

## David

# David, Waiting for the Kingdom

### *Waiting for the Lord*

In the rest of 1 Samuel we see David, the anointed king, waiting for the promised kingdom. This was a time of preparation. It was a time of humiliation and danger as He faced opposition and threats on his life from the hand of Saul, the outgoing king. A favorite theme of David in the psalms was “wait for the Lord,” 5 times specifically, “wait” alone, of the Lord, 23 times.<sup>1</sup> Our own struggles need to be informed by this same dynamic as we wait for the Lord in our own lives and apply New Testament truth about growth, that God uses testing in our journey to become like Jesus Christ. Few things test our faith like waiting for God to act in His own timing and for His own purposes. It should be of some comfort and encouragement for us to persevere in faith as we see God’s faithfulness to David. We, also, must fight the “little battles” as we grow and serve and wait, trusting in His faithfulness, even as our own unfaithfulness is exposed. The New Testament reveals this kind of testing as part of the process of character growth we must all go through (James 1:2-4).

## David and Jonathan

In chapters 19-20 we get to see the inside of a remarkable relationship. Jonathan, son of King Saul, does his best to protect and promote David, even though he was in line to be the next king after his father according to the tradition of the time, for a son to follow his father to the throne of kingdom nations. Of course, David had been anointed by God through His prophet Samuel to be the next king, so something had to happen for Jonathan to step aside or die. David would be king, no doubt, for God had spoken. We will gain some insight and encouragement for our own lives here about what to do when God’s will conflicts with our own prosperity and future.

Beginning in **chapter 19** we also see an ominous turn in Saul’s quest to avoid God’s judgment on him and his reign. No more games with the ladies, Saul’s schemes with his daughters. Now he comes out overtly in 19:1 directing his servants and even Jonathan to kill David. This puts Jonathan in a difficult spot because, “Jonathan, Saul’s son, greatly delighted in David” (19:1). What would Jonathan do? How would he react as His father’s fear and disobedience interfered with what he knew was right?

There seems to be no hesitation as Jonathan goes immediately to David with the new instructions from Saul. He devises a way to communicate with David about the situation and approaches his father the next morning, planning to tell David what transpires. Then in verses 4-5 Jonathan intercedes with his father about David, recounting David’s benefits to the king and declaring David’s innocence as he tries to turn Saul away from his plans to kill David. This appears to work and Saul vows, in verse 6, “As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death.” So David returns to serve Saul, “as formerly.”

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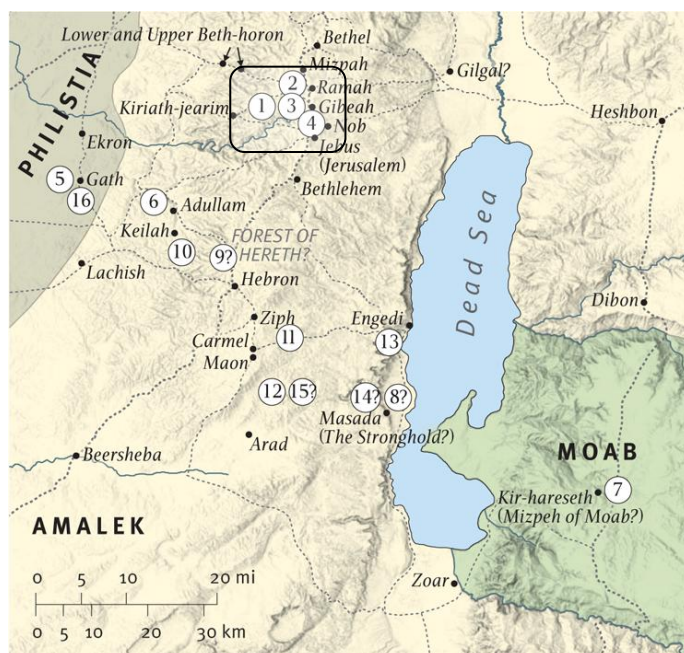
<sup>1</sup> 5 times total in Psalms (English) 2 times in Psa 27:17; “wait” alone, of the Lord, 23 times. [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). All scripture quotes are from this version unless otherwise noted.

