

## SAUL SEEKS FOR DAVID

### A SPIRITUAL GAME OF CAT AND MOUSE

## Introduction:

1. In our last study, we learned that David was moving from place to place in fear of his life because of the jealousy of King Saul.
2. This story continues as Saul draws ever closer to David.
3. However, in all of these events, God's hand can be seen protecting and delivering David.
4. Thus, this game of "cat and mouse" has a spiritual purpose – to prove to David the faithfulness of God and his need to rely upon Him completely.

- I. David Defends Keilah (23:1-6)
  - A. As David remained in hiding in the wilderness of Judah, he continued to fight the Lord's battles on behalf of the nation of Israel.
    1. In many ways, David was the original Robin Hood.
    2. Word came to David about the Philistine attack on Keilah because someone knew that he could deliver the city from the enemy.
    3. David was unafraid to engage the enemy because he knew he was doing the Lord's will.
  - B. Upon learning of the conflict at Keilah, David asked the Lord if he should fight this battle.
    1. This is a testament to the great faith of David.
    2. It also illustrates the stark contrast between David and Saul.
  - C. God told him to save the city of Keilah, but David's men were still afraid.
    1. Eventually, several from this group would become known as David's "mighty men."
    2. However, at this point they were not as strong in faith as David was.
    3. Yet, his courage would become an encouragement to them.
  - D. So, David enquired of the Lord again and received the same answer – "I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand."
  - E. Then, David and his men went into battle and won a great victory over the enemy – even taking spoils of cattle.
    1. The Bible says that "David saved the inhabitants of Keilah."
    2. Yet, it is clear that God was involved in their deliverance.
    3. When one hears, believes, and obeys God, both are responsible for the salvation that follows.
  - F. While in the liberated city, Abiathar the priest arrived with the priestly ephod.
    1. Apparently, this was the ephod of the High Priest, Ahimelech, who had been killed by Doeg on the orders of Saul.
    2. This ephod contained the Urim and Thummim, by which enquires could be made of the Lord (cf. Exodus 28:30-31).
- II. David Escapes from Keilah (23:7-14)
  - A. When word came to Saul that David was in Keilah, he called forth his army to go to battle to capture David and his men.
    1. Notice that Saul believed that God was blessing him by placing David in the walled city.
    2. In fact, God was blessing David by protecting him from Saul!
    3. Saul has become so deluded there seems to be little hope for him.

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- B. When David learned of Saul's plan, he again enquired of God.
  - 1. He asked, "Will Saul come down?"
  - 2. God replied, "He will come down."
  - 3. He asked, "Will the men of Keilah deliver me into the hand of Saul?"
  - 4. God replied, "They will deliver thee up."
- C. Upon learning God's will, David and his men (now 600 strong) left Keilah to return to the wilderness.
- D. As a result of his actions, Saul did not come down to Keilah.
  - 1. This passage contains an important lesson about the foreknowledge of God and the free will of man.
  - 2. God foresaw what would happen if David remained in the city.
  - 3. But, by changing his actions, David altered the future.
  - 4. Thus, God is able to see all possible outcomes.
  - 5. Furthermore, God's foreknowledge does not override man's free will (cf. Romans 8:28-31).
- E. Finally, David and his men fled into the wilderness, to a mountain in Ziph.
- F. Though Saul searched for him daily, God protected David from the wicked king.

