

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 471

1 Samuel 22

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Episode Summary

David flees from Saul to the cave of Adullam, where he is joined by his brothers and other relatives. He also gathers a group of men who are discontented with Saul's rule. Saul learns of David's whereabouts and orders the death of Ahimelech the priest and all the other priests at Nob. David then goes to Mizpah in Moab and asks the king to allow his parents to stay with him. Saul continues to pursue David, but David is able to escape and elude capture. Saul's paranoia and jealousy continue to grow, and he becomes increasingly ruthless in his pursuit of David. David, on the other hand, continues to show his loyalty to God and his willingness to trust in Him. Even though he is being hunted by the king, David remains confident that God will protect him.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 471. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin and he's the scholar, Dr. Justin Bass. Hey, Justin! How are you?

JB: Doing well, Trey! How are you doing, sir?

TS: Doing pretty good. Having a good summer so far?

JB: Yeah. Yeah, it's been a blessed summer. Kids are out of school and we're having a good time.

TS: We were talking before the show, and I think you've got a new course you've been working on. Can you tell us about that?

JB: Yeah. It's just beginning. It's real exciting. We're working on a plan for another course for AWKNG. This one will be on kind of early church history. I'm going to focus on right after the New Testament up to Constantine. So we're looking at the key figures, they key Church Fathers, the writings, and just key events. Of course, one of the things I love to look at is how the church ultimately just took over and turned the Roman Empire upside-down. There's a lot of fun stuff with that, so it's something else I'll be working on throughout the summer. Hopefully we can get that recorded here towards the end of the summer.

TS: Perfect. And that's for the flash drive project, correct?

JB: Yes. It's very exciting to add one more to it! That will be great. Praise the Lord.

TS: We just had Drenna on a couple episodes ago to talk about that project, so it's good stuff.

JB: Wonderful.

TS: Yeah, absolutely. Well, Justin, I'm fired up for chapter 22, so I'm ready if you are!

JB: I'm ready sir! Thank you.

In the opening scene of *Tombstone* (the greatest Western ever made), we see Curly Bill and his gang terrorizing a wedding and even executing the groom. Afterward, the priest that was to preside over the wedding comes over to the gang, calling down curses on them in Spanish (probably an imprecatory psalm, I think). Johnny Ringo (Curly Bill's right-hand man) doesn't hesitate, but shoots the priest right between the eyes. Even Curly Bill cannot hide the shock on his face at Ringo murdering a priest. Those who made *Tombstone* were making it clear from the outset that Johnny Ringo is not just any outlaw. He is soulless—willing to commit even the worst of crimes. Someone who would murder a priest in cold blood is capable of anything. Later, when they are watching the performance of Faust, who sold his soul to the devil, Curly Bill asks Ringo what he would do if the devil came to him. Ringo replied, "I've already done it."

The author of 1 Samuel 22 is making the same point about Saul as he orders the murder of 85 innocent priests of Yahweh and then utterly destroys all the families in their time. Saul is soulless, mad; his depths of evil know no bounds. He is wholly under the power of that evil spirit tormenting him, for Yahweh has left him.

When we pick up at 1 Samuel 22:1, we are in the middle of the story that began with David's escape from Saul's court back in 1 Samuel 19. Or you could even go further back. In 1 Samuel 21, David visited the priest, Ahimelech, at Nob, and through deception received from him consecrated bread and the sword of Goliath—that same sword that young David used to cut Goliath's head off. We are also told that Doeg, the Edomite, was there and saw everything Ahimelech did for David. This is key for our chapter. Then David fled to Achish, king of Gath (the same Gath Goliath is from), and David is carrying Goliath's sword there, which is pretty cool. But when they repeat the song about David slaying tens of thousands of Philistines, David feigns madness and escapes again, this time to take refuge in a cave. So this brings us up to date to 1 Samuel 22. Let's look at the first two verses.

5:00

So David departed from there [Gath] and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard *of it*, they went down there to him. ² Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him.

By 1 Samuel 25, David will have over 600 men with him. Who are these men? This no doubt includes many of David's mighty men. It actually lists them out by name in 2 Samuel 23 (and see 1 Chronicles 12 for many others who rallied to David during this time). In fact, I love how in 1 Chronicles 12:14-15, it says that the men of Gad swam across this dangerous, rushing river Jordan to get to David. I mean, talk about a call to adventure! Who wouldn't want to go and join the outlaw, David? When I read these stories, I want to go join David! He's pictured here like a Robin Hood or William Wallace, and he's become the leader of all those men who have suffered some kind of loss or deprivation that has left them embittered in spirit. He's the champion of the discontented, the disenchanting, and the mistreated.

