

## Pastor's Bible Study

### Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study

Week Twenty-Six 1 Samuel 21 - 31

#### Review

Literary Period Covered: 1030 - 1010 B.C.E.

Review

## What's going to happen to David?

- David is a wanted felon on the run
- He's approximately 20 years old
- He will spend the next 10 years on the move
- What will he do?

#### Lecture Segment

#### **1 Samuel 21 - 31**

David is on the run from King Saul. He will have to take matters into his own hands.

#### **In Chapter 21:1–22:5 David's Deceptions at Nob and Gath**

At Nob he lied to the priest Ahimelech to save himself by receiving food [5 loaves of sanctified bread] and Goliath's sword (21:1–9). His deception will cost many innocents lives [because in his rush he will ignore Doeg the Edomite who is witnessing what David has done] (22:18–19).

David mistakenly thought he could find refuge as a mercenary soldier in the Philistine city Gath, but Achish the king discovered his identity. David pretended to be a madman to save himself (21:10–15). [But in the end David will become a mercenary soldier bringing together an army of 600 mercenaries who will follow him]

#### **Chapter 22:6–23 tells the story about Saul Murdering the LORD's Priests**

David hid in the wilderness of Adullam where he was joined by social outcasts like himself. He arranged for his family's care in Moab, and he hid in the forest of Hereth at the advice of the prophet Gad (22:1–5). David likely turned to Moab because of his ancestral linkage with Ruth [and Boaz], the Moabitess (Ruth 4:18–22), and because of Moab's hatred for Saul (compare 14:47).

Saul learned from Doeg, the Edomite, that David had received comfort from the priest Ahimelech (compare 21:1–9). Saul's paranoia led him to think that Ahimelech had conspired with David against him. The deranged Saul ordered the murder of the priests of the LORD! His guards refused to obey, however, because they would not harm the LORD's servants. Doeg, of Edomite descent, had no regard for the LORD and carried out the king's command. Only Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, escaped to David's camp. There he found safety under David's protection.

#### **We will skip past Chapter 23:1–29 where we see David Depend on the LORD.**

David's deception of Ahimelech had led to the death of the LORD's priests. From this tragic episode David learned to depend on the LORD's help to escape Saul. David turned to the

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priest Abiathar, who possessed the sacred ephod, to inquire of the LORD. He followed God's guidance to save the city Keilah from Philistine invaders (23:1–6). By inquiring of the LORD, he also escaped Saul at Keilah and fled successfully from place to place in the wilderness of Ziph (23:7–29). The author presents a striking contrast between Saul, who killed the servants of the LORD, and David, who honored them.

**In Chapter 24:1–22 we read about how David Spares Saul**  
Saul pursued David into the region of En Gedi.



There he went aside into one of the many caves nearby to relieve himself. [With his back towards the rear of the cave he faced his men to protect himself.] David and his men were hidden in the back of the same cave. His men urged him to kill the king, but David chose to trust God's providence. However, he quietly cut off the hem of Saul's garment. David later regretted doing it, however, because the hem was symbolic of Saul's position as the LORD's anointed (24:1–7). Once the king left, David called out to him and showed the hem as evidence of his innocent intentions toward the king. Saul openly admitted his sin against David and confessed with his own mouth that the LORD had chosen David to be king (24:8–22).

**We will not discuss in class Chapters 25 through 28 in class but the overviews will benefit when you chose to review a class in the future.**

#### **Chapter 25:1–44 tells the story of how David Spares Foolish Nabal**

The notice of Samuel's death is not incidental to the author (25:1). He shows how the people's love for Samuel's godly leadership continued with David as well.

David kindly protected the flocks of a wealthy herdsman named Nabal (Hebrew *fool*; compare 25:25). As a result, none of his flocks were stolen or lost to wild animals. It was not unreasonable then for David to ask Nabal to respond kindly to him. But Nabal angrily refused, and David threatened to kill him. The shepherds of Nabal, who had benefited from David's protection, entreated Abigail, Nabal's wife, to intercede. Abigail pleaded with David that the LORD's anointed had no need to avenge himself since the LORD would do so. David gratefully agreed and resisted the evil deed. Later, God struck Nabal dead (25:2–38). This event exemplifies the Old Testament understanding of God's sovereignty over all things. Everything happens as part of the outworking of God's will.

This famous incident involving Abigail led the author to list David's wives (25:39–44). He married Abigail from Carmel and Ahinoam from Jezreel. His first wife, Saul's daughter Michal, was given to another man (compare 18:27).

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#### **In Chapter 26:1–25 we see David Spare Saul Again – What happened to the promise Saul made at En Gedi to not pursue him anymore?**

The Ziphites feared David and urged the king to pursue him in their territories (compare 23:19–24). When David learned of Saul's arrival, he discovered the location of the camp. Abishai joined David in spying out the camp at night. They discovered Saul asleep with Abner resting nearby. Although Abishai interpreted the occasion as the LORD's opportunity for him to kill the king, David rebuked Abishai, pointing out that Saul was the LORD's anointed. Instead, David took a spear that was stuck in the ground at the king's head along with the king's water jug. David left without detection because the LORD had caused Saul to fall into a deep sleep (26:1–12).

