

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

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

רָאשׁ יִת וְבָקַר צָאן מִבְשָׁלֵל בָּעֵם	took	But the people	of the spoil	sheep	and oxen	the chief
	H3947	H5971	H7998	H6629	H1241	H7225
לִיהְיוּ הַלִּזְבֵּחַ בְּמִתְּרָם	of the things which should have been utterly destroyed	to sacrifice	unto the LORD			
	H2764	H2076	H3068			
בְּגִלְגָּל אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהָוָה	thy God	in Gilgal				
	H430	H1537				

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.