

FIRST SAMUEL

Chapter 22

David at the Cave of Adullam

David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. 2 And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became commander over them. And there were with him about four hundred men. 3 And David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab. And he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother stay with you, till I know what God will do for me." 4 And he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. 5 Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.

22:1 *cave of Adullam.* See 2Sa 23:13; Ge 38:1; Jos 12:15; 15:35; 1Ch 11:15. (CSB)

cave. Used in this area for shelter. David fled to a cave again in 2Sm 23:13. (TLSB)

Adullam. Old Canaanite city c 12 mi E of Gath, out of Philistine territory. (TLSB)

his brothers and all his father's house. Although we have heard little about them—beyond an episode of resentment (17:28–30)—David's family rallied to his support. (TLSB)

22:2 *bitter in soul.* Drawn from the disadvantaged of society, including those who had suffered personal loss. (TLSB)

captain. May not be a formal military title; implies command of the company. (TLSB)

four hundred men were with him. David, officially an outlaw, was joined by others in similar circumstances, so that he began to develop the power base that would sustain him throughout his later years as king. (CSB)

22:3 *Mizpah in Moab.* Moabite town east of the Salt Sea; may be identified with Kir-hareseth, the Moabite capital. To reach Mizpah, David probably traveled south around the sea. (TLSB)

let my father and mother come and stay with you. The king of Moab was a natural ally for David because Saul had warred against him (see 14:47) and David's own great-grandmother was a Moabitess (see Ru 4:13, 22). (CSB)

what God will do. David witnesses to his confidence that God will act for him. (TLSB)

22:4 David's ancestry is linked to Moab (see pp 422–23); this, together with possibility of an alliance against Saul, would secure him a welcome (TLSB)

stronghold. Perhaps a specific fortress, but more likely a reference to a geographical area in which it was easy to hide (see 23:14; 2Sa 5:17; 23:14). (CSB)

Perhaps a cave. (TLSB)

22:5 *prophet Gad*. The king-designate is now served also by a prophet. Later a priest would come to him (v. 20) and complete the basic elements of a royal entourage—and they were all refugees from Saul’s administration. This is the first appearance of the prophet who later assisted David in musical arrangements for the temple services (see 2Ch 29:25), wrote a history of David’s reign (see 1Ch 29:29) and confronted David with the Lord’s rebuke for his sin of numbering the Israelites (see 2Sa 24:11–25). (CSB)

Prophet who attained status in David’s kingly court. Saul had not carefully developed such a counsel relationship with Samuel, though he sought Samuel’s blessings for political purposes. Examples from Mari and Hamath describe prophetic figures acting as king’s counselors in other nations. (TLSB)

go into ... Judah. A risky move, as it takes him into the area Saul controlled. (TLSB)

forest of Hereth. Located in Judah, on the other side of the Salt Sea, a considerable return journey. (TLSB)

22:1–5 During David’s continued flight, his followers support him and God protects him, directing David through a prophet. David had panicked due to fear (ch 21), but the Lord calmed and directed him. When troubled, treasure God’s Word as your stronghold. Through the Word, the Lord will bless, comfort, and strengthen you. • Give us a trusting heart to obey You, heavenly Father, and to live in the confidence of Your Word, our stronghold Amen. (TLSB)

Saul Kills the Priests of Nob

6 Now Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men who were with him. Saul was sitting at Gibeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him. **7** And Saul said to his servants who stood about him, “Hear now, people of Benjamin; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, **8** that all of you have conspired against me? 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, to lie in wait, as at this day.” **9** Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who stood by the servants of Saul, “I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, **10** and he inquired of the LORD for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.” **11** Then the king sent to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father’s house, the priests who were at Nob, and all of them came to the king. **12** And Saul said, “Hear now, son of Ahitub.” And he answered, “Here I am, my lord.” **13** And Saul said to him, “Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?” **14** 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? **15** Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? No! Let not the king impute anything to his servant or to all the house of my father, for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little.” **16** And the king said, “You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father’s house.” **17** And the king said to the guard who stood about him, “Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because their hand also is with David, and they knew that he fled and did not disclose it to me.” But the servants of the king would not put out their hand to strike the priests of the LORD. **18** Then the king said to Doeg, “You turn and strike the priests.” And Doeg the Edomite turned and struck down the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five persons who wore the linen ephod. **19** And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword; both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep, he put to the sword.

