

Exegetical Notes – 1 Samuel 17:12-31

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1 Samuel 17:12-31

Verses 12-15

¹² Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah. Jesse had eight sons, and in Saul's time he was very old. ¹³ Jesse's three oldest sons had followed Saul to the war: The firstborn was Eliab; the second, Abinadab; and the third, Shammah. ¹⁴ David was the youngest. The three oldest followed Saul, ¹⁵ but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

- David has already been introduced at Saul's court as a musician who played music to calm the raging king (see 1 Samuel 17:1-11). However, when the king was not in residence, only certain members of the court traveled with him. Saul was off to fight the Philistines, but David had not been chosen to accompany him.
- David's three older brothers were part of the army and were with the king. But David was at his father's house at Bethlehem. He went back and forth between the king's camp and his father's house.

Verse 16

¹⁶ For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

- For 40 days, Goliath, the Philistine champion, came forth to challenge the Israelites (see 1 Samuel 17:1-11). But no one in the Israelite camp was willing to face him.

Verses 17-19

¹⁷ Now Jesse said to his son David, "Take this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. ¹⁸ Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance from them. ¹⁹ They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines."

- One day, Jesse, David's father, sent David to the Israelite camp to take supplies to his brothers and to see how they were doing.

Verses 20-23

²⁰ Early in the morning David left the flock in the care of a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry. ²¹ Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other. ²² David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and asked his brothers how they were. ²³ As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it.

- Just as David arrived at the camp, the forces of Israel had moved into battle position and were shouting the war cry.
- David left the things he had brought with him with the keeper of supplies and joined his brothers on the battle line. Goliath stepped forward and issued his challenge to the Israelites. David heard Goliath's challenge.

Verse 24

²⁴ Whenever the Israelites saw the man, they all fled from him in great fear.

- When Goliath issued his challenge, the army of Israel fell back. No one was willing to stand up to Goliath and accept his challenge.

Verse 25

²⁵ Now the Israelites had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his family from taxes in Israel."

- King Saul was seeking a champion from among the Israelites who would stand up to Goliath. He had offered great wealth and a position of standing in his household to whoever defeated Goliath.

Verses 26-27

²⁶ David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

²⁷ They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, "This is what will be done for the man who kills him."

- David inquired, in the hearing of his oldest brother, about what would be given to the man who defeated Goliath and was told of the king's offered reward.

Verses 28-31

²⁸ When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle."

²⁹ "Now what have I done?" said David. "Can't I even speak?" ³⁰ He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. ³¹ What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

- David's older brothers had been present when Samuel anointed David to be Israel's next king (see 1 Samuel 16:1-13). In fact, each of them had been rejected as Israel's new king before David was anointed. Eliab, the eldest son of Jesse, who had been the first rejected in David's favor, was apparently jealous of his brother's election. He confronted David angrily when he heard David asking about the rewards King Saul had offered. He accused David of being conceited and wicked and reminded him that he was not a player in the game but only a spectator.
- David's response showed that he had encountered this kind of rejection and condemnation from his brothers before. They were jealous of his election and angered because God did not choose them. Their anger was with God but was directed at the person God had chosen.
- David continued to seek knowledge about the situation that Israel faced. Someone reported David's interest in the matter to the king and Saul called David to him.

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