This cave of Adullam is in Judah, halfway between Gath and Bethlehem. Adullam actually means "refuge." It was a Canaanite city in the time of Jacob (see Genesis 38:1), but it was captured by Joshua in the course of his occupation of the land (see Joshua 12:15). And this particular cave was more like a stronghold—probably a well-fortified hilltop like the stronghold of Zion later. It served as a base of operations for David, as we see in 2 Samuel 23, for example. David may have composed some of his earliest psalms in this cave. Psalm 57 has the inscription, "a Miktam of David when he fled from Saul in the cave." Here are the opening verses to that psalm. Imagine you are in the cave with David saying (or even singing) this with him (a great way to read the psalms, by the way):

**Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me,
For my soul takes refuge in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge
Until destruction passes by.
² I will cry to God Most High,
To God who accomplishes *all things* for me.
³ He will send from heaven and save me;
He reproaches him who tramples upon me. *Selah.*
God will send forth His lovingkindness and His truth.
⁴ My soul is among lions;
I must lie among those who breathe forth fire,**

**Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows
And their tongue a sharp sword.
⁵ Be exalted above the heavens, O God;
Let Your glory *be* above all the earth.**

Sung in a cave (laughs). The next two verses... 1 Samuel 22:3-4:

³ And David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother come *and stay* with you until I know what God will do for me." ⁴ Then he left them with the king of Moab; and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.

Notice David needs a place to keep his mom and dad safe. And where does he go? He goes to Moab. Why would David go to Moab? Well, maybe because his great-grandmother was Ruth, the Moabitess. I love that because notice the Bible isn't trying to justify itself by telling us this explicitly. The story of Ruth and this story just fit together like puzzle pieces because they're both telling the historical truth. Notice also that David, like the greater David (Jesus Christ), takes care of his parents even under significant distress. Remember Jesus taking care of his mama, even while he was nailed to the cross. Look at verse 5:

⁵ The prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.

The prophet Gad comes out of nowhere to basically say, "Go back home, David. The Lord doesn't want you staying here." And in contrast to Saul, David obeys God's prophets. Gad was probably one of the prophets from Samuel's school that we spoke about in another podcast. He will be intimately involved with David throughout his reign as king, and he will live to see Solomon's Temple. Gad is the prophet at the end of 2 Samuel who gives David those three options of punishment for taking his wicked census. Such a cool little detail, by the way, of God's personality. I love how he lets David choose his own punishment [laughs]. "You pick, David. You pick!" You will hear often that the books of Samuel are anonymous, but that's not true. According to 1 Chronicles 29:29, the prophet Gad is said to have been one of its authors, along with Samuel (obviously before his death in 1 Samuel 25) and the prophet Nathan, who was also a part of David's courts and was intimately involved. I trust the first century B.C. author of Chronicles on who wrote these books over German scholars like Wellhausen, who were smoking cigars in the 19th century.

10:00

Now to the darkest, most horrifying section in all of Samuel. 1 Samuel 22:6-19. Listen to verse 6:

⁶ Then Saul heard that David and the men who were with him had been discovered. Now Saul was sitting in Gibeah, under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing around him.

Common in ancient Near Eastern art is a king sitting under a tree with a scepter—and in this case, Saul's spear. Interesting, then, that in the very last verse of 1 Samuel (chapter 31, verse 13), we're told that Saul was buried under a tamarisk tree. Is the author foreshadowing here that Saul is as good as dead for what he's about to do? Let's keep reading.

⁷ Saul said to his servants who stood around him, "Hear now, O Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse also give to all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds? ⁸ For all of you have conspired against me so that there is no one who discloses to me when my son makes *a covenant* with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you who is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in ambush, as *it is* this day."

Notice that Saul does not use the name "David," and Doeg wisely won't, either, when he responds to Saul in a moment. Saying David's name makes Saul go wild. It reminds me of the Chronicles of Narnia where the White Witch goes crazy any time she hears anyone mention the name of Aslan.

⁹ Then Doeg the Edomite, who was standing by the servants of Saul, said, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. ¹⁰ He inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

Doeg was first mentioned back in 1 Samuel 21 as being a witness to Ahimelech helping David. The Septuagint adds that he is a tender of Saul's mules. But he clearly was some kind of mercenary—a part of Saul's bodyguard, but separate since he was not an Israelite. Edomites (the heirs of Jacob's brother, Esau) are usually presented as enemies of Israel throughout the Old Testament.

