

1 Samuel 17:55

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.

Analysis

And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.

Saul's question 'whose son is this youth?' raises interpretive questions since David had previously served in his court (16:21-23). The Hebrew na'ar (youth/servant) emphasizes David's lowly status. Several explanations exist: Saul's inquiry concerns David's family for marriage eligibility per his promise (17:25), his unstable mental state caused forgetfulness, or the narrative presents a separate tradition. Regardless, the theological point remains clear - Saul asked about David's earthly lineage while heaven had already declared David's true identity as God's anointed. Abner's inability to identify David underscores how God elevates the obscure to confound the mighty.

Historical Context

Abner son of Ner was Saul's cousin and commander of Israel's army. His oath 'As thy soul liveth' was a standard ancient oath formula. Royal courts employed many servants, making individual recognition difficult. Saul's promise to reward

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