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1 Samuel 20–21 | “The Flights of David”

I. THE COVENANT BETWEEN DAVID AND JONATHAN. (20)

A. (v. 1)

1. **“And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?”**

a. *“David fled from Naioth in Ramah”*

1) Poor guy! David has been going through it:

a) Drafted into the military. (18:2)

b) Promoted to lead the whole military. (18:5)

c) Avoided being killed by his mentor, King Saul. (18:10-11)

d) Demoted in rank. (18:13)

i. He basically went from being *the Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (18:5) down to a *Lieutenant Colonel* (18:13).

e) Lost his first fiancé. (18:19)

f) His father-in-law doesn't like him (18:29) and throws javelins at him while he's playing his guitar (18:11; 19:9-10).

g) Forced to leave his career. (19:10)

h) Lost his wife. (19:11-17)

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i) Focus of manhunt by government agents as an enemy combatant, and under threat of of a *targeted killing*¹. (19:20-22)

j) Being a musician, I wonder if David wrote any Country Songs!! 🤠🎸

2) I would be having a conversation with the Lord: “Lord, I thought you anointed me to be the next king of Israel! I thought there was a calling on my life! Why are all these things happening???”

3) **KEY:** Just because things aren’t looking good doesn’t mean that God has set you aside! He’s working out His plan exactly how it’s supposed to be!

b. *“came and said before Jonathan”*

1) Since Saul is held up in Ramah by the Spirit of God, David comes back to Gibeah where Jonathan is to talk with him.

B. (v. 2)

1. ***“And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so.”***

a. At this point, Jonathan believes that the reconciliation earlier (19:7) was good and permanent, and he

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Targeted_killing

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assumes that if Saul was going to kill David, he would have mentioned it by now.

C. (v. 3)

1. “...*there is but a step between me and death.*”

- a. Eternity is much closer than any of us realize. We are more frail than we often think, and in reality, we are one step from death.
- b. When we’re younger, we do not think much about death, and we have that feeling of immortality. Death seems to be so far down the road. Yet, as we get older, we begin to realize our mortality, but still think of death as being down the road a little ways.
- c. The truth of the matter is that none of us know just when death is going to come knocking at our door!
 - 1) Cf. [Luke 12:13-21](#) - “*And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many*

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years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

- d. There is coming a day when we will take that step into eternity.
- 1) Cf. **Psalm 39:5** - *“Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.”*
 - 2) Cf. **Psalm 90:12** - *Moses wrote, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”*
 - 3) Cf. **Psalm 102:11** - *“My days are like a shadow that inclineth; and I am withered like grass.”*
 - 4) Cf. **Proverbs 27:1** - *“Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”*
 - 5) Cf. **Daniel 5:23** - *Daniel warned Belshazzar and said, “But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:”*

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- 6) Cf. [Luke 12:42-48](#) - *“And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”*
- 7) Cf. [Hebrews 9:27](#) - *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”*
- 8) Cf. [James 4:13-16](#) - *“Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.”*

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- e. We should live so that at whatever moment the Lord says this is your last *step*, we will be ready to *step* into His kingdom.
 - 1) God does not always give a warning. Many who have died took that last *step* not knowing it was the last *step*.
 - a) **Illust.** - Years ago, my mom had a coworker that was drunk, and he climbed on the edge of the balcony multiple stories up, and he fell and died. He didn't know it was his last step.
 - 2) God is under no obligation to warn you. You may be planning a death-bed repentance, but you might not have the chance. You have no guarantee that God is going to warn you.
 - 3) You may be telling God that you want to come to Him on your terms, and that I will choose the time and place! Wrong! You must come to God on His terms! Who do you think you are to dictate the terms to God?

D. (v. 5)

1. ***“And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even.”***

a. “new moon”

- 1) Every new moon, there was a festival (**Num. 10:10; 28:11-15**).

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- b. *“that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even”*
 - 1) The *new moon* festival would last for two days, so by the *third day* it would be over.
 - a) I like to think that the Holy Spirit put a little “Easter egg” here in the Text about the resurrection of Christ.

E. (v. 15)

- 1. ***“But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.”***
 - a. *“my house”* = Jonathan’s house, including his father Saul.
 - 1) Jonathan is requesting that when David becomes King, that he will not purge the family of the previous reign.
 - 2) **NOTE:** Jonathan knows that David will be the next King over Israel.
 - a) Jonathan is a believer and follower of the LORD. (14:6)
 - b) He is the son of the current king, yet he understands that he will not be the next king of Israel.

