

2 Samuel 18:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away.

Analysis

And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away.

This verse contributes to the narrative of Absalom's Death, emphasizing tragedy of rebellion. Absalom's death despite David's orders demonstrates the tragic consequences of rebellion against God's anointed. The graphic description of Absalom caught in oak branches suggests divine judgment. David's overwhelming grief ("O my son Absalom") reveals parental love even for rebellious children. Theological themes include the tragedy of rebellion, the reality that sin leads to death, parental love's persistence, and the danger of prioritizing family over kingdom responsibilities.

Historical Context

The historical setting of 2 Samuel 18 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 tragedy of rebellion 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 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does this passage deepen your understanding of tragedy of rebellion?
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

וְקָרָא	וְאַבְשָׁל וּמִ	לִפְנֵי י	עֶבְדֵי י	דָּוִד	וְאַבְשָׁל וּמִ	רָכָב
met	And Absalom	the servants	H5650	of David	And Absalom	rode
H7122	H53	H6440		H1732	H53	H7392
עַל	וְהָפָּךְ רֶדֶד	וַיֵּבֶ אֶ	וְהָפָּךְ רֶדֶד	תַּחַת	שׁוֹבֵר	
H5921	and the mule	went	and the mule	H8478	under the thick boughs	
	H6505	H935	H6505		H7730	
הָ	הַגְּדוֹלָה	וַיִּחַזֵּק	רֹאשׁוֹ	הָ	וַיִּתֵּן	
oak	of a great	caught hold	and his head	oak	and he was taken up	
H424	H1419	H2388	H7218	H424	H5414	
יִן	הַשָּׁמַיִם	וַיֵּבֶ יִן	הָאָרֶץ	וְהָפָּךְ רֶדֶד	אֲשֶׁר	תַּחַת יוֹ
H996	between the heaven	H996	and the earth	and the mule	H834	H8478
	H8064		H776	H6505		
עָרָה:						
that was under him went away						
H5674						

Additional Cross-References

2 Samuel 14:26 (Parallel theme): And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight.

Job 31:3 (Parallel theme): Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?

Proverbs 30:17 (Parallel theme): The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.