

# 1st Samuel

## Lesson 48

### (ii) Saul Restarts His Pursuit (23:14b)

Thwarted at Keilah, when Saul stopped his pursuit, the writer tells us how Saul restarts the pursuit of David. Verse 14b.

*“And Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand.” (23:14b)*

Notice that God got involved with thwarting Saul’s pursuit. God made sure that Saul failed in his desires.

### (6) David and Jonathan Make a Second Covenant

#### (a) David Stayed with Jonathan at Horesh (23:15-18)

Jonathan learned that David was at Horesh and came to him. There, David and Jonathan make a second covenant. There also, David stayed with Jonathan at Horesh in David’s house. Look at what Jonathan reveals to David. Verse 15.

*“Now David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. <sup>16</sup> And Jonathan, Saul’s son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God. <sup>17</sup> Thus he said to him, “Do not be afraid, because the hand of Saul my father will not find you, and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you; and Saul my father knows that also.” <sup>18</sup> So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; and David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house.” (23:15-18)*

Once again, the writer of this section tells us the end result before he tells us the steps that led to that result. As such, Jonathan promises to continue to be knit to David even when David becomes king. Here, Jonathan reveals that Saul knows that David will be the next king. Jonathan also reveals that it is his intent to remain with David constantly, which will mean Jonathan will be in rebellion to his father.

#### (b) Saul Learns of David Staying at Horesh (23:19-23)

The Ziphites are concerned that David is hiding in their location and tattle tales to Saul. With that, Saul learns of David staying at Horesh. The writer of this passage may have switched between Gad or Nathan because surely one was near David and the other was near Saul. We hear from this writer Saul’s response to the Ziphites. It seems that Nathan is the one who will be with Saul from this time on and Gad is with David. We can hardly imagine that the prophets are switching between the two in peaceful harmony with Saul and his men.

*“Then Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, “Is David not hiding with us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? <sup>20</sup> Now then, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul to do so; and our part shall be to surrender him into the king’s hand.” <sup>21</sup> Saul said, “May you be blessed of the LORD, for you have had compassion on me. <sup>22</sup> Go now, make more sure, and investigate and see his place where his haunt is, and who has seen him there; for I am told that he is very cunning. <sup>23</sup> So look, and learn about all the hiding places where he hides himself and return to me with certainty, and I will go with you; and if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah.” (23:19-23)*

The Ziphites have given Saul a specific location for David. Yet, in Saul’s experience, he does not want to arrive with his army and that location be wrong. Therefore, he sends the Ziphites back to make sure.

## (c) Saul Pursues David in the Wilderness

## (i) Saul Attempts to Surround David (23:24-26)

We will now hear how Saul pursues David in the wilderness and how Saul attempts to surround David; however, we will also learn that Saul was correct in his suspicion, for David and his men had moved further south from the location reported to Saul. Verse 24.

*“Then they arose and went to Ziph before Saul. Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon.”* <sup>25</sup> *When Saul and his men went to seek him, they told David, and he came down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard it, he pursued David in the wilderness of Maon.* <sup>26</sup> *Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain; and David was hurrying to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were surrounding David and his men to seize them.”* (23:24-26)

David and his men had moved south of where the Ziphites had first reported to Saul. Nevertheless, the Ziphites must have reported back with the new location because Saul gathered his men and went to the new location in the wilderness of Maon. Remember, Saul would not go after David until he had a sure location. The wilderness of Maon surrounded the town of Maon. Maon means *habitation*. It was about seven miles south of Hebron in the hill country of Judah. Later we will find out that this was the home of Nabal, who will die, and David will marry his widow, Abigail. For now, David is on one side of the mountain range near Maon, and Saul is on the other. Saul had evidently divided his forces and sent groups of warriors to surround David and his men.

## (ii) Saul Distracted by the Philistines (23:27-28)

Almost surrounded by king Saul, it seems that David might be caught off guard. But, David has nothing to worry about, for the writer tells us how Saul is distracted by the Philistines. Verse 27.