However, after defeating the Philistines in service to Saul, “with a great slaughter,” Saul returns to his old ways as David was playing his instrument for him. “An evil spirit from the Lord” came on Saul in a repeat of the murderous intent from earlier and he “tried to pin David to the wall with the spear,” that was in his hand. Apparently, David recognized the scenario and “slipped away out of Saul’s presence so that he stuck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night” (19:10).

However, Saul continued his pursuit to David’s house. He sent men to the house to kill David in the morning. David’s wife, Michal, Saul’s daughter helped him escape through a window and he fled, again, foiling Saul’s plot.

After David had gone, his wife, Michal, deceived the messengers (Sept. ἀγγελοῦς) from Saul by placing a household statue in David’s bed and saying David was sick. Saul, however, was persistent and gave orders to bring David anyway so he could kill him. Of course, the messengers from Saul saw the statue and realized they had been duped.

Saul was upset with his daughter but she tricked him again by saying David had threatened her so she would help him escape. This still applies to Saul, “fool me once shame on you, fool me twice shame on me!” Weakness under pressure seemed to run in the family, as it still tends to do, but she saved herself this way.



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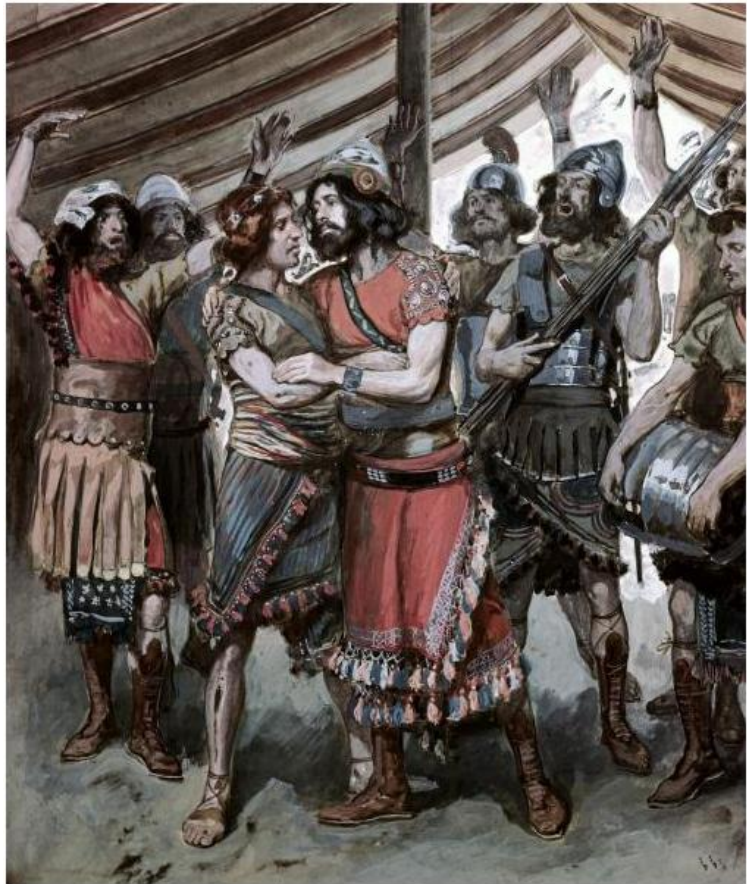
So it says, “David fled and escaped and came to Samuel at Ramah,” v.18. Samuel is the one, the prophet, that got David into all this by anointing him as the next king so it’s reasonable that David went to him to confide and take shelter. And the Lord God continued to show faithfulness to David and his plan for his life in a unique way. Saul sent messengers, again, to where David and Samuel were at Naioth, in Ramah, probably an encampment or school of the prophets (Appendix A). These messengers promptly became overcome with ecstasy by the Spirit of God and began to prophesy with the other prophets and Samuel that were there. This evidently distracted and prevented them

from their designated mission to capture David so Saul had to send other messengers. However, “they also prophesied”, so Saul sent a third group after David but “they also prophesied.” It’s hard to find good help, you know, so Saul decided to go himself.

