

We have been seeing how the life of David prefigures the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus.

You need to see that since King Jesus *is* the Lord’s anointed one (meshiach)--
then we need to see that loving David, protecting David, and making a covenant with David
is all about loving Jesus, delighting in Jesus, and protecting Jesus –
and by “protecting” I mean defending and maintaining *his kingdom* –
rather than seeking our own kingdoms!

This is what Jonathan has done.

Jonathan doesn’t care about *his* kingdom!
Jonathan wants to see the kingdom of God –
and so he loves David, and wants David to be king!

And if David signifies our Lord Jesus Christ –
then we should see that as we are made partakers in Christ –
we also are called to imitate him.

We are called out into the wilderness –
Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.

But we are also promised the same protection –
“I will be with you always – even to the end of the age.”

You may have complete confidence that the Lord will protect and guard you from all evil.
Nothing can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.
Not even death.

When we fear man – we do not fear God.
But when we fear God – we do not fear man!

The adventures of David fit a rather neat pattern.

After his grand introduction in his conquest over Goliath,
we have seen over the last three chapters
how Saul’s family (and all Israel) follow David.

Interesting, isn’t it, that Saul is the one father in 1 Samuel who produces faithful children!

Part of the lesson that God is teaching his people is that holiness and righteousness
are not inherited traits!

You must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!

It doesn’t just “happen” because you grow up in a Christian family.

Tonight we come to part two: The Messiah in Hiding,
in which David flees to Ahimelech the priest,

then to Achish the Philistine King of Gath,
and then to the cave of Adullam, to Moab and to the forest of Hereth.
These three flights are paralleled in chapters 22-23 by three betrayals:
the betrayal of the priests by Doeg,
the warning from God that the men of Keilah will betray David,
and the betrayal by the Ziphites.

The following section, The Adventures of David, Part 3, (in chapters 24-26)
will focus on the two times that David spares Saul's life,
sandwiched around the death of Samuel
and the lengthy narrative of how David married Abigail.

The final section of 1 Samuel will then deal with David among the Philistines,
and Saul among the dead.

But tonight is all about the Messiah in hiding.

The book of Samuel makes frequent reference to "the LORD's anointed"

Ha Meshiach Yahweh.

David often uses it to refer to Saul (as we'll see next time),
but it has an unmistakable connection to David as well,
because David is also the LORD's anointed.

He is the Messiah.

Once you have seen this,

it is easy to see parallels to Jesus as he teaches and makes disciples in Galilee—
hiding in the wilderness, gathering followers,
as he awaits God's timing.

(My hour has not yet come...)

Jesus recapitulates the history of Israel—
and since Israel has failed,

and God has anointed David to be the king who succeeds where Israel fails,
it is not surprising to see David himself recapitulating the history of Israel.

David must wander in the wilderness (as Israel had done, and as Jesus would do),

and wait for the LORD's appointed time.

The new feature is the feature of betrayal.

This wasn't as much of an issue for Israel in the wilderness,
because their treason arose from within.

But David is not only supposed to succeed where Israel failed,
but he is to lead Israel back into the right way—

and not surprisingly, not all Israel will be entirely eager to follow!

The LORD's anointed—the Messiah—has no place to lay his head,

and worse, he will be betrayed even by those whom he has delivered from their enemies!

1. David Flees to the Priests (21:1-9)

Then David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech came to meet David, trembling, and said to him, “Why are you alone, and no one with you?”² And David said to Ahimelech the priest, “The king has charged me with a matter and said to me, ‘Let no one know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.’ I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place.³ Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here.”⁴ And the priest answered David, “I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread—if the young men have kept themselves from women.”⁵ And David answered the priest, “Truly women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition. The vessels of the young men are holy even when it is an ordinary journey. How much more today will their vessels be holy?”⁶ So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the LORD, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.⁷ Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD. His name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul’s herdsmen.

Things start out well.

David left Jonathan in the field,
and went to Nob, where Ahimelech the priest lived.

And David told Ahimelech that he was on a secret mission from Saul.

There are two questions that arise here.

First, David deceives Ahimelech.

The text does not comment on the wisdom or folly of these sorts of actions –
but the consequences of these actions provide some measure of evaluation.

When Jonathan deceived his father in order to protect David from death,
the result was life and blessing.

But now David’s deceit of Ahimelech seems much less appropriate.

David may be trying to protect Ahimelech from complicity in his flight –
but such efforts prove futile.

And at the end of the story, David seems to acknowledge that this was a bad idea.

Second, the more egregious action is when Ahimelech offers holy to bread to David
(bread which only the priests were to eat).

