

Lesson 14: First Samuel 22:3–23:13

4 David in the Stronghold

Read First Samuel 22:3-5.

This picture opens with a brief conversation between David and the king of Moab, sandwiched between two narrator's comments. So we have a mini-chiastic structure (ABA). The final verse is part instruction from the prophet Gad and part narrator's comment that ends the sequence with a departure statement.

1. Why does David take his parents to Moab?

1 2 / 4 Contrast: Deceit versus truth and transparency

2. How do David's words/actions now compare to his previous attempts to seek refuge?

What changed David's behavior? Something happened in the cave of Adullam. We know that God brought people to David to minister to him and renew his purpose and focus. But what about David's thought life? How did that change? A number of Psalms come out of this episode in David's life that give us a glimpse of his emotions and reflections.

Psalms 34 – "A Psalm of David when he pretended madness before Abimelech [Achish], who drove him away, and he departed."

Psalms 56 – "A Michtam of David when the Philistines captured him in Gath."

Psalms 57 – "A Michtam of David when he fled from Saul into the cave."

Psalms 142 – "A Contemplation of David. A Prayer when he was in the cave."

Question for Reflection

Endurance tests are part of pursuing the crown/reward, and one of those endurance tests is how we react in a crisis. Our actions and reactions reveal the training of our minds and a lot about how we view God and are aligned with God's vision and values. We can stumble when troubles break over us unexpectedly.

- Fear was driving David's decisions at first. How did David deal with his fear?
- In his psalms, David dwelt heavily on praising God. How does praising God in the midst of crisis help us?
- When crises happen in your life, do you seek time alone to reflect and pray? Do you make an effort to give God praise and thanks in spite of your circumstances?

3. What/where is the Stronghold?

4. What do we know about the prophet Gad?

5 Saul Kills the Priesthood
Read First Samuel 22:6-23.

This picture now segue abruptly away from David to focus wholly on Saul. The picture opens with a narrator’s comment and ends at verse 19 with another narrator’s comment, but then there is that open-ended comment in verses 20-23 that bridges this picture with the next.

There are three dialogues arranged in a chiasmic structure around Saul’s address to Ahimelech:

- A Conversation 1: Saul addresses his servants first, then Doeg responds.
- B Conversation 2: Saul addresses Ahimelech.
- A Conversation 3: Saul addresses his servants again, but it’s Doeg who responds.

There is a fourth conversation between Abiathar and David. It is a reaction to Saul’s actions and part of that picture, but it serves more as a lead in to the next picture.

Conversation 1: Saul addresses his servants (v6-10)

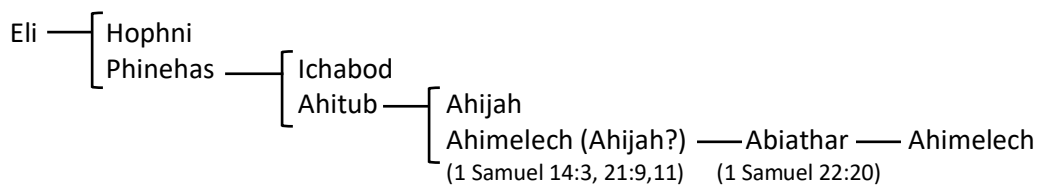
5. Where is Saul? (v6)

6. What are Saul’s grievances? (v7-8)

7. What is Doeg’s testimony? (v9-10)

8. What more do we find out about Ahimelech now?

When Ahimelech was mentioned last week in Chapter 21, he was just called Ahimelech the priest without any more information than that. Now his lineage is mentioned, which connects him with the cursed line of Eli. Being the son of Ahitub makes Ahimelech the great-grandson of Eli.



Back in Chapter 14, we see Ahijah, the son of Ahitub, and now in Chapter 22 we see Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub. The text doesn't tell us what the relationship is between Ahimelech and Ahijah, or how much time has elapsed between the two chapters. He is either the brother to Ahijah, the son of Ahijah, or they may be the same man whose name has been changed to reinforce the picture of what is happening here in Chapter 22. (Name changes like this aren't unusual. Gideon was alternately called Jerubbaal for picture purposes.)

If the name has been changed to reflect this picture, then let's consider the meanings behind the names:

Ahijah means "brother of God."

