

A Study of I Samuel

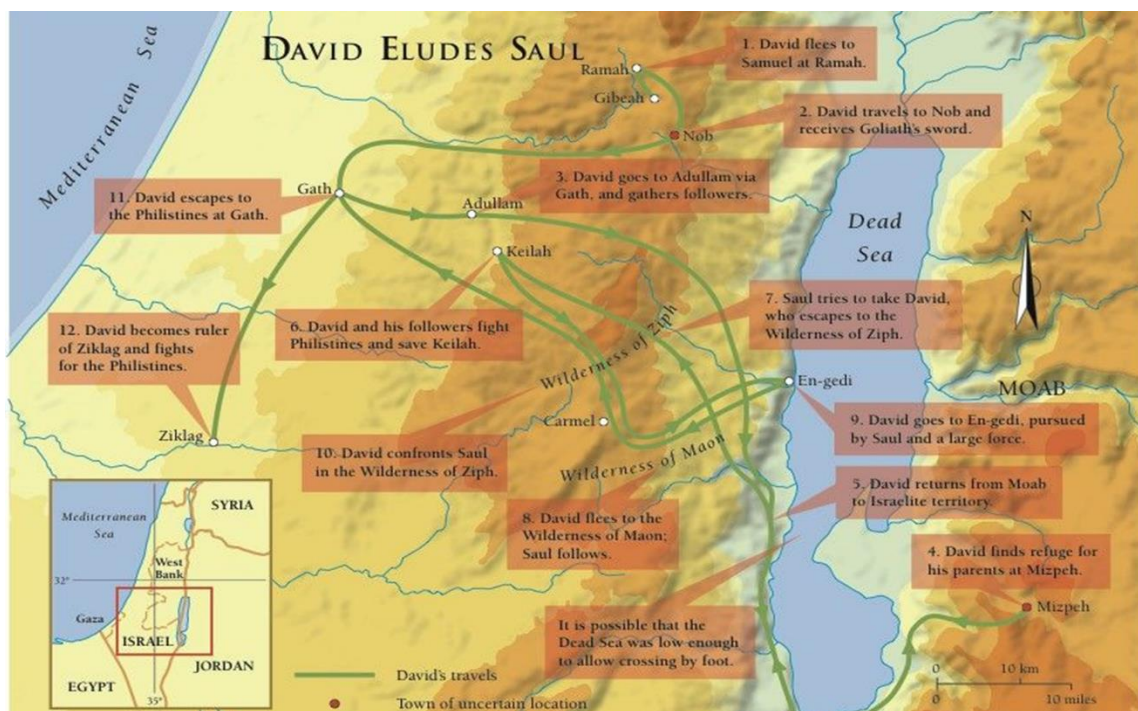
The Desiring for a King

David in Exile

Chapter 21

David was no more than 20 when he was forced to flee Saul. David is now driven to the wilderness area of Judah. This location would be a natural for David given his childhood familiarity of it. Here David will be “on the run” for nearly 10 years.¹

The period of time recorded in chapters 21-26 records only a fraction of the events that must have taken place during this time period. God is teaching David many lessons during this time of which David gives insight throughout the book of Psalms.



¹ This period is reckoned from the fact that David was 30 when he began to rule over Judah at Hebron (2 Sam. 5:4).

David at Nob (21:1-9): After the Ark was captured by the Philistines, King Saul moved the tabernacle to Nob, near his hometown of Gibeah. The town of Nob is known as the city of priests (see I Sam. 22:18-19). It is here that David flees.

David seeks Bread (1-7): Ahimelech (also known as Ahiah I Sam. 14:3) fears why David is alone (1). David lies to Ahimelech the priest, David claiming that Saul has him on a secret errand (2). David having no provisions seeks bread. Ahimelech lets him know there is no common bread only showbread. Ahimelech gives David and his men old bread from the table of showbread (3-6). This event is referenced by our Lord in Matthew 12:3-4 and shows the concession to the law – life is more holy than bread (Matthew 12:7-8).

A servant of Saul, Doeg sees Ahimelech give David bread which will lead to treachery and bloodshed (7). David knowing that Doeg will tell Saul, flees in fear (see I Sam. 22:22).

David seeks Weapons (8-9): David is given the weapons of Goliath. Now he is able to bare them.

David at Gath (10-15): David in fear flees to Achish, king of Gath. Gath is the hometown of the Philistine hero Goliath. The leadership of the king of Gath recognize that it is David who has killed many of the Philistines in battle (11). David to escape pretends to be mad (13-15).

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David at Adullam (1-2): David assembled a band of loyal followers at the cave of Adullam, a crowd of 400 men that will eventually grow to 600 (23:13). David's experiences in the cave are found in Psalm 54 and 142.

David's whole clan or family join him at Adullam including his mother and father (vs. 3).

