

1 Samuel 17:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines.

Analysis

And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines.

The Goliath narrative demonstrates that human impossibilities create opportunities for divine glory. David's confidence rests not in weapons or military training but in the character of the God who delivered him from lion and bear. His declaration that 'the battle is the LORD's' establishes the theological principle that spiritual victory comes through faith in God's power rather than confidence in human strength. The contrast between Saul's armor (representing human methods) and simple shepherd's weapons (representing faith) teaches that God uses unexpected means to accomplish His purposes and receive glory.

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

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

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 this passage connect to the larger biblical narrative of redemption and point toward Christ and the gospel?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׂא וּלְ	וְאִישׁ	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וְנֶאֱסַפּוּ	וַיִּחַנּוּ	
And Saul	and the men	of Israel	were gathered together	and pitched	
H7586	H376	H3478	H622	H2583	
בְּעֵמֶק	הָאֵל	וַיַּעֲרֹכּוּ	מִלְחָמָה	לְקֹבֵאֶת	פְּלִשְׁתִּים:
by the valley	of Elah	in array	and set the battle	against	the Philistines
H6010	H425	H6186	H4421	H7125	H6430

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 21:9 (Parallel theme): And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me.

1 Samuel 17:19 (References Israel): Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.

