

# Eden Revisited (1 Samuel 13)

## 1. The Anatomy of Saul's Sin (v.1-12, 19-22)

### A. The Circumstance and Current Crisis (v.1-9)

- Jonathan attacks the Philistine encampment at Geba (v.3): Jonathan, with a thousand soldiers, attacks the Philistine garrison at Geba. He is around the age of 20. We are unsure of whether or not Saul gave the direct orders, or if he attacked on his own accord. The Hebrew word for "garrison" can mean "commander" or "military outpost." Geba was one of the cities dedicated to the Aaronic priesthood (Joshua 21:13-19).
- There are no blacksmiths in the nation of Israel (v.19-22): There were no metal workers in Israel because the Philistines had a monopoly on metal production and distribution. The Israelites lived during the Bronze Age; copper and tin would be melted into weapons of metal (as opposed to primitive stones and sticks). The Israelites only had metal farm equipment and were charged excessive amounts of money by the Philistines to sharpen them.
- Increasing strength and size of the Philistine army (v.4-5): Jonathan's attack appeared to be an honorable and noteworthy victory, until the Philistines marched towards Michmash (where Saul was stationed) with 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen and soldiers.
- Diminishing Size of Israel's Army (v.6-7): Once the soldiers saw the size and strength of the Philistine army, 80% fled. Some hid themselves in caves, holes, rocks, tombs, and cisterns. Others fled the nation by crossing the Jordan river into the land of Gad. By the time Samuel arrives, only 600 soldiers remained, all of whom "trembled" with fear (v.7, 15).

### B. A Partial Obedience (v.8-14)

- Saul departed from Michmash for two reasons: first, Gilgal was the place of rendezvous in the Jordan Valley that was not presently dominated by the Philistines. Secondly, because Samuel commanded him to.
- Did Saul attack the Philistine garrison (10:8) at Gilgal? There is no internal evidence. We are unsure if it took Saul one year to finally obey Samuel (one year elapsed from 1 Sam. 10-13) or whether Samuel commanded him to go to Gilgal for the second time (which is not included in our text).
- Saul was commanded to wait seven days until Samuel arrived. Sacrifices were usually offered twice per day: once in the morning, and again in the evening (Numb. 28:1-6). Saul most likely sacrificed a burnt offering in the morning before Samuel arrived in the evening prior to the peace offering.
- Instead of being welcomed, Samuel rebukes Saul's foolishness.
- Saul's sin was not that he sacrificed a burnt offering; he disobeyed what the LORD had commanded through the prophet Samuel. Saul was not permitted by the LORD to perform these sacrifices under these circumstances. Saul was told

to wait seven days for Samuel. Saul did not follow through with the covenant that was renewed at Gilgal (11:14-15, 24-25) since Samuel was the spokesman for God.

- The "command" of the LORD (v.13) is in reference to the Torah, and prophetic utterances of God's prophet (Ex. 24:12). Just as Moses spoke God's word to the nation during the wandering, so Samuel was to speak to Saul and the people. Saul is not allowed in this new covenant of kingship to behave as the other nations do. Israel's king is to obey and serve the LORD through His prophet.
- Saul has not acted uncharacteristically; after all, he is the people's king (10:24; 11:15). Saul wanted to act independently of the LORD and His prophet, similar to the ark narrative in 1 Samuel 4.

### C. Failure to Assume Responsibility (v.11-12)

- Saul blamed his disobedience to the LORD on three parties: his soldiers (who were all scattering), Samuel (who was "late"), and the Philistines.
- Saul believed that he could earn God's favor by disobeying Him. It is no surprise that the people's king disobeys the LORD's command.

## 2. The Consequence of Saul's Sin (v.13-14)

### A. Saul has forfeited his future dynasty as king (v.11-14)

- "What have you done?" (v.11) is reminiscent of Joshua's remarks to Achan (Josh. 7:19), as well as the LORD's rhetorical question to Cain after he murdered his brother Abel (Gen.4:10), and Adam after he ate of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:9, 13).
- Saul potentially could have had an everlasting dynasty, but Saul's disobedience has compromised any of his future progeny from inheriting the throne.
- Saul will still remain, and die as king, provided he obeys the LORD.

### B. The LORD will choose the next king, not Israel (v.14)

- The emphasis in the Hebrew of "a man after His own heart" is not focused on David's heart being set on the LORD; instead, David is God's choice.
- Saul was not the LORD's king; he was the people's king (10:24; 11:15; 12:13). The next king will be the choosing of the LORD, without acquiescing to the nation's fickle murmuring, grumbling, complaining, and idolatry.

Adam and Saul were both heads of their own institutions, and violated the commands given to them by the LORD. They expressed an unwillingness to take personal responsibility for their actions; Saul blamed Samuel, the diminishing size of his army, and the Philistine army (13:11-12), while Adam blamed the LORD (Gen. 3:12). Because of Adam's sin, both he and his progeny would be cast out of the garden. In the same way, Saul's sin and absence of repentance forfeited an enduring dynasty in the Promised Land.