

I Samuel 13 Handout

Last week we saw how Saul raised up an army to protect the people of Jabesh-gilead from the Ammorites, and how the people all went to Gilgal to renew the kingdom there. Then in chapter 12 we see Samuel stand before the people and take them to court to enter into judgment with them. He retells the stories of how God answered the cries of His people only to have them forget Him again and again. Now they want a king, so God has given them one. God will bless them even though they have rejected Him. Listen again to chapter 12 verse 14:

“If you will fear the Lord and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the Lord, then both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God.”

Then Samuel follows that up with a warning in verse 15:

“But if you do not listen to the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the command of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you, even as it was against your fathers.”

God makes it very clear what He is asking of them and what the blessings and consequences will be based on their actions.

Verse 1

Now this seems like a pretty straightforward verse, but you would be wrong. There is actually some debate over what this verse actually means.

In the actual Hebrew, the numbers are not there. They are missing. The NIV and NASB translation are identical and they get their numbers from Acts 13:21 which says, “Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. Now the ESV and the NKJV have a similar translation. NKJV says-” Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose for himself 3,000 men”

ESV says “*Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel . . .*”

After looking at this, I personally like the Message translation which says, “*Saul was a young man when he began as king. He was king over Israel for many years.*”

Verse 2

How many men of Israel did Saul choose for himself? _____

How many were with Saul at Michmash and the hill country of Bethel? _____

Who were the other thousand men with? _____

Michmash was five miles northeast of Gibeah. It seems that Saul wanted to clear this area of Philistines to make it more secure. We are told he sent the rest of the people away to their tents.

We aren't told this yet, but Jonathan is Saul's oldest son.

Verses 3-4

What are we told Jonathan does? _____

A garrison is troops who are stationed in a fortress or town to defend it. We are told the Philistines heard about it.

What does Saul do? _____

He says "Let the Hebrews hear"

What is it that the Hebrews hear? _____

What else did they hear? _____

We are told the people were summoned to Saul at Gilgal.

Jonathan's initial victory at Geba provoked the Philistines, who massed their forces across the steep valley that separated Geba and Michmash.

Verse 5

What do the Philistines do? _____

_____ chariots and _____ horsemen and people like _____

We are told they came up and camped at Michmash.

There is some debate on whether these numbers are truly accurate or not. Whatever their numbers, it causes a big reaction in the Israelite army.

Verses 6-7

What did the men of Israel do when they saw what was before them?

We are told some crossed into the land of Gad and Gilead. Whatever they saw, caused them great fear.

But where was Saul? _____

What about the people? _____

Verse 8-9

How long are we told Saul waited for Samuel? _____

Remember back in chapter 10 verse 8 Samuel said to Saul, "*Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do.*"

The king wasn't free to initiate war whenever and with whomever he wanted. He had to answer to a higher authority. He received orders from God and his prophet, who in this case was Samuel. This would have been a very unique version of Israelite monarchy. Standing beside every Israelite king was to be a prophet who spoke God's word for the situation. The degree to which the king obeyed or rejected that word from the prophet was the determining factor in the Bible's evaluation of that king's reign. God remained king over Israel, represented by His prophet, who ordered God's anointed one. This is how things were supposed to work.

What happened when they saw no sign of Samuel? _____

So, what does Saul decide to do? _____

This was in violation of the prophet's orders from 10:8.

Saul had been directed by Samuel to wait seven days after which time the prophet would arrive and offer the appropriate sacrifice the correct way and commission Saul and the troops to enter the battle.

What do we see missing while Saul is waiting? What could he have been doing?

Verses 10-12

Just as Saul finishes the offering, what happens? _____

What is Samuel's reaction to what Saul has done? _____

Saul offers all kinds of excuses:

- The people were scattering
- You did not come at the appointed time
- Philistines were assembling at Michmash
- He thought - "the Philistines will come against me and I haven't asked the favor of the Lord."

What does Saul say at the end of verse 12? _____

Verses 13-15

How does Samuel say Saul has acted? _____

What does Samuel say at the end of verse 13?

What has God sought for Himself? _____

We are told the Lord has appointed this man ruler over His people. We are told it is because Saul didn't keep what the Lord commanded.

The word "heart" here suggests "will" or "choice" and emphasizes God's freedom in selecting a replacement for Saul rather than continuing Saul's line. It also suggests something positive in the new choice of king's character over Saul's. The new king will genuinely obey God's wishes in a way that Saul doesn't.

The circumstances surrounding the choice of these two kings is clearly different.

This prophetic condemnation that Samuel brings to Saul is not a final rejection of Saul and his reign. He will keep the throne for now, but it won't pass to his descendents and endure forever. I believe Saul could have faithfully followed God and his line could have been on the throne for generations. Eventually God would have raised up a king from the line of Judah even if Saul had followed the Lord faithfully. I think that God truly wanted Saul to obey and be faithful and prosper as king of Israel.

What are your thoughts on this?

We are told in verse 15 that Samuel went to Gibeah of Benjamin.

When Saul counted his men, how many did he have? _____

Verse 16-18

We are told that Saul, Jonathan and those with them were staying in Geba while the Philistines were camped at Michmash.

What came from the camp of the Philistines? _____

- One toward Ophrah to the land of Shual
- Another turned toward Beth-horon
- The third turned toward the border that overlooks the Valley of Zeboim

What this shows us is that the Philistines could afford the luxury of sending detachments of raiders out in different directions in order to cut off Saul's forces and prevent any reinforcements from the northern tribes to come to his aid.

Verses 19-21

What could not be found in all of Israel? _____

Why not? _____

Where did the Israelites have to go to get their equipment sharpened? _____

How much were they charged for these services? _____

At this time, the Philistines controlled a monopoly in metal technology and were able to limit Israel's arsenal. While the Philistine troops would have had the latest in advanced weaponry, the Israelites would have been restricted to the weapons of wood and stone.

Verses 22-23

What happened on the day of battle? _____

The Philistines went out to the gorge of Michmash.

It seems clear: Saul and his army are in danger of annihilation. We will have to wait until next week to see what happens!

There are many thoughts about the rejection of King Saul:

- Some see Saul as essentially being a victim of God
- Others see Saul as simply being a character in a narrative in which the cards are stacked in the favor of David.
- Some think Saul's flaw is his inability to assert himself as king. That he cannot free himself from the old order and therefore can't be the bearer of the new order.

However, none of these give due weight to what the Bible is actually telling us, which is Saul's rejection as king is his failure to keep God's commands. At first glance, we see Saul's offense is his failure to wait for Samuel, but the deeper offense is his disobedience to God. He fails to accept the structure of authority that has been established for him by God and the prophet Samuel.

Saul had been given all the blessing and empowerment needed to be king, but when he is surrounded on every side by the Philistines he disobeys God and takes matters into his own hands.

In Saul's actions, we see what is called the autonomy of sin:

1. Saul allows the circumstances of his current situation to overtake him.
2. Saul commits himself to partial obedience. He fails to follow through on his commitments to God to the end. He waits the seven days, but then takes matters into his own hands to insure his victory on the battlefield.
3. When Samuel confronts Saul, he fails to take responsibility. He puts partial blame on Samuel for being late and on his army for scattering. He ends by saying he had no other choice.

How many times have we done the same thing?

Unfortunately, we are going to see this happen again and again with Saul. He is content to rely on himself and his own resources rather than depend on God and obey His commands.