

1 Samuel 13:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

Analysis

And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

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

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

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

אָשָׁר	לִמְוֹעֵד	שְׁבֻעָת	יְמִים	וְיָחִילוּ	וְיָמִים	שְׁבֻעָת	וְיָמִים	וְיָחִילוּ
And he tarried	seven	days	according to the set time					
H3176	H7651	H3117						
had appointed but Samuel	came	had appointed but Samuel	not to Gilgal					
H8050	H3808	H935	H8050					
were scattered and the people								
H6327	H5971							

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 10:8 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.

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