

231018-4 1Sa 21, Achish Thinks David a Mad Man–CThurman

The matter concerning Saul's desire to kill David is finally confirmed by Jonathan. David now goes into hiding from Saul for some time.

Chapter 21

1 ¶ Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest:

Saul had gone to Ramah to find and kill David. But as Saul came nearer to Ramah the Spirit of the LORD came upon him so that he prophesied *all that day and all that night*. David took this opportunity to escape to Gibeah to meet with Jonathan. He proved to Jonathan that Saul had determined to kill him. This being done, David then flees to Nob, which is about five miles southeast of Gibeah.

and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why [art] careful

afraid, of the verb דָּרַךְ, tss. *to tremble, to be afraid, to be careful*.

at the meeting of, Qal infin. of the verb אָרַב, *to befall, to happen, to come upon, to be against, to meet, to chance*.

thou alone, and no man with thee?

alone, a masc. singular noun of אֶבֶר, *only, alone*.

Abimelech, by the marginal note, appears to be the same as Ahiah, son of Ichabod's brother Ahitub. Abimelech is the great-grandson of Eli. (Eli – Phinehas – Ahitub – Ahiah) At this time he was in possession of the high priest's ephod. Abimelech is presently Israel's high priest (cf. 1Sa.14.3)

David's reputation and as representative of the king moved him to be careful and wonder what the purpose could be for David's coming. David has a few men with him there, as will be seen in the next verse. But David has a private meeting with Abimelech.

Now, I can't say for certain but the tabernacle might have been moved to Gibeon at this point, and so near to Nob where Ahimelech lives. The ark of the covenant might have been moved from Kirjathjearim by this time.

1Ch 21:29 For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, [were] at that season in the high place at Gibeon. (Gibeah?)

2Sa.6.3 And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that [was] in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart.

1Sa 14:18 And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither (to Gibeah) the ark of God. For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel.

Ahimelech or Ahiah evidently moved from Shiloh to Nob and is functioning as Israel's high priest. He has the priestly ephod with him there.

2 And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business matter matter

anything, the fem. noun מְאֵימָה, tss. any thing (1Sa.20.26, 39; 21.2; 25.15), -thing (1Sa.25.21), ought (1Sa.25.7), somewhat, fault (1Sa.29.3).

whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed [my] servants to such and such a place.
informed

have appointed, Poel pret. of the verb יָדַעַ, tss. to know, to become acquainted, to teach, to show, to comprehend, to know (oft), to perceive, to be sure, etc.

Again, we see David behaving himself wisely. Ahimelech doesn't need to know the true nature of David's coming there. As far as he is concerned David is still a servant and representative of the king.

Mt 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

The king's commandment certainly required David to come to this place quickly and unannounced.

3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give [me] five [loaves of] bread in mine hand, or what there is present.

whatever is found

whatever is found, Niphal (simple pass.) part. of the verb אָצַף, tss. to find, to suffice, to get, to meet, to get hold, to take hold, etc.

לִּח

4 And the priest answered David, and said, [There is] no common bread under mine hand,

profane

common, לִּח, an adj. tss. unholy, common, profane.

קֹדֶשׁ

but there is hallowed bread;

holy

The only bread that Abimelech had that could be given to David and the young men with him is the unleavened bread (comp. Le.24.5-9; Ex.34.25; Lev.2.11) that had been removed from the table of shewbread this past Sabbath day. It was only to be eaten by the sons of Aaron.

Lev.24.5 And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake.

6 And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD.

7 And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon [each] row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, [even] an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

8 Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, [being taken] from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant.

9 And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it [is] most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute.

It was removed according to the word of God in order to lay on the new supply of bread for the week. But whether on the table or not the bread was dedicated and only to be used for holy purposes. In this case the high priest determined it to be lawful for David and his young men to eat this shewbread if they were in an immediate, bodily state of cleanness, purity (contrasted to practical defilements of the flesh).

