

## Exegetical Notes – 1 Samuel 21:10-15

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen for Cornerstone Fellowship  
101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320  
610-384-1375  
charleshjensen@aol.com

(David has fled from King Saul. Saul is pursuing David with the intention of killing him. Over the next three weeks we will look at three sections of Scripture which deal with David's attempts to escape Saul. These are three troubling passages because they are based on deception and deceit. To protect himself from Saul, David, the man after God's heart, lies and deceives others. Saul pursues David to prevent God's judgment from falling on him, which is impossible. No one consults God and no one follows the law of God. Innocent people die. David relies upon his own understanding to protect himself from Saul. Saul relentlessly pursues David trying to alter the declared will of God. God protected David at every turn, and God's will cannot be altered by the action of Saul. However, there are valuable lessons for us in these passages.)

### 1 Samuel 21:10-15

#### Verses 10-11

***<sup>10</sup> That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath. <sup>11</sup> But the servants of Achish said to him, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one they sing about in their dances:***

***"Saul has slain his thousands,  
and David his tens of thousands'?"***

- After David visited Ahimelech (see 21:1-9), he went to King Achish in Gath to escape King Saul. Gath was in Philistine territory. Philistia was an enemy of Israel. It was the city state from which Goliath, the Philistine champion who David had killed (see 17:6) came. King Saul would be unlikely to pursue David into enemy territory. However, David himself would be unwelcomed there.
- David had the sword of Goliath when he went to Gath (see 21:8-10).
- The servants of King Achish were alarmed at David's arrival and expressed their concern to the king. They actually believed that David was the most important man in Israel and would likely become Israel's king.

### Verses 12-13

***<sup>12</sup> David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. <sup>13</sup> So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard.***

- David, apparently realizing that going to Achish was a mistake, pretended to be insane. In that day insanity was considered to be a curse, not an illness. An insane person was thought to be possessed by some evil spirit and forsaken by his or her god(s). To harbor an insane person was thought to invite the evil spirit in and to, potentially, offend the god(s) of the person stricken.
- David's plan was to get "kicked out" of Gath before the people there decided to avenge Goliath.
- David's decision to go to Gath, of all places, would play into the idea that he was insane. Why would he go to Israel's enemies for refuge.

### Verses 14-15

***<sup>14</sup> Achish said to his servants, "Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me? <sup>15</sup> Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?"***

- Achish fell for David's act and concluded that David was crazy. Because harboring David might invoke the disfavor of the god(s) that were cursing David, he refused David shelter.
- By going from Israel to Gath to escape King Saul, David had jumped out of the frying pan into the fire.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon based on 1 Samuel 21:10-15. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. All rights are reserved by Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)