

1 Samuel 15:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

Analysis

And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

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.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does this passage clarify the relationship between genuine faith and concrete obedience, and what does it teach about partial compliance?
2. Are there areas where you practice selective obedience, substituting religious activity for heart-level surrender to God's commands?
3. How does this passage connect to the larger biblical narrative of redemption and point toward Christ and the gospel?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּתֵּן שׁ	אֶת	אֶגְגֹּ	מֶלֶךְ	עַמְלִי קַ	חַי	וְאֶת	כָּל
And he took	H853	Agag	the king	of the Amalekites	alive	H853	H3605
H8610		H90	H4428	H6002	H2416		
הָעָם	וְהָחִר יִם	לְפִי	חֶרֶב:				
all the people	and utterly destroyed	with the edge	of the sword				
H5971	H2763	H6310	H2719				

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 30:1 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

Numbers 24:7 (Kingdom): He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

Esther 3:1 (Kingdom): After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

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