*“But a messenger came to Saul, saying, ‘Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid on the land.’”* <sup>28</sup> *So Saul returned from pursuing David and went to meet the Philistines; therefore they called that place the Rock of Escape.”* (23:27-28)

The LORD is never late. He is never early. He is always right on time. In fact, He is even on time when we do not know that we need Him to be on time. The only way for this story to evolve into this whole message is for Gad and Nathan to be one with Saul and one with David. More than likely Gad was with David and Nathan was traveling with Saul. It seems, both of their chronicles have been combined to tell the differing sides of this complex story between David and Saul. If it is Nathan, he is reporting the news of the Philistine raid in the land and Saul’s decision at the time that handling the Philistines was more important than killing David. The place where Saul was camped, and left, was nicknamed *the Rock of Escape*. Its nickname in Hebrew is *sela-hammabekoth* and it is the name of the great gorge that lies between Hachilah and Maon, southeast of Hebron. The gorge has a river running through it and the gorge is large enough to hold the army of Saul and provide clean water.

## (d) David Escaped to Engedi (23:29)

With the threat calmed by the departure of Saul, David escaped to Engedi with his men. Verse 29.

*“David went up from there and stayed in the strongholds of Engedi.”* (23:29)

Engedi was a city built initially by the Amorites (Genesis 14:7). It was situated on the western bank of the Dead Sea, and it was famous for its fountain and vineyards. David will be safe there for a while. But after the encounter with the Philistines, Saul will hear that David is in Engedi and follow him there with an army of three thousand men. It was surely the same army with Saul that was on the other side of the mountain from David in the gorge of the Rock of Escape.

Of course, we must know by now that David was recording psalms of worship at this time of his life. So let us enjoy his music.

*For the choir director: A psalm of David. 1 O LORD, I have come to you for protection; don't let me be disgraced. Save me, for you do what is right. 2 Turn your ear to listen to me; rescue me quickly. Be my rock of protection, a fortress where I will be safe. 3 You are my rock and my fortress. For the honor of your name, lead me out of this danger. 4 Pull me from the trap my enemies set for me, for I find protection in you alone. 5 I entrust my spirit into your hand. Rescue me, LORD, for you are a faithful God. 6 I hate those who worship worthless idols. I trust in the LORD. 7 I will be glad and rejoice in your unfailing love, for you have seen my troubles, and you care about the anguish of my soul. 8 You have not handed me over to my enemies but have set me in a safe place. 9 Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am in distress. Tears blur my eyes. My body and soul are withering away. 10 I am dying from grief; my years are shortened by sadness. Sin has drained my strength; I am wasting away from within. 11 I am scorned by all my enemies and despised by my neighbors— even my friends are afraid to come near me. When they see me on the street, they run the other way. 12 I am ignored as if I were dead, as if I were a broken pot. 13 I have heard the many rumors about me, and I am surrounded by terror. My enemies conspire against me, plotting to take my life. 14 But I am trusting you, O LORD, saying, "You are my God!" 15 My future is in your hands. Rescue me from those who hunt me down relentlessly. 16 Let your favor shine on your servant. In your unfailing love, rescue me. 17 Don't let me be disgraced, O LORD, for I call out to you for help. Let the wicked be disgraced; let them lie silent in the grave. 18 Silence their lying lips— those proud and arrogant lips that accuse the godly. 19 How great is the goodness you have stored up for those who fear you. You lavish it on those who come to you for protection, blessing them before the watching world. 20 You hide them in the shelter of your presence, safe from those who conspire against them. You shelter them in your presence, far from accusing tongues. 21 Praise the LORD, for he has shown me the wonders of his unfailing love. He kept me safe when my city was under attack. 22 In panic I cried out, "I am cut off from the LORD!" But you heard my cry for mercy and answered my call for help. 23 Love the LORD, all you godly ones! For the LORD protects those who are loyal to him, but he harshly punishes the arrogant. 24 So be strong and courageous, all you who put your hope in the LORD! (Psalm 31)*

