

1 Samuel 11:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What aileth the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.

Analysis

And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What aileth the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.

The detail that Saul 'came after the herd out of the field' emphasizes his humble circumstances despite his anointing. He had not yet assumed royal duties but continued his ordinary agricultural work. This image of the farmer-king recalls Cincinnatus of Rome and anticipates David the shepherd-king. Saul's question 'What aileth the people?' shows he was not present when the messengers arrived, underscoring the providential timing of his return at this precise moment.

Historical Context

Cattle herding was a primary occupation in the hill country of Benjamin. Saul's continued agricultural work after his anointing reflects the gradual nature of his assumption of royal authority. Unlike later Israelite kings, Saul had no palace, court, or standing army at this point.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Saul's humble work ethic before assuming power instruct leaders today?
2. In what ways does God prepare His servants through ordinary labor before calling them to greater tasks?

Interlinear Text

וְהִנֵּה	הַ	אֵל	שָׁא	אָמַר	בְּאַ	אַחֲרֵי	בְּבָקָר	מִן	בְּשָׂדֶה
H2009		And behold Saul	came	after		the herd	H4480	out of the field	
		H7586	H935	H310		H1241		H7704	
אָמַר	וְ	אֵל	שָׁא	מַה	לְעָם	כִּי	כִּי	יְבַכּוּ	
said		And behold Saul	H4100	What aileth the people	H5971	H3588	that they weep		
H559		H7586					H1058		
וְיִשְׁפַּרְתָּ	לְ	אַתָּה	דִּבֶּרְתָּ	אֲנָשִׁים	יְבַישָׁ:				
And they told	H0	H853	him the tidings	of the men	of Jabesh				
H5608			H1697	H582	H3003				

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 19:19 (Parallel theme): So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.