LK.6.1 ¶ And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing [them] in [their] hands.

2 And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?

3 And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him;

4 How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?

5 And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

'Now our Lord's argument stands thus, that if David, a holy, good man, and, the men that were with him, who were men of religion and conscience, when in great distress, through hunger, ate of the showbread, which was unlawful for any to eat of but priests, the high priest himself assenting to it; then it could not be criminal in his disciples, when an hungred, to pluck, rub, and eat a few ears of corn, which were lawful for any man to eat, even though it was on the sabbath day ...' John Gill, *Exposition of the Old & New Testaments*, The Baptist Standard Bearer Publication, vol.7,p.127

if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.

guarded, kept, preserved

hallowed, of the masc. noun קֹדֶשׁ, tss. holy, holiness, sanctuary, holy things, hallowed, hallowed things.

The high priest says, yes, David and the young men with him may eat this shewbread if they are in an immediately state of bodily purity.

The truth is, not David or the young men, not the high priest or any of the sons of Aaron should eat this bread being in a state of uncleanness. The type of the priesthood being the saints of God (the baptized believing church-related disciples of Jesus Christ) and the shewbread, of fellowship with Christ, His word, and one another, is not possible when we are in a state of present defilement (walking after the flesh, unrepented).

Eph.4.25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

27 Neither give place to the devil.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with [his] hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

5 And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women [have been] kept from us about these three days,

Ex.25.30 And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway.

Le.24.5 And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake.

6 And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD.

7 And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon [each] row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, [even] an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

8 Every sabbath he (Aaron, or His sons after him) shall set it in order before the LORD continually, [being taken] from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant.

9 And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it [is] most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute.

The sanctuary, table and bread representing the place where the believer-priests come together with Christ to feed upon and fellowship around the word of God.

7 Now a certain man of the servants of Saul [was] there that day, detained before the LORD;

detained, Niphal (simple pass.) part. of the verb עָצַר, tss. to restrain, to close up, to refrain, to recover, to detain (v.7), to reign, to stop, to withhold, to keep (v.5).

and his name [was] Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that [belonged] to Saul.
shepherd'ers'
keepers (of the flock)

chiefest, אַבִּיר, an adj. tss. a mighty, the chiefest, strong, stout, valiant, strong ones, bulls, angels'.

herdsmen, Qal part. Poel of the verb רָעָה, tss. to feed, to devour, to entreat, to be a shepherd, to be a herdsman, to be a keeper.

It is not revealed what it was that detained Doeg so that he had to remain at Nob, but somehow or the other he becomes witness to the meeting between David and the high priest.

8 And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear

or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my ^{כְּלֵי} weapons with me,
instruments, vessels
because the king's business required haste.
weapons, armor
matter

required haste, Qal part. Paul of the verb **צָהַר**, and only this once in the OT.

9 And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it [is here] wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod:

under

wrapped, Qal part. Paul of the verb **לָוַט**, tss. *to cast, to wrap*.

cloth, **שִׁמְלֵה**, a fem. noun tss. *garment, cloth, raiment, apparel, clothes*.

if thou wilt take that, take [it]: for [there is] no other save that here. And David said, [There is] none like that; give it me.

10 ¶ And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish

hasted from the face

fled, Qal fut. of the verb **פָּרַח**, tss. *to make haste, to flee away*, etc.

the king of Gath.

So, David went over to the city of Gath, one of the five major cities of the Philistines, where was the king, Achish. Now, Gath is about 25 miles west of Nob.

11 And the servants of Achish said unto him, [Is] not this David the king of the land?

Probably as David, with the few men that are with him, drew near to the city he overheard what was being said by those that were under Achish' jurisdiction. Even these understood David to be Israel's king, at least next to receive the throne.

Isn't it is amazing how word gets around sometimes?

did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

12 And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

This kind of report could be very detrimental to him and his men. There's no telling what Achish might do. Would he think to kill David or use him some way to turn Israel against him?

