

Saul's kingship and death; David as a fugitive in the wilderness

1 Samuel 21 – 2 S 1; 1 Chronicles 12:1-22; Psalms of David - 7, 13, 17, 22, 25, 34, 35, 52, 54, 56, 57, 58, 63, 64, 109, 140, 141, 142.

1 Samuel 21

1-9 David comes to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest who gives him the consecrated bread and Goliath's sword; Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief herdsman, was there.

1. David seeks refuge with both priests and prophets; in sharp contrast to Saul who has no such relations with these groups. This may account for David's popularity.

2. Doeg, later indicates that David sought instructions from the priest – perhaps in his flight from Saul and the need to be assured that the Lord was with him.

3. The priests at Nob are the descendents of those at Shiloh. It is described later as a city of priests [22.19] with a significant sanctuary [17.54]. It cannot have been situated where Isaiah 10.32 and Neh 11.32 locate Nob – according to them it was in the neighbourhood of Anathoth, and so very close to Jerusalem. It may well be that, this Nob, mentioned here, when destroyed – as it is recorded in 22.19 – was rebuilt in the other place. Certainly Anathoth would be consistent with Abiathar's later command [1 Kings 2.26], he being the only surviving member of the priesthood of Nob.

4. The 'holy bread' in the house of God – as Jesus later calls it [Matt 12.4] – was the cereal offering, which afterwards would have been eaten by the Aaronite priests [Le 24.9].

5. Doeg, as an Edomite, falls into the category of an antagonist. Edom and Israel have maintained an hostility over a long period of time, from the time of their forefather Esau, and then on to the wanderings in the desert [Nu 20] and at the time of the Judges [Ju3], the time of Saul [1 S 14,17] and Solomon [1 K 11.14ff]. It continued until the exile in 587 and after that continued to assert itself in the hostility between the Jewish people and the Idumaean Herod.

10-15 He flees to Achish at Gath (in Philistine) where he pretends to be mad when he is recognised as a Philistine enemy.

Psalms 56

When the Philistines seized him in Gath, he prays, knowing God is with him.

1-4 David, fearful and under strong attack from all around, puts his trust in God

5-7 As his enemies distort his words and lurk around to attack him, David asks God to put them out and cast them down.

8-13 Aware that God sees him, and is aware of his wanderings, he knows himself as treasured and noted by God. What David is sure of is that God is with him and that his enemies will have a day they must face God's account of things. David knows God has his vows before Him, He will deliver David and save him from death. He is going to walk before God in the land of the living.

Psalms 34

Praise for the Lord who saved him when he acted as a madman before the Philistine people of Gath and their king Achish.

1-3 David blesses the Lord and exalts His name.

4-7 He celebrates the deliverance that God has brought him. He has rescued him.

8-14 The man who takes refuge in the Lord is blessed. To fear God leaves us with no lack. David would teach us the fear of the Lord. It is important to be keeping our tongue from evil and also of seeking peace.

15-18 God preserves the righteous, and is very attentive to the broken hearted and the crushed in spirit.

1 Samuel 22

1-2 He moves from Gath to the cave of Adullam; joined by family and 400 others.

1. It is a site of a high country which is riddled with caves. It offers a refuge for the fugitive and his family, who are very near Saul in Bethlehem. All sorts of dangerous men attach themselves to David.

Psalms 57 & 142

Ps57 is a Cry for deliverance from persecutors when in the cave.

1-3 David sees God as a gracious person who will attend him and help him.

4-6 He sees his whole life as being among 'lions' dangerous people who are out to kill him with spears and bows but also their tongues. David obviously knows that in Saul's areas of influence the tongues of people are saying things about him that he cannot control or correct.

7-8 His soul is steadfast as he goes to sleep.

9-11 He will declare his thanks to God among the peoples, and extols the truth and loving kindness of God to him. This is to God's glory.

Ps 142 makes clear the personal sense David has of being enclosed by his enemies and that his soul feels like it is in prison. He asks that God would bring him out of this prison so that he might praise his name.

1 Chronicles 12:8-18

Strong men who joined David in the wilderness strongholds.

