

Bible and the Headlines: Security Breach

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It used to be a plot trope of movie mysteries ‘to return to the scene of the crime.’ For people who remember those days, recent headlines brought on a sense of nostalgia. In this real life mystery, both the accused and the victim returned to the scene of the crime. The ‘accused’ in this mystery is the U.S. Secret Service, and the ‘victim’ is the former President Donald Trump. The crime was the failure of the Secret Service to stop an assassin from shooting Mr. Trump at a Pennsylvania rally.

On October 3 the Pittsburgh Post Gazette featured, “‘We’ll Make Sure It’s Safe’: Mike Kelly Says Butler Site Will Be More Secure for Trump Rally Saturday.” The headline’s declaration comes from a U.S. congressman overseeing security preparations for the upcoming rally at the site of the July assassination attempt. The article states, “Lawmakers and law enforcement officials say visitors . . . on Saturday should expect tighter security to enter the rally, a wider security perimeter and ballistic glass” as part of the enhanced protection.

NBC News on October 5th carried, “As Trump Returns to Assassination Attempt Site, Secret Service Is 'At a Breaking Point,' Officials Say.” Written from the perspective of the Secret Service, the article quotes sources who say, “An increased workload and a lack of sufficient staffing . . . is contributing to errors, a relaxing of protocols and low morale that could lead to another catastrophic failure.” The sources say the Secret Service has a bumper crop of protectees, while experiencing high levels of attrition in their ranks.

The New York Times weighed in on the subject October 5th with, “Security Is Tighter for Trump Rally at Site of July Assassination Attempt.” The article points out that Congress and the White House will soon review, “. . . the results of an internal Secret Service study . . . that will identify the problems that permitted a shooter to infiltrate the rally on July 13.” In addition to Secret Service agents, the impending security cordon will include agents from Homeland Security Investigations, the Transportation Security Administration, the Pennsylvania State Police and police from Butler Township,

The Bible contains an incident similar to Butler, Pennsylvania, when those charged with executive protection failed in their mission. The security breach is recorded in Joshua 3. In this chapter, Israel was invaded by the Moabites (v. 12). Their king ruled in Jericho (v. 13). A man named Ehud decided to assassinate the Moabite king. In order to get past the king’s security detail, Ehud hid his weapon on the side of his body the guards would not expect. The Bible says, “Ehud made himself a double-edged sword eighteen inches long. He strapped it to his right thigh under his clothes” (v. 16). This ruse worked for Ehud because he was left-handed (v. 15). The Moabite king also increased his own vulnerability to an assassin by ordering his security detail to leave him (v. 19). The final security barrier was distance, which Ehud eliminated by telling the king that he had a message from God for the king (v. 20). The king allowed Ehud to get next to him, which is when Ehud struck (v.21). The king’s security detail did not check on the king for some time, and this allowed the assassin to escape (v. 26).

From Biblical days to our modern times, it is a risky business to govern others. This is why God commands His people, “Let everyone lift up petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (1 Tim 2:1-2).