

1 Samuel 24

Here we have the well known incident of David cutting off a corner of Saul's robe. The immediate significance is that David has Saul in his power. He can slay Saul, live in safety, and ascend to his rightful throne. But he does not.

To take a robe, in scripture, symbolizes borrowing authority. When Jonathan put his own robe on David in 18:4, it was the same as handing him his inheritance in Saul's kingdom. Saul himself had torn off a piece of Samuel's robe in chapter 15, which Samuel then pictures as Saul's kingdom being torn from him. The prophet Ahijah in 1 Kings 11 tears Jeroboam's garment into twelve pieces and returns ten of them, symbolizing the ten tribes that will form Jeroboam's new northern kingdom of Israel.

David repents of stealing a swatch of Saul's robe and refuses to take his life and thus seize his throne, even though he is entitled to it. We are reminded of the antitype of David, the Lord Jesus. "... Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself ..." (Phil 2:5-7).

Questions for study and discussion:

1. How many more men did Saul have than David?
2. In verse 4, are David's men correct about what the Lord has told David? Are we sometimes tempted by false representations of the Lord's will?
3. Does David indeed "do to him as it shall seem good to you"?

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The Lord Himself does take on a borrowed robe when the soldiers dress Him in purple and mock Him as a king. But of course they unwittingly are dressing Him in His proper regal garb. And later they cast lots at the foot of the cross for portions of His garments, only stopping at tearing apart His valuable tunic, woven as a single piece.

Do we sometimes dress our Lord in the raiment of a king but fail to genuinely exalt Him as King? Yes. But we have a portion from His garments, one that we cannot cut off, tear away, or win in a game, but is given to us through faith and by grace. "Then they were each given a white robe ..." it is said of the martyrs in Revelation 6:11. Indeed, all who trust in Jesus are dressed in His white robe. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10).

Notes

24:1 En Gedi is an oasis on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Its springs would have sustained David and his men.

4. Read verse 6. Where else in scripture do we have instructions or examples not to strike those in authority?

5. Why does David not kill Saul?

6. What do David's descriptions of Saul and himself tell us about David's heart?

7. What does David swear to Saul? Does he fulfill his oath?

8. David does not seem to disbelieve Saul's repentance but he does not join him, and instead proceeds to his stronghold. Does this seem unforgiving?