David at Mizpeh of Moab (3-5): David in order to seek protection for his parents goes to Mizpeh of Moab. This would make sense for David to do because his family (through Ruth) came from there (3-4). The prophet Gad tells David to go to the land of Judah (5). Gad will become David's seer (2 Sam. 24:11).

David at the Forest of Hareth (5): David, back in the land of Judah will be told of all that Saul did unto the priest of Nob by the hand of Doeg. David protects the remaining son of Ahimelech the priest, Abiathar. All this happens in this region.

Saul, Doeg and the Slaughter of the Priests and People of Nob (6-19): Saul's bitterness towards David leads him to slay God's priests and the people of Nob. It is very telling that Saul is now willing to kill all the city of Nob unlike Saul was willing to do to the Amalekites (15:9).

Saul's Rebuke of the Benjamites (6-8): Saul's rebuke of those who did not letting him know of all that was happening behind his back concerning his son Jonathan and David is very pathetic.

Doeg's Allegiant to Saul (9-10): Doeg tells Saul all that he saw concerning David and Ahimelech.

Ahimelech and the Priests before Saul (11-19): Saul brings Ahimelech and all the priests before him to inquire of them concerning David. "Why have you conspired" is the words of Saul (13). Ahimelech tells Saul that he knew nothing that was going on between David and Saul besides who would have thought the king would be seeking David life for he is Saul's loyal servant, even a family member (14-15).

Saul is not content with the answer from Ahimelech and therefore gives the order to have him killed, however, the footmen would not slay the priests (16-17). What the footmen were not willing to do however Doeg is willing. Doeg kills 85 priests that day (18). Saul through Doeg utterly destroys all things living in Nob (19).

The Son of Ahimelech is Spared (20-23): Abiathar the son of Ahimelech is spared by David, David realizing that he was to blame for the slaying of the people of Nob. Abiathar will become a great help to David (see 23:9; 30:7). Abiathar will lead the tabernacle worship in Jerusalem once David is king.

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Victory at Keilah (1-13): The Philistines rob the threshing floors seeking to bring Israel into submission through starvation (1). David inquires of the LORD twice if he should go against the Philistines in battle to defend the Keilahites. The LORD responds, “Go and smite the Philistines and save Keilah” (2, 4).

David wins a great victory against the Philistines, delivering the city of Keilah (5-6). Saul however is told David and his men are in the city of Keilah, a city that can be surrounded. So, Saul gathers men to go and destroy David and his men (7-8).

David inquires of the LORD if the people of Keilah will turn over David and his men to Saul and his armies to which the LORD affirms (9-12). So, David and his men flee Keilah (13). Saul chose not to go to the town of Keilah having heard that David fled.

David in the Wilderness of Ziph (14-18): David is moving about the wilderness of Ziph. Ziph is a desolate region of limestone rocks and caves. It is here that Jonathan and David make their 3rd and final covenant together (16-18).

David and the Ziphites (19-29): The Ziphites were loyal to king Saul and as such they went up to king Saul and told Saul of David’s whereabouts. Saul tells the Ziphites that once they locate David’s whereabouts that he will come down and search him out (19-24). So, the Ziphites left and search out David in the wilderness of Ziph but David had fled to the wilderness of Maon (24).

Saul impatience’s moves him to depart to Ziph however hearing that David has fled to the wilderness of Maon they pursued him there (25).

David was surround by Saul’s army, however the LORD intervened. For Saul was told that the Philistines had invaded the land and therefore left off pursuing David (26-28). Therefore, the place is called Selahammahlekh “meaning the rock of division” (28).

David now flees to the stronghold of Engedi (29).

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Saul in the Hand of David (1-15): David and his men are hiding in the wilderness of Engedi. Saul takes 3,000 men and pursues David (1-2). Saul goes into a cave to relieve himself in the very cave that David and his men are hiding. The cave being very large so David and his men are not known to Saul (3).

David being encouraged of his men that God must be delivering Saul into his had cuts off the skirt of Saul's robe without Saul's knowledge. Saul took off his outer garments leaving them a distance away whereby David could cut off the skirt without his notice (4).

David's heart smote him (5). David announces to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed to stretch forth mine hand against him see he is the anointed of the LORD" (6). So David stayed the hand of his men from killing Saul (7).

Once Saul was far enough away, David arose from the cave and bowed to the earth to Saul (8). David tells Saul not to listen to men's words telling him that David seeks his life, for the LORD has delivered him into the hand of David and David did not kill him. The piece of robe was evident to this fact (9-12). David asks why Saul is wasting his time seeking out a dead dog a flea seeing he is King. David humbling himself and exulting Saul (13-15).

Saul's Response (16-22): Saul's response is one of humility. Remember we talked about the erratic behavior of Saul; it is seen here. Saul makes an interesting confession in verse 20. Saul is acknowledging that David will be king! Saul then asks David to swear that he would take care of his family (20-21). David said he would not destroy Saul's seed (21).

