

1 Samuel 22

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[0 : 00] 2 Samuel 22. So a new year is just around the corner, isn't it? 2013, I don't know where that went, it's just flown by, hasn't it?

I guess many of us have had a mixed year, haven't we? There have been ups and downs for most of us in this room tonight.

But wouldn't it be great to know what 2014 has in store for us? Wouldn't it be brilliant to know the future? Wouldn't it be fantastic to know we've got it all under control?

Wouldn't you love to get your employment sorted out, if that's a worry for this new year, to get that solid and predictable? Or your health, to know where that's going?

Here's my diary for 2014, it's fresh, and it is beautifully empty until Paul gets back next week. But wouldn't it be great to have everything filled out in this diary for the next year?

[1 : 09] Wouldn't it be great to have all the important things filled out? Think of your diary, perhaps in that relationship that you're banking on.

Well, on the 22nd of October, it's in the diary already, you are going to meet your future wife, or your future husband, and it's going to be fantastic. Maybe your kids' schooling. Well, on the 7th of September, they're going to go to a new school, and it's going to be fantastic, they'll settle in really well.

Exam results, 6th of August, 5 A's, and a place at Oxbridge. Students, you can always hope, can't you? Wouldn't it be good to have it all sorted out right now?

No nasty surprises, no disappointments, so that the things we hope for, as individuals, and as a church, are guaranteed for this year, from day one, would be great, wouldn't it, to have that.

Well, if you're really desperate for that, you could go to a fortune teller, couldn't you? Just like the Spanish football manager, José Lepara, I think I've pronounced his name right there.

[2 : 21] José Lepara, he went to a fortune teller to get a prediction about a girl that he loved. He wanted to know how the relationship would pan out in the future, and he kept visiting this fortune teller, but it was bad news every time.

It was a bit sad, really, because it was an unrequited love. And there was no sign of that changing. But there was one option left. It was a long shot, but the fortune teller offered José Lepara a love potion, that he could buy from him for, wait for it, \$200,000.

It's about £150,000. This, he said, would guarantee that the girl of his dreams would fall in love with him and want to marry him immediately.

Well, surprise, surprise, the potion didn't work. And it all went really pear-shaped when Lepara was caught by the police breaking into the house of the fortune teller, trying to recover his money.

Maybe, if you think about it, if he'd have just given the girl the £150,000, she would have fallen in love with him anyway at that point. Could have saved him a whole lot of trouble. So idiotic, wasn't it?

[3 : 39] But you know, there's a bit of José Lepara in all of us, isn't there? As we think about the future. We have our plans, our contingencies about the unknown.

We have our props. We want to control it. If we could believe it, we'd love it if there was someone that we could go to who could give us a potion and sort out our future so that it would all work out as we want it, according to every detail.

Well, you know, our passage this evening, it's here to train us to spot the right type of person to entrust our futures with. Now, as we read that earlier, as Marsha read it, the part in the chapter that might have seemed shocking to us is this incident where all these priests are killed near the end of the chapter in verse 18 by Doeg.

Now, that's important. But without going into too much detail, I want you to see just the little hints in the story that are taken up with the idea of knowledge about the future, disclosure and wisdom about the future.

So you've got David who listens to this prophet called Gad in verse 5 about what he should do with his travel arrangements. And then Saul complains that no one discloses things to him in verse 8.

[5 : 15] In verse 10 and 13, we learn about a priest called Ahimelech inquiring for David, receiving wisdom from the Lord for him.

And how in verse 22, don't worry about the details for now, but David says, I knew on that day what would happen in the future with these priests, and that he's even occasioned the death of the priest's sons.

You see, it's a chapter that is filled with different ways of handling the future and knowledge about the future. Now, maybe you notice this.

As you meet certain people, you meet people occasionally, don't you, who stand for certain types of person. I don't know if you kind of think like that. I tend to sort of categorise people like that.

But they are the embodiment of certain kinds of people. So, take one of our elders, and I know he won't be embarrassed about this, Chuck Phillips, he's here tonight, and we're glad of it.