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- i. He knows that God removed the royal dynasty from his father Saul (13:13-14), and that his father was stripped of his throne and was rejected from being king by the Lord for his disobedience (15:23).
- c) He knows that God has chosen someone else to be king (15:28-29), and recognizes the hand of the LORD upon David and that he will be God’s chosen king over Israel (18:1-4; 19:4-5).

F. (v. 16)

1. **“So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies.”**

- a. This covenant is not just with David himself, but with “the house of David.” In other words, this covenant is between Jonathan the Dynasty of David.

G. (v. 19)

1. **“...and shalt remain by the stone Ezel.”**

- a. “Ezel” - Heb. “Departure”
 - 1) The LXX translates this word as the Greek word εργαβ *ergab* (“a heap of stones”), which it uses also in verse 41.

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- a) This may have been a place that had a natural *heap of rocks*, a cavernous rock, or a *heap of ruins* of some ancient building.
- 2) We do know that this place is *South* of where Jonathan will be shooting arrows (v. 41).

H. (v. 27)

1. **“And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?”**
 - a. Saul figures out that the reason cannot be uncleanness at this point since uncleanness would only last 24 hours (Lev. 15).

I. (v. 30)

1. **“Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?”**
 - a. “Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman”
 - 1) That’s messed up that Saul would call his wife that!

J. (v. 31)

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1. “For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.”

- a. Saul says that as long as David is alive, he tells Jonathan:
 - 1) You will not be king - “*thou shalt not be established*”
 - 2) You will not have a kingdom - “*nor thy kingdom*”
- b. However, Jonathan already wants David to be the next king and he is not concerned about his own ambitions.

K. (v. 33)

1. “And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.”

- a. This isn’t the first time Saul tried to kill Jonathan!
(14:44-45)
- b. Any doubt that Jonathan had before about his dad wanting to kill David (v. 2) is now gone!

L. (v. 42)

1. “And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.”

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- a. **NOTE:** By Jonathan letting David go, he was giving up his throne and his kingdom for the love a friend.
 - 1) **Q** = Would you give up your throne in order to love someone else?...
 - a) Too often, we sit on our throne and we want to claim our rights, but there are times it is better to give up your own ambitions or rights in order to love someone else.

- b. **KEY:** Sometimes it’s better to give up your seat for the benefit of someone else.
 - 1) This principle will help you to have a successful marriage.
 - 2) This principle will allow you to have great friendships.
 - 3) This principle could cause a better environment at work.

- c. A few OBSERVATIONS of this covenant between Jonathan and David:
 - 1) It involves the deep, loving friendship of these two men.
 - 2) Jonathan will never betray David.
 - 3) David will not cause a dynastic slaughter of the house of Jonathan.

II. DAVID’S FLIGHTS. (21)

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NOB (v. 1-9)

A. (v. 1)

1. **“Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?”**

a. “Nob”

1) The ancient site of *Nob* is identified as Al-Issawiya,² just outside East Jerusalem on the eastern slopes of Mount Scopus overlooking Jerusalem.³

2) **NOTE:** The Tabernacle has been at Nob since the destruction of Shiloh (4:11) by the Philistines.

b. “Ahimelech the priest”

1) *Ahijah, the son of Ahitub* is mentioned as *the priest* (14:3, 18), but *Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub* (22:9) is also mentioned as the priest. Thus, Ahimelech is either: 1) the same as Ahijah; or 2) the brother of Ahijah.

a) Either way, we do know that *Ahimelech* was Ichabod’s brother and the great-grandson of Eli (14:3; 22:9), the priest to whom Samuel was apprenticed.

