

1 Samuel 13:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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.

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

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

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

וּפְלִשְׁתִּים יָם	נֶאֱסַף וְ	לְהִלָּחֵם	עִם	יִשְׂרָאֵל		
And the Philistines	gathered themselves together	to fight	H5973	with Israel		
H6430	H622	H3898		H3478		
שְׁלֹשִׁים יָם	אַלְפִים	וְשֵׁשֶׁת	אֲלָפִים	פָּרָשִׁים יָם	וְעָם	
thirty	thousand	chariots	and six	thousand	horsemen	and people
H7970	H505	H7393	H8337	H505	H6571	H5971
כַּח וּל	אֲשֶׁר	עַל	שְׂפַת	הַיָּם	לְרַב	
as the sand	H834	H5921	shore	which is on the sea	in multitude	
H2344		H8193		H3220	H7230	
וַיָּעֹלוּ	וַיִּחַן וְ	בְּמִחְמָשׁ	קִדְמָה	יָת	אֵין:	
and they came up	and pitched	in Michmash	eastward	H0	from Bethaven	
H5927	H2583	H4363	H6926		H1007	

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 11:4 (Parallel theme): And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many.

1 Samuel 14:23 (References Israel): So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven.

Joshua 18:12 (Parallel theme): And their border on the north side was from Jordan; and the border went up to the side of Jericho on the north side, and went up through the mountains westward; and the goings out thereof were at the wilderness of Beth-aven.