Of course, Ahimelech is the grandson of Phineas (the worthless son of Eli)--
so you might not expect great fidelity to the law from him!

But when David asked for bread,

Ahimelech says that the only bread available is the holy Bread of the Presence,
but offers it on condition that the men have kept themselves from women

(as we saw this morning, according to Leviticus,
any sexual intercourse rendered a man unclean until sundown).

When David refers to their “vessels” – he’s using a term
that would ordinarily refer to their equipment
(the sorts of things you would take on a journey – or expedition).
In that way, it’s a lot like English.
We use euphemisms to speak of people’s “equipment”!

But why does Ahimelech offer the holy bread to David?

Earlier this year we went through the book of Leviticus – and Leviticus 24:5-9 is very clear:
this bread is for Aaron and his sons to eat.
It is not for the king, nor is it for “the young men” that David was going to meet.
It is for the priests.

Leviticus 24:9 says,
“it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place,
since it is for him a most holy portion out of the LORD’s food offerings,
a perpetual due.”

In other words, it was not “lawful” for David to eat this bread.

And yet Jesus says that Ahimelech did what was right!

And David was not guilty of profaning the holy bread.

In Matthew 12:3, after the Pharisees have accused his disciples
of doing “what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath” by plucking grain on the Sabbath,
Jesus says,

“Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him:
how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence,
which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him,
but only for the priests?”

Let’s be clear about what Jesus is saying:

when he says “it was not lawful” for David to eat the bread of the Presence,
that is *not* the same thing as saying that it was sinful!

After all, Jesus’s *point* in Matthew 12 is his conclusion:

“if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,
you would not have condemned the *guiltless*.”

For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

Jesus is saying that his disciples are guiltless.

Jesus is saying that David and Ahimelech were guiltless.

Even though they are doing things that are “not lawful.”

What does this mean?

It means that the law was never intended to be an *exhaustive* rule.

The law stated that the bread of the Presence was for the priests.

The law *never* stated that the priests could not show hospitality!

Sure, it may be that the priests would ordinarily have ordinary bread for guests –
but in the emergency situation that presented itself,
Ahimelech acted with *mercy*.

In Matthew 12 Jesus uses another example as well:

He says that the priests profane the Sabbath (by doing their ordinary work)
and yet are guiltless.

Even as the work of worship is proper activity for the Sabbath,
so also nourishing the Lord’s anointed and his people
is the proper function of the holy bread.

If we are so focused on “following rules” that we lose sight of mercy,
then we have lost sight of the purpose of the Law!

At this point we hear that Doeg the Edomite was present –
but nothing more is said of him until the middle of the next chapter.

There are three things said about Doeg:

- 1) He is an Edomite (and David’s great-grandmother was a Moabite)
- 2) He is the chief of Saul’s herdsmen (David had been a shepherd)
- 3) And he was “detained before the LORD” – doubtless some sort of uncleanness.
(while David professes to be holy).

Because rather than go straight to the sequel of this story,
we must first establish David’s flight pattern!

⁸ Then David said to Ahimelech, “Then have you not here a spear or a sword at hand? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king’s business required haste.” ⁹ And the priest said, “The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you struck down in the Valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it, for there is none but that here.” And David said, “There is none like that; give it to me.”

And, with the sword of Goliath David fled to Achish, the king of Gath.
This may not have been so smart!

2. David Flees to Gath (21:10-15)

¹⁰ And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish the king of Gath.

Gath was one of the five cities of the Philistines,
and Goliath is also known as “Goliath of Gath.”
So for Goliath’s killer to come to Goliath’s home with Goliath’s sword,
may not appear to be one of David’s most brilliant moves.

We are not told why – but in verse 14, Achish blames his servants for bringing David to him.
So this may be an early indication of a certain “pro-David” sentiment in Gath.
We’ll hear later of many Gittites following David –
so it may well be that certain honorable Gittites had remembered Goliath’s challenge,
and considered themselves honor-bound to seek David’s good.

Listen to what the servants of Achish say to him:

¹¹ And the servants of Achish said to him, “Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, ‘Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands’?”

We often think of this as an accusation against David –
but what if they are saying to Achish:
“Here is a challenger to Saul’s throne!
If we ally with David, we could get rid of Saul!”

In other words, the Gittites are not *hostile* to David!
They are potentially seeking an alliance!

And that scares David more than hostility!

¹² And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

Because David does not wish to ally with the Philistines!
He came here for refuge – but he *will not* fight against the Lord’s Anointed!

So what do you do when you realize that your “bright idea” has got you in trouble?!
Act like a madman!

