



ROCK AND REFUGE • Turning to God in Times of Distress

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

I Samuel 21:1-22:23

In I Samuel 21-22, Saul is on a full-fledged pursuit of David. The scene for this study looks like something from *Mission Impossible*. God gives David a mission, which he chooses to accept, that is full of dangerous twists, turns, and escapes that Harry Houdini would be jealous of. The only thing missing is a sweet car chase with explosions.

Chapter 21 begins with David going to a city called Nob. David first finds the priest and asks him for bread to eat and a sword to carry. David's next stop is Gath (Goliath's hometown). Here, David pretends to be a crazy-man so he isn't killed by Achish the king. Finally, David makes a stop at Adullam, where he puts his family for safe keeping. Our narrative ends with Saul killing the priests at Nob because they conspire against him by helping David.

This study shows David's dependence on God in the face of adversity and God's protection of David. God has promised to make David the next king of Israel and God never backs down from His promises. As you prepare for the lesson, pray that the group will see God's work behind the scenes to preserve David and how David desperately clings to the Lord even when the circumstances seem overwhelming.

David Flees from Saul (21:1-22:5)

After David and Jonathan confirm their covenant in chapter 20, David moves on to Nob to meet Ahimelech the priest. To maintain confidentiality, he tells Ahimelech that he is on a secret mission from the king. David is alone and must act quickly because he knows that Saul is hot on his trail. David wants something to eat and all the priest has is the holy bread from the temple (v. 6), so he gives it to David. David also wants a weapon. The only weapon was the massive, powerful sword of Goliath. "There is none like that; give it to me," David said (v. 9). This exchange seems to go well, but after it's too late, David realizes that a servant of Saul named Doeg is in the temple. He overhears everything and, in 22:9, he tells Saul what happened. Help the group understand and discuss that though things seem to keep getting worse for David, God is orchestrating every event. God uses suffering and persecution for many reasons, including the growth of David's faith (see Rom. 5:3-5; James 1:2-3).

David then goes to Gath, Goliath's old stomping grounds, and runs into king Achish. David's reputation is well known in Gath as the one who has "struck down...his ten thousands" (v. 11). In order not to be killed, David pretends to be insane, drooling on his beard and scratching the doors and gates. He prob-

What's the Big Idea?

During great tribulation for David – as he is pursued by Saul – God continually cares for him. In the same way, we can look to Jesus during times of distress in our lives, trusting that He will be a great shield and refuge.

What's the Problem?

We forget that God is the only Almighty and when hard times come, we run to other things for protection.



ably looked very foolish (and crazy, of course) but his life is spared. In fact, King Achish says in verse 15 that he already has enough crazy men living in his house; he doesn't need one more. Immediately after escaping Gath, David went to the cave of Adullam. His father and brothers and other men who were in distress came to him there – about 400 men! David pleads with the king of Moab to let his family stay there while he flees Saul. Notice that even in the face of death, David cares for others. He is seeking to take care of his mom and dad and friends who are hurting. Verse 2 of chapter 22 says, “He became captain over them.” What a beautiful foreshadowing of Christ! When we were lonely and afflicted, Christ became our captain by saving us. Hebrews 2:10 says, “For it was fitting that [God]...in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.” The Greek word for founder literally means leader (the KJV uses the word “captain”). Notice the similarity between David and Jesus. Both lived in great turmoil, yet both brought people to safety. And we know that Christ's work is far greater than David's, for Christ has brought us to eternal glory through His perfect life, death, and resurrection.

Saul Kills the Priests at Nob (22:6-23)

Once Saul finds out that David has been discovered, he throws a pity party for himself. “No one discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me” (v. 8). Don't forget that pride is often expressed in extreme self-pity. After Saul stops whining, Doeg speaks up about what went down at the temple. He tells Saul that Ahimelech provided David with food and a sword. Out of jealousy and rage, Saul commands his servants to kill Ahimelech and the other priests of Nob. None of them obeyed. Saul then told Doeg to do his dirty work and Doeg killed 85 priests that day. How shameful that a king of God's chosen people would commit such a dastardly deed. Fortunately, one of Ahimelech's sons escaped and found David. In the last verse of our passage, we see David's faith in God stronger than ever: “Stay with me; do not be afraid...With me you shall be in safekeeping” (v. 23).

Conclusion

Here again we see the same theme of David's resolute trust that God will deliver him. It has been said that the safest place to be is wherever God has you. David not only knew that truth, he experienced it. Help your group come to the great pleasure of trusting in God in dim situations. Pray that you and your group would experience the Lord as a rock and refuge and that your hearts would fully cling to Jesus, the powerful captain of your salvation.

What's Our Response?

We must turn to God and have faith that He will be our refuge in times of trouble.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 21:1-22:23

LAUNCH

How do you respond when you're in a desperate situation?

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 21:1-9

1. Read I Samuel 20:30-31. Why is David on the run as I Samuel 21 begins?
2. How does David explain himself when he comes to Ahimelech?
3. What does David seek from Ahimelech, and how does Ahimelech respond?

Read I Samuel 21:10-22:5

4. Read I Samuel 17:4. What does it say about David's state of affairs that he would flee to Goliath's hometown?
5. How do the servants of Gath's king respond when they see David?
6. How does David react when he hears them talking about him in this way, and how does the king respond to David?

7. Read Psalm 34. How does David process his time in Gath as expressed in this psalm?

Read I Samuel 22:6-23

8. How would you describe Saul's disposition in verses 6-8?
9. What information does Doeg give Saul in verse 9?
10. How does Saul respond to this information in verses 10-19?
11. What do Saul's actions say about the condition of his heart?
12. How does David respond to the news of Saul's actions in verses 20-23?
13. Read Psalm 52. How does David process the events of this section in this psalm?

APPLY

14. What does it look like for you to practically take refuge in God during a desperate situation you're currently facing or may face in the future?
15. Read I John 2:18 and Daniel 7:21-22. These passages speak about the notorious antichrist. In what ways do Saul's actions place him in this role?
16. Reread Psalm 52:5-9. Where are you tempted to turn other than God when you face desperate times?

What Are the Answers?

1. Saul wants to put him to death.
2. He tells him he's on a secret mission from the king.
3. He seeks food and weapons. Ahimelech gives him consecrated bread and Goliath's sword.
4. He's really desperate.
5. They recognize him as the warrior of Israel who's reported to have slain tens of thousands.
6. David was fearful and feigned insanity, and the king sent him away.
7. He sees his deliverance as an answer to prayer and an expression of God's goodness.
8. He's paranoid and full of self-pity.
9. He tells him about David's interaction with Ahimelech.
10. He calls for Ahimelech and has Doeg murder him and the people of his city.
11. His actions reveal a heart that's extremely hardened to the Lord that he would wipe out his priests because of his crazed obsession with destroying David.
12. He grieves that his own actions brought this about and takes Abiathar into his care.
13. He takes comfort in knowing that God will show His love to those who take refuge in Him forever while bringing destruction upon those who oppose Him.
14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. He waged war against and overpowered God's people.
16. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

Then Ahimelech answered the king, "And who among all your servants is so faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law, and captain over your bodyguard, and honored in your house?"

I Samuel 22:14