

Message #27

“What Could Have Been Will Never Be”

I Samuel 13:1-14

As we have travelled through the New Testament we must conclude that when Jesus Christ was here on earth, He offered Himself to Israel as her God/Savior/Messiah/King. He came unto His own and His own did not receive Him. He said I wanted to gather you as a hen gathers her chicks, but she would not accept Him and therefore Jesus said I have had enough and God’s program is moving away from you and it is going to others (Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35). Jesus Christ, who is God, finally reached a point when He said I have had enough. What I could have done, I will not do now. What could have been won’t be now.

That same kind of thing can happen to a church. Jesus warned of this very thing to the church of Ephesus in Revelation. He warned that if a church moved away from its love for the Lord and love for the word, Jesus will remove the candlestick. He will reach a point where He says, I have had enough of this and He will pull the plug on His blessings. What God could have done He won’t do. What could have been will not be.

That same kind of thing does not only happen to the nation Israel, or a church, but it can also happen to an individual. It is possible for an individual to actually miss out on what could have been in a relationship with God. Something that starts out so promising can end in a disaster. **That is precisely the story of the life of King Saul.**

Now we have certainly seen in this book that the thing that God uses to bring us to the place He wants us to be is warfare. There are times when God will permit us to find ourselves in intimidating and hostile situations. These are the very moments when we should draw close to the Lord. But the problem for many people is they don’t.

What we see here is this:

WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE HAVE BEEN BLESSED BY GOD, AND THEY CHOOSE TO PERSISTENTLY SIN AND REBEL AGAINST GOD, THEN WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN WILL NEVER BE.

One of the saddest judgments God can pronounce on someone is the judgment of “what could have been will never be.”

In this chapter Samuel tells that story about Saul. It is a very sad story and Samuel brings out five historical facts:

HISTORICAL FACT #1 – Saul had initial security. 13:1-2

When Saul became king, he began with a fresh clean slate before him. In **verse 1** there are a couple of numbers that present a slight interpretive problem. **First**, the text says Saul was about 30-years-old when he began to reign and **second**, we learn from Acts that reign was 40 years (Acts 13:21), not 42.

The Masoretic Hebrew text does not have the number 30, pertaining to the age of Saul. It appears to have been dropped from the text. However, some Greek Septuagint manuscripts contain the age 30.

Now the forty and two have presented problems, but it is easy to resolve.

You will notice, if you are reading a NASV that the number “*thirty*” or number “*forty*” which is before the number two, is in italics. The simplest solution is that Saul had reigned two of his forty years when this event happened. So this event happened when he had 38 years left to reign.

We may remember that in chapter 11, Saul had just come off a major victory over the Ammonites. In chapter 12, Samuel had challenged Israel to carefully follow the word of God.

Now what happened is in the aftermath of the victorious battle against the Ammonites in the battle of Jabesh-Gilead, Saul chose 3,000 men who were choice warriors to be Israel’s security force.

According to **verse 2**, Saul made a choice of those he wanted on this military team. He obviously did not select everyone, because he sent the rest of the people home.

Saul took the larger number near him. He kept 2,000 men for himself in two different cities, Michmash and Bethel, and he sent 1,000 men to Jonathan his son at Gibeah, some 5 miles from Michmash, which was located NE of Gibeah of Benjamin.

This was a good beginning. Things were quiet, peaceful and secure. But it is in this very context that God’s people can forget about God and become self-reliant and complacent.

HISTORICAL FACT #2 – Saul’s son had initial success. 13:3-4

Jonathan spotted a garrison of Philistines located in Geba. Geba was also a city of Benjamin (**v. 16**) located about 7 miles north of Jerusalem, about 2/3rds of the way from Gibeah to Michmash.

Jonathan saw these Philistines as a cancerous sore, so he took his men and attacked them and defeated them.

All Israel heard the news and Saul was ecstatic. He was proud of his son and he had trumpets blown and announcements made all throughout the land. His son, Jonathan, had defeated the Philistines and Saul wanted all Israelites to come to Gilgal.

We may remember that Gilgal was the place where Samuel led Israel to worship God after they had defeated the Ammonites (I Sam. 11:14-15). Apparently, Saul wanted to worship God and offer praise to God to express his thanks for the victory.

Now there is no hint here that Samuel orchestrated this. In fact, as we shall see, Samuel was not even there. So in many respects, Saul is doing something without the approval of Samuel. It is clear from **verse 4** that Saul's reputation was spreading.

This was a great moment early in the days of Saul's reign. Saul was rejoicing and praising God and he wanted the entire nation to join in with him.

HISTORICAL FACT #3 – Saul's enemies eventually gave Saul a scare. **13:5-7**

Just as the news of Israel's victory had spread to all Israel, so the news of the Philistines defeat spread to all the Philistines.

