

Let's Worship God

17th-22nd November 2025

1 Samuel



1 SAMUEL

Monday - 1 Samuel 22:6-23 - Barbarity, Brutality, Savagery, and Terror

Thankfully we have not experienced any acts of terror recently. Yet acts of terror do intrude upon our lives at various points. I write this devotion a few days after the 19th anniversary of 9/11. It's not long since Westminster, Manchester, Paris, and Christchurch experienced significant acts of terror. I live in a country with 30 years of terror and troubles in its recent history. Acts of terror, barbarity, brutality, and savagery intrude into our lives sometimes. In 1 Samuel 21 a barbaric, brutal, and savage act of terror intrudes on David's life and the pages of Scripture.

Nob is a priestly city, its citizens are ministers and representatives of God. Doeg the Edomite raids this defenceless city, slaughtering 85 priests (verse 18). The Jewish historian Josephus puts the death-toll, including "woman, child and infant" (verse 19) at 350. Men, woman, children, infants, and even the animals. They are not even taken as plunder, but liquidated in wanton destruction. The images these verses conjure are distressing: the beautiful ceremonial robes of the priests soaked in blood; their white linen ephods stained crimson; a deathly silence hanging over the town; children lying where they were cut down. An act of barbarity, brutality, savagery, and terror.

These are unpleasant images and we should find them unpleasant to have them conjured in our minds by God's Word. Yet God does not record them for the sake of making a 15 or 18 certified story, or to gratify our lust for violence and gore. Neither is he callous about human suffering. He has lessons for us to learn. How do we live in the face of modern terror? How do we live with reminders of our own brutal history in Ireland, Scotland, the US, or wherever? How do we live in a world of barbarity, brutality, savagery, and terror? We will see these lessons this week as we look at the three kings in the passage.

Questions

1. Are there any acts of terror in your lifetime that you still struggle to come to terms with?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that this week God would prepare us for living in a barbaric, brutal, savage world.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping." 1 Samuel 22:23

Praise: Psalm 52:1-4 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Tuesday - 1 Samuel 22:6-23 - Saul: the Destructive King

The section starts ominously. David is discovered - has he been spied upon; are there informers in his camp? Saul is holding court under the Tamarisk tree. This does not sound ominous to us, but kings in the nations around Israel were often portrayed as sitting under sacred trees. He is a king like the kings of the pagan nations around them (8:5). He has his spear in his hand, a hint of the coming violence. Two times he has thrown it at David and once at Jonathan - you do not want an angry man to have a spear in his hand! There are tensions in the royal court - Saul is suspicious of conspiracy (verse 8a) and is tarring everyone, even his son and heir. In fact, Jonathan seems to bear the brunt, and Saul can't even bring himself to say his name (verse 8b). Like a paranoid nut he is threatened when there is no threat, fearful that David is "lying in wait", when in fact David is hiding. This scene of conspiracy, suspicion, and imagined threat is replayed when the priests are summoned. The priests are addressed the same way ("hear now", verses 7 and 12); he cannot bring himself to say Ahimelech's name (verse 12), and he speaks of their conspiracy, rising up and lying in wait.

We see this for what it is - baseless paranoia. We are given repeated insights into David's innocence: no-one from Israel will inform on David and it's left to a Gentile, Doeg; Ahimelech is firm in his defence of David (verse 14); Saul's guards refuse to carry out his order (verse 17). Saul is now a paranoid conspiracy theorist, and there is no truth in the matter.

It all culminates in a great tragedy as the death sentence is pronounced on Nob (verse 16). It is a gross miscarriage of justice. Even if the accusations were true, no-one was to be put to death on the testimony of one witness (Numbers 35:30). Nob, the priestly city, is treated like an enemy city - totally destroyed. You can't escape the picture of king Saul: the "king like the nations" is a destructive king.

Questions

1. What leads Saul, a king like the nations, to this course of action? Where does it begin?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God would give you insight into the destructive ways of the world, that we might love his ways instead.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping." 1 Samuel 22:23

Praise: Psalm 52:5-8 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Wednesday - 1 Samuel 22:6-23 - Sin's Destructive End

Don't miss the profound tragic irony in Saul's actions. In chapter 15 he failed to carry out the total destruction of Amalek, which was the just judgement of God. Now he commands the total destruction of one of God's cities, an injustice of the highest proportion. The previous priestly city, Shiloh, had been destroyed by Philistines; this priestly city is destroyed by its own king. The sad truth is that Israel got what she wanted, and what Samuel warned against - a king like the nations. Saul is murderous, despotic, and tyrannical. Seeing threats everywhere, he is ordering pogroms and witch hunts, liquidating loyal servants (verse 12 and verse 15).

As the king 'of their own choosing', Saul was the king after their own heart, and after our own heart. The 'have it your way' king shows us what happens when we have it our way. He is the embodiment of the heart that rejects God's ways and God's rule. He is every one of us, apart from Christ. Saul shows us where sin ends up and where our way leads - death and destruction.

Perhaps you think, "I'm a long way off slaughtering entire towns." I don't deny that, but look at our sin drenched world: terror and destruction occur across the globe daily, most of it just doesn't make our news broadcasts. Death and destruction are everywhere. Look, too, at where sin begins: it starts with small acts. Like the Jungle Doctor fable: cute little leopards become big leopards, and big leopards kill. The seed of every sin is in our heart - murder is just the full flowering of anger (Matthew 5:21-22). Ultimately all sin leads to our own destruction and death (Romans 5:12 and 6:23). You might be a long way off slaughtering whole towns, but all sin leads to death and destruction. See the horror of Nob and see the horror of your sin.

