

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

Spirit of Antichrist

I Samuel 22:6 – 23

Intro: Anyone that grew up during or shortly after the Baby Boom should recognize a picture of **Bozo the Clown**. Btw having his own syndicated show & all the merchandise w/ his picture on it, he was easily the most recognizable figure in all of children's entertainment during that period of TV history. Of course, there's only 1 **Bozo the Clown** & him long gone, but I'd venture 2 say that most of us meet **bozo's** on a regular basis (usually in traffic). In 1 sense, **Bozo the Clown** was a distinct, individual TV personality; yet in another sense, **bozo** stands 4 more than just a guy in white face paint & a big red wig – **bozo** is a **type** of *other folks* that we may meet or already know.

The Apostle John's teaching on the **Antichrist** makes a similar distinction (**I Jn 2:18**). There's **Antichrist** w/ a capital A who w/b coming (**little horn Dan 7; man of lawlessness II Thess 2; beast out of the sea Rev 13**), the **final Antichrist** b/4 the Lords' 2nd Coming, but John also says many **antichrists** have already come. There's *the Antichrist* & yet there are **antichrists**. Thru the course of human history there are **antichrist** figures who **typify** & point 2 the **full embodiment** of the evil 2 come. Now, John identified the antichrists of his day mainly by their false teaching but another identifying characteristic of an antichrist figure is that he **opposes, is in conflict w/ & attempts 2 destroy** God's people. This is where Saul comes in. Here in **ch22**, the façade is removed & Saul is seen 4 the **antichrist** figure he really is. We have previously established the wickedness of Saul's heart in his insistent refusal 2 obey the commands of **YHWH**, the true King of Israel. Now we see that his rebellious heart goes well beyond disobedience & is bent on destruction.

6-8-1st, the story. David's now officially a fugitive from King Saul. He's escaped w/ his life & is now living pillar 2 post. When he finally gets 2 the cave of Adullam, his family & about 400 other men join him there. Meanwhile, back in Gibeah, Saul is hosting a royal pity party. He uses this occasion 2 berate his officers & closest advisors, all of whom were from his own tribe of Benjamin. He 1st reminds them that as king, he's the only 1 that can reward them 4 their faithful service. "**Do you think the son of Jesse is going 2 hand out government jobs & perks 2 you like I have?**" Then Saul's paranoia really begins 2 show as he accuses them all of plotting against him w/ a conspiracy of silence, callously w/holding vital intelligence from him about his own son's support of his sworn enemy David. 2 top it all off, he actually believes David is trying 2 assassinate him & that Jonathan has convinced David 2 do it!

9-10- Doeg- This guy knows when 2 speak up! He's in charge of Saul's herdsmen & an "outsider" (Edomite). While everyone else is standing around w/ their mouths shut & their hands in their pockets, Doeg shares w/ Saul what he saw when he was at Nob. Now we know why he's mentioned in **21:7**. "The 'son of Jesse' showed up at Nob & Ahimelech inquired of the Lord 4 him, fed him & armed him (Goliath's sword even)! Now, there's no indication in the text either that David asked 4 of Ahimelech agreed 2 inquire of the Lord 4 David but since no 1 was around 2 contest his story, Doeg figured this little tidbit would make him look that much better 2 Saul & David look that much worse.

11-13- Perception is reality! Saul was quick 2 accept Doeg's story b/c it perfectly fit the scenario he had created in his mind & further, it justified any & all actions he would take against David, up 2 & including termination (of his life).

Ahimelech & his family are called on the carpet 2 answer 4 these accusations & all of them show up. B/c Ahimelech assisted David, Saul accuses him of being involved in this "vast right-wing conspiracy" 2 remove him from the throne.