<sup>2</sup> John D. Currid and David P. Barrett, [Crossway ESV Bible Atlas](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 123.

He got as far as “the large well that is in Secu,” v. 22, and asked directions. An ancient roadside rest stop this place was evidently well known by the original readers but has been lost to us.<sup>3</sup> However, between Gibeah of Saul and the destination of Ramah, Saul was directed to Samuel and David. As Saul went to Ramah, the Spirit came upon him and he was ecstatically prophesying until he arrived in Ramah. There he took off his outer garments and continued to prophesy before Samuel all day and all that night. So David’s Lord personally intervened through His Spirit and kept David safe again.

**1 Samuel 20** finds David turning to his friend, Saul’s son, Jonathan. As they discuss the situation, Jonathan reassures David of his safety and explains his trusted position with Saul that he would know if anything was about to change or happen. David’s reply was, “But truly as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is hardly a step between me and death” (verse 3). So they devise a plan to communicate any intelligence Jonathan comes up with. The nearest occasion for intelligence gathering is the next day, a feast on the occasion of the next new moon. Jonathan would engage his father in conversation about David and contend with him for David’s safety and report what King Saul says. Having renewed their vows to one another, the scripture says Jonathan, “loved him as he loved his own life (verse 17). We all need a friend like that. So a signal is set that involves Jonathan and a young boy retrieving arrows shot by him. David would be hiding in the area, “by the stone Ezel,” (v. 19) a local landmark, clearly known to both men. The signal would indicate whether or not Saul had favorable intentions about David. After a reference to the new vows between the two, they split up, “As for the agreement of which you and I have spoken, behold, the LORD is between you and me forever” (verse 23). Now it was time for the contest to begin. On the first day of the new moon, “the king sat down to eat food” (20:24). Saul said nothing the first day but the second day he noticed David’s place at the feast was empty and asked Jonathan about his absence. Jonathan offered the agreed upon reason for the absence that David’s presence was required with his family in Bethlehem. Saul



James Tissot, 15 October 1836 – 8 August 1902

<https://www.jesuswalk.com/david/images/tissot-friendship-of-david-and-jonathan-504x600.jpg>

<sup>3</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Secu,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1922.

obviously saw through the subterfuge because 20:30 reports to us that, “Saul’s anger burned against Jonathan.” Insults were hurled at Jonathan, and Saul made his case against David and called for him to die. Jonathan returned the barrage with a defense of David and pleas for Saul to back off. “Why should he be put to death? What has he done” (v. 32)? Then Saul lost control, if you can lose something you never had and “hurled his spear at him (Jonathan) to strike him down” (v. 33). Same m.o. as with David, Saul must have slept with that spear. This was at the dinner table! It is what fear (18:29) can do to a once great man. That ended the fake civility and “Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did not eat food on the second day of the new moon (34).” “So Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death” (v.33).

The next day Jonathan went to meet David as agreed to give him the intelligence report about Saul. After the agreed upon signal, they met and wept together, David more so. After a reminder of the promise, the covenant, they had exchanged, they parted. They would only see each other one more time (chapter 23 at Horesh) that we know of in the text. This friendship was short and sweet and tragic.

**Godly Friendship** We have seen perhaps the most famous and informative male to male friendship in history. They say one doesn’t have more than a few real friendships in life. Those few should be treasured. No real reason is given in the text for the magical relationship we witness in David and Jonathan. We can only see it work and notice a few characteristics of it.

