

18. Saul's Failure

Quote: "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

1 Samuel 15:22, 23

Verse By Verse Bible Marking:

1 Samuel 13:1 - "Saul reigned one year" - probably belongs to the end of **ch12**. The first year saw the establishment of the monarchy and the retirement of Samuel.

"and when he had reigned two years over Israel" - This gives the time of the events of **ch 13**.

1 Samuel 13:2 - "Saul chose him three thousand men" - Saul is imitating the kings around him, and fulfilling the warning of Samuel (**1 Sam 8:11-13**).

"two thousand were with Saul in Michmash, and in mount Bethel" - Josephus says they were "the guards of his own body" (Anitq. Book V, Ch VI). Saul positioned his men a few km NW of Geba along the wadi.

"a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeath" - It appears from Josephus that Saul gave these to Jonathan as bodyguards as well. This was close to Geba on the south. Between them, Saul and Jonathan cut off the garrison's communications with Philistia.

1 Samuel 13:3-4 Note order of the events:

1 - "Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines". 2 - "Saul blew a trumpet". 3 - "all Israel heard that **Saul** had smitten a garrison". Saul took the glory for what Jonathan had done in faith.

1 Samuel 13:5 - "pitched in Michmash" - cp **v2** - Saul had moved to Gilgal 25 km to the west (**v4**) to gather Israel for battle. Probably also afraid of the forces with which the Philistines advanced.

1 Samuel 13:6 - To attack the Philistines, Israel would have to advance up a steep rise against the Philistine infantry, cavalry and chariots. To them this seemed impossible. They needed a leader who would go before them and direct them to trust in Yahweh.

Background to 1 Samuel 13:

(Mark above 1 Samuel 13)

The Philistines had set up a garrison at Geba on one of the hills that commanded the Pass called Michmash (v3). This gave them control of the land around, because the Pass of Michmash opens the way through the harsh craggy hills to the lowlands and coastal plains in the west. Such a garrison being in the territory of Benjamin was an insult to a king who was a Benjamite. Saul knew he must get rid of the garrison, but he feared that this might cause a Philistine invasion and make things worse. Chapter 13 opens with two years passing and Saul having not acted.

1 Samuel 13:8 - **“but Samuel came not”** - Yahweh is testing Saul’s trust in him. Did he truly believe Yahweh would be with him? (1 Sam 10:7; 11:13; see also Lev 26:7-8)

1 Samuel 13:9 - Saul impatiently presumed God would overlook his departure from the appointed means of worship. Later Uzziah was smitten with leprosy (2 Chron 26:16-21) for offering incense.

1 Samuel 13:14 - **“thy kingdom shall not continue”** - Saul has “shall not be established”. Saul himself had not been rejected as yet (cp ch 15:26), but succession of his seed upon the throne has.

“Yahweh hath sought him a man after his own heart” - see ch 16:7; Psa 89:20. These words apply to David as a young teenager. He is called a “man” - Hebrew ‘ish’ - a mighty man, a captain, or a leader. Note how Acts 13:22 adds “and he shall fulfil all my will”. Saul had failed to lead by example, and had failed to do the will of Yahweh. David would be different.

1 Samuel 13:17-18 - The Philistines encroach on the territory of Israel.

1 Samuel 15 Mark the following at the top of 1 Samuel 15.

Important Lessons from 1 Samuel 15:

1. It is possible to give a religious reason for an act of disobedience (v21).
2. One can be seduced into disobedience by popular clamour (v24).
3. Continued disobedience is certain to result in the withdrawal of the best influences of life (v35).

Colour the key words in 1 Samuel 15:

- **“hearken”** - v1,22, **“obey”** - v19,20,22 (2x),24. This is what Saul was required to do, but failed. Colour this green.
- **“people”** - v1,4,9,15,21,24,30. These influenced the king to disobey Yahweh. (orange)
- **“utterly destroy”** - v3,8,9 (2x),15,18,20,21. Also colour the emphasis in v 3 - **“smite”, “utterly destroy all”, “spare them not”, “slay”** (brown).
- In v 9 put a red circle around “spared Agag” and “would not utterly destroy”.

1 Samuel 15:22 - **“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?”** - Many imagine that if they make great sacrifices of time or money for the things of God, it will excuse them for failing to do what he requires. Yahweh requires literal obedience. See Ecc 5:1; Jer 7:22-24.

“obey” - Heb “shama” - involves hearing effectively, understanding AND obeying.

Translated “hear” in Ecc 5:1.

“hearken” - Heb “qashab” means hearing with emphasis on paying close attention and obeying.

1 Samuel 15:23 - **“witchcraft”** - Saul ultimately resorted to this (1 Sam 28:6-25).

“stubbornness” - implies the digging of ones heels in and refusing to take what one knows to be a better way.