if that traveler is a stranger to you and so David knew that Ahimelech would do all that he could do to provide that food that he needed first of all because he knew Ahimelech I think you could count on that and then secondly because he was bound to duty bound honor according to his honor according to the culture but Ahimelech had a problem didn't he which seems quite strange to us that he didn't have any bread other than bread that had already been consecrated to the Lord and so that's what we have in verse four and the priest answered David and he said there is no common bread on hand but there is holy bread or uncommon bread or holy bread or sacred bread now the word common he said common bread word common is a

Hebrew word that usually refers to profane bread bread now that doesn't mean that the bread was wicked says that it was profane that it was defiled in any way not any reference to the quality of the bread or the spiritual makeup of the bread that if you were to eat it it would somehow be evil it would be sinful it would be it would corrupt it's not a reference to that it's just a reference to make a distinction between what's called holy bread or consecrated bread the common bread refers to

bread that could be eaten be given and eaten by non Levites or non priests that would be the common bread they didn't have any of that but they did have holy bread and what in the world is that well that's bread that had been consecrated to the Lord sacred bread that's bread according to Exodus chapter 25 verse 30 bread that was to be set daily on the table of show bread in the holy place in the tabernacle as part of the law of the tabernacle and every day they had to make fresh bread and place it on the table of show bread in the holy place remember in the tabernacle and then later in the temple you had the holy place incense altar of incense the golden lampstands the table of show bread and then the veil would be there to separate it from the holy of holies inside there would be the ark of the covenant all right so they had the table of show bread and that bread was to be placed there fresh every day hot out of the oven and then at the end of the day the next day that would be taken out and fresh bread would be put in now what would happen to that other bread the bread that they took out and replaced with fresh consecrated bread well that bread would be for the Levites for the priests to eat it was holy bread holy for them that is it was not to be given or eaten by non Levites and so it was sacred Leviticus chapter 24 and verse 9 says it shall be for Aaron and his sons and they shall eat it in a holy place for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute that means not only Aaron and his immediate sons but the generations that would follow that come out of Aaron this would be for the tribe of Levi Levi was the priestly tribe alright so that's the kind of bread they did have bread that was holy and it was that bread that Ahimelech had however there were specific laws that would allow a non [28 : 31] Levite to eat some of that bread they had to do certain things for one thing well actually in the first place they had to be in a certain condition that is if it meant to was necessary to preserve their lives then according to the law that bread could be given to a non Levite and other stipulations about their own cleanliness in the ceremonial sense alright so Ahimelech made that concession David was in need and so he made the concession but he also added to that if David would eat the bread in a Levite like way then he could have it not only David but his men see at this point Ahimelech believes that David has men encamped somewhere outside of

Nob he said they're in a certain place over there and Ahimelech believed him so he made that stipulation David and his men they must eat this bread in a Levite like way that's what he said in verse 4 but there is holy bread if the young men have at least kept themselves from women he's not talking about kept themselves from women in the sense of sexual immorality or fornication or anything like that he's talking about these men and their wives and because according to the law in Leviticus chapter 15 in verse 18 ritual cleanliness the ritual cleanliness laws related to sexual contact any sexual contact and especially that which was sanctified sanctioned by God between a husband and a wife but in order to eat this bread they must have been free or free of any kind of sexual contact so

David's response to this requirement is that that all lines up so we qualify or I qualify to have bread but his response is really kind of interesting if you look at verse 5 then David answered the priest and he said to him truly women have been kept from us about three days since I came out he's just telling the truth all right so qualifies there but then he goes on to say and the vessels of the young men are holy and the bread is in effect common even though it was sanctified in the vessel this day what world does that mean well actually it's a kind of complicated translation in fact in really in very real sense not a very good translation a more literal translation would be it may not help us any but here's a more literal translation he's saying that the vessels or the things belonging to the young men are holy that is they're sanctified even when it is a common journey and does it help you any a common or unholy journey let me read the and

I hate to say it but the NIV probably got it right more than any other translation you know I'm not a big fan of the NIV but that's okay here's how the NIV puts it the men's things are holy even on missions that are not holy like warfare it's understood here that David and his men and eventually he will have these men and warfare is their mission eventually to bring David to the very throne of Israel so what does he say he said the men's things are holy that is they're consecrated even on particular missions or endeavors that are not holy holy endeavors holy missions like war like battle now the meaning is this Israelite warfare when they go to battle

Israelite warfare is a task that should be performed only by consecrated servants of the Lord so you might remember David David when Israel was being taunted by Goliath and David said that he defied the armies of what the living God so in the mindset of David and he just actually he's just

saying to Ahimelech he's just repeating a kind of an axiom of life in Israel that God's soldiers God's army is sanctified even though they're going out to do unsanctified kind of work or common kind of work like warfare David when he did battle against Goliath himself he did so how in the name of the Lord Almighty so