Ahimelech means "brother of the king."

The difference in the names reflects a difference in loyalty. Where the priest should be aligned with God, his name now identifies him and aligns him with the king who has rejected God. But now the priesthood's loyalty to the king is under suspicion.

There are right and wrong kings with whom to align yourself when trying to keep the crown to which you have been anointed. This is part of the endurance test not just of a king but a royal priesthood.

Saul calls Ahimelech and the priests from Nob to him and accuses them of conspiring with David.

Conversation 2: Saul addresses Ahimelech (v11-16)

9. What are Saul's charges against Ahimelech? (v13)

10. What is Ahimelech's defense against Saul's charges? (v14-15)

11. What is Ahimelech's sin in Saul's eyes?

Conversation 3: Saul addresses his servants (v17-19)

12. Who gets caught in the massacre? (v18-19)

13. Why didn't the people of Israel intervene to save the priests?

Conversation 4: Abiathar's Report, David's Response (v20-23)

14. What is David's response to Abiathar's news? (v22)

15. Did David's deception of Ahimelech cause of the massacre?

16. Would it have mattered if David had inquired of the LORD instead of taking the sword?

17. Was it necessary for David to lie to Ahimelech?

18. Why did God arrange for Doeg to witness David's actions?

Question for Reflection

When you are faced with the temptation to lie about something, reflect for a moment before you speak.

- Why do you feel the need to lie (or omit the truth)?
- Which is of more value? Righteousness and a clear conscience before God or basic needs such as food, shelter, safety, medicine, etc.?

6 The Battle of Keilah

Read First Samuel 23:1-13.

The Battle of Keilah is divided into three main sections. Again, it is arranged in a chiastic structure (ABA).

- A David saves Keilah from the Philistines (v1-6)
- B Saul's plot to capture David (v7-8)
- A David escapes and saves Keilah from Saul (v9-12)

Note that the chapter begins with a dialogue and not a narrator's comment that would indicate the start of a new picture. This chapter is part of the picture with the previous chapter. The picture ends with a narrator's note at the end of the chapter.

The narrative moves the action with someone being told something by an unknown party.

"Then they told David" (v1) "And Saul was told" (v7) "When David knew" (v9) "Then it was told to Saul" (v13)

That kind of repetition helps establish the structure.

David Saves Keilah from the Philistines (v1-6)

19. What do we know about the Philistine attack? (v1)

20. What do we know about Keilah?

21. Why note that Abiathar carried away the ephod in verse 6?

Saul's Plot to Capture David (v7-8)

Verses 7-8 have a tight chiasmic structure. Saul heard the news. Saul interpreted the news. Saul acted on the news. Saul's interpretation is the point of the chiasm.

22. How does Saul interpret the news of David's location? (v7)

23. Saul plans to besiege the city. Who else will this affect besides David and his men?

David Escapes and saves Keilah from Saul (v9-13)

24. How do David and his men escape?

Note, the rhythm in this section is similar to the beginning, except that we don't have David's men in the dialogue. David asks and the LORD answers. David asks and the LORD answers. Then David and his men act. There is no balking on the part of David's men this time.

The repetition in the text seems belabored, but it is belabored to make a point. Twice David faced a battle, both times in an effort to save Keilah. That is his motivation. Each time he inquired of the LORD twice, and twice he succeeded by following the LORD's word. The repetition creates a symmetry with the first section, but also an emphasis on the fact that David is pursuing a reward correctly and for the right reason—to save God's people.

Saul, by contrast, only wants to kill David and destroy Keilah. He doesn't inquire of the LORD at all but declares the LORD's intent to his men based on his own interpretation of events, saying "God has delivered him into my hand . . ." But God did not. Saul's effort is thwarted.

Application

In this passage, we are given two obvious examples of how to fight a good fight. David and Saul are pursuing two different rewards, and they have different reasons for pursuing those rewards.

- What are the rewards?
- What are the ways they go about it?
- Saul interpreted what he considered to be a fortuitous turn of events to be God's will, and he let that belief drive his actions. Do we ever do that? When things are going our way and we are presented with a sudden opportunity that seems good to us, do we just chalk it up to God's will or do we actually take time to ask Him if it is His will?
- What is the benefit of inquiring of the LORD?