² The ancient city is identified with an Iron Age site near the village of 'Isawiyya on Mt. Scopus, near the modern campus of the Hebrew University. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/nob>

³ DMS 31° 47' 55" N, 35° 14' 54" E Decimal 31.798611, 35.248333

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- 2) Also, Jesus referred to this time as “*the days of Abiathar the high priest*” (Mark 2:25-26), yet here it says that *Ahimelech* was the High Priest.
- a) **Q** = We know that Jesus doesn’t make mistakes, so how do we deal with this apparent difficulty?...
- i. Some scholars suggest that it is both a father and a son that served *together* as co-high priests at that time.
 - a. This happened at other times in Israel’s history (1 Sam. 4:4; 1 Chron. 18:16; Luke 2:2).
 - ii. Other scholars suggest the possibility that both the father and the son *each had both names*!
 - a. Cf. 1 Samuel 22:20; 2 Samuel 8:17; 1 Chronicles 18:16; 24:6
 - b. Thus, *Ahimelech* would also have the names *Ahijah* and *Abiathar*.
 - iii. Other scholars also suggest that Jesus may have been giving a customary Jewish reference to the O.T. passage, rather than referring to the actual man.
 - a. The Jews would reference a text of Scripture by identifying the overall section of the Scripture since they didn’t have the

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chapter breaks and verse numbers like we have today.

- iv. Other scholars suggest that Jesus may have been speaking of the general time period, rather than the actual man — (*“in the days of Abiathar the high priest”*)
 - a. In other words, Jesus would be referencing Abiathar, not that he was the high priest when this event happened, but it was during the timeframe in which this well known High Priest was alive.
 - b. **NOTE:** There are times that we refer to someone by their title, even though we refer to a time before they had that title.
 - i. **Illust.** - It would be like saying, “Pastor Chuck Smith lived during the time of the Great Depression.” Well, during the Great Depression, Pastor Chuck was not a pastor yet because he was just a little kid, but it would still normal to call him “Pastor Chuck” even when referring to the days before he was a pastor.
 - ii. **Illust.** - Or we could say, “Back in the day when

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President Biden was in the Congress...”

B. (v. 4)

1. **“And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread;...”**

a. “hallowed bread” = Showbread (Ex. 25:30; Lev. 24:5-6)

2. **“...if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.”**

a. The showbread was not to be treated casually, but it was to be considered sacred.

1) The Law said, “*And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place*” (Leviticus 24:9), though it does not say that *only* the priests can eat it. However, this shows the principle that it is not to be treated as ordinary!

b. Because it is the “*hallowed bread*,” the men would have to be ceremonial clean, and sexual intercourse would make a couple ceremonially unclean until the next day (Lev. 15:16-18), and that is why Ahimelech gives this stipulation.

C. (v. 6)

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1. **“So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.”**
 - a. Every Sabbath day, the priest would bring twelve hot, fresh loaves of bread into the Tabernacle to replace the showbread from the previous Sabbath ([Lev. 24:8](#)).

D. (v. 7)

1. **“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 chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul.”**
 - a. “detained before the LORD”
 - 1) **Q** = What does it mean that he was “detained before the LORD”?...
 - a) He may have been *detained* for a vow, purification, or maybe being suspected of leprosy ([Lev. 13:4](#)).
 - b) He may have committed some trespass, and was *detained* there until he had offered a sacrifice.
 - c) He may be there wanting to proselytize and is waiting to be received into the religious community.
 - d) Or, it may just mean that he was traveling, but because it’s the Sabbath day, he was not allowed to travel.

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- b. “Doeg” - Heb. “*Full of Anxiety; Full of Worry; Full of Fear*”
 - 1) Nationality = *Edomite*
 - a) **Q** = How did this *Edomite* come into Israel and become a part of Saul’s army?...
 - i. He may have been a convert to Judaism.
 - ii. He may have been a slave of war ([1 Sam. 14:47](#)).
 - iii. Or, he may be an Israelite who lived in Edom.
 - a. For example, Uriah the Hittite was not a Canaanite, but a Jew who lived in the Hittite area.
 - 2) Occupation = “*the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul*”

E. (v. 8)

- 1. “***And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.***”
 - a. **NOTE:** David now wants a sword or spear, though when he fought Goliath he didn’t need either one of those ([17:45](#)).

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- 1) This may indicate that David is less secure of himself as he was before, and that he may be losing his confidence.

GATH (v. 10-15)

F. (v. 11)

1. **“*And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land?...*”**
 - a. It seems that the Philistines had good intelligence on Israel. They may have had sources that said that David is the rightful *king of the land*.
2. **“*...did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?*”**
 - a. This song was a Billboard INTERNATIONAL HIT on the Music Charts!

G. (v. 13)

1. **“*And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.*”**
 - a. Cf. **Psalm 34; 56** - David wrote these Psalms from his experience here.

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- b. **NOTE:** David couldn't read ahead and see how this all turned out! He had to live through it and see firsthand the faithfulness of the Lord.