¹³ So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard. ¹⁴ Then Achish said to his servants, “Behold, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me? ¹⁵ Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?”

Psalm 34 reflects on this experience.

Psalm 34 praises God because “I sought the LORD and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.”

Psalm 34 also says, “his praise shall forever be in my mouth” –
and the phrase “made marks on the doors of the gate”
may suggest that David was chewing on the gate!
“his praise shall forever be in my mouth –
even when I am chewing on the gates of Gath!”

David may have delivered the performance of a lifetime
when he persuaded Achish to declare him insane,
but David recognized that it was God who delivered him.

You see here a very clear statement of the importance of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.
If David sits around and says, “Well, God will save me” –
then he’d be dead by now!
David needs to be quick-minded – but also humble-hearted.

It is not David’s job to find allies and overthrow Saul.
David’s job is deny himself, take up his cross, and (well) follow Jesus in advance!

Psalm 34 is also very explicitly a Psalm of the cross:
verse 20 is quoted in John 19:36
“He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken.”

It is not just my imagination that connects the sufferings of David with the sufferings of Jesus:
John saw it first!
John saw that what David experienced at Gath prefigured the cross.

And before all of that was God’s imagination,
as he laid out the history of redemption.

But now is not the time for the crowds to say “crucify him!”
And so the Messiah is brought through trial and tribulation out of the hands of his enemies.
And so David escaped.
David, like the ark of the covenant,
has passed through Gath in triumph.
Remember that!
The ark of the covenant had been captured and sent to Gath,
where it destroyed the Philistines.
Now David, the slayer of Gath’s mighty warrior,
has passed through Gath unscathed as well!

What is the lesson for us?

You cannot prostitute the kingdom of God to the agendas of the nations.
The gospel of the kingdom cannot be made to serve some other cause.

Rather, all other causes – all other agendas –
need to bow the knee to the King!

And that's what we start to see in chapter 22:

3. David Flees to the Cave – to the Stronghold – and to the Forest (22:1-5)

22 David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. ² And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became commander over them. And there were with him about four hundred men.

Then David escaped to the Cave of Adullam.

Adullam is in Judah,
not far from Bethlehem.

And the whole area is pocked with caves.

And there at the Cave of Adullam David was joined by his father's house
(no doubt they were afraid of what Saul would do to them),
along with “everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt,
and everyone who was bitter in soul.” (22:2)

This is sometimes used to point to Saul's failure as a king.

But if only 400 men were unhappy with Saul
(and I should point out that the text nowhere blames Saul for their misfortune),
then Saul's reign must have been pretty decent for the Israelites.

Older commentators often worked hard to demonstrate that these 400 men were respectable,
and not a band of brigands.

But I am inclined to point out that these were the “down and out”
just as Jesus called the “down and out” to himself.

God uses the foolish things to shame the wise!

Recent events all over the world have perhaps reminded us
that what the ruling elite call “brigands” may well be “decent folk”
who have been driven to despair.

It is worth noting that this group also includes David's family
(one of the leading families of Bethlehem),
along with the prophet Gad—and at about that time the lone surviving priest,
Abiathar, also joins them.

So it was not *merely* the riff-raff who fled to David!

But David's kingdom has a place for the riff-raff!

Just like Jesus' kingdom has a place for prostitutes and tax collectors...

³ *And David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab. And he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother stay with you, till I know what God will do for me."* ⁴ *And he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.* ⁵ *Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah."* So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.

And David went to Mizpeh of Moab and asked the king of Moab to shelter his parents
"Till I know what God will do for me."

Why is this significant?

David's great-grandmother was a Moabitess named Ruth.

In other words, she was Jesse's grandmother.

Just as Saul's story connects to his great-great-grandmother's city of Jabesh-Gilead,
so also David's connects to Moab.

Think back to Elimelech and Naomi – fleeing Bethlehem because of famine.

In the kind providence of God,

even their fearfulness and straying was woven back into the tapestry of life.

Little did Naomi know that her grandson, Jesse, would find refuge in Moab.

We rarely get to know how our decisions affect future generations!

But you can trust God to work *all things* together for good

for those who love him – for those who are called according to his purpose.

Even your foolishness – even your fearfulness – can be used by God!

But at the same time – what was it that enabled their sojourn in Moab to bless Jesse and David?

Naomi's repentance!

Repentance and return from exile is the foundation of God's kingdom!

But the prophet Gad warned David not to remain in the stronghold (probably Mizpeh),
and so David departed and went into the forest of Hereth
(probably the region around the caves of Adullam).

David is looking for a place where he can be still – and wait upon the LORD.