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time the Ziphites came and said to Saul, "We know where David is hiding." To be accompanied by stringed instruments. 1 Come with great power, O God, and rescue me! Defend me with your might. 2 Listen to my prayer, O God. Pay attention to my plea. 3 For strangers are attacking me; violent people are trying to kill me. They care nothing for God. Interlude 4 But God is my helper. The Lord keeps me alive! 5 May the evil plans of my enemies be turned against them. Do as you promised and put an end to them. 6 I will sacrifice a voluntary offering to you; I will praise your name, O LORD, for it is good. 7 For you have rescued me from my troubles and helped me to triumph over my enemies. (Psalm 54)*

## Chapter 24

### (e) David Spares Saul's Life in Engedi

#### (i) David Hides in a Cave (24:1-3a)

We do not know how long it took for Saul to run the Philistines out of the land, but the writer tells us that as soon as he was through, he returned in his attempt to kill David. David and his men had moved from Maon to Engedi, on the western coast of the Dead Sea. There the writer tells us how David spares Saul's life in Engedi and we find the story beginning as David hides in a cave. Chapter 24, verse 1.

*"Now when Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, saying, 'Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.'"*<sup>2</sup> *Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats.* <sup>3</sup> *He came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there was a cave;"* (24:1-3a)

As Saul returns from facing off with the Philistines to chasing David, Saul brings with him three thousand men; David has about six hundred at the time. Engedi is a beautiful location, lush, green, with water for all. When you see Engedi, it is easy to understand why Lot was taken by the look of the Jordan River Valley before the Dead Sea was formed in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Solomon will extol the greatness of the vineyards of Engedi in his Song of Songs (Song 1:14). But, as in all mountainous areas, there are rough areas. Such was the Rocks of the Wild Goats. Saul stationed his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats, but not on the Rocks of the Wild Goats. Wild Goats are often seen in rocky areas, climbing them primarily for safety from prey animals.

When the writer uses the word *"front,"* he is telling us that Saul stationed his men where he could see the going and comings of anyone that might be hidden in the caves of the crags of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. The Hebrew word translated here means *"the surface, or upon the surface."* The word picture implies the ability to see what is on the surface of the Rocks of the Wild Goats.

On the way to the Rocks of the Wild Goats, Saul and his men passed by the *"sheepfolds."* A sheepfold is an enclosed area where a flock of sheep can be protected. Because of the mountainous area in Engedi, the sheepfold was more than likely an area where at least three sides, and maybe part of the fourth side consisted of natural rock structures. An entrance was somewhere that allowed the sheep to be driven into the area. Water was needed in the area also and a stream may have been one of the natural barriers. This conclusion all makes sense because in the sheepfold, there was a cave. A cave was up the mountain a bit from the level ground which was part of the barriers making the fold protected from animals of prey or restricting the sheep from wandering off.

#### (ii) Saul Enters the Cave (24:3b-4a)

Passing by the sheepfold, where the cave was located, Saul enters the cave. Verse 3b.

*"...and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave.* <sup>4</sup> *The men of David said to him, 'Behold, this is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.'"* (24:3b-4a)

For the first time we hear that Saul was like all humans, and all animals for that case. Nature calls. It is not the first time the Bible has mentioned the call of nature. We heard of it first with Eglon, the king of Moab, whom the judge Ehud killed and Eglon's men thought he was relieving himself in the room and did not want to bother him. A point I make here. If you ever think the LORD has not covered or mentioned something in the Bible about life, you need to think again. Everything is mentioned in the Bible and you can testify to that if you knew the content of the story in the Bible. Doing an electronic word search may not bring the subject to mind, but reading the context of the stories will. In searching for this subject, who would have ever thought of using the word *"relieve?"*