1. This is a list that the Chronicler adds after the time when David is about to become king over all [1 C11]. He does, as it were, a flashback to the time we are reading about in the southern sector of Israel's desert regions, to list those who had joined David earlier.

1 Samuel 22: 3-4 At Mizpah of Moab, he asks the king to care for his parents.

1. Concerned for his parents, who could not live the life of fugitives for a long time, David turn to the area of Moab because of his family associations with it [Ruth 4.17].

2. He approaches the king of Moab directly – which suggests that David's earlier fame was still of some clout – requesting that he protect his parents.

5 Admonished by Gad, he comes to Hebron in Judah.

1. The prophet Gad appears, as he will re-appear in 2S24. Adullam lies near the border of Judah and the Philistine area. Gad advises David to go closer to home into the land of Judah. He does so moving to Hebron.

Psalms 63

His soul thirsts for God and he finds joy with Him. Those who want to destroy him will die.

Psalms 64

A prayer for preservation from secret enemies to God who will cause their downfall.

1 Samuel 22:6-10 When Saul expresses concern about his servants' support,

*1. Saul's speech indicates how disturbed he is about the fact that the people are not standing with him. He is aware of the attractiveness of David to them and taunts them with the fact that David is not in power and cannot favour them as Saul is in a position to do so.
2. Here we note that Saul seems to be aware of Jonathan's support for David.*

Doeg reveals about Ahimelech's aiding David.

11-16 Saul questions Ahimelech, orders the priests killed.

1. Ahimelech is caught in the devious political matters that are swirling all around him. He obviously trusted David's account of the his 'secret mission' and so declares himself to be innocently in the dark. Saul is unimpressed.

17-19 His guards refuse so Doeg kills all in the city.

20-23 Only Abiathar escapes; he brings news to David.

1. David does see his behaviour at Nob as culpable, not so much that he gave the priest there false information, as that he was not sufficiently careful.

2. Abiathar, as the remaining priest of the Shiloh connection, stays with David from this time forth. He serves David for a long time.

Psalm 52

written against Doeg and his boasting and evil ways.

1-4 Once again, we are aware that for David the decisive hurt he finds in Doeg is the use of his tongue to denounce him, and the priests at Nob, before Saul.

5-7 David has a clear sense that God will overwhelm Doeg, and the he is typified as man who does not make God his refuge and defence as David must and does.

8-9 David sees himself as a productive tree in God's house. Relying, as he does, on the lovingkindness of God, David will wait for the Lord and give thanks to Him in the meantime.

Psalm 109

David wants the Lord to take vengeance on his accusers, while dealing kindly with him.

1-5 Again, we notice the constant pre-occupation of David with the tongue of his adversaries. It is the slanderous attacks upon himself that he cannot remedy or reach out to silence.

6-20 "Let this ..." happen to his enemies. He calls down God's vengeance against them. Imagining them and him to be in a court scene – where the judgment of God will now fall.

21-31 David asks God to deal kindly with himself; because he is weak, needy and wounded. God is the one who stands at the right hand of the needy to save him from those who judge his life.

1 Samuel 23

1-5 David fights for Keilah; he saves it from the Philistines.

1. Keilah is the location of ruins about 6 miles south of Adullam. Threshing floors are an obvious target for plunder, because the whole harvest is laid down and threshed, ready for the taking.

2. David is not only motivated to do something for the people of his own tribe, but also to resist the Philistines who are the real enemies of God here.

3. To drive away the Philistine cattle removes from them the transportation of the grain they would steal.

6-14 Through Abiathar, he learns from the Lord that Keilah will betray him to Saul, so he escapes into the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph.

1. The use of the ephod which accompanies Abiathar gives David the basis of planning his way strategically.

15-18 Jonathan meets with David, encourages him and renews their covenant at Horesh in Ziph.

1. David is now in the S to SE of Hebron – the region is the declines that lead down to the Dead Sea, David is now exposed to a real chase, fortified bases are scarce.

2. The visit of Johnathan makes clear for the reader the inevitability of the fact that David's anointed position will inevitably prevail, even though Saul's pursuit is strong and real at this time. So Johnathan strengthens David "in God".

19-23 The Ziphites betray David's presence to Saul.