Here in central Judah,

David had the best chance to avoid both Saul and the Philistines.

So long as no one rats him out!

But chapters 22-23 tell us that rats were plenty common in the Messiah's day!

4. Doeg Betrays the Priests (22:6-23)

⁶ *Now Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men who were with him. Saul was sitting at*

Gibeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him. ⁷ And Saul said to his servants who stood about him, “Hear now, people of Benjamin; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, ⁸ that all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day.”

First we have the murderous Doeg the Edomite.

He had been in Nob on the day that David came there,
“detained before the LORD” (no doubt he was unclean in some way) (21:7).

When Saul hears news that the young upstart is in the forest of Hereth,
gathering a band of malcontents,
he does what any decent king would do.
He sets out to crush the rebellion before it gets too big.

But Saul starts by berating his servants—those from his own tribe of Benjamin:

*Hear now, people of Benjamin;
will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards,
will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds,
that all of you have conspired against me?
No one discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse.
None of you is sorry for me or discloses to me
that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait as at this day.*

You can see what Saul is thinking.

Saul thinks that David is preparing an assault to try to take the throne.

But even so, no one answers except Doeg the Edomite.

⁹ *Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who stood by the servants of Saul, “I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, ¹⁰ and he inquired of the LORD for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.”*

A foreigner—a son of the rejected Esau—takes the side of the rejected Saul.
 (“Jacob have I loved, but Esau I hated”)

And when Doeg tells Saul what the priests had done for David,

Saul summons the priests and demands an explanation for their *conspiracy* against him:

¹¹ *Then the king sent to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests who were at Nob, and all of them came to the king. ¹² And Saul said, “Hear now, son of Ahitub.” And he answered, “Here I am, my lord.” ¹³ And 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 God for him, so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?”¹⁴ Then Ahimelech answered the king, “And who among all your servants is so faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law, and captain over your bodyguard, and honored in your house?¹⁵ Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? No! Let not the king impute anything to his servant or to all the house of my father, for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little.”¹⁶ And the king said, “You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house.”

In verse 13, he says:

*why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse,
in that you have given him bread and sword and have inquired of God for him,
so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as at this day? (22:13)*

Ahimelech’s reply demonstrates that there was no conspiracy.

Now we can understand why David deceived Ahimelech.

If he had spoken honestly to Ahimelech,

then Ahimelech would have been put into the awkward position
of having to choose between David and Saul.

David was trying to protect Ahimelech—

but even his best efforts failed.

Convinced that everyone is against him, Saul refuses to believe Ahimelech,
and he orders his guard to kill the priests.

¹⁷ And the king said to the guard who stood about him, “Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because their hand also is with David, and they knew that he fled and did not disclose it to me.” But the servants of the king would not put out their hand to strike the priests of the LORD.¹⁸ Then the king said to Doeg, “You turn and strike the priests.” And Doeg the Edomite turned and struck down the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five persons who wore the linen ephod.¹⁹ And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword; both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep, he put to the sword.

But they are good Israelites—

and whatever faults they may have,

they know better than to strike down the priests of the LORD!

So Saul said to Doeg—you do it!

And so Doeg struck down 85 priests (those who wore the ephod),

slaughtering the whole city of Nob,

both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep (22:19).

Saul had failed to devote the Amalekites to destruction,

but he now devotes the priests of Yahweh to destruction!

And while this is properly viewed as a horrible crime,

it is also the fulfillment of what God had said to Eli,
that his household would be cut off.

The rejected king renders judgment upon the rejected priest by the hand of the rejected son—
Doeg the Edomite.

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

²¹ *And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. ²² And David said to Abiathar, “I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house. ²³ Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping.”*

And so the last heir of Eli, Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, fled to David,
and David acknowledges that he was indeed the occasion of the death of Ahimelech's house.

There is a difference between *causing* trouble – and being the *occasion* of trouble.
David did not cause the death of the priests – he is not guilty of their death –
and yet he recognizes that his visit was the occasion for Doeg and Saul.

Perhaps if he had been truthful with Ahimelech, the priests would have been more careful?
(If you are going to involve someone in a dangerous plan of yours,
it would be prudent to inform them so that they can be aware of the risks they are taking!)

But at any rate,
David takes upon himself the obligation of protecting the last priest of the house of Eli.

Brothers and sisters,
if we have paid attention even slightly to what God has revealed in David,
and then, far more clearly in Jesus (!)
we should be fearless.

What can separate us from the love of God in the Messiah?
If God brought Jesus through suffering to glory,
and has now made us partakers with Jesus,
then why should cross or trial grieve me?