

# He's Got the Whole World in His Hands (1 Samuel 23)

## 1. David's Inquiries (v.1-14)

- While in the forest of Horeth (22:5), David is informed that the Philistines are raiding the threshing floors of Keilah (three miles from the Cave of Adullam and ten miles from the city of Gath).
- Threshing floors were typically storage areas of wheat, barley, and other grains following the spring and summer harvests. They were not well-defended and often looted by the enemies (Judg. 6:6; 2 Kgs. 6:27; Joel 2:24). The Philistines brought livestock with them to haul away the stolen grain (v.5).

### Inquiry #1 (without the ephod (v.1-5)):

- David inquires of the LORD without the aid of the ark or breastplate of the high priest (Urim and Thummim). Saul had relied on a medium between him and God, but not David. David inquired of the LORD (twice), and the LORD spoke back, like He did with Moses (Deut. 4:12) and Samuel (1 Sam. 3:4).
- The narrator provides no details to the vehicle, means, or method of inquiry. We are only informed that the LORD spoke to David directly.
- David is unsure whether he should insert himself at Keilah, since both he and his men are outlaws. After inquiring of the LORD the first time, the LORD commanded David to attack (v.2). David's men are perhaps skeptical of this new inquiry. They are also afraid of Saul and even more afraid of the Philistines (v.3). David inquired again, and the LORD reassured David and his men that He would hand the Philistines over to them. David and his men delivered the people of Keilah and took the livestock of the Philistines.
- Unlike Saul, who cannot inquire of the LORD despite having the ark, high priest, and ephod (14:18-20, 36-37, 41-42), the LORD answers David directly.

### Inquiry #2 (with the ephod (v.6-13)):

- Abiathar joins David after he saved the city of Keilah (v.6). Abiathar escaped from Nob with the high priest's ephod (21:9; 22:9) during Doeg's massacre (22:18-19).
- All priests wore an ephod called a "linen ephod" but the high priest's ephod was a more elaborate affair (Ex. 28:6-14; 39:2-7). Attached to this ephod was the breast piece, which contained the Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8).
- This special ephod was associated with receiving revelation from God (Numb. 27:21; 1 Sam. 28:6; Ez. 2:63; Neh. 7:65).
- Saul is somehow informed that David is within the walls (gates) at Keilah.
- David consults the ephod (Urim and Thummim) and is informed that Saul will destroy the city on David's account. Additionally, the people of Keilah will turn David over to Saul once he arrives. David departs for three reasons; he wants to protect his own men, himself, and the people of Keilah from Saul.

Previously, Saul would muster his troops against the foreign aggressors (1 Samuel 11, 15). Now, he wants to attack his most faithful servant who has just delivered the nation from the Philistines. Saul's obsession with David has taken precedence over his responsibilities as king.

Instead of rejoicing with David about the victory at Keilah against the Philistines, Saul realizes a tactical advantage over David; he is walled in and has no way of escape.

## **2. David's Friend (v.16-18)**

- Discouraged, tired, and fearful, David resigns with his band of 600 companions to the wilderness of Ziph (Judah).
- Despite Saul's inability to find him, Jonathan does. This is the last time that Jonathan and David will see one another before Jonathan's death at the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam. 31 - 2 Sam. 1).
- Jonathan did more than just visit David; he strengthened David, or "placed David's hand in God's hand." While Jonathan encouraged David not to be afraid, he also reminded him of God's promise: David will not die, but instead be king (v.17).
- The reader is explicitly informed that Saul knows David is to be king. Previously, it was implicit (20:30-31).
- Jonathan avoided the sin of empathy. Instead of suffering with David (empathy), Jonathan suffered alongside David (sympathy). Jonathan acknowledged David's difficulty, yet was able to point David to the LORD's promises.
- He initiates a third covenant with David (18:1-4; 20:16-17, 42). This covenant now includes Jonathan serving David once he becomes king.

## **3. David's Trials and Deliverance (v.3, 12, 19-24, 27)**

- After rescuing the town of Keilah and fleeing to the wilderness of Ziph, the Ziphites were simultaneously undercutting David. They reported to Saul about David's whereabouts.
- We are not sure why they would betray their own tribe. They may have feared Saul, or perhaps there was a falling-out with David. The Ziphites were Judahites associated with the family of Caleb (1 Chron. 2:42) and inherited Bethlehem (1 Chron. 2:51). Later in the narrative, Nabal, a Calebite, is going to cause trouble for David.
- As Jonathan strengthens David in the LORD, new enemies emerge; the Ziphites are conspiring against David secretly, informing Saul of his whereabouts (v.19-24). The Ziphites provide detailed information to David's whereabouts.
- While David and Saul have their own human networking system (v.1, 7, 13, 19, 25, 27), David's apparatus is superior; the LORD is on his side, which is evident through the mediating offices of the prophet and high priest (22:5, 20-23; 23:6). God's hand is with David (v.4, 6, 7, 12, 14, 16, 17, 20).
- While Saul is the destroyer of Israel at Gibeah and Nob (22:16-19), David is the Savior of Israel at Keilah (23:1-5). Saul complains that no one discloses anything to him (22:7-8), yet God discloses to David everything necessary through the prophet, Gad, and high priest, Abiathar (22:5; 23:2-4, 10-12). Saul's only loyal supporter is Doeg, the Edomite, while David's loyal supporter is Jonathan, the king's son, who has established three covenants with him (18:1-4; 20:16-17, 42; 23:18). Previously, the Philistines were David's enemies, and now the LORD has used the pressure of the Philistines to deliver David from Saul (v.27-28).