¹¹ Then the king sent someone to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's household, the priests who were in Nob; and all of them came to the king. ¹² Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub." And he answered, "Here I am, my lord." ¹³ Saul then said to him, "Why have you

and the son of Jesse conspired against me, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he would rise up against me by lying in ambush as *it is this day?*"

We should see Saul like most tyrants throughout history (Stalin particularly comes to mind here): paranoid—very paranoid, seeing conspiracies everywhere. I bet Saul always had that spear near them (notice it says it was in his hand) in case someone would try to assassinate him, like modern tyrants might carry guns with them everywhere. It can't be a peaceful existence. The Sword of Damocles was always hanging over Saul's head, or at least he thought it was. This paranoia was no doubt a part of that torment of the evil spirit, or demon, from Yahweh.

¹⁴ Then Ahimelech answered the king and said, "And who among all your servants is as faithful as David, even the king's son-in-law, who is captain over your guard, and is honored in your house? ¹⁵ Did I *just* begin to inquire of God for him today? [JB: I love that question.] Far be it from me! Do not let the king impute anything to his servant *or* to any of the household of my father, for your servant knows nothing at all of this whole affair."

We really get a taste of Ahimelech's wisdom here. His defense is magnificent. He replies to every charge one by one, exonerating himself. But reason and logic doesn't matter in the face of a maniac.

¹⁶ But the king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech,

By the way, that's the same language in the Hebrew going back to Eden, when Adam and Eve were warned, "If you eat the fruit of this tree, you shall surely die." He goes on:

"You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's household!" ¹⁷ And the king said to the guards who were attending him, "Turn around and put the priests of the LORD to death, because their hand also is with David and because they knew that he was fleeing and did not reveal it to me." But the servants of the king were not willing to put forth their hands to attack the priests of the LORD.

This is so powerful. Matthew Henry comments,

Never was the command of a prince more honorably disobeyed.

15:00

[Laughs] I agree. How often do soldiers, today or in the ancient world... How often do they refuse to obey the direct orders of the king? It has to be rare. Saul's soldiers have disobeyed Saul one other time in 1 Samuel 14, when Saul wanted them to kill Jonathan for eating the honey, based on that stupid vow Saul made. Now Saul wants them to murder 85 priests of Yahweh, and they say, "No!" They had a line they wouldn't cross, and this was it. Like Peter and John would say later, "We must obey God rather than men."

A good question for application to take from this is, what is your line? It's got me thinking this. What's my line? What's the line you will not cross at school or at work, in life? I mean, that line is being tested for Christians more and more every day. We're recording this at the beginning of June, and companies all across America are now demanding employees to display their pronouns in emails and on social media; in some cases, participate in pride celebrations and use other people's preferred pronouns—call a man a "she" or a woman a "he." Just recently, the Los Angeles Dodgers embraced an anti-Christian hate group that regularly blasphemes our Lord in parades and by other means. This clearly crossed the line for at least a few players. Their pitcher, Blake Treinen, put out an open letter condemning his own employer for doing this. Here's what Blake wrote in the last paragraph:

I believe Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins. I believe the word of God is true and in Galatians 6:7 it says, "do not be deceived, God cannot be mocked; a man reaps what he sows." This group openly mocks Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of my faith, and I want to make it clear that I do not agree with nor support the decision of the Dodgers to "honor" the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15

I love seeing that courage and that leadership. What is your line that you will not cross?

So Saul's bodyguard refuses to murder God's priests. What is Saul going to do? Well, like all tyrants, he finds someone who will.

¹⁸ Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn around and attack the priests." And Doeg the Edomite turned around and attacked the priests, and he killed that day eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. ¹⁹ And he struck Nob the city of the priests with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and infants; also oxen, donkeys, and sheep *he struck* with the edge of the sword.

Doeg, like so many throughout history just following orders, had no line. Murdering 85 priests of Yahweh, women and children and babies... No problem! I think the author of Samuel wants us to know that Doeg does not fear Yahweh.

Eighty-five priests is most likely the correct number, but the Septuagint has 305 priests, so it could have been even worse. Josephus has 385 priests. God only knows where Josephus got that number. And notice that the language of the destruction of Nob is the *cherem*—it's the ban language of 1 Samuel 15, where God commanded Saul (you remember) to utterly destroy all the Amalekites. Saul disobeyed that order, but instead wages *cherem* warfare on the priests of Yahweh and their families. The only other time such Israelite-on-Israelite type of violence happened was during the darkest times of the book of Judges.

