

1 Samuel 20

We now come to the final partings between David and Saul, David and Jonathan. David will not speak to Saul again except for the two times he spares Saul's life, and tells him so. David and Jonathan will briefly meet again in Chapter 23. But it is clear David knows he can never return to Saul's court.

We can learn from David's departure into exile. Notice how he does not ask Jonathan to leave his father. Neither does he try to recruit followers to join him in the desert (although a few disaffected subjects of Saul do so; see chapter 22). David makes no attempt to raise a rebellion as Absalom will later do to him, although his popularity among Saul's subjects would be certain to make that rebellion succeed.

This is all the more remarkable because David knows that God has chosen him to occupy the throne and that Saul is deservedly doomed to fall. If David's kingship is ordained by the Lord, why not claim it now?

Questions for study and discussion:

1. In light of 19:2, why does Jonathan tell David he is safe from Saul?
2. What is David's scheme to determine if Saul is truly after his life?
3. Does David ask Jonathan to lie on his behalf in verse 6?

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This is another example of David being a man after God's own heart. He knew that God's promises will take place in God's time. He yields to that timetable and goes willingly, alone, into exile. The triumphs and failures he experiences during that exile will help to forge the king he will become.

“These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13)

Notes

20:1 This chapter takes place around Saul's home in Gibeah.

20:1 *Nathan* means *has given*. *Jonathan* means *Jehovah has given*. *Nathaniel* means *God (elohim) has given*.

20:5 Monthly new moon festivals are described in Numbers 28:11-15. The only New Testament reference is in Colossians 2:16.

4. How is Jonathan's statement in verses 14-15 borne out later?
5. Why does David come up with the elaborate signal with the arrows, then in the end simply talk to Jonathan face to face?
6. Saul's words about Jonathan's mother in verse 30 are disgusting. How are they also ironic?
7. In verse 31, Saul threatens to kill David in order to protect Jonathan's inheritance. Do we sometimes use concern for our family or loved ones as a rationale for doing something that is wrong?
8. The parting between David and Jonathan is wrenching for both of them. Why doesn't Jonathan just leave with David? After all, his father has just tried to kill him.