

1Samuel 21:1 ¶ Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?

1Samuel 21:2 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 whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed *my* servants to such and such a place.

Though commentators don't agree on the exact location of Nob, most agree that it was near Jerusalem. Some commentators note that the tabernacle may have been located there at this time since Ahimelech later makes reference to the ephod being there.

David fled first to Nob to get help from Ahimelech the priest. That David would come to him alone with no weapons or supplies probably made Ahimelech suspicious and fearful of what David might do. He questioned David as to why he was alone. David told the priest that Saul had sent him on a secret errand that had necessitated him leaving immediately without the normal preparation. He noted that his servants were waiting for him somewhere close by.

David obviously lied to the priest, but certainly felt justified in seeking food and a weapon since he had been forced to flee for no fault of his own. In the next section it will be noted that the priest inquired of the LORD before giving David what he wanted, therefore implying that the LORD considered it a valid request. The LORD Jesus even referenced this particular action of David's as an example of the fact that in God's economy man's need overrides the importance of keeping the letter of the law, and God considered him guiltless.

*Matthew 12:1-7 "At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, **neither for them which were with him**, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, **ye would not have condemned the guiltless.**"*

Though we aren't told how David gathered a group of followers, the words of Matthew seem to affirm that he at least had a few men with him at this time.

1Samuel 21:3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present.

1Samuel 21:4 And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.

1Samuel 21:5 And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth

women *have been* kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and *the bread is* in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel.

1Samuel 21:6 So the priest gave him hallowed *bread*: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.

David asked the priest to give him five loaves of bread, or whatever he had available. The priest told David that he had no common bread; all he had was the consecrated bread. He would give him that if his men had abstained from sleeping with any women. David assured Ahimelech that it was the custom for his soldiers to stay away from women when going to battle, and they had been clean for three days. Even the men's belongings were clean.

We know from the next chapter that Ahimelech inquired of the LORD before giving David what he asked for.

1 Samuel 22:10 "And he enquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

So the priest gave David the consecrated bread, the showbread, from the day before that had just been replaced.

1Samuel 21:7 Now a certain man of the servants of Saul *was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul.*

It is noted that a certain servant of Saul was present and witnessed all that transpired between David and Ahimelech. The servant is identified as Doeg, an Edomite, the overseer of Saul's herdmen. It is noted that he was "detained before the LORD," but no reason is given.

It will be shown in the next chapter that when he leaves Nob, Doeg runs straight to Saul to report what he knows.

1Samuel 21:8 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 weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.*

1Samuel 21:9 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: 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.*

David next asked Ahimelech if he had a spear or sword he could give him. He explained that he had to leave so quickly that he did not have time to get his own. The priest told him that the only weapon he had was Goliath's sword; it was wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. He told David he could have it if he wanted it. David declared that it was one of a kind, and he would take it.

Even if Ahimelech was suspicious about what was going on, he must have reasoned that if anyone deserved to have Goliath's sword, it was David since he had killed him.

1Samuel 21:10 ¶ And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.

1Samuel 21:11 And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

David kept running because he feared Saul. For some reason he decided to go to Achish, the king of Gath, in the land of the Philistines. Interestingly, Gath was the hometown of Goliath.

The servants of the king reminded him that they thought this man was David, the man who had been lauded for killing ten thousands, while Saul was only noted as killing thousands.

1Samuel 21:12 And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

1Samuel 21:13 And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.

1Samuel 21:14 Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore *then* have ye brought him to me?

1Samuel 21:15 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?

When David heard what the servants said, he became afraid of how Achish would respond. He decided to act like a mad man, so he scratched marks on the doors of the gate and drooled down his beard. Achish was disgusted and asked his servants why they had brought this man before him in the first place; he must have thought that this surely couldn't be the David of renown. He declared that he had enough crazy men among his own people and certainly didn't need another one in his house.

It is noted in the introduction to Psalm 34 that David wrote this psalm in light of God's protection at this time.

Psalms 34:0–22 “A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed. [This description makes it clear that Abimelech and Achish are the same. It is believed by some that Abimelech is a title.] I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the

LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing. Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

Many commentators like to point out that David is acting in the flesh in the early part of his flight from Saul. I don't think that necessarily means that he is acting without faith, and I think this psalm helps clarify that fact. We all react to crises in our lives in different ways, and sometimes our reasoning is affected by the stress we experience. I think it was after his escape from Achish that David finally got a grip and began to think more clearly and look to the LORD for His leading instead of just reacting. There is a section in the next chapter that seems to affirm this thought, and it seems that the arrival of Abiathar the priest (who probably brought the ephod with him) reminds David that he should seek God's direction in every decision he makes.

1 Samuel 22:20–23:2 "And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David. And Abiathar shewed David that Saul had slain the LORD'S priests. And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house. Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard. Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshingfloors. Therefore David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah."

David is so confident that the LORD is with him that he can assure Abiathar that he will be safe as long as he is with David. It is noted that he begins to make decisions by enquiring of the LORD.