[34 : 04] David just using this truth this axiom to answer Ahimelech in his requirement so that he can get the bread so after he says that Ahimelech gave David the bread that he asked for we have that verse six we don't need to read that again and then we have inserted here what really I think is the author's kind of foreshadowing of something that is going to shortly come it's really kind of interesting verse seven says now a certain man of the servants of Saul that ought to clue you into a potential problem right there there there a certain!

man of the servants of Saul was there that day detained before the Lord that is he is in some sense a prisoner there and his name was Doeg and Edomite the chief of the herdsmen who belonged to Saul all right so you just have that little insertion that little blurb about Doeg and it doesn't say anything else about him but if you think about it and you're reading along you say well there's a reason why that's inserted at this point because the author is preparing us for something some key thing that Doeg is going to do!

maybe in the near future and indeed he does now he's an Edomite back in chapter 14 Saul had fought against the Edomites Doeg may have been a captive may have been a captive or maybe he had been kind of a double agent a spy for Saul and the armies of Israel whatever did some kind of favor for Saul so he is in a sense a captive being held here you know maybe not so much imprisoned but he is held before the Lord here in the high priest house so Saul may have some use for him later and indeed he was useful to Saul in a most wicked way and we'll discover that in the next chapter it kind of ties in with the terrible thing that happened to

Ahimelech and all the priests there in Nob and I'll just go ahead and tell you it was all done at the hand of Doeg Doeg and so he's kind of introduced here and so the reference to him here in verse 8 is meant to kind of introduce him to the reader and then the author will bring him weapons protection something that he could use to protect himself he didn't have anything I mean he got out quickly and verse 8 says and David said to Ahimelech is there not here on hand a spear or sword for I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me because the king's business required haste I heard a preacher say that was one reason why a lot of preachers speed when they say well the Lord's business requires haste you know well anyway I never say that

I just come up with some other excuse for speeding you know when it happens my wife's not in here all right so he needs something needs some weaponry well what need do priests have for weapons they don't have any weapons they don't use weapons and so as it turns out there's only one weapon in the whole house the whole place and it's the sword of Goliath the sword of Goliath verse 9 so the priest said the sword of Goliath the Philistine whom you killed David in the valley of Elah there it is right over there wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod if you will take that if that will suffice take it for there is no other except that one here so they didn't have any other weapon other than that one sword the sword of Goliath well you know to whom did it belong the sword of Goliath belonged to

[38 : 41] David David was the rightful owner of it David had won it in battle do you remember the story David and Goliath and after Goliath has been felled with a single stone to his head you know of course the Lord defeated him for David David took Goliath's sword and cut off his head and then the Bible tells us in 1st Samuel 17 verse 54 that David took the sword and put it in his tent it was rightfully his he was the victor you know it it's a trophy which was the custom of the day still today in some places to take the enemy's weapon it's a trophy of victory this is what David did but now somehow we're not told how or when this happened but it went from

David's personal possession to the house of the tabernacle and it was kept there as an historical relic the sword that belonged to Goliath the one who was defeated and the Philistines defeated but now David needed it and David said there is none like it give it to me and so gave it to him there is none like it it is interesting an interesting thing that David said there there is none like this sword and I really think that David knew better than that and eventually would learn better because in 2 Samuel chapter 7 verse 22 David said something very similar and yet it was not in reference to a sword the

Bible says David said you are great oh Lord God for there is none like you very similar wording in fact in the English very similar in the Hebrew it's almost identical there is none like you and there is

no God besides you that's a great statement and David I think even knew better in this day that sword was not going to be his protection even though it was a great sword and you can imagine that it was a very big sword and we have Goliath's weaponry described for us you know the spear and you know how large it was and the head of the spear and his shield and his armor and everything about Goliath was huge nine foot tall giant you know he'd have to have a pretty good sized sword and he did none like his sword certainly so in that sense David is really saying the obvious later

David's son Solomon I think he learned from his father David he didn't learn enough from him but he learned something he said in 1 Kings 8 23!

O Lord the God of Israel there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath keeping covenant showing loving kindness to your servants who walk before you with all their hearts there's none like you David said there's none like you and though David is saying here there's no sword like this and indeed you know I think we could say that there was no better physical physical protection for David than Goliath's sword perhaps but the Lord is even is an even better protector perfect protector there is none like him so David relied upon the devoted next time we'll see two other things that will lead us all the way to I think verse 5 of chapter 22 David risked the dangerous it'll be the second thing we'll see first thing we'll see next time when he actually went and sought refuge in a

[43 : 10] Philistine city and then finally David rallied the discontented there were a number of discontented Israelites some of them mighty warriors and he rallied them and God used David and his leadership qualities to to form his own kind of personal army and these these men these great mighty men David's mighty men will stick with him all the way through even after he becomes king of Israel and so we'll see that next time Thank you.