



## *Studies in the Life of David*

Text

First Samuel 23:1-13

Topic

David repeatedly inquires of the Lord to determine God's will for he and his men

Title

*"The Spiritual Inquirer"*

Introduction

Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, bluntly announced,

Yesterday at around 0800, one of our patrols confronted a group of foreigners. They were Christian missionaries and we killed them all.

It was, in fact, a medical-mission's team of ten people, including six Americans, attacked on August 7th.

How do you end up being murdered on a remote road in Afghanistan? It's simple, really. You inquire of the Lord as to where He wants you to go. When He answers, you arise and go there, accepting the risk that is inherently involved.

The more I thought about that formula - inquire, arise, accept - the more I realized **that it is what Christians do almost every day:**

- We inquire of the Lord each day. We call it 'devotions,' but whatever we call it, we offer ourselves up fresh to the Lord as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to Him, which is our reasonable response to His saving us.

- We arise and go out to our mission field. It might be no further than down the hall, or our place of employment, or a classroom, but it is nonetheless the place God has sent us to serve Him.
- Then we accept the risk of serving Him in the place or places He has put us. Some places are obviously riskier than others but all places have at least potential risk for a believer.

This same behavior is modeled for us by David in the verses we are covering today. Except that in addition to accepting the risk of serving the Lord, David also shows us how to accept the rejection that often accompanies our serving.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Are To Inquire, Arise, & Then Accept The Risk of Serving the Lord, and #2 You Are To Inquire, Arise, & Then Accept The Rejection Of Serving The Lord.

#1 You Are To Inquire, Arise,  
& Then Accept The Risk Of Serving The Lord  
(v1-6)

Twice we are told “David inquired of the Lord,” in verses two and four. When he does so again, in verses nine through twelve, we see how he inquired of the Lord. He had the priest bring the “ephod” to him.

The ephod was a garment originally designed for the high priest (Exodus 28:4; 39:2). It was made "of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen," held together by two shoulder-pieces and a skillfully woven band which served as a girdle for the ephod. On the shoulderpieces were two onyx stones on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. It is not known whether the ephod extended below the hips or only to the waist. Attached to the ephod by chains of pure gold was a breastplate containing twelve precious stones in four rows. Underneath the ephod was the blue robe of the ephod extending to the feet of the priest. The robe of the ephod was thus a garment comprising, in addition to the long robe proper, the ephod with its shoulderpieces and the breastplate.

Mentioned in conjunction with the high priests ephod are the Urim and Thummim. These were gemstones that were somehow carried by the high priest on the ephod. They were used by the high priest to inquire about God's will in certain situations. Scholars propose that God would cause the Urim and Thummim to light up in varying patterns to reveal His decision. Others propose that the Urim and Thummim were kept in a pouch and were engraved with symbols identifying 'yes' or 'no' and 'true' or 'false.'

Abiathar, who became high priest after the assassination of his father and the other eighty-four priests by Doeg, probably brought to the camp of David the ephod worn by the high priest when he fled Nob.

Keep this in mind as we examine the narrative.

1 Samuel 23:1 Then they told David, saying, "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors."

The Philistines were essentially pirates. They would lie in wait until the Jewish farmers had brought in their harvest. Then they would raid their threshing floors and plunder them.

Why tell David? He wasn't king; he was still in exile, still a fugitive. Still, he had the means and the heart to do something.

Our king is Jesus. He's still in exile, waiting to return. Mean time we are His means to do something to help others. If the problem is spiritual, and most of them are, the average believer is better equipped to address it than any nonbelieving so-called 'expert.'

1 Samuel 23:2 Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" And the Lord said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines, and save Keilah."

These Urim and Thummin stones were pretty talkative! I'm not sure how you get from 'yes' or 'no' to "Go attack the Philistines, and save Keilah." I have to think there was a little more involved with them than we typically understand.

We can't say for sure, because not much is told us about the stones, but it is likely that other means of inquiry were used in conjunction with them, otherwise you could not have so complete a message.

1 Samuel 23:3 But David's men said to him, "Look, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?"

David and his men were on the run. It was all they could do to stay one step ahead of King Saul and his army. To openly attack the Philistines only brought them greater visibility and danger.

They were an army, a formidable one at that, but they considered avoiding confrontation, remaining in hiding.

*I hope that never describes the church of Jesus Christ.* If we are an army, then let's be on the front lines rather than constantly being supplied while in hiding.

1 Samuel 23:4 Then David inquired of the Lord once again. And the Lord answered him and said, "Arise, go down to Keilah. For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand."

I think there are two lessons here and, even though they are opposites, both can be true:

1. The first lesson, for the followers of David, was that they ought to have trusted his leadership. Not blindly, of course. But they knew he had sought the Lord, inquired of the Lord using the ephod, and it was their spiritual service to submit. I think we miss out on a lot of blessing because we simply do not want to submit to godly leadership.
2. The second lesson, for David, was that if the Lord is leading, there's nothing wrong with confirming His leading by continuing to seek Him. It wasn't a lack of faith on David's part but rather to increase the faith of his men. There comes a point at which you still need to press forward, having heard from the Lord. But, in the mean time, encouraging others to inquire of the Lord is a good thing.