[6 : 19] There is only one Chuck, isn't there? He's unique, and we're glad that he's with us. But you may meet somebody who has a similarly contagious laugh and shares his quirky sense of humour.

You may meet somebody like that. He speaks with a deep South American accent. Now, although he is not the Chuck, you might say he is a real Chuck Phillips kind of guy, isn't he?

There is only one Chuck Phillips, but there can be many like him. There can be many Chuck Phillipses. It's the same when we use the phrase Mr. Nice Guy, isn't it?

There's only one Mr. Nice Guy, but there can be lots of Mr. Nice Guys. Now, do you see the points? There are people who represent types of people, aren't there?

And you see, what the book of 1 Samuel does is it teaches us about two important types of person. It shows us on the one hand the type of person God's anointed king will be.

[7 : 25] Now, the Bible word is the Christ, the Messiah, the saviour of God's people. He will be like David in the book of 1 Samuel, the one who kills off the Goliaths, the one who brings the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, who brings peace and security from the enemies.

That's David, isn't it? He's a type of God's Christ, his special king. But then there's this King Saul, who we read about in the passage, and he is the symbol of opposition.

He's the antithesis to God's King David. He's a type of Antichrist. So you've got the two types of person, the two types of king.

And you see, we're to be trained to spot which of the two is better. Because we will go to somebody about the future, won't we?

We will all go to somebody or something. Whether it's God's Christ or somebody else. We all have our ways of trying to handle the future.

[8 : 37] Our little fortune tellers. Our insurances. Our contingencies. Our worries. But we need to know whether the person or the thing that we go to is like God's Christ, or more like the Antichrist.

With nothing more than a really expensive pretend love potion. That actually brings us ruin in the end. So three things to see about these two types of people.

First off, look at their surroundings. Look at their surroundings in the world. Now what do each one of them offer you? You've got the Christ, David, and you've got the Antichrist, Saul.

Well look at the Christ for a second. Have a glance at verse 1. David departed and escaped from there, and escaped to the cave of Adulam. To the cave of Adulam.

Now what sort of life does King David offer? Well he isn't the king of the castle, is he? He's the king of the cave. Now don't worry if you don't know the background to the story.

[9 : 49] But David at this point is on the run from Saul, who hates him more and more every day. Back in chapter 21, David has just been helped by a priest called Ahimelech, who gives him provisions and Goliath's sword.

He escapes then to Gath, and he finds himself going into this cave. Which would have been a pretty common place to hide at that sort of time.

It's a bit like a, I don't know, a B&B;, or a homeless shelter or something like that. It's not really the life of Riley, is it?

For this Christ. It's a pretty vulnerable kind of life. It would be pretty cold and smelly. I haven't been in a cave recently, but that's what I imagine it to be.

Pretty unpleasant. He offers you a cave, not a castle. He offers you a life on the run.

[10:56] He offers you no permanent home in this world, but almost a feeling of homelessness here. But, by contrast, there's Saul, isn't there?

Look down at verse 6. At verse 6 there, now Saul heard that David was discovered. And the men who were with him. Saul was sitting at Gebeah under the tamarisk tree.

On the height, with his spear in his hand. Just imagine it. And all his servants were standing about him. Well, it's a different picture, isn't it? You've got the convict in the cave.

And then the great prince, the great king, in the palace. He's got the servants. The security, the spear in his hand. And the strategy, he's on the heights, isn't he?

Strategically powerful. Whatever the future holds, Saul's got it covered, hasn't he? He can see what's coming. He's got the life of privilege and plenty. And you know, that might be the choice facing you this evening.

[11:57] You can go with the Christ, with Jesus. But he says himself, doesn't he? Foxes have holes. The birds have nests.

But I have no place to lay my head. It's a cave. Be prepared, he says. Don't get too comfortable in this world if you want to be with me.

Because there's more to life than this world. But actually you might not want that, might you? You might want to be next to Saul with some sense of power and prestige and control for the future.

But Christ? Well, can he honestly be serious? A cave? What sort of future is that? It's not great, is it? If you want to be accepted and popular and privileged and feel in control in the world, and that's all there is, then Saul is your man.