Psalm 54

When the Ziphites told Saul, David asks God to save him.

1-3 David asks God to save him and to vindicate him. Violent men have arisen who have set God before them.

4-5 It is the Lord who sustains David's soul, He will recompense evil to his foes and destroy them in His faithfulness – ie to David.

6-7 David willingly praise and sacrifices to God because He has delivered David from all his troubles and David can now look with satisfaction upon his enemies.

1 Samuel 23: 25-28 At Maon, a southern rock in the wilderness, David narrowly escapes capture when Saul is recalled to defend Judah against a Philistine invasion.

1. The rock of parting stays in the mind of David as a place of deliverance.

29 David goes to Engedi.

Psalm 13

David appeals to the Lord for relief from his enemies but as always his trust is in the Lord. His main thrust is "How long?" He does not want his enemies to gloat over him. He doesn't want them to see that he is shaken. He has trusted in God's loving kindness.

Psalm 17 A call for protection against his oppressors, this is written when persecution was at its highest pitch, David appeals that his cause is a just one and calls on God to hear and protect him and bring his oppressors down.

Psalm 22

Is a cry of anguish at persecution and an appeal for help; knowing God does deliver and praising Him for caring for the afflicted and as ruler of the nations. This psalm prophesies the persecution of Christ.

1. In treating the suffering and death of Jesus, the Gospel writers major on the application of Psalm 22 to this subject. They quote it often and in very particular circumstances. Psalm 22.1//Matt 27.46; Mk 15.24. The section 22.1-18//Mk 9.12; Luke 24.27. 22.5//Romans 5.5. 22.7//Mtt 27.39; Mk 15.29. 22.7-8//Lk 23.35-36. 22.7,8//Matt 26.24. 22.8//Mtt 27.43. 22.15//Jn 19.28. 22.16//Philippians 3.2. 22.16-18//Mtt 26.24. 22.18//Matt 27.35; Mk 15.24; Lk 23.34; Jn 19.24. 22.20//Philippians 3.2. 22.21//2 Tim 4.17. 22.22 Hebrews 2.12. 22.23//Rev 19.5. 22.28//Rev 11.15, 19.16.

2. We need to make a distinction between salvation as a rescue from:

[a] dying as an act ie. preserving the life you currently have

[b] death as a state [an accomplished fact]. ie having lost the old life you are resurrected to a new one, while the continuity of your person is sustained.

Christ changes the meaning of abandonment in dying by doing it and by being resurrected.

3. Matthew 27.35-46 and Luke 23.27-35 and Mark 15.24-34 make the following things clear:

[i] The placard above the head of Jesus on the cross, and the discussions that lead up to his crucifixion, throw into relief these titles which we have encountered in the Gospels. Titles of "Jesus, King of the Jews", "Son of God" and "King of Israel". The view of his enemies who mistakenly take Jesus to be calling on Elijah for deliverance is that they have the idea

that deliverance from the predicament would imply a substantiation of Jesus as Son of God. That is, God would deliver Him if He delighted in Him. This is the idea that He would then avoid death; and that the preservation of one's life is to be delivered from those who seek it – this is certainly the psalmist David's, perspective,. Rather, what Jesus does is a meeting of death and an overcoming of it

4. What God delivered Him from, in resurrecting Him, was not from dying but from death.

*4. Central in the Gospels is the cry of Jesus Matt 27.46 "My God, why have you forsaken me?" The construction of the Greek sentence does not use *if*na with the verb in the subjunctive – if it did that would imply that Jesus was asking the purpose of this abandonment. Rather the verb is an Aorist Indicative Active, which means He is asking, "Seeing that your character, as I know it, is good towards me, why have you acted out of character?" This question is driven by the registration within Jesus Himself that He feels abandoned.*

5. This is not a value judgment, it simply asks a question as He deals with the feeling of abandonment when He knows that all of His life He has known confirmed care of God for Him. He is experiencing withdrawal from God as a man; and when Christ speaks to God as man He does so for us. Since this is so there is a true experience of abandonment as He dies for us. It is the death of the old man. In being abandoned to die in the way that Christ [acting for us] brings about the death of death.