13 And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad
altered, disguised reason

changed, Piel (intensive act.) fut. of the verb **פָּנַח**, tss. *to strike again, to be a second time (1Sa.26.8), to do again, to be diverse, to repeat, to double, to prefer, to disguise, to change (1Sa.21.13), to alter.*

behavior, **דַּעַת**, a masc. noun tss. *a taste, a behavior (1Sa.21.13), advice (1Sa.25.33), understanding, judgment, discretion, reason, decree.*

and feigned himself made, Hithpoel (Reflexive pass.) fut. of the verb **לָלַח**, tss. *to shine, to boast, to praise, to commend, to celebrate, to glory, to feign madness, to rage.*

in their hands, and scabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall

scribbled
busily marked

scabbled, Piel (intensive act.) fut. of the verb **סָבַב**, tss. *to scabble* (cf. 1Sa.21.13), *to mark* (cf. Ez.9.4), *to limit* (Ps.78.41); to set a mark (Gesenius)

spittle, **רִיר**, a masc. noun twice in the OT tss. *spittle, white of an egg* (Job 6.6).

down upon his beard.

beard, **זָקָן**, common noun always tss. with the English *beard*. Notice that the Hebrew adj. is **זָקֵן**, *old, ancient*.

David being very wise about his first appearance before Achish so that he might be dismissed as some great man. This turns to David's advantage later as his following increases in numbers so that he goes almost unnoticed by Achish. Later David shall begin to undermine the efforts of the Philistines against Israel.

14 Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad:

is mad, Hithpael (reflexive act.) part. of the verb **עָזַב**, marg. '*playeth the mad man*', and always tss. with the English *mad*; of *mad men* (v.15, Pual part.), *to play the mad man* (v.15, Hithpael infin.).

wherefore [then] have ye brought him to me?

15 Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this [fellow] to play the mad man in my presence? shall this [fellow] come into my house?

by me

David was no mad man. As a matter of fact, four times in ch.18, it was said of him that he behaved himself wisely, prudently, skillfully; that is, he guided himself wittingly or with wisdom.

1Sa 18:5 And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, [and] behaved himself wisely; and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

1Sa 18:14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD [was] with him.

15 Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.

1Sa 18:30 Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, [that] David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

*behaved himself wisely, Hiphil fut. of the verb שָׁכַל, tss. to be wise, to be prudent, to be skillful, to guide wittingly, to understand, to consider, to prosper, to instruct, to wisely consider; 1Sa.18.5, Hiphil fut., **behaved himself wisely (marg. prospered)**; 1Sa.18.14, 15, Hiphil part., **behaved himself wisely (marg. prospered)**; 1Sa.18.30, Qal pret., **behaved himself ... wisely.***

David was thought to be a mad man or a fool to the king of the Philistines, when in reality the wisdom, skill, prudence, and understanding that he used to direct himself, to govern his life, to mold his behavior around, proved the reality, the genuineness of his hope in God. He believed the LORD who said that one day he would rule as a king. So, his decisions and actions were all with that in mind. This man Achish thought David to be a mad man was actually a wise man.

Brethren, the world will think we are mad because of the message we preach of Christ's death, burial and resurrection to save sinners from death and eternal ruin. It will think we are fools because of the manner in which we choose to live our lives, on account of the kind of convictions we have over what is to them senseless and non-issues. The world will think we are fools when they see what we are willing to give up for Christ's sake. David,

on the way to the throne, forsook his house, his father, mother, wife, and land to follow after the promise which God made to him.

Mk.10.29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, 30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

The Philistine thought David was mad, and the world will think the same of you as you follow after Christ. Forsaking the world and following Christ isn't just one-time act. It's a life-long manner of life. We're on our way to a throne with Christ the Lord. What is there that we cannot give up in view of this coming great day? ... *But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.*