

# 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 Abigail

Almost in passing, chapter 25 starts out, with the passing (pun intended, sorry) of the prophet Samuel, in verse 1. This was the end of an era in Jewish history. Samuel was prophet, priest and the last judge over Israel, judge instead of king when “everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25). This more flexible form of government was rejected by the people for a form of government more like the nations around them (1 Samuel 8:5, 20). In doing so, they rejected God’s will. The Lord said to Samuel, “for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them” (1 Samuel 8:7). Samuel presided, then, over anointing the first two kings of Israel, Saul, a disappointment, and David.

David was not yet king, though anointed to be so. He would still run from Saul for a time until the time came the Lord had appointed. So “David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran” (25:1d; see Appendix).

As in his dealings with the men of Keilah and the Ziphites, even with Saul himself, David is learning that God’s will and timing is best and sometimes obedience means to wait. Now, in this next episode, David would learn a hard lesson, not to take his own revenge but to leave that to the Lord, as Paul instructs us, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God” (Romans 12:19).

Of course, David did not know the Apostle Paul but this later man of the tribe of Benjamin has written us timeless truth for godly behavior. David has to learn these lessons as an Old Testament saint without the aid of the later clarity that would come with the Messiah Jesus Christ in a special time described as “the ends of the ages” (1 Corinthians 10:11). This is the Church Age, in which we live, the days of the invisible kingdom “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (Rom 11:25). We also know, now, that “God causes all things to work together for

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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.

good to those who love God” who “He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son” for our and His glory (Rom 8:28-30). So we can read back into Old Testament accounts what we now know are God’s timeless intentions to “conform us to the image of His Son.” God was forming the character of a king.

In the wilderness David would hear that a man named Nabal was shearing his sheep in Carmel. This was near Maon, where the man probably lived (from the text of 25:2), and evidently near the wilderness where David and his men were taking shelter from Saul. 25:1 says David “went down to the wilderness of Paran.” However, scholars think this was likely a copyist error and should have been “the wilderness of Maon” because of the proximity of David and his people to Nabal’s in the area of Carmel and Maon where David guarded Nabal’s shepherds. The wilderness of Paran was far to the south (see, Appendix). There could be another explanation, possibly a name known locally at the time.

“So David sent ten young men” to greet Nabal in his name and bless him and ask provisions from him for guarding and showing kindness to his men and the animals. However, Nabal turned back David’s messengers with empty hands. The insult stung and David and his men strapped on their weapons and prepared to pay Nabal another visit.

Nabal had a wife named Abigail who the Scripture says, “was intelligent and beautiful in appearance.” She got word of Nabal’s insulting reply to David’s men and a report of the relationship with David’s men in the wilderness. It was told her that, “the men were very good to us, and we were not insulted, nor did we miss anything as long as we went about with them, while we were in the fields. They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the time we were with them tending the sheep” (v 15-16). Further comment by Nabal’s men is telling as to the character of the man, “he is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him” (v 17c).



<https://dia.org/collection/meeting-david-and-abigail-60001><sup>2</sup>

Abigail got busy, put together a package of rations and loaded them on donkeys. She set out secretly with the young male servants in front and met David and his men as they were coming toward her. She prostrated herself before him and spoke wisely, begging him for understanding and explaining what a worthless and foolish man Nabal was. She spoke further of the Lord and His choice of David to be king and invoked blessing from the Lord on David and his future. She was very persuasive.

David responded by blessing the Lord and praising Abigail’s wisdom, blessing her for keeping him from shedding blood and “avenging myself by my own hand (v 33). He explained what was planned for Nabal and all that was his, if only Abigail had not restrained him. So David accepted

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Paul Rubens, The Meeting of David and Abigail, between 1625 and 1628, oil on canvas. Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of James E. Scripps, 89.63.

her peace offering, “Go up to your house in peace. See I have listened to you and granted your request” (v 35).

The next day Abigail told Nabal about her rescue mission and the text says, “his heart died within him so that he became like a stone,” (v 37) a dead man walking. God completed the judgment, “About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died” (v38).

So we see that it is not necessary to take one’s own revenge or return evil for evil perpetrated against us. Paul was right when he said through the Holy Spirit, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath *of God*, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY” (Romans 12:19). David would later declare, “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer” (Psa 18:2). Paul would say, “that we might become the righteousness of God in Him,” and that Christ “is our life” (2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 3:4) as we so closely identify with deity. To die to sin and the world and be replaced with the life of Christ is the only way to truly be changed and live differently like Christ.