6. If that is the case then God could abandon us to die because the meaning of "to die" is changed. Now we die in order to rise; so that the way to life involves a passage through death in the sense that our old man is properly abandoned by God so as to die that we might enter new life. This is the basis of the teaching of Jesus to take up our cross, to follow Him into death and that this leads to the saving of our life.

7. The writer to the Hebrews thinks of Jesus [Psalm 22.22//Hebrews 2.9-16]

[i] as being crowned with glory and honour because He suffered death in order that He might taste death for everyone. God has perfected our Redeemer through suffering because it is through death that He has destroyed the one who has the power of death – the devil.

[ii] as fulfilling Ps 22.1-21 in the tasting of death and that verse 22.22 ff as the results.

[iii] Christ was "heard" in that His God let Him die and then delivered Him from the death into life. So it is true for us, we won't know if we have been heard or not until we are on the life-side of the cross.

Psalm 35

Again he appeals to God to fight for him and destroy his enemies, who malign him and rejoice in his difficulties.

Psalm 58

he desires that the wicked be punished and vengeance be taken by the Lord.

1 Samuel 24 The meeting in the cave of Engedi

1. We have already seen in 23.23-4 that Saul has taken 3000 men to seek out David at the Rock of the Wild Goats

1-2 Saul pursues David again.

3-7 David and his men hide in a cave at Engedi; Saul enters; David secretly cuts Saul's robe but spares his life.

Once again, David will not touch Saul as the Lord's anointed.

8-15 Showing himself, David declares his innocence to Saul.

1. But the speech that he makes to Saul shows the deep trouble it is to him that his father-in-law seeks his life.

16-22 Saul admits his fault, makes peace with David and departs.

1. Saul's speech makes clear that even he knows that David will become king. The inevitability of this matter is clear even to the king.

1 Samuel 25

1 Samuel dies, Israel mourns. David goes to the wilderness of Paran.

1. The death of Samuel, which is repeated in the same words in 28.3, may be placed here when David is in Engedi because, of all people, it would have been Samuel who had the clout and authority to settle this matter between Saul and David.

2-13 Having protected his men, David asks Nabal for provisions.

1. David is once again, south of Hebron. Carmel [see also 23.14ff] is near Maon.

2. Nabal means 'simpleton' or 'silly'.

3. His wise and charming wife, Abigail stands out as the real centre of the narrative in the exchanges with David.

9-13 When he refuses, David sets out to destroy him.

1. When given the news, David maintains a silence – then gives the order to start out.

Everyone understands what is afoot.

14-31 Abigail, Nabal's wife intercedes for Nabal, appealing to David not to avenge for himself by shedding Nabal's blood.

1. Abigail understands that swift action is necessary. Her servants must have known where David was encamped – she sends the gifts ahead of her – reminiscent of Jacob with Esau.

2. David's opening words indicate that he d=feels quite vindicated in taking this action.

3. She shows propriety and skill in her reply. She takes the guilt for herself. She wants to save David from bloodguiltiness. She sees David's conduct in the light of his promised future – she is an instrument of the Lord to keep David's kingship clean. She also appeals to his generosity. She really represents the prophetic voice. In this way she prevents him from forfeiting his role in God's plan.

32-35 David takes her advice and gifts.

1. David mentions the two offences she has preserved him from making; so he hears her as a prophet might be heard.

36-38 Hearing of this, Nabal dies.

39-43 David takes Abigail and Ahinoam as wives.

1. David has already taken for his wife Ahinoam of Jezreel.

2. Here he takes Abigail. What is not spoken of is the fact that this rich widow ingratiates him with the locals in Keilah and Ziph. What is important is the evident hand of God guiding this matter - that is uppermost in the narrative.

44 Michal had been given to Palti by Saul.

1. Reminds us that the threat from Saul has not lifted.

Psalm 7

Under persecution, David asks the Lord to vindicate him against his attackers according to his integrity before the Lord.

Psalm 25

He prays for deliverance from his enemies; for instruction in the ways of the Lord; and for help in trouble.

Psalm 140

Under persecution, David prays for rescue and protection from evil men. He knows that the Lord cares for the afflicted and poor.

Psalm 141

He calls to God to guard his words and heart towards righteousness and to protect him from the wicked.

