

Who was Abiathar in the Bible?

Along with Zadok, Abiathar served as one of the chief priests during David's reign as king. Abiathar's name means "father of excellence" or "father of abundance" in Hebrew.

Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech, who served as a priest at Nob (1 Samuel 21:1; Mark 2:26) until he and the other priests were murdered by King Saul (1 Samuel 21:1-19). Being the only son of Ahimelech to escape the massacre at Nob, Abiathar fled to David and was promised protection by the future king (1 Samuel 21:20-23).

Because Abiathar served David and acted as priest for all of David's men in hiding, he was made high priest along with Zadok once David began his reign as king (1 Chronicles 15:11). This was a natural role for him to take on, as he had kept the ephod and administered the Urim and Thummin when David sought direction from the Lord (1 Samuel 23:6; 30:7).

When Absalom rebelled against his father and attempted to usurp the throne, Abiathar remained loyal to David. Abiathar was among those who fled the capital city with David (2 Samuel 15:24). Zadok and the Levites carried the ark of the covenant, "and Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the people had finished leaving the city" (2 Samuel 15:24). Although David admired the loyalty and faithfulness of the priests, he ordered them to return to the city with the ark. This proved helpful because they were then able to send word to David about Absalom's plans (2 Samuel 15:27-29; 17:15-16). David was restored to his throne and Abiathar to his priestly office.

Things changed as David's son Solomon took the throne. Abiathar was not loyal to the new king. Adonijah, another one of David's sons, put himself forward as king with the help

of Joab (one of David's nephews) and Abiathar (1 Kings 1:5, 7). Once the threat from Adonijah was neutralized, King Solomon dealt with the conspirators. One of Solomon's actions was to remove Abiathar from the priestly office. This fulfilled the Lord's word of judgment over Eli and his descendants, which impacted Abiathar since he was related to Eli (1 Samuel 3:12-14; 1 Kings 2:27). It was only because of the priest's loyal service to David that Solomon did not kill him. Solomon told Abiathar, "Go back to your fields in Anathoth. You deserve to die, but I will not put you to death now, because you carried the ark of the Sovereign LORD before my father David and shared all my father's hardships" (1 Kings 2:26). Zadok replaced Abiathar as priest under Solomon (1 Kings 2:35).

Abiathar lived most of his life in faithful service to the Lord, but he did not finish well. Instead of siding with the rightful king of Israel (2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 1:17), Abiathar assisted one of David's rebellious sons who desired to rule. He allowed earthly matters to become his focus, which cost him the priestly office. Like Abiathar, we can easily get caught up in worldly schemes and lose sight of God's plan. Rather than seeking our own way or chasing what seems politically expedient, we should seek to faithfully follow God. Then, when our time on earth is done, we can state with the apostle Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful" (2 Timothy 4:7, NLT).