FIRST SAMUEL

Chapter 13

*Samuel Rebukes Saul*

**Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty- two years. 2 Saul chose three thousand men from Israel; two thousand were with him at Micmash and in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. The rest of the men he sent back to their homes. 3 Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it. Then Saul had the trumpet blown throughout the land and said, “Let the Hebrews hear!” 4 So all Israel heard the news: “Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost, and now Israel has become a stench to the Philistines.” And the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal. 5 The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Micmash, east of Beth Aven. 6 When the men of Israel saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. 7 Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear. 8 He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul’s men began to scatter. 9 So he said, “Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings.” And Saul offered up the burnt offering. 10 Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. 11 “What have you done?” asked Samuel. Saul replied, “When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, 12 I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the Lord’s favor.’ So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.” 13 “You acted foolishly,” Samuel said. “You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. 14 But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command.” 15 Then Samuel left Gilgal and went up to Gibeah in Benjamin, and Saul counted the men who were with him. They numbered about six hundred.**

**13:1** *(thirty) years old … ( forty-)two years.* See NIV text notes. The wording of the verse follows the regularly used formula that introduces the reigns of later kings (see, e.g., 2Sa 2:10; 5:4; 1Ki 14:21; 2Ki 8:26). (CSB)

**13:2** *Micmash.* Located southeast of Bethel and northeast of Gibeah near a pass (see v. 23). (CSB)

*Jonathan.* Saul’s oldest son (see 14:49), mentioned here for the first time. (CSB)

**13:3** *Geba.* Located across a ravine and south of Micmash. (CSB)

**13:4** *stench.* A metaphor depicting an object of strong hostility, as in 2Sa 10:6; 16:21; Ge 34:30; Ex 5:21. (CSB)

*Gilgal.* See note on 11:14. By prearrangement Saul had been instructed to wait for Samuel there (see notes on v. 8; 10:8). (CSB)

**13:5** *three thousand chariots.* See NIV text note. The Canaanites under Sisera (see Jdg 4:13) had 900 chariots. The Israelites did not acquire chariots until the time of Solomon (see 1Ki 4:26). (CSB)

**13:8** *time set by Samuel.* See note on 10:8. Saul is fully aware that Samuel’s previous instructions had reference to this gathering at Gilgal. (CSB)

*Saul’s men began to scatter.* The seven-day delay heightened the fear of the Israelite soldiers. (CSB)

**13:9** *Saul offered up the burnt offering.* Samuel had promised to make these offerings himself (see 10:8) before Israel went to battle (see 7:9), and he had directed Saul to await his arrival and instructions. (CSB)

**13:13** *You acted foolishly.* The foolish and sinful aspect (see 26:21; 2Sa 24:10; 1Ch 21:8; 2Ch 16:9) of Saul’s act was that he thought he could strengthen Israel’s chances against the Philistines while disregarding the instruction of the Lord’s prophet Samuel. (CSB)

*You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you.* Saul was to recognize the word of the prophet Samuel as the word of the Lord (see 3:20; 15:1; Ex 20:18–19; see also note on Ex 7:1–2). In disobeying Samuel’s instructions, Saul violated a fundamental requirement of his theocratic office. His kingship was not to function independently of the law and the prophets (see notes on 12:14, 23; 15:11). (CSB)

**13:14** *your kingdom will not endure.* Saul will not be followed by his sons; there will be no dynasty bearing his name (contrast the Lord’s word to David, 2Sa 7:11–16). There is a striking parallel in the word of the Lord to Eli (see 2:30, 35). (CSB)

*the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him.* Paul quotes from this passage at Antioch (Ac 13:22). (CSB)

*leader.* See note on 9:16.

**13:15** *six hundred.* The seven-day delay had greatly depleted Saul’s forces (see vv. 2, 4, 6–8). (CSB)

*Israel Without Weapons*

**16 Saul and his son Jonathan and the men with them were staying in Gibeah in Benjamin, while the Philistines camped at Micmash. 17 Raiding parties went out from the Philistine camp in three detachments. One turned toward Ophrah in the vicinity of Shual, 18 another toward Beth Horon, and the third toward the borderland overlooking the Valley of Zeboim facing the desert. 19 Not a blacksmith could be found in the whole land of Israel, because the Philistines had said, “Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears!” 20 So all Israel went down to the Philistines to have their plowshares, mattocks, axes and sickles sharpened. 21 The price was two thirds of a shekel for sharpening plowshares and mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening forks and axes and for repointing goads. 22 So on the day of the battle not a soldier with Saul and Jonathan had a sword or spear in his hand; only Saul and his son Jonathan had them. 23 Now a detachment of Philistines had gone out to the pass at Micmash.**

**13:17** *Raiding parties.* The purpose of these Philistine contingents was not to engage the Israelites in battle, but to plunder the land and demoralize its inhabitants. (CSB)

**13:18** *Valley of Zeboim.* Located to the east toward the Jordan Valley. (CSB)

**13:19** *Not a blacksmith.* A Philistine monopoly on the technology of iron production placed the Israelites at a great disadvantage in the fashioning and maintenance of agricultural implements and military weapons. (CSB)

**13:22** *not … a sword or spear.* The Israelites fought with bow and arrow and slingshot. (CSB)