

1 Samuel 13:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

Analysis

Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

Saul's failure demonstrates that partial obedience is disobedience, and religious activity cannot substitute for heart surrender. His pattern of excuses, blame-shifting, and selective compliance while maintaining outward religious appearance warns against external religion without internal transformation. The pronouncement that 'to obey is better than sacrifice' establishes that God desires humble submission over impressive religious performance. Saul's rejection teaches that prolonged disobedience, even mixed with apparent faithfulness, eventually results in God's withdrawal of calling and blessing.

Historical Context

The establishment of monarchy around 1050-1010 BCE represented a dramatic political and theological shift for Israel. Unlike surrounding nations where kings were considered divine or semi-divine, Israel's kings were supposed to function under God's ultimate authority as laid out in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. The

Benjamite tribe occupied strategic territory between Ephraim and Judah, making Saul's selection a politically astute choice to balance tribal rivalries. Archaeological remains from this period show increased fortification and centralization of settlements, confirming the transition to state-level organization. Levitical priests served hereditary roles mediating between God and people through sacrificial system. Corruption among priests was not uncommon in this era, as demonstrated by biblical criticism of Eli's sons and later Jeremiah's condemnations. Proper sacrificial procedure was critical for maintaining covenant relationship, making priestly misconduct particularly heinous.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does this passage deepen our understanding of God's character, purposes, and ways of working in human history?
2. What specific heart attitudes, thought patterns, or life practices does this passage call you to examine or change?
3. How does the emphasis on obedience over sacrifice point toward Christ's perfect submission to the Father's will?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּבְחַר	ל	וְ	שָׁא	וְ	שְׁלֹשָׁה	וְ	אֶלְפֵי	מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל	וְ	הָיָה	עִם
chose		H0	Saul		him three		and a thousand	men of Israel		H1961	H5973
H977			H7586		H7969		H505	H3478			
וְ	שָׁא	וְ	אֶלְפֵי	בְּמִיכַם	וְ	בְּהַר	בֵּית	ל	א		
	Saul		and a thousand	in Michmash		and in mount	H0	Bethel			
	H7586		H505	H4363		H2022		H1008			
וְ	אֶלְפֵי	עִם	הָיָה	י	וְנָתַן	בְּגִבְעָה	בְּנֵימִן	יֵן			
	and a thousand		H1961	H5973	were with Jonathan	in Gibeah	of Benjamin				
	H505				H3129	H1390	H1144				
וְ	תִּרְ	הָעָם	שָׁלַח	אֶת	יָשׁ	לְאֶהֱלִיוֹ:					
	and the rest	of the people	he sent		every man	to his tent					
	H3499	H5971	H7971		H376	H168					

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 10:26 (Parallel theme): And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.

1 Samuel 14:31 (Parallel theme): And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint.

1 Samuel 13:5 (References Israel): And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven.

1 Samuel 13:23 (Parallel theme): And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.