Matthew Henry right concludes his comments on the story by saying:

Barbarous cruelty, and such as one cannot think of without horror. Strange that ever it should enter into the heart of man to be so impious, so inhuman.

I agree. 1 Samuel 22:20-23 (the final verses):

²⁰ But one son of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David.

One of Ahimelech's descendants escaped—Abiathar. David gets a priest of Yahweh while Saul murders them. And you wonder why the text throughout Samuel says again and again, "Saul inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him, either by dream or by prophets." This "only one escapes the massacre" is a running theme throughout the Bible. Beginning with Moses and later with Joash, being saved from that wicked witch Athalia, and culminating in Jesus being saved from Herod or, more rightly, Satan (see Revelation 12).

Abiathar is an interesting character study. He's faithful and loyal to David his entire reign, but when David is on his deathbed, he sides with David's son Adonijah over his son Solomon. For this reason, Solomon removes him from the priesthood when he becomes king, but he doesn't kill him due to his faithfulness to David. The famous line from *The Dark Knight*, I think, applies well to Abiathar: "You either die a hero or you live long enough to become a villain."

20:00

1 Samuel 22:21:

²¹ Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD.

Note that Saul gets the primary blame for killing the priests—not Doeg, who actually stabbed them. Saul is clearly guilty of the greater sin. And according to the inscription, David composed Psalm 52 soon after Abiathar told him about what Doeg had done. It says in the inscription to Psalm 52, "A Maskil of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul and said to him, 'David has come to the house of Ahimelech.'" Let's read this psalm:

Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? [JB: Clearly, Doeg is in his mind.]

The lovingkindness of God *endures* all day long.

²Your tongue devises destruction,

Like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit.

³You love evil more than good,

Falsehood more than speaking what is right. *Selah.*

⁴You love all words that devour,

O deceitful tongue.

⁵But God will break you down forever;

He will snatch you up and tear you away from *your* tent,

And uproot you from the land of the living. *Selah.*

⁶The righteous will see and fear,

And will laugh at him, *saying,*

⁷“Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge,

But trusted in the abundance of his riches

And was strong in his evil desire.”

⁸But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God;

I trust in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever.

⁹I will give You thanks forever, because You have done *it,*

And I will wait on Your name, for *it is* good, in the presence of Your godly ones.

It's really powerful when you know the background to these psalms. Back to the last verses of 1 Samuel 22:

²²Then David said to Abiathar, “I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have brought about *the death* of every person in your father’s household.

Again, something you never see Saul doing: taking responsibility for his actions, for his sins. Then the last thing David says to Abiathar:

²³Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life, for you are safe with me.”

Powerful promise there at the end from David! I love hearing him say, "Do not be afraid." This is the only time David says this in the Bible. The greater David, Jesus Christ, will say, "Do not fear" or "Do not be afraid" a blessed twenty times.

I've counted them. If the author of Samuel thought that being near King David was safe, how much more being with the Son of David—the King of Kings and Lord of Lords? Jesus' promise to his followers is far greater than David's promise to Abiathar.

And surely I am with you always, even to the very end of the age.

Matthew 28:20

Like the historical David, though, it's dangerous being near and following Jesus. But there is no more secure place to be. There's actually an apocryphal saying of Jesus quoted by some of the early Church Fathers and some other early writings where Jesus says this:

He who is near me is near the fire.

I love that. I want that to be true. I want that to be something Jesus said. It sounds like something he would have said.

This is my key takeaway from the story: Rally to the greater David. Fight for him, and if necessary, die for him. Crown him king over your heart and mind. David has slain his thousands, but Jesus Christ his tens of thousands. Or more likely, his billions. Crown him. Crown him Lord of all, as the great hymn says:

All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall.
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all.

TS: Justin, you missed a quote there. If you're going to throw out *Tombstone*, you could have at least said that Abiathar could have said, "I'm your Huckleberry" or something to that effect. [laughter]

JB: I'll add that in next time.

TS: If you're going to go *Tombstone*... I was a big fan of *Young Guns* as well... *Desperado*... Of course, *Lonesome Dove* and all that stuff.

JB: Clint Eastwood just turned 93. *Unforgiven* is probably my second favorite after *Tombstone*.

TS: There you go. All righty, sir. I appreciate your movie references woven into the study. It's fun. We appreciate you coming on and helping us with 1 Samuel. I want to thank Justin for that, and I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.