

2 Samuel 17:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

Analysis

And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

This verse contributes to the narrative of Competing Counsel, emphasizing divine providence over human wisdom. The contrast between Ahithophel's shrewd counsel and Hushai's divinely-blessed alternative demonstrates God's providential control over human wisdom. The text explicitly states "the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel" (v. 14), emphasizing divine sovereignty. Ahithophel's suicide demonstrates despair when human wisdom fails. Theological themes include God's sovereignty over human planning, divine protection of His anointed, and the inadequacy of worldly wisdom apart from God.

Historical Context

The historical setting of 2 Samuel 17 occurs during David's reign (circa 1010-970 BCE) over Israel's united monarchy. Archaeological discoveries, including the Tel Dan inscription mentioning the 'House of David,' corroborate biblical historicity. Ancient Near Eastern customs regarding divine providence over human wisdom

provide crucial background. The geopolitical situation involved regional powers—Philistines, Ammonites, Arameans, Moabites, Edomites—as David consolidated and expanded Israel's territory. Cultural practices concerning kingship, warfare, covenant relationships, family dynamics, and religious observance differed significantly from modern Western contexts, requiring careful attention to avoid anachronistic interpretation while extracting timeless theological principles applicable across cultures and eras.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does this passage deepen your understanding of divine providence over human wisdom?
2. What does this verse reveal about God's character, and how should that shape your worship and obedience?
3. In what specific ways can you apply this truth to your current circumstances and relationships this week?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶחֱיֹתָ פָּל	רָאָה	כִּי	לֹא	נַעֲשֶׂתָהּ	עֲצָתוֹ
And when Ahithophel	saw	H3588	H3808	was not followed	that his counsel
H302	H7200			H6213	H6098
וַיִּסַּב שֵׁ	אֶת	הַחֲמֹר	וַיָּקָם	וַיֵּלֶךְ	אֶל
he saddled	H853	his ass	and arose	and gat him home	H413
H2280		H2543	H6965	H3212	
בֵּית וְ	אֶל	עִירוֹ	וַיֵּצֵא	אֶל	בֵּית וְ
and put his household	H413	to his city	in order	H413	and put his household
H1004		H5892	H6680		H1004
וַיִּחַנְּךָ	וַיָּמָת	וַיִּקְבְּרֶךָ	בְּקֶבֶר	אָבִיו:	
and hanged	himself and died	and was buried	in the sepulchre	of his father	
H2614	H4191	H6912	H6913	H1	

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 27:5 (Parallel theme): And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

2 Kings 20:1 (Parallel theme): In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.

2 Samuel 15:12 (Parallel theme): And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

Psalms 5:10 (Parallel theme): Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee.

1 Kings 16:18 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died,

2 Samuel 15:31 (Parallel theme): And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

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