14-15- Ahimelech amounts a seemingly capable defense: he was clueless 2 the problem btw Saul & David. This wasn't just plausible deniability, he was completely in the dark about the whole situation. This is further evidenced by the fact that the 1st thing Ahimelech does is praise David. Knowing Saul's frame of mind, that couldn't have helped. Ahimelech raised some good points: "who's more faithful (or successful) than David? Isn't he your son-in-law? Didn't you grant him a high rank? Doesn't he have an impeccable reputation in the king's court? What's this about inquiring of the Lord 4 him? I did nothing of the sort! Who's feeding you all this? I don't know what you're talking about!"

But Saul had heard enough & he wasn't in a forgiving mood – it was curtains 4 Ahimelech & the priests of **YHWH!**

16-23- The only survivor of the massacre at Nob was Abiathar & he, like many others, now sought refuge w/ David. We must force ourselves 2 look at the terror & bloodbath in **vs18** & the butchery & massacre of **vs19**. The lesson of **ch22** is that God's people need 2 face reality but also have a reason 4 confidence as we face *the work of antichrists*.

1) **God's enemies only prove God's Word**. The events of **vs18-19** are horrific & undeserved; but as we read of Doeg's slaughter, let's not forget the prophecy that was spoken in **2:30-33**. Doeg's butchery "fulfills" the word of God against the house of Eli. That word had been spoken 40-50 yrs b/4; now, in the carnage at Gibeah & Nob, it had come 2 pass. Of course, we can't blame God 4 this massacre. **YHWH** is not the author of this evil. Complete & total blame belongs 2 this renegade Edomite brown-noser & the **antichrist** that commands him. They alone dared 2 destroy the **priests of the Lord**. It's a detestable wickedness 4 which Saul & Doeg are fully responsible & yet, it is a clear fulfillment of the word **YHWH** had spoken those many years b/4. When you step back & consider it, 1 truth is clear: **even while opposing God's kingdom, God's enemies only succeed in bringing about God's Word!** That's the secret the enemies of God always fail 2 see: as they vigorously attack God, all the while they're simply executing His will. God's enemies prove the truthfulness of God's Word. In their hostility against Him, they carry out His will

This truth is clear & mysterious, plain but not simple. It's what early believers preached & prayed (**Acts 2:23; 4:27-28**)

This truth should put steel into our confidence & our endurance. If we realize that as men oppose God & His people, they will only fulfill His Word; it won't **take away** the sorrow, grief or suffering we may endure but it should give us the certainty of ultimate victory! Ch22 instills in us 1 indisputable fact: **there's no way God's enemies can gain an edge**. They're completely outclassed. If they knew what they were doing, they'd kick themselves, except they already are! If God's word of judgment is so sure, than wouldn't His word of peace & provision be just as sure?

II) **God's people feel the hatred of God's enemies**. Antichrist's passion is to crush & destroy the people of God. That's exactly what Saul does here, just on a smaller scale: he vents his murderous hatred on the priests of the Lord, God's designated servants & representatives of His people. Saul annihilates a town in Israel as if it was 1 of YHWH's enemies. He engages in open war against the servants of the Lord & thus, against the Lord Himself. The refusal of his other servants to lay a hand on the Lord's anointed priest should have given him pause & thought but it didn't.

True, Saul didn't destroy all of Israel – just 85 priests & their families. Also, he didn't destroy **all** the cities in Israel - just 1; but, antichrists aren't measured by statistics, **Saul** becomes **Destroyer of Israel** & joins an infamous group:

Antichrist Pharaoh – instituted his own special brand of postnatal care for Hebrew babies; antichrist Balaam & Balak – who, by curse & counsel, tried to destroy a fledgling Israel in the wilderness. Jezebel (priests), Haman & Antiochus. These all appeared before the time of Christ & there have been plenty that have come on the scene since that time.

