

## Our Faithful God (1 Samuel 21:1-22:5)

### I. David's Falsehood before Ahimelech (v.1-9)

- David had pled his case before Samuel at Ramah (19:18) and Jonathan near Gibeah (20:1), and now flees to Ahimelech at Nob.
- After the Philistines captured and burned down Shiloh, the worship center of Israel was moved to Nob. Nob is considered the "city of the priests" (22:19) and the main sanctuary site for Israel's monotheistic rituals. While the ark was at one point in Shiloh, it was never in Nob; it is still in Kiriath-jearim (1 Sam. 7:2; 2 Sam. 6:3). Nob is about three miles southeast of Gibeah.
- As David arrives, he is greeted by Ahimelech, who is trembling. Ahimelech is the son of Ahitub (22:9, 11, 20), who was, in turn, the son of Phinehas, son of Eli (14:3). He is functioning as the chief priest at Nob.
- Ahimelech asks David why he is alone, and why no one is with him (v.2). David, in fear (20:3), fabricates a lie and provides a cover story on why he is alone: He is on a "secret mission" and is with men, but will be meeting them "over there." Interestingly, Ahimelech does not press David any further.
- David asks Ahimelech what is "on hand" and alludes to bread, even though his motives may be more than a visit to the priests for bread. David asks for "five loaves" which complements his deception.
- Ahimelech has on hand the Bread of the Presence (Ex. 25:30; 35:13) which was only to be consumed by the priests (Lev. 24:5-9). The twelve loaves were to be arranged on a table in the tabernacle as a private witness that the LORD sustains his people and supplies all their needs (Ex. 16). David most likely came to Nob on the Sabbath.
- Ahimelech did not have any "common bread" on hand, yet provided for David and his "men" on one condition: they have kept themselves sexually pure while on their "secret mission."
- Although they were not descendants of Levites, they must behave in a Levite-like manner, which would require ritual cleanliness (Ex. 19:15; Lev. 15:18). David reassures their ritual purity, and David is given the bread (v.6).
- Jesus points out that there is a greater obligation to mercy which overrode the observance of ceremonial laws (Ex. 34:12; Deut. 23:25; Matthew 12:1-4). The intent of the law is fulfilled by the act. Human needs take precedence over ceremonial law. When a ceremonial obligation comes in collision with a moral duty, the lesser obligation gives place to the heavier. While duty may be difficult in cases when the moral laws clash, there is no difficulty when the ceremonial and moral law collide; the preference is to the moral, which was the preservation of life.
- David's second request for Ahimelech was what else he has "on hand." David knows what is hiding at the religious site at Nob, and was perhaps the only reason why he came: Goliath's sword (v.8).
- After David slayed Goliath, he placed Goliath's armor in his tent (17:54). At some point, Goliath's sword was stashed at Nob, and David knew it. David's carnality is displayed in not only his request, but his response: "there is none like it" (v.9).
- The narrator interrupts the flow of the story by inserting the presence of Doeg, the Edomite (v.7). The Edomites are descendants from Esau (Gen. 36:9) and have a history of being apprehensive towards the Israelites (Num. 20:14-21).
- David's deception, regardless of his motives, is going to contribute to death of the priests at Nob (22:22).

## 2. David's Fear and Foolishness before Achish (v.10-15)

- After eating the bread of the presence at Nob and departing with Goliath's sword, David heads 23 miles southwest to Gath, one of the five Philistine cities.
- Why does David flee to a Philistine city? He is outside of Saul's domain, assumes that he may be able to reside in Gath, unnoticed, and/or may try to enlist himself in the service of Achish to garner protection.
- As soon as David arrives in Gath, the servants of Achish recognize him and recount the song that the Israelite women sang and danced to when the Israelite soldiers returned from the striking down the Philistines (17:52-18:7).
- Once David realized that they knew who he was, for the first time in 1 Samuel, the narrator describes David as "much afraid." (v.12).
- After they seized him (v.13; Ps. 56:1), David then, all out of options, resorts to a shameful and embarrassing resort of pretending to be like a madman. He marks the doors of the gate (graffiti, destructive behavior) and slobbered/drooled all over his beard like a wild animal.
- Gath had enough crazy people, so Achish sent David away, unharmed (v.15).

## 3. David's Following at Adullam (22:1-2)

- After David's embarrassing fiasco at Gath, he comes to a Cave of Adullam, which is in his homeland of Judah 12 miles east of Gath (Josh. 15:35).
- David has reached rock bottom (19:10, 18; 20:1; 21:1, 10; 22:1); he has lied to Ahimelech (21:2), deceived Achish (21:13), and placed Jonathan in a difficult moral dilemma as a covenant friend (20:6). This season of difficulty has taken its toll on him. David had not consulted the LORD in this season of trial.
- Unexpectedly, David receives visitors; first, his family, and then 400 others. David was set as a commander over those who were in distress, debt, and bitter in soul. The outlaws and outcasts of Saul's regime are drawn to David.

## 4. God's Faithfulness (22:3-5)

- David has been acknowledged as the future king by God (1 Sam. 16:12), the prophet Samuel (16:13), Jonathan (18:4), and by the servants of Achish (21:11).
- In concern for his family, David departs from the cave at Adullam to Mizpeh of Moab. He seeks safe harbor for his family with Moabites.
- David's great-grandmother Ruth was a Moabite (Ruth 1:4; 4:13, 18-22); David has Moabite blood.
- Despite the trials Ruth experienced, the Lord providentially arranged the union of Ruth and Boaz, thus securing safety for future generations, although unaware of it during the testing. The family of Jesse is safe because of the faithfulness of God through Ruth, not David's obedience to the LORD (22:3-4).
- Out of nowhere, the prophet Gad gives David the word of the LORD (22:5).
- Despite David's unbelief, sin, folly, and self-pity, the LORD still protected him and provided for him.
- David penned two Psalms after his departure from Achish in Gath (Psalm 34; 56), and two when he was alone in the Cave of Adullam (Psalm 57; 142).