1 Samuel 26

1-5 Informed by the Ziphites, Saul again pursues David at Hacilah.

6-12 David and Abishai sneak into their camp and take Saul's spear and jug of water but spare Saul's life.

13-20 From a distance, David admonishes Abner for not protecting Saul and asks Saul why he continues to chase him.
21-25 Saul admits his sin against David.

1 Samuel 27

1-4 David flees to Gath in Philistine.
5-7 David asks Achish for Ziklag; stays for 1 yr & 4 mths.
8-12 He raids other cities, telling Achish he fought Judah.

1 Chronicles 12:1-7

The men who came to David at Ziklag

The Chronicler is giving us a list of these men who attended David at different times in his life. So the context of 1 Chronicles 11 sets the scene and then 1 C 12 is a retro look under the special subject of the men who came to David – looking back as it were.

1 Samuel 28

Some think that the text of this chapter would be better following 31, for then the material of 29 would then be joined to that of 27 of which it is the continuation.

1-2 Achish, preparing to attack Israel, makes David his bodyguard.
3-11 Saul fearful and unanswered by God, looks for a medium.
8-15 He asks a witch at Endor to bring up Samuel to ask him what to do.
*1. The death of Samuel makes the setting of this encounter with the witch [who is a medium] even more obvious. The need for Saul to hear the prophetic voice of Samuel makes poignant reading as he disdained that voice and the person in earlier times, finding it a nuisance to his activities.
2. It is significant, and needs to be remembered in any assessment of Saul, that he had taken great pains to cut off the worship of false gods and the mediums and the wizards that were in his jurisdiction. This fact accounts for the woman's disturbance and immediate reply that it is dangerous for her to do this work since it is already proscribed by the king. Saul therefore swears by the Lord that no punishment will come to her for this matter.
3. As soon as the woman hears that it is Samuel that she is targeting, she draws a conclusion about her visitor – it must be Saul himself. This is a tacit awareness that she too understands the current king's need for the prophetic voice and guidance from the Lord.*
16-19 The spirit of Samuel foretells his defeat and death by the Philistines.
*1. Samuel speaks of being 'disturbed' and when he hears Saul's request of him for prophetic word, wonders why Saul would ask him since the Lord has turned against Saul and is now his enemy. The spirit of Samuel will not refrain from being subject to the current dealings of God with his people. There is a continuity here between the dead in the Lord and the purposes of God upon the earth amongst the present living generation.
2. Samuel makes clear what will happen – but it is a prophecy which has no encouragement for the current ventures of Saul. He prophesies his death and that he, along with his sons, will "be with" Samuel.*
20-25 Saul faints and the woman feeds him.
1. The woman, seeing his fear, has regard for him. She uses her risk at doing what she has done to make him now do what she wants, that is to serve her king and see him comforted. Is this what most people come to here as a medium to find – albeit as a deception?

1 Samuel 29

1 The Philistines gather at Aphek against Israel at Jezreel.
2-5 David marches with Achish but the other Philistine lords send him away.
6-11 Achish although confident in him, dismisses David.

1 Chronicles 12:19-22

Men of Manasseh who defected to David when he was about to go to battle with the Philistines against Saul.

1 Samuel 30

1-3 David returns to find Ziklag burnt by the Amalekites and their women and children taken.

4-10 David and his men chase them, after asking the Lord.

11-20 A sick abandoned Amalekite slave directs David where to find the Amalekites; whom he slaughters, rescuing the families.

21-25 David divides the spoil among those who fought and those who stayed back because of fatigue.

26-31 He sends gifts to other Israelite cities who supported him

1 Samuel 31 // 1 Chronicles 10:1-12**

1-6 At the battle against the Philistines, the Israelites are defeated; Saul's sons die and Saul and his armour bearer kill themselves.

7 The Philistines possess the cities the Israelites desert.

8-10 Finding Saul and his sons' bodies, they parade them.

11-13 The people of Jabesh-gilead recover the bodies, burn them and mourn their deaths.

**** Note:** 1 Chronicles 10: 13-14 comments on Saul's life and the sin that resulted in his death and the removal of the kingdom from him to David.