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- III. A Visit from Jonathan (23:15-18)
- A. Because Saul still sought to kill him, David was forced to hide in the woods of Ziph.
  - B. Thus, David faced another time of discouragement.
    - 1. He was still separated from his family and friends.
    - 2. He had done no wrong to be pursued by the King.
    - 3. He had fought for the people of Keilah while in hiding for his life.
    - 4. They had showed ingratitude and would have turned him over to Saul.
    - 5. So, David had grown fearful and disheartened once again.
  - C. It was at this time that Jonathan found David and encouraged him.
    - 1. Notice the emphasis upon Jonathan's identity – the son of Saul.
    - 2. Consider his self-denial in relation to this – he would not be King of Israel, but would be happy to serve under King David.
  - D. Jonathan strengthened David's hand in God.
    - 1. Not with money, weapons, or inside information
    - 2. Jonathan encouraged David's faith and trust in Jehovah.
    - 3. David had nothing to fear because Saul would not defeat him.
    - 4. God's promise was sure and certain – David would be king.
    - 5. If the covenant between these two men could remain intact in trying times, how certain must the covenant of God be!
    - 6. We must be a source of encouragement (cf. Deut. 3:28; Neh. 2:18; Job 4:3-4, Job 16:5; Prov. 27:9, 17; Ecc. 4:9-12; Isa. 35:3-4; Eze. 13:22; Luke 22:32, 43; Eph. 6:10; 2 Tim. 2:1; Heb. 12:12-13).
  - E. Keep in mind that behind Jonathan's actions was a knowledge of and faith in the promise of God to Abraham.
  - F. As far as the Scripture reveals, this was the last time these two friends would meet in this world.
- IV. God Protects David (23:19-29)
- A. While David was hiding in Ziph, the citizens of that land sent word to Saul that they would deliver him to the King.
    - 1. Note Saul's response in verse 21.
    - 2. It is never compassionate to encourage one to do wrong.
  - B. Both the people of Ziph and Saul, along with his soldiers, were searching for David.
  - C. Finally, Saul had David and his men surrounded at a rock in Maon.
  - D. Just as it seemed David would be captured, word came to Saul that the Philistines had invaded the land of Israel.
  - E. Thus, Saul was forced to leave his pursuit of David and go fight against the Philistines.
    - 1. The name Selahammahlekoth means, "the rock of divisions."
    - 2. Possibly, it means "the rock of smoothness" indicating David's slippery escape.
    - 3. The ESV renders in "the rock of escape."
  - F. David escaped and traveled to Engedi (cf. Psalm 54).
- V. David Spares Saul's Life (24:1-22)
- A. After Saul battled the Philistines, he took 3,000 men to find David in Engedi.
  - B. As they searched, Saul went into a cave to "cover his feet."
    - 1. Possibly, this means to relieve himself.
    - 2. Likely, it means to rest or take a nap.

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- C. Unbeknownst to Saul, David and his men were hiding in the same cave.
- D. Imagine the temptation that was placed before David.
  - 1. With one act, he could end his life of running and hiding.
  - 2. He could become King of Israel and lead the nation to follow God.
  - 3. The opportunity came upon him suddenly, with little time for planning ahead or considering his actions.
  - 4. His men were pressuring him to kill Saul – even saying that God’s providence was at work (cf. 23:7).
- E. Yet, David understood that it is never right to do wrong – even if something good may come from it.
- F. So, instead of killing Saul, David cut off a piece of Saul’s robe.
  - 1. Even then, his heart “smote him” because he had acted against the Lord’s anointed.
  - 2. It was David’s reverence for God that kept him from yielding to temptation and taking Saul’s life.
  - 3. Because he respected God, David also respected Saul’s position in the office of King – even though he was a failure and rejected of God.
- G. David spoke to his men and taught them a powerful lesson in humility and submission to God – and proved himself a worthy captain and King.
- H. After Saul exited the cave, David appeared before the cave and called out to Saul.
  - 1. David bowed to the ground before his king.
  - 2. David referred to him as “my lord the king,” “the Lord’s anointed,” and “my father.”
  - 3. David informed Saul that he was listening to the lies of men who claimed that David wanted to harm him.
  - 4. If he had wanted to, David could have killed Saul.
- I. David made it know to Saul that his fate was in God’s hands – God would judge between Saul and David (cf. Romans 12:17-21).
- J. After David had spoken, Saul responded with an emotional outcry.
  - 1. He referred to David as “my son, David.”
  - 2. He began to cry and weep.
  - 3. He acknowledged David’s righteousness and mercy.
  - 4. He recognized that David would be king, for he was worthy.
- K. Thus, he asked David to make a covenant with him – that he would not destroy Saul’s descendants when he became King.
- L. David agreed and Saul returned to his home.
- M. Wisely, David recognized Saul’s words for what they were – a mere, momentary emotional outburst (cf. 26:1-2).
- N. Thus, David and his men remained in their fortified location.

*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

**Proverbs 16:32**