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1 Samuel 13–14 | “A Venture In Faith”

INTRO: Between chapters 12 & 13, some time has transpired.

1. The Philistines have infiltrated into the hill country, which was not true under Samuel (7:13-14).
2. Members of Saul’s own people have now joined the Philistines (14:21).
3. Saul’s popularity has reached an all-time low in contrast to previous chapters (14:29).
4. Saul no longer had the same trust in God and was now quite self-reliant (13:8-9, 12, 14).
5. Ahiah, and not Samuel, has become Saul’s spiritual advisor (14:3, 18, 36).
6. The Israelites don’t have any weapons like they had before (13:19-22).

II. SAUL’S WAR WITH THE PHILISTINES. (13)

A. (v. 1)

1. **“Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,”**

a. **NOTE:** The Manuscripts on this verse are quite difficult:

1) HEBREW: “*Son of a year Saul reigned and when two years he had reigned over Israel.*”

a) LITERALLY: “*Saul was one year old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years over Israel.*”

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- b) **NOTE:** Obviously, Saul was not one year old when he began to reign, so how do we interpret this?
 - c) The LXX has omitted this verse altogether in most manuscripts, however the later mss. add the number *thirty*.
 - d) The Latin Vulgate translates it literally from the Hebrew.
 - e) The Syriac reads, “When Saul had reigned one or two years.”
 - f) The Hexaplar version some anonymous writer has inserted the word *thirty*.
- 2) Some scholars believe that the Text was corrupted and that there was a copyist error along the way, or that this verse is not in the original text.
- a) They believe that one or two numbers were dropped out of the text, so it would be translated: “*Saul was ... years old when he began to reign, and he reigned ... two years over Israel.*”
 - b) Thus, some translators have added in numbers in italics or put “...” for a blank:
 - i. NIV - “Saul was *thirty* years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel *forty-two* years.”
 - ii. CSB - “Saul was *thirty* years old when he became king, and he reigned *forty-two* years over Israel.”

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- iii. NASB - “Saul was *thirty* years old when he began to reign, and he reigned *forty* two years over Israel.”
 - iv. ASV - “Saul was *forty* years old when he began to reign; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,”
 - v. HNV - “Sha'ul was *forty* years old when he began to reign; and when he had reigned two years over Yisra'el,”
 - vi. RSV - “Saul was . . . years old when he began to reign; and he reigned . . . and two years over Israel.”
- c) One commentary notes: “A blot of some kind may have effaced these figures in the original manuscript, and the copyist not knowing what they were, may have left them blank.”¹
- d) **NOTE:** The Original Autographs were inspired by God and without error, yet there have been some very minor copyist errors in some manuscripts as they have been copied. However, all the Biblical manuscripts we have today are 99.9% in agreement, and only differ in punctuation, word endings, minor grammatical issues, word order, etc. There is no theological teaching or doctrine that is impacted by these minor differences.

¹ <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/teb/1-samuel-13.html>

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- 3) Other scholars think that the beginning phrase “the son of a year in his reigning” mean that Saul had a son of a year old when he began to reign, Ishbosheth, and who was forty years of age when his father died.² (2 Samuel 2:10)
 - 4) Other scholars believe that the first part of the verse is a summary statement that should go with the end of Chapter 12, “Saul reigned one year,” speaking of the events of chapters 11-12 as happening in his first year. Then, the second part goes with Chapter 13 happening in Saul’s second year. I personally think this is the best option that harmonizes with the Text.
- b. **Q** = How long did Saul rule?...
- 1) Saul started out as a *young* adult. (1 Sam. 9:2)
 - 2) He was old enough to have a son in command in part of his army (1 Sam. 13:2; 14:14).
 - a) Saul would have probably been at least 20 years old when Jonathan was born, and Jonathan would have probably been at least 20 years old when he was leading the army (Num. 1:3), thus Jonathan could have been 18 years old when Saul began to reign and Saul would have been at least 38 years old when he began to reign.
 - 3) Ishbosheth, who was Saul’s fourth son, was 42 years old when he was assassinated. (1 Samuel 14:49; 31:2; 2 Samuel 2:10)

² <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/geb/1-samuel-13.html>

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- 4) Saul’s grandson Mephibosheth was 5 years old when he died. ([2 Sam. 4:4](#))
- 5) The Apostle Paul said that Saul reigned for 40 years. ([Acts 13:21](#))
 - a) Josephus says that Saul reigned for 40 years (*‘Antiq.,’* 6.378), saying that Saul reigned 18 years while Samuel was alive, and 22 years after Samuel’s death (*‘Antiq.,’* 6:14, 9)
 - b) Some scholars suggest that this may include the 2 years of Ishbosheth’s rule ([2 Sam. 2:10](#)) and the interval in between.
 - c) In other words, the 40 years would cover the period from the coronation of Saul to the coronation of David.

B. (v. 3)

1. ***“And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.”***
 - a. **Saul’s Big Mistake #1** — He took credit for someone else’s victory!

C. (v. 5)

1. ***“thirty thousand chariots”*** = 30,000 chariots
2. ***“six thousand horsemen”*** = 6,000 cavalry

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3. “**people**” = multitude of infantry

D. (v. 8)

1. **“And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.”**

- a. Samuel had told Saul to wait for seven days (10:8), and when Samuel would come, that he would make a sacrifice before any military engagements.

E. (v. 9)

1. **“And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.”**

- a. **Saul’s Big Mistake #2** — He stepped outside of his calling and did something he was not called to do!
 - 1) Saul was from the Tribe of Benjamin, but it was the Tribe of Levi that had the priesthood and offered sacrifices.
 - 2) **NOTE:** He was foolish when he tried to hide from God’s calling (10:21-22), but on the other hand, he was foolish here trying to do something that he was not called to do!
 - 3) **KEY:** It is foolish and wrong for us to hide from the call of God, but it is just as wrong for us to jump into something we are not called to do!