God's Christ. He isn't the one for you. So there's the surroundings. The surroundings. The cave and the castle. So look at the surroundings. But second point tonight, look at their servants.

[13:16] Look at their servants. Now if you know me, you might know that I'm a bit of a self-confessed Apple computer geek. I quite like Apple computers. And I was very jealous that Emma got an iPad before me.

I hadn't even got an iPad yet. So think about next Christmas for me. But I don't know if you remember when Apple brought out the new iPad. Here's one here. The new iPad. They brought this out, I don't know when it was, iPad 5, just later last year.

And when they did that, they announced it, didn't they? And there were queues and queues of people down Regent Street, outside the Apple store, waiting to get their hands on one of these new iPads.

People were even willing to sleep in tents, weren't they, to get first in the queue. They were willing to be homeless for a couple of nights to get their hands on one of these new iPads.

If you want to play afterwards, you can come and have a go. They would do anything to get their hands on one, wouldn't they? You know, people will always go to the things that they believe to give them happiness, won't they?

[14:24] And they'll do almost anything to get it. And actually that's what you've got in verses 1 to 2, when you look at the servants of the Christ of David.

Here is David in the cave. But there are queues and queues of people waiting to get to him. It's a bit like Santa's grotto in Westfields, isn't it?

The queue is endless. Look at verse 2. Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him.

And he became captain over them. 400 of them, we're told. So you've got all the waifs and the strays queuing up to be with David.

Look at his servants. Those in debt, broken and depressed, hurting, purposeless, distressed, desperate people gathered to David.

[15:28] There is just something irresistibly attractive about the man, isn't there? About this Christ. They queue up to be with him.

David, he just naturally attracts the needy to himself. And they find direction and purpose and life with him. He becomes captain over them.

He's a natural born leader. You know, we had a lovely walk down the embankment on Christmas Eve last week. It was great. They had all the Christmas markets. It was beautiful.

But there was a hint of sadness in it all because there were quite a few homeless people sitting on the side of the streets. And it's horrible, isn't it? You see folk like that and you just feel powerless. You're so sad. You're so sad. And yet there's a sense of powerlessness of not knowing what to do to help people in so much trouble. But David, the Christ, he seems to know, doesn't he?

[16:27] He instinctively knows how to be the captain of the needy. To sort them out. He knows how to protect them.

To be leader over them. Now the surroundings in the cave may be basic, but there's an atmosphere there, isn't there? Of fulfilment and restfulness. The people, the distressed people, finally find a place where they have a captain.

He is a naturally brilliant leader. He's naturally brilliant at dealing with the depressed and the discontented or those in debt. And you know, he's naturally brilliant at dealing with you.

He's worth queuing up for. He's even worth living in a tent for. Or in a cave for. Now, let me speak to the men for a moment.

Blokes, let me talk to you if I may. I hope you don't think that I am making sweeping generalisations here about men. Or sort of being close-minded in any way.

[17:36] But I think as men, we generally like the idea of fighting. I notice that Marius had a sword for Christmas. And his sister had a beautiful dress.

As men, we sort of like to fight, don't we? That's in our instincts. Even from a young age. We want to battle for a cause, don't we?

We want to be firemen and soldiers and knights of a round table. And the problem is that young lads today, don't they?

They can't express that in the right way. It often goes to crime and violence. Whether it's in the real world or in the virtual world.

We want to be fighters. But actually there's nothing to fight for, is there anymore? There's nothing to live for.

[18:31] Certainly nothing to die for. Purposeless. Aimless. But the Christ, he says, men, will be your captain.

So church, it is not just for ladies and children, although it is. It's for the men to find their captain, the Christ.

And to fight for him. With leadership and prayer. And sacrifice. As soldiers of faith. Now ladies, do encourage us men in that.

We need help, we do. He'll give you something to live for. And something to die for. Your captain. That's the Christ.

But then again, you've got the Antichrist, haven't you? There he is. Look at him. Saul, verse 7 again. And we get to eavesdrop on one of his boardroom meetings, don't we? With his cabinet.