20 But one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. 21 And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. 22 And David said to Abiathar, “I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father’s house. 23 Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping.”

22:6–23 Jonathan is not mentioned in this account, except as the focus of Saul’s anger (v 8) because of his alliance with David. (TLSB)

22:6 *Gibeah*. Saul’s birthplace and capital. (TLSB)

22:7 Saul suspects David of bribery. (TLSB)

son of Jesse. Pejorative description of his former favorite. (TLSB)

people of Benjamin. Saul, a Benjamite (9:1–2; 10:21), seeks to strengthen his position with his own officials by emphasizing tribal loyalty. David was from the tribe of Judah. (CSB)

give every one of you fields and vineyards. Saul does exactly what Samuel had warned him that he would do—become as the kings of other nations (see 8:14). His actions are contrary to the covenantal ideal for kingship. (CSB)

22:8 *conspired ... covenant*. We do not know how Saul came to learn of the covenant between Jonathan and David. It may be a paranoid assumption, though true. (TLSB)

my son. Failure to use his name implies anger with Jonathan. (TLSB)

22:10 *Ahimelech inquired of the LORD for him*. Not mentioned in ch 21, but Ahimelech admits to it implicitly (v 15). Saul compared seeking the oracle of God with material support of treachery. (TLSB)

22:11 Tabernacle was located at Nob after the destruction of Shiloh. The Philistines had captured the ark before attacking Shiloh (4:3). (TLSB)

all. Ahimelech and his whole priestly family. (TLSB)

22:12 Saul’s address to the priest is curt. (TLSB)

22:13 *to lie in wait*. Saul is wrong, as David later shows his unwillingness to attack his king. David’s strategy is entirely defensive. (TLSB)

22:14–15 Ahimelech’s response is both honest and brave. He commends David’s loyalty while expressing his own innocence. Rather than denying the charge that the king brings against him, he justifies the actions of which he is accused. (TLSB)

22:16 *all your father’s house*. Death sentence is pronounced on the entire family, as though the priesthood itself were condemned. (TLSB)

22:17 *kill the priests of the LORD*. Wipe them all out. (TLSB)

They knew he fled. How much the priests really knew is not clear. David himself had not told them (see 21:2–3, 8). (CSB)

would not ... strike. Refusal to comply suggests loyalty to David or reverence for the priesthood. (TLSB)

22:19 *put to the sword.* Thus the prophecy of judgment against the house of Eli is fulfilled (see 2:31). (CSB)

man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep. Procedure of total annihilation in “devoting” something to destruction that Saul should have followed in ch 15. (TLSB)

22:20 *Abiathar ... escaped and fled to join David.* Abiathar brought the high priestly ephod with him (see 23:6) and subsequently “inquired of the LORD” for David (see 23:2 and note; see also 23:4, 9; 30:7–8; 2Sa 2:1; 5:19, 23). He served as high priest until removed from office by Solomon for participating in the rebellion of Adonijah (see 1Ki 2:26–27). (CSB)

The priesthood survived through Abiathar, who surfaces in 2Sm together with the priest Zadok, son of Ahitub (Abiathar’s grandfather), so there was at least one other continuing line of priesthood. (TLSB)

22:21 *Saul had killed the priests of the LORD.* Report avoids sensationalism and focuses on the event’s most serious aspect. (TLSB)

22:22 David failed to warn the priests, which now makes him feel guilty. Clearly, his confession does not exonerate Saul or his servant Doeg. In the NT also, loyalty to God’s anointed brings with it the promise of suffering and possible martyrdom (cf Mt 16:25). (TLSB)

22:23 *he who seeks my life seeks your life.* Jesus assures us: “If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you” (Jn 15:18). (TLSB)

22:6–23 The story temporarily leaves David. We see the priesthood nobly suffering at the hands of the godless. Be prepared to suffer as God’s royal priesthood, remembering that God’s purpose will not be thwarted, as shown in Jesus’ death and resurrection for you. • Jesus, our great High Priest, since You freely gave Your life for me, take my life into Your service. Amen. (TLSB)