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F. (v. 10)

1. ***“And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came;...”***

- a. **Saul’s Big Mistake #3** — He did not wait in obedience to God’s Word, but acted presumptuously!
- 1) It is so important that we wait on the Lord in His timing, rather than just start doing something just to be doing something!
 - 2) God is always on time! He might be there at the 11th hour, but He is never late!
 - 3) God’s timetable is not always our timetable.

G. (v. 11)

1. ***“And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;”***

- a. **Saul’s Big Mistake #4** — He blamed others for his disobedience!
- 1) Not much has changed since the Garden of Eden!
 - a) Cf. **Genesis 3:12-13** - *“And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the*

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woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”

H. (v. 12)

1. “Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.”

a. **Saul’s Big Mistake #5** — He made excuses!

1) “I forced myself”

a) He’s basically saying that he had no choice and was out of options, so he had to take on a priestly role.

I. (v. 14)

1. “But now thy kingdom shall not continue:...”

a. “continue” - Heb. “*arise; be established; endure; succeed*”

1) Saul is not being rejected as being king, which will happen later (15:23, 26), but that he will not have a long-lasting Dynasty.

2) In other words, succession of the Throne will not come from Saul’s line.

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2. “...*the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people...*”

a. “*man after His own heart*”

1) Cf. [1 Samuel 16:7](#); [1 Kings 11:4](#); [15:3](#); [Acts 13:22](#)

2) **NOTE:** God is looking for a man or a woman *after His own heart!*

a) Cf. [2 Chronicles 16:7-9](#) - “*And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand. For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.”*

b. “*commanded*” - Heb. “*appointed; ordained*”

1) David was God’s choice!

J. (v. 15)

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1. “...And Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men.”

a. This means that 1,400 men deserted Saul since verse 2.

1) 2,000 men (v. 2) - 600 men = 1,400 men left Saul

K. (v. 21)

1. “Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.”

a. “file” - Heb. “charge [price] for sharpening a pim”

1) This was a unit of weight or value, and the price of the filing was a *pim*, which was 2/3 of a shekel.

2) In other words, this was an exorbitant price, but the point is to show the extreme pressure the Philistines exercised over Israel. So, they would depend on the Philistines to shop in their farm equipment, which was very expensive!

III. JONATHAN’S VENTURE IN FAITH. (14)

A. (v. 6)

1. “...it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.”

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a. Jonathan is not acting presumptuously, but he’s taking A VENTURE IN FAITH:

1) Trusting in the PROMISES of God.

- a) Cf. **Leviticus 26:3, 7-8** - *“If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; ... And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.”*
- b) Cf. **Deuteronomy 7:12-13, 16-19** - *“Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. ... And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee. If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them? Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt; The great temptations which thine eyes*

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saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby the LORD thy God brought thee out: so shall the LORD thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid.”

- c) Cf. **Deuteronomy 11:22-23, 25** - “For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. ... There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you.”

2) Remembering **PREVIOUS EXAMPLES** in their History.

- a) Cf. **Joshua 23:8-10** - Joshua, when he was old and rehearsing Israel’s history up until that point, he said, “*But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day. For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.*”

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- b) Cf. **Judges 3:31** - Shamgar, one of the Judges, slew *six hundred* Philistines “*with an ox goad.*”
- c) Cf. **Judges 7:7; 8:10** - The Lord told Gideon that his army was “too many”, so He weaned the army down to 300 men, which defeated the Midianite army of 135,000 men!
 - i. That’s a ratio of **1 : 450** !!!
- d) Samson killed 1,000 men with the jawbone of a donkey (**Judges 15:15-16**), and about 3,000 people at the end of his life (**Judges 16:27-30**).

B. (v. 18)

1. **“And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel.”**

a. “the Ark”

- 1) Some LXX Greek manuscripts translate it as “*the ephod*” instead of “*the Ark,*” which would make more sense because:
 - a) *The Ark* was not with Saul in Geba, but it was at Kirjathjearim at this time (**7:1-2**).
 - b) The verb “*Bring hither*” was never used of *the Ark*, but often of *the ephod* (**23:29; 30:7**).

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- c) Also, it was the Urim and Thummim, which were in the breastplate of the ephod, that was used to inquire of the Lord, not *the Ark* of the covenant.
 - i. This would make sense since the priest was already there with *the ephod* (v. 3)
- d) **NOTE:** The LXX translation was made from an ancient Hebrew text that was over 1,200 years older than the Masoretic Text.

- 2) However, if the Hebrew is indeed correct, then they must have brought “*the Ark*” into Saul’s camp from Kirjathjearim (7:1-2), possibly to keep it safe from the Philistines, and then later returned it to Kirjathjearim since that is from where David would bring *the Ark* to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:1-2).

C. (v. 19)

1. “...and Saul said unto the priest, *Withdraw thine hand.*”

- a. **Saul’s Big Mistake #6** — He stops seeking guidance from God and feels that he needs to take immediate action!

D. (v. 24)

1. “*And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be*

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avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food.”

- a. Some Observations:
 - 1) This was a rash and foolish vow!
 - 2) It was a result of misplaced zeal.
 - 3) It was not a wise decision to make for a king leading an army into battle.

E. (v. 32)

1. “...and the people did eat them with the blood.”

- a. **Saul’s Big Mistake #7** — Because of his foolish vow, he led the people into sin.
 - 1) It was forbidden under the Law of Moses to eat the blood ([Lev. 3:17](#); [17:10-14](#); [19:26](#)).