[19:33] Here he goes in verse 7. Saul said to his servants who stood about him. Hear now, people of Benjamin. Will the son of Jesse, that's David, give every one of you fields and vineyards?

Will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds? That you've all conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse.

None of you is sorry for me. Or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in wait as at this day.

When you look at Saul's servants, you realise that Saul is the kind of boss who shouts at his staff when he is frustrated when losing control of the business, isn't he?

He's totally preoccupied with himself. None of you is sorry for me. None of you discloses anything to me.

[20:33] He's like one of those sort of macho chief executives in the city who just make their secretaries cry all the time. Because they're so frustrated with themselves.

He's not a real man, is he? He's no captain. He's a coward. And he says to his servants, I'm such a great boss. Is David as good as me? Can he give you people to command?

Can he give you control of fields and vineyards? Can he give you control of your future like I can?

But the servants, they're sick of it, aren't they? Have a look at verse 17.

Saul turned to the guards who stood about him. Turn and kill the priests of the Lord. Because their hand is also with David. But the servants of the king would not put out their hand to strike the priests of the Lord.

He's getting more and more rash. And his servants, they're fed up with it. They don't listen to him, do they? It's an embarrassing moment. They don't follow his orders.

[21 : 38] They're sick of it. His power is failing. He may have the palace and not the cave. But the atmosphere is full of mistrust and selfishness.

He says he can give them vineyards and fields and armies. But the servants of Saul are fed up with him. They're fed up with a failing, self-absorbed pretender of a king.

That's the Antichrist. He says, I'll give you the world. But it's a world without direction. Aimless. With a selfish coward.

I wonder, are you sick of that sort of life? It might be the palace. But he's only a pretender, isn't he? The Christ has a cave.

But he is a captain. A captain of the future. So look at the surroundings. Look at the servants. But third, and then last point tonight.

[22 : 44] Look at their security. Look at their security. Now whilst Saul may appear to have the servants, the spear and the strategy.

When you look at him closely, you realise that the prevailing feeling in Saul's camp is paranoia. Just look again at verse 6.

Saul heard that David was discovered and the men with him. And Saul was sitting at Gebeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with a spear in his hand.

That sounds impressive, doesn't it? But actually the spear there is the same spear that he's tried to pin David against the wall with in the past. It's not a spear of confidence, is it?

And of strength. But it's a spear of paranoia. Of fear. No one discloses to me where David is.

[23 : 42] He can't see what's going on, can he? Saul is shrouded in darkness. He's without counsel. He's only got worry to protect him from the future.

Even his servants disobey him. That's Saul in his camp. He's got no one to tell him about his worries.

No one to bring him wisdom. No one to disclose anything to him. That's the life of the Antichrist. And isn't that so often what life can be like for us when we don't go to the Christ, to the Lord Jesus, to our captain?

I wonder if you know people like that, where life is just full of paranoia about the future. Where decisions about anything just become impossible. Where worry is the only way of trying to deal with the unknown.

It's an exhausting way of living, isn't it? If that's you, maybe that is you. It's a draining way to live like that. Where there's no clarity in life.

[24 : 53] And you're in the dark about tomorrow, let alone 2014 and beyond. Saul is paranoid. He's looking for trouble around every corner.

I mean, have you thought about it? Why is he even worried about David in the first place? That's a Himalax point in verse 14, isn't it? Who among your servants is so faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law and captain of your bodyguard?

Saul, David is not a problem. David's not even against you. But that's Saul, isn't it? Suspicious and irrational. He's like the man in Proverbs 28, where it says, The wicked flee when no one pursues.

That's the life of the Antichrist. Of those without Christ. No real security. Just paranoia.

But as we've seen already, with David, with the Christ, there is knowledge and revelation. The prophet Gad brings to him the word of the Lord in verse 5.

[26 : 01] He has access to God's word. He's in a cave, but it's a cave filled with light. The light of the knowledge of the Lord's word.

He can see perfectly and he can negotiate the problems. He's just been with the priest, the Himalax, in chapter 21. Again, in contact with God's word.

