

1 Samuel 23:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.

Analysis

And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.

Jonathan's words blend comfort with prophetic certainty. The command 'fear not' (al-tira) echoes divine assurances throughout Scripture. His declaration about Saul's hand 'not finding' David expresses confidence in God's protection. Jonathan then affirms David's destiny: 'thou shalt be king over Israel.' Remarkably, he positions himself subordinate to David ('I shall be next unto thee'), accepting second place to his friend. The stunning conclusion—'Saul my father knoweth'—reveals that even Saul, despite his pursuit, recognized David's inevitable kingship. Jonathan's faith spoke truth his father's madness denied.

Historical Context

Jonathan's acceptance of David's future kingship meant renouncing his own dynastic claim. Ancient Near Eastern succession typically passed father to son; Jonathan's deference was extraordinary. His statement about Saul's knowledge suggests Saul pursued David precisely because he recognized the divine appointment he could not prevent.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 – Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when God's plan places others above you?
2. What does Jonathan's selfless encouragement teach about true friendship?

Interlinear Text

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 20:31 (Kingdom): For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.

1 Samuel 24:20 (Kingdom): And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.

Hebrews 13:6 (Parallel theme): So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Isaiah 54:17 (Parallel theme): No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

Acts 28:16 (Parallel theme): And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org