[Abigail Kneels before David\\*](#) (1 Sam 25:23) <sup>3</sup> (above). God was preparing an ordinary man to serve as king of His people and glorify Him in his day and time as God is preparing us to serve in our own day and time.

However, God was not finished blessing David in another way David could not have foreseen or experienced if he had taken matters into his own hand with Nabal. With Nabal dead, Abigail was free to remarry and David did not delay to add a godly woman to his entourage. The episode now ends with David sending another group of messengers to Carmel with a different message, “David has sent us to you to take you as his wife” (v 40). She wasted no time but “quickly arose, and rode on a donkey, with her five maidens who attended her; and she followed the messengers of David and became his wife” (v 42).

Not too bad for a happy ending to this episode in the future king’s life.

**Wait for the Lord and keep His way,  
And He will exalt you to inherit the land; Psa 37:34**

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<sup>3</sup> The David and Solomon series (1896-1902) by James J. Tissot, gouache on board, are found in the Jewish Museum, New York. <https://www.jesuswalk.com/david/images/tissot-abigail-kneels-before-david-473x355.jpg>

## Appendix

**Paran.** Desert region in the northeast Sinai Peninsula west of the Arabah (Rift Valley). The settlement of Kadesh-barnea is its northernmost limit. Some scholars identify the great Et-Tih plateau of the central Sinai as a part of this wilderness. It is difficult, however, to fix the southern and western limits with precision from the biblical evidence.

David is said to have led his band of men to this region after the death of Samuel to be out of the range of King Saul (1 Sm 25:1). A textual problem emerges at this point. The Greek translation of 1 Samuel 25:1 reads “wilderness of Maon.” This was probably the reading of the original Hebrew manuscript. The wilderness of Maon was the mountainous area around the village of Maon just south of Hebron, where David had sought refuge previously (1 Sm 23:24, 25) and where Nabak lived. It is unlikely that David would have traveled so far to the south as to reach the wilderness of Paran. There he would not have had contact with Nabal’s shepherds. It is probable that a copyist accidentally substituted Paran for Maon.<sup>4</sup>

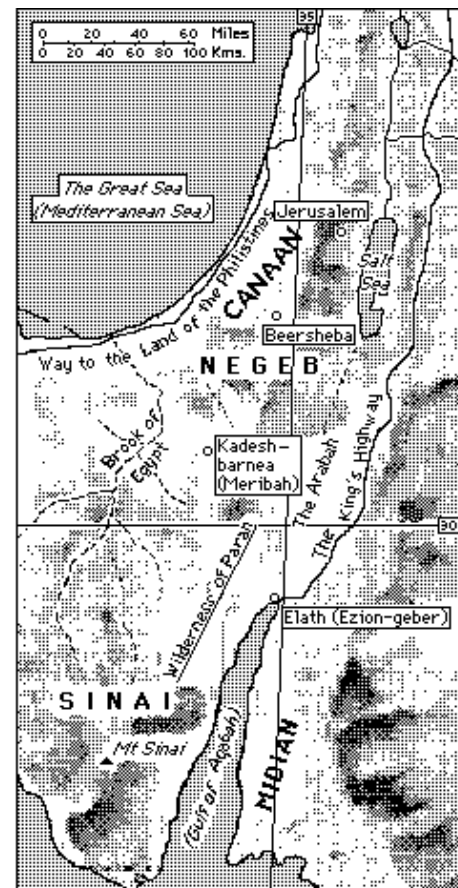
**Paran.** A wilderness situated in the E central region of the Sinai peninsula, NE from the traditional Sinai and SSE of Kadesh, with the Arabah and the Gulf of Aqabah as its E border. It was to this wilderness that Hagar and Ishmael went after their expulsion from Abraham’s household (Gn. 21:21) It was crossed-by the Israelites following their Exodus from Egypt (Nu. 10:12; 12:16), and from here Moses despatched men to spy out the land of Canaan (Nu. 13:3, 26). The wilderness was also traversed by Hadad the Edomite on his flight to Egypt (1 Ki. 11:18).

1 Sa. 25:1 records that David went to the wilderness of Paran on the death of the prophet Samuel, but in this instance we may read with the Greek ‘wilderness of Maon’.

El-paran, mentioned in Gn. 14:6 as on the border of the wilderness, may have been an ancient name for Elath. Mt Paran of the Song of Moses (Dt. 33:2) and of Hab. 3:3 was possibly a prominent peak in the mountain range on the W shore of the Gulf of Aqabah. (\*ZIN.)<sup>5</sup>

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*The location of ‘the wilderness of Paran’.*



<sup>4</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Paran,” Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1616.

<sup>5</sup> R. A. H. Gunner, “Paran,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 870.