David crossed to a distant hill and called out to awaken Abner. He challenged him to consider his lapse in protecting the king. When the king realized that David had taken the spear and jug, he regretted unjustly pursuing David. He believed that because David had spared the LORD's anointed that the LORD in turn would deliver David. Saul confessed a second time that David would triumph (26:13–25; compare 24:20).

Some scholars hold that this account is a retelling of how David spared Saul's life at En Gedi (1 Sam 24). While there are a number of similarities, David's different responses show that the two stories are distinct incidents. As a result of En Gedi and the encounter with Nabal, David realized that God would care for him. David left Judah for a life among the Philistines in order to avoid further contact with Saul.

#### **In Chapter 27:1–12 we see David Tricking the Philistines**

[David has been serving King Achish but feeding information to Jonathan. Here he is tasked to destroy Judah. He finds a way to trick the King into thinking he did what was asked. David is playing a very serious game that could lead to his death if found out]

David feared that any further encounters with Saul would lead to bloodshed. In the service of King Achish of Gath he would escape Saul's attention. David's troops were headquartered at Ziklag, where he raided the enemies of Judah. **He duped the Philistine king into thinking that he was attacking the towns of Judah.**

The passage does not condone David's deception of Achish; rather, the author includes this to show how God used David even in this situation to aid the covenant people. Also it continued the theme of how David outwitted the foolish Philistines (compare 21:10–15).

#### **In Chapter 28:1–25 we read about King Saul Consulting the Witch of Endor**

The Philistines threatened war in the Jezreel Valley. Out of fear Saul sought a word from the LORD. Ironically, Saul, who had once despised the LORD's will (14:18–19; 15:26), could not discover it now that he desperately needed it (compare 28:16). When God refused to answer Saul through legitimate means, Saul sought a spiritual medium (28:1–7).

By deceiving the witch at Endor, Saul convinced her to bring Samuel from the dead. Much to her surprise the appearance was a genuine one, and by it she discovered Saul's true identity. God intervened in an unprecedented way and actually sent Samuel to prophesy Saul's judgment (compare 15:27–29). Samuel condemned Saul to death because he "did not obey the LORD" (28:18). So great was Saul's despondency that he could not continue. At the urging of Saul's men and the sorceress, he took food to strengthen himself for his travel (28:8–25).

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The passage contrasts the true prophetic word of Samuel with Saul's attempt to consult the dead (compare Saul's condemnation in 1 Chr 10:13–14). The prophetic word would be fulfilled, and Saul could not hope to escape it.

**We begin our discussion again in Chapter 29:1–11. [How is David going to get out of leading the Philistines into battle against the Israelites? God Spares David through the fear of the Philistine commanders who will convince the King to turn David away.]**

This episode precedes the events in chapter 28 since the Philistines were gathered at Aphek (29:1) and then moved to Shunem in the Jezreel Valley (29:11; 28:4). This arrangement serves to heighten without interruption David's success against the LORD's enemies (continued in 1 Sam 30).

**The Philistines refused to include David in their battle against Israel. God used the discontent of the Philistines to spare David from fighting against his own people and jeopardizing, in their eyes, his place as the LORD's anointed (29:1–5). Achish apologetically dismissed David to Ziklag (29:6–11).**

**In Chapter 30:1–31 we see [David return to Ziklag to the families of his men. The capture of the families and their transport slavery and their ultimate rescue will strengthen David. God was on his side.]**

David and his men arrived in Ziklag, where they discovered the city burned and their families captured by raiding Amalekites. So distraught were the men that they threatened to stone David, but the LORD strengthened him (30:6). At the instruction of the LORD by the ephod of Abiathar, David pursued the Amalekites (30:1–8).

During the march, two hundred men remained behind because of exhaustion, but four hundred pressed ahead. With the aid of an Egyptian slave who was left behind by the Amalekites, David's men discovered their camp, overtook them, and retrieved all their possessions (30:9–20). David won the hearts of his men and the elders of Judah by sharing with them—even the two hundred who stayed behind—a portion of the booty taken from the Amalekites (30:21–31).

**In the closing Chapter we read about 31:1–13 Saul's Shameful End**

The final chapter resumes the account of the Philistine war (1 Sam 28–29). The Israelites were defeated and many killed on Mount Gilboa. The proud king died shamefully by ending his own life. His corpse was publicly abused by the Philistines. Three of Saul's sons were also killed in battle, preparing the way for David to be king (31:1–10).

The people of Jabesh Gilead remembered how Saul had delivered them from the Ammonites (compare 11:1–11). They journeyed all night to Beth Shan, where Saul's body had been impaled. They stole the body away and honorably buried Saul at Jabesh, where they mourned his death (31:11–13).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dockery, D. S., ed. (1992). [Holman Bible Handbook](#) (pp. 230–233). Holman Bible Publishers.

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**Conclusion**

The King is dead!

- With the death of Saul and his three sons
- The door is open for David to become King

**Enjoy your Summer Break**

**Questions for Reflection during the summer break**

1. We have journeyed through the ups and downs of the Israelite community. If you think about the Sheena what influence can godly parents have on the lives of their children?
2. God has many ways of accomplishing his plan for the people Israel. What are some of the different means the LORD uses to accomplish His purposes for His people?
3. What are the consequences of disobedience to the word of the LORD?
4. What are proper ways the people of God (Israel) may seek the LORD's will?

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