This just prompts us to consider 1 **fact** that should give us some consolation: **antichrists tend to be fragile (weak)**! Sure, Saul can order priests to be executed (if he orders the right guy). But that's exactly Saul's problem: **all he has left is raw power**. He's isolating himself, losing whatever real support he could have had: chased off his best commander, pushed away his own son & closest confidant; alienated his closest servants & exterminated all the priests. At 1 time, Saul had it all but now he's in the process of losing everything. David could say "**God is for me**" (Ps 56) but all Saul can say is, "**Doeg is for me**" (how pitiful). Saul's weakening power is consoling to God's people. It gives an encouraging supplement to John's original statement on the subject – **even now many antichrists have come - & gone**.

III) **God's remnant proves His Church is invincible**. Saul may only have raw power left but it's still pretty powerful. Just not completely powerful. Abiathar escapes, runs to David, relays the tragic news & finds safety with him. David treats YHWH's priests much differently than Saul does. Contrast Saul's last words to Ahimelech (**You shall surely die**) with David's words to Abiathar (**with me you shall be safe**). In this, David is seen as protector & preserver of the priests. But Abiathar's escape is a picture of **how God always preserves His people in the midst of destruction**. Moses to Pharaoh, Elijah & the 7K to Jezebel; Herod in Bethlehem – 1 of those toddlers would escape! Herod had no idea how impossible it was to reverse redemption once God had ordained it.

So Abiathar stands as witness to God's insistence in preserving a remnant of His people. The priest of the Lord may be destroyed but not completely destroyed. God's people may regularly be put down but never put out. Abiathar's escape **does not mean** that all God's servants are immune to the world's butchery, it just means that the world's butchery **can never wipe out** all of God's servants. The Lord does not promise that we will never die in the kingdom of God; He just promises that the kingdom of God will never die. If that's what you're seeking, it should be comforting news. If it's not comforting news – then you're probably not seeking God's kingdom 1st. Abiathar's witness is simply this: **there will always be a church on earth to worship God according to His will until Jesus returns to His Bride**.

You might not have expected 2 meet an antichrist in I Samuel but here he is. I believe this message is not just critical 4 the church today, it's also timely. We may soon be faced w/ the same trials & persecutions that other parts of the Body of Christ experience on a regular basis but the principles provided in this chapter should bring strength 2 our resolve 2 endure in the faith. What else can we do? We can't go back 2 our former lives, there's nothing 2 go back 2!

“If God knew this was going 2 happen, why didn't He do something 2 stop it?” He did. He warned the house of Eli 2 repent & turn from their sin. He warned Israel of the dangers inherent in human royalty. Here's the thing: God created us as rational, thinking beings & He provides direction on the right way 2 live. When people ignore His directions, He provides warnings of the consequences of continuing down that path 2 destruction. In the end, God expects us 2 obey Him b/c we choose 2 not b/c we're forced 2, so the impetus is on us 2 make the right choice, the smart choice. **Prov 22:3** makes the point pretty clear. This point's so important, it appears again in **Prov 27:12**.

What evil is coming? We're living in the last days. It doesn't take a political science or sociology degree 2 see that the entire world is spinning towards destruction. Life as we've known it, the good life, cannot be sustained must longer. Someday soon, the real Antichrist will appear & when that happens, it will literally be hell on earth. But as terrible as that will be, it will only be temporary. I believe the proverb is warning of an even greater evil: the eternal judgment of God against sin! “**But I love God! Why will I face His judgment?**” Love 4 God is not something that can simply be expressed verbally, it must be expressed physically. **Jesus** said, “**If you love Me, keep My commandments**” (Jn 14:15) You can't just claim 2 love God, you can only demonstrate your love 4 God thru obedience 2 His Word. But b/4 you balk at this, understand that this is exactly how God loves us: He shows His love 4 us thru sacrificial actions (**Rom 5:8**). When we were still His enemies, God sent His own Son 2 die on the cross 4 our own sin. Abiathar escaped the massacre & found safety & refuge w/ David. Do you want 2 escape the evil that's coming? All you can do is run 2 the Son of David, Jesus Christ, & receive forgiveness of sin & refuge in His gift of salvation. Will you do this today? ☺