Be that as it may, in Saul's current state with nature calling, he stumbled in the hidden location of David and six hundred men. Set the scene in your mind. Saul, alone, enters a cave, where six hundred men are waiting with David. And what do the six hundred men think? They think the LORD has brought Saul into the cave alone so that David can kill him and end the conflict caused by Saul. When we see words like, *"the LORD said,"* we always need to look at who is talking. Is the LORD actually talking, or is someone else trying to say something for the LORD that the LORD has not said? The latter is the case here. The LORD did not say to David, *"Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you."* Those words came from the mouth and minds of David's men. Speaking of electronic Bible searches, and concordance searches

for that matter, you can find the instances of “*the LORD said*,” and be deceived if you do not read the context of each passage. Time after time I have heard a preacher say, such-in-such word is found this many times in the Bible. So what? What point does that make of the truth? Preachers do this to try to build a solid, overwhelming foundation to the point they want to make. Me, knowing the Scripture, hang my head and think, “how foolish” every time. Let me chase a rabbit for a moment that will clearly prove my point. In the English versions of the New Testament, the word “Church” is used one hundred and twelve times. But the Greek word that is translated “Church” is *ekklesia*. *Ekklesia* means *the assembly*. In the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, the word *ekklesia* is used every time an assembly of some group is mentioned. And, in the New Testament, the Greek word *ekklesia* is found one hundred and fifteen times. Why then is *ekklesia* translated one hundred and twelve times as “church” and three times as something else? By the way, the other three times it is translated *assembly*. Why is it not always translated “church?” Properly, all one hundred and fifteen times it should be translated *assembly* because that is what it means. An assembly is a gathering of a group of people. What is the deal? The deal is that our Bible translators have read into the Scripture and made the distinction for us of the difference between the *assembly of the believers who belong to the LORD* and the *assembly of the Jews in the synagogue*. Both are properly called assembly, but the translators want you to know that the context of the passages where the *assembly of the believers* is being addressed concerns what we understand to be the “Church” and not the *assembly of the Jews*. That would be all well and good, except for one important point. The Greek word for “Church” is in the Bible twice and it is not included in the one hundred and twelve times the word “Church” is used in the translation of the English Bible. The Greek word for “Church” is *kyriake*. From Greek it became *kirche* in German, then *kirkeja* in Old Norse, *kirika* in Old Saxon, then *cirice* in Old English, then *kirch* in Middle English, and *Church* in Modern English.

With all of that etymology for the Greek word *kyriake*, it is found only two times in the New Testament. Here are those times.

“*Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord’s [kyriake] Supper....*” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:20)

“*I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s [kyriake] day, and I heard behind me a loud voice....*” (Revelation 1:10)

The Greek word that became our word “Church” is *kyriake*, and it means *the LORD’s*. The implication is the things that belong to *the LORD*. In the New Testament, two specific things are said to belong to the LORD – His supper, His day. The New Testament does not use the original word for Church when speaking of believers. Nevertheless, we belong to the LORD, and we are His, but the word for “Church” is not used in association with believers. Therefore, the translators have super imposed the idea of those who belong to the LORD, grabbed the word “Church,” and applied it one hundred and twelve times where the word *assembly* would be the proper translation. It is their good intentions to define for us in the context of each passage those who belong to Jews and those who belong to the LORD.

So the next time you hear a preacher say, the “*word for church in the Bible is *ekklesia* and it is used one hundred and twelve times*, (or perhaps one hundred and fifteen times if he actually counted for himself)” you will know that the preacher has not done his homework and is telling you a falsehood.

That was a long way around the bush to prove that word searches in the Bible do not always get you what you are looking for, and that goes for word searches for specific things that you think might or might not be in the Bible, but everything about human life throughout all times is found in the Bible, if you know where and how to find it. But when found, we must be careful to always look at the context to see who is speaking and if it is of the LORD or not. In our case in this passage, the men of David want Saul dead, not the LORD.