1 Samuel 23:5 And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines, struck them with a mighty blow, and took away their livestock. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

They plundered the pirates! It was a complete victory.

1 Samuel 23:6 Now it happened, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, that he went down with an ephod in his hand.

The readers of First Samuel already knew, from the opening verses, that David would have “inquired” using the “ephod.” Why mention it here?

Just speculating, but I’d say it’s for emphasis. It’s like saying, “See how important it was that Abiathar grabbed the ephod and brought it to David.”

To us it says, “See how important it is that you inquire of the Lord day-by-day to discern the Lord’s will.”

I haven’t been able to find the Urim and Thummim. This is an old building, but they don’t seem to be hid anywhere here. Today we discern God’s will a little differently.

First, keep yourself in a place, spiritually speaking, where you can pick-up on God’s will. In Romans 12:1-2 you read,

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

If you’re not presenting yourself and doing the other things suggested, you won’t be on the correct frequency to hear from the Lord.

Next I’d point out that God’s will has mostly already been revealed. As you read the Bible you are given either direct commands or definite principles by which to make decisions.

Still there are times when you can go left or right, say 'yes' or 'no.' I always like the model of Acts thirteen for those times. The men were waiting on the Lord, in prayer, when the Holy Spirit somehow spoke to them. Then they continued in prayer to confirm what they'd heard.

There remains a certain mystery to God's will because God is romantic and He wants you to seek Him, to desire Him, the way a panting deer desires the water. You can't remove this romantic element without turning your walk into something strictly mechanical. Mechanical Christianity is an ugly thing.

God will call upon you to take risks. If He isn't, then you're not hearing from Him, and it's probably because you've reduced discovering His will to a matter of what makes the most sense to you.

Serving the Lord has always been a risky business. We're promised persecution and suffering. We're told the world will hate us. We read about believers whose lives were required but who were heroes in the Hall of Faith.

Check to see if there is a measure of risk in your life. If not, I'm not saying to do something reckless just for the sake of doing it. I'm saying you should get back to the basic formula: Inquire, arise and go, accepting the risk involved, to the glory of God.

#2 You Are To Inquire, Arise,  
& Then Accept The Rejection Of Serving The Lord  
(v7-13)

The defense of Keilah is the very first 'ministry' of David's army. Thus it is instructive that the very people he and his men risked their lives to save quickly rejected him. It's instructive in that serving others assumes a great deal of rejection and, if you're not ready for it, it'll cripple you.

1 Samuel 23:7 And Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah. So Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars."

1 Samuel 23:8 Then Saul called all the people together for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.

The tremendous ministry 'high' of defeating the enemies of God and delivering the people of God was going to be challenged.

You and I can't live on the spiritual adrenaline of ministry highs. I love them; they're great. But we are in this for the long haul. We serve looking past the people and the circumstances and to the Lord. It's His assessment that we care about.

Saul did not inquire of the Lord. Nevertheless he thought circumstances favored him and, thus, it must be God's will. If you rely only on your own wisdom, and do not seek the Lord, than you will misinterpret circumstances based upon your own desires.

Here comes the part that hurts:

1 Samuel 23:9 When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here."

1 Samuel 23:10 Then David said, "O Lord God of Israel, Your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake.

1 Samuel 23:11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O Lord God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant." And the Lord said, "He will come down."

1 Samuel 23:12 Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the Lord said, "They will deliver you."

Once again I would have us note that these stones had an awful lot to say, a much bigger vocabulary that 'yes' or 'no.' We just don't know everything we'd like to know about the Urim and Thummim.

David had just delivered the men of Keilah from the Philistines. They would repay him by delivering him to Saul.

In terms we can relate to, they would reject David.

Anyone who serves the public, especially those who are willing to make an ultimate sacrifice of their lives, knows that the particular individuals you save might not be grateful.

It may not be the first thing you learn about serving others, but pretty early on you will suffer rejection. You must know and believe it is the Lord you are serving. If you look to the people, you won't last very long. If rejection doesn't merely cripple you from serving, it will make you bitter in your serving.

Tucked away in this dialog between God and David is the phrase, "Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake." David had saved them from one enemy but he was putting them at risk from another enemy. His heart was to see them delivered and safe, and that could not happen if he remained.

David put their needs ahead of his own. That's a good job description for us as we serve Jesus.

Don't expect anything in return for serving others. That is, don't expect anything from them. Only expect to receive things that are spiritual from the Lord.

The apostle Paul, after everything he went through, said, "at my first defense, no one stood with me" (First Timothy 4:16). No one, that is, but Jesus - and that was enough for him because Jesus was the Person Paul was serving.

Our situation as servants of Jesus isn't quite that bleak. In fact, it's not really bleak at all if we keep our eyes on Him. To have the privilege of serving the Lord cancels-out any amount of risk or rejection. To hear Him say, "Well done," both now and especially at the Reward Seat, is precious.

You should inquire of the Lord. Inevitably, He will have you arise and go to face some risk, to experience some rejection. It must be so because He also faced risk, He also was rejected. He did it for you, to save you.



Can you do it for Him, to serve Him? ***Of course you can!***