One of the most noticeable characteristics of this friendship is its selfless nature as these men looked out for one another. They had the other’s back. Another characteristic was loyalty. The stresses of life and death did not break but bred strength into the loyalty both men had to each other. Their relationship also had to be sacrificial to promote each other at their own expense. Jonathan especially seems to have had a lot to lose in David’s survival since he would normally have been the next king. For David to be king, something would have to happen to Jonathan’s right to ascend the throne by way of abdication or death. It turned out to be death (1 Sa 31:2).

Trust is an element of this friendship, also. They trusted God, though He is not mentioned in the text, and each other. This is seen in the righteousness of their own conduct and their commitment to God’s plan and will. Their trust in each other is plain from faithfully executing their plan and in the vows they made to each other. Vows like these were both vertical before the Lord (2 Sa 21:7) and horizontal to each other. They trusted each other to keep these vows before God. Honor is also another aspect of vow keeping. These were honorable men who made vows to be kept as a way of expressing their respect. Respect for words and their meaning is a lost value in our day. One of the most important aspects of our relationship with God is confidence that He will keep His word, especially when we fail, and will unconditionally love us throughout eternity. He means what He says. So should we. Saul made a vow in 19:6 but it was rash and he did not follow through or keep his word. David and Jonathan gave their word to each other and counted heavily on the vows they made.<sup>4</sup> Their vows concerned not only themselves but their families “forever” (20:42). David’s treatment of Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth many years later (2 Sam 9f) shows the depth of his commitment to Jonathan and the vows they made to each other

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<sup>4</sup> Their vows were mentioned in the text 7 times from 1 Sam 8 through 2 Sam 23, 1 Sam 8:3;20:



before God. Seven times the vows are referred to in these two chapters and in one later.<sup>5</sup> They meant what they said. Let's learn to do that, also.

What other values and character traits stand out to you? Let me know.

Principles of growth through Jesus Christ, in the New Testament, will help us achieve such relationships and be changed into the kind of people having the fruit of the Spirit and the character of Christ that make us good friends to others. May God give us all at least one sacrificial real friendship in our lives. SFC

## Appendix A

**Naioth.** Place where David was given refuge from Saul (1 Sm 19:18–20:1). Here Samuel supervised a group of prophets. According to verses 19 and 23, Naioth was located within Ramah, Samuel's hometown.

The derivation of the term is enigmatic. The word occurs nowhere else in Scripture, and the Hebrew text seems intentionally obscure. The word perhaps stems from a Hebrew root meaning “pastoral abode” or “dwelling place.” In 2 Samuel 15:25 another derivative of the Hebrew root refers to the Lord's habitation, leading some to suggest that Naioth is a proper noun referring to a sanctuary in Ramah (see 1 Sam 10:5, where prophets were also associated with a sanctuary). Others conclude that Naioth alludes to a school, cloister, or settlement of prophets, of which Samuel was head. Its exact location is unknown.<sup>6</sup>

Translated “camps” by Ralph Klein, “*Saul was informed, “David is in the camps at Ramah.”*”<sup>7</sup> Also he explains later, “Samuel and David went to sit in the “camps.” This word, which only appears in this context (vv 18, 19, 22, 23; 20:1), is probably not a proper noun, Naioth (RSV), since it is always associated with another place name, Ramah. It is customarily compared to the Akkadian word *naṣm*, meaning pasturage or steppe. Perhaps Israelite prophetic groups occupied such shepherd's abodes (cf. 2 Sam 7:8; Jer 33:12). Lindblom compared the word to the log building in which Elisha and the sons of the prophets lived (2 Kgs 6:1–7). “Camps” or “huts” would seem to be appropriate translations.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Sam 8:3, 20:8, 13-17, 23, 42; 2 Sam 23:18.

<sup>6</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “[Naioth](#),” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1522.

<sup>7</sup> Ralph W. Klein, [1 Samuel](#), vol. 10, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), 192–193ff,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Ralph W. Klein, [1 Samuel](#), vol. 10, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), 198.