

1 Samuel 15:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

Analysis

But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

Saul continues to blame 'the people' for taking 'sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed.' He adds religious justification: 'to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.' This elaborate excuse combines blame-shifting with spiritualization: others took the livestock, but their intention was worship. The mention of Gilgal - where Saul's first major failure occurred (chapter 13) - creates ironic resonance. The site of his unlawful sacrifice becomes his excuse for unlawful preservation.

Historical Context

Gilgal's importance as a worship site made it plausible as a sacrifice location. However, charam livestock was not eligible for sacrifice - it belonged exclusively to God for destruction. Saul's excuse fails on technical as well as theological grounds.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does combining multiple excuses reveal rather than conceal the weakness of our defense?
2. When does religious activity become cover for disobedience rather than expression of faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

וָקַח	הָעָם	מִהַשָּׁל ל	צֹאן	וּבָקָר	רֹאשׁ יֵת
took	But the people	of the spoil	sheep	and oxen	the chief
H3947	H5971	H7998	H6629	H1241	H7225
הֵם הָיוּ כִּי			לְזָבֵחַ	לַיהוָה	
of the things which should have been utterly destroyed			to sacrifice	unto the LORD	
H2764			H2076	H3068	
בְּגִלְגָּל:	אֱלֹהֵי יְיָ				
in Gilgal	thy God				
H1537	H430				

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 15:15 (Sacrifice): And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.