What started as a 'small' sin for Saul, just a little rejection of God's Word, had brought him to the point of wiping out God's ministers. It's an attack on God himself, or as close as Saul can get anyway. Little sins end in death, destruction, and striking at God himself. Be destroying sin or it will destroy you.

Questions

1. What sin do you need to pull out now before it flowers into something even more destructive?

Prayer Points

1. "Deliver us from evil"
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping." 1 Samuel 22:23

Praise: Psalm 58:1-4 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Thursday - 1 Samuel 22:6-23 - God: the Ultimate King

In moments of barbarity, brutality, and terror like this, where is God? This is a legitimate question to ask; and it is answered by this passage. In the midst of this barbarity and brutality, God is in the same place he always is - the throne of Heaven. He is there ruling over all things, reigning over all things, and bringing all things to pass. It is illustrated in this chapter.

Saul's savagery is directed at God, but it is also directed by God. He is in control of it all, without being the cause of sin. We see this when we remember that the priests at Nob were of the family of Eli. Remember Eli's wicked sons, Hophni and Phinehas, from chapter 2? The family were judged by God for their wickedness: "Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house" (2:31). In chapter 2 God said, "I will punish Eli and his family for their sin"; in chapter 22 we see Eli's household cut off - it is God's judgement. Events at Nob are not just the results of Saul's savagery, but also God's sovereignty. God uses his enemies to bring about his purposes: "Even the wrath of man shall praise you" (Psalm 76:10).

Where is God in the horror of Nob? Where was God on 9/11? Where was God for 30 years of the Troubles in Ireland? He was and is on the throne, bringing his purposes to pass, even through the wicked actions of his enemies. I'm not saying these acts of violence were necessarily God's specific judgement on a specific place or people; we can't determine that. But we can say that they are God working out his purposes and plans. He is on the throne. This should be a comfort to us. God is not napping when terror happens, he is on the throne fulfilling his purposes, through the good and the bad.

Questions

1. Where do you see the greatest act of man's wickedness fulfilling the purpose of God? (Acts 4:27-28)
2. Are there any acts of personal terror and tragedy that you need to reckon with the sovereignty of God in?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that God is never caught napping, and ask for faith to rest in his sovereignty.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping." 1 Samuel 22:23

Praise: Psalm 58:5-8 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Friday - 1 Samuel 22:6-23 - David: the Better King

As you reflected on what we saw in this chapter yesterday you might have found yourself thinking, "I'm not sure I like this God who is in control of all things, allowing massacre and tragedy, unleashing Saul's savagery to settle a personal score." In one sense that is not unreasonable, but you need to see the whole picture of who this God is.

God is not the cause of sin; it is Saul's morality that is the problem, not God's. The people chose Saul and gave him this power - he is their choice. God, on the other hand, is actively doing something about it. As the people's choice slaughters cities, God's choice is blessing his people. We see this in the closing scene as the sole survivor, Abiathar, makes it to David.

What a difference we see between the people's king and God's king: a difference in responsibility and in how he treats the priests. The people's King ducks responsibility, blaming David, the priests, and his servants, although it is his sin that has cost him his kingdom. God's king, on the other hand, takes responsibility for the massacre (verse 22). David has realised the folly of his ways at Nob and Gath and grown from those lies. Learning the lessons of folly and falsehood, he takes responsibility.

Also, the people's king slaughtered the priests, but God's king protects them (verse 23). Abiathar finds refuge with God's king. With God's king, one doomed to death could find safety from his foe, resting in the promise of safekeeping. God's king is better! Our way leads to death and destruction, God's way leads to safety and protection - this is the whole picture we need to see to understand God's plans and purposes in this world.

Questions

1. Do you struggle to come to terms with God's justice and judgement? How does seeing the whole picture help?
2. A better king, with whom those doomed to death can find safekeeping...who does that sound like?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that God doesn't just bring his justice, but also his mercy to a sin-cursed world.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping." 1 Samuel 22:23

Praise: Psalm 58:9-11 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Saturday - 1 Samuel 22:6-23 - Messiah: the Better King

As we look at the world today we see barbarity, brutality, savagery, and terror, we see the fruit of our kingship and self-rule - destruction. Adam and Eve tried to take the crown from God's head and put it on their own; the result is death and destruction. But it is not so when we look to God's better king, who takes responsibility and offers protection with himself. Jesus Christ is the true and better David, and a better king than we are.

He is a better king because he takes responsibility. He took responsibility and entered this world of barbarity, brutality, and terror; he experienced its barbarity, brutality, and terror, and he overcame it to rescue us from death and destruction. He is a better king because he takes responsibility, and he rescues.

He is a better king because he gives protection. With him is safety and security. Note verse 23 - safekeeping is with him. Where he is, Heaven, is the safest place. Think about it: those who are his, who die as victims of this world's barbarity and terror, are actually safest. They are conquerors with him; safe with him. Also, our children who are miscarried, painful though it is for us, are taken straight to safety with him, spared a lifetime of trouble and terror in this world. We need to hold fast to the truth that "to depart and be with Christ is far better" (Philippians 1:23).

So, in this world of barbarity, brutality, savagery, and terror, there is only one place of safety, only one place to go - to God's King, Jesus Christ. Is that where you are? Are you looking to him and trusting in him alone, like Abiathar? In his service and at his disposal, like Abiathar? Is he the one you tell of this world's troubles and of your personal pain (verse 21)? Is he the one you look to for hope? The terrors and troubles of this world are meant to drive us to him.

Questions

1. How does David foreshadow Jesus in this chapter?

Prayer Points

1. Thank God that we are "in Christ" and are ultimately untouchable by the trouble of this world, as he is in Heaven.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping." 1 Samuel 22:23

Praise: Psalm 62 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

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