And that's what gives David wisdom and clarity. It's what removes fear. No matter what his surroundings are. Now in the middle of the chapter, you get this character showing up, don't you, called Doeg.

Doeg. Doeg. Now Doeg has appeared already in 1 Samuel actually. You don't need to know everything about Doeg. All you need to know is that he is a snitch bag.

He is the one who gets Ahimelech into trouble for helping David in chapter 21. Doeg just happened to be there, you see, and he saw what happened, that David was helped, and he grasses that up to Saul.

[27 : 09] And what follows is a horrible, bloody act of violence where Doeg slaughters Ahimelech and all the priests and their families in the cattle. And there's only one priest who escapes at the end of the chapter.

This priest called Abiathar who manages to find David. Now as we read that, we might be tempted to think that Saul has scored some points against the Christ and those who side with him.

And it seems so unfair, doesn't it? It's so wrong that these priests are killed. But actually, if you know a bit of background, you might have to remember a long way back in the beginning of 1 Samuel, where in chapter 2, God says to another priest, Eli, enough is enough about his sons. See, Eli's sons were notoriously bad priests and bad sons. They were having sex with the women of the tabernacle. They took the meat of the offerings and ate it for themselves.

In chapter 2, it says, they made the name of the Lord stink. And God warns Eli, look, sort your sons out or I will. He reminds him over and over again and Eli never does anything about it.

[28 : 33] So God promises that justice will be done on the sons of Eli. And now you see, judgment finally does come on those priests through this man, Doeg.

Now what Doeg did was wrong, wasn't it? To kill those priests. It was a wicked thing to do. It was butchery. But actually, it was also the fulfillment of God's word of judgment.

You see, nothing escapes God's word. Even when his enemies think they're winning, all they do is fulfill his word. It's God's word that is solid and unchanging and altogether pure.

And it's impossible to get around it, even when you're against it. And so do you see, that because David has God's word, he is secure.

And he says to Abiathar, this priest who escapes, have a look at verse 22, I knew on that day when Doeg was there, when he saw me, that he would surely tell Saul, I have occasioned the death of all the priests of your father's house.

[29 : 55] Even though it's been a terrible thing to happen to Abiathar's family, the Christ can say to him, listen, I knew it would happen. I occasioned it.

And actually it was in God's plan. With the Christ, there is perfect light and knowledge, perfect security, because he has his word.

Now we're going to come to a close, but I want you to see just one last thing in this passage, and it's the kind of punchline really of the chapter in verse 23. Just have a look there.

So it feels like a contradiction in terms. Verse 23, David says to this escape priest, stay with me, do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life.

With me you'll be in safekeeping. So this escape priest finds David, and the comfort that David gives him is, well, good to meet you, but I'm pretty much the reason you're in trouble.

[31 : 02] He seeks my life, and now he seeks your life. You're with the person who actually puts you in most danger. This is all because of me, and solved paranoia.

Yet with me you're safe, he says. It's a contradiction, isn't it? Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. He says to Abiathar, for security, from now on, stay with me.

The one who lives in caves, stay with me. The one who puts you in danger, stay with me to be in safekeeping.

The one who will be your captain. The one who will bring the light and revelation of God's word into your life to sort you out.

That's David. That's the Christ. But remember what we said before, there are many Christs, aren't there? But there is only one Christ.

[32 : 08] The Lord Jesus. It's David's greater son who, whatever the surroundings are in our lives, promises to be our living word.

The very light of God made man. Our life that is the light of men. Our wisdom. Our safekeeping. Wouldn't it be great to have it all planned out at the start of this year? to have it all sorted, to be in control, to live in a castle. But wouldn't it be even better to have a captain, to have the Christ, to have a cave filled with light?

People will always go to the things that they believe, give them happiness, won't they? And they'll do almost anything to get it. So let me ask you, are you in the queue for the Christ at the beginning of this new year?

Or are you still playing around with pretend potions? And aren't you sick of that? But with him you'll be in safekeeping.

[33 : 25] Let's pray together.