The Philistines had learned that they had been beaten badly in Gibeah. So the Philistines decided that they would gather their forces together to come up against Israel.

When you read **verse 5**, it is clear that these Philistine forces were impressive and intimidating. They had 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen and so many infantrymen that they were too numerous to count.

The Philistines camped at Michmash, which is located about 4 miles NE of Gibeah, Saul's capital.

According to **verse 6**, when Israel saw this Philistine contingency move into a war position, Israel had always been greatly afraid of the Philistines (I Sam. 7:7-8). But this move really escalated that fear.

Now behind the scenes of all of this was the sovereignty of God. God had permitted this because He intended to route these Philistines. If Saul would have remained faithful to God, and trusted God, not only would he have experienced a great victory, but he would have been established as a great king.

According to **verses 6-7**, when the people of Israel saw this move of the Philistines, they had six reactions:

(Reaction #1) - Some hid in caves. **13:6a**

(Reaction #2) - Some hid in thickets. **13:6b**

(Reaction #3) - Some hid up in the cliffs. **13:6c**

(Reaction #4) - Some hid in cellars. **13:6d**

(Reaction #5) - Some hid in pits. **13:6e**

(Reaction #6) - Some ran across the Jordan. **13:7a**

These are the people of God and what you don't find them doing is praying. This reminds me of what it will be like for Israel in the Tribulation. They will be running from the Antichrist and hiding here and there. Jesus predicted there will come a moment when the nation will cry to Him and He will deliver them.

Now just think about this. Here is the nation of Almighty God and they are running scared. What a pathetic example of God's people. According to **verse 7**, Saul was still in Gilgal and all the top military men with him were trembling, which means they were shaking. These were the best hand-picked men he could select and they were a bunch of cowards, shaking in their boots.

There is no question that enemies are intimidating. They are big and powerful and they are impressive. They look undefeatable. But if God's people will remain faithful to God, they will see God protect them and topple their enemies.

HISTORICAL FACT #4 – Saul's impatience led Saul to sin. 13:8-12

Saul obviously felt the pressure of all of this and he sensed a major battle with the Philistines was on the horizon. Saul apparently sent word to Samuel to come to him and apparently Saul had asked him to be there in seven days. He probably got that idea of seven days from Samuel himself. This was apparently a number pattern that Samuel used (i.e. I Sam. 10:8). Samuel certainly could bring spiritual stability to this whole event.

Now we may remember that Samuel had specifically told Saul you do not do anything without consulting God. Samuel would reveal to Saul exactly what God wanted him to do and he was not to move until he knew what God wanted him to do (I Sam. 10:8).

According to **verse 8**, Samuel did not get there on time. So instead of Saul saying, we need to wait for God's man to bring us God's word, Saul decided that he would offer the burnt offering himself and not only function as a king, but also function as a priest (**v. 9**).

What Saul did was to elevate himself and take on a role that God did not give him the authority to have. Saul was no Levite and he certainly was no Samuel.

This is a serious sin. This is a sin of insubordination; this is a spirit of self-assertion and rebellion. Saul did not have any authority to be able to offer this sacrifice other than the authority he gave himself.

According to **verse 10**, as soon as Saul got done offering the sacrifice, Samuel showed up. Samuel did not get there on the day Saul wanted and we must assume that God wanted Samuel to show up late to test Saul. As soon as Samuel showed up, Saul went to meet and greet him.

God sovereignly controlled the timing of all of this. We cannot lock God into our time for things because God does not jump at the whims of people. He has a sovereign plan. You do not ever push God around.

According to **verse 11**, Samuel asked Saul how he dared to offer this burnt offering. Who do you think you are? Who gives you the right to usurp the Lord's priesthood and function as a priest?

In **verses 11-12**, Saul gave Samuel four reasons why he went ahead and did this. He thinks he has good justifiable reasons for usurping the authority of Samuel and God. **It is obvious he is not sorry nor repentant by his answers. He is trying to justify himself:**

Reason #1 - The people were scattering. **13:11a**

The numbers were dwindling and he felt he needed to take things into his own hands.

Reason #2 - Samuel had not arrived at the appointed time. **13:11b**

Saul informs Samuel that it was partly his fault for not getting there on time.

Reason #3 - The Philistine enemy was assembled at Gilgal. **13:11c**

The enemy was ready to go.

Reason #4 - We needed God's favor. **13:12**

I knew I had to ask God's favor and take care of this. I forced myself to take the responsibility of being a man of God and offering the sacrifices.

Let's face it, these things are true. These things did happen, however, Saul was not authorized by God to offer the sacrifices and even though he thinks he has good reasons for what he did, he has sinned greatly and he is guilty.

He is acting very foolishly. You see, when it comes to the true work of God, the end does not justify the means. God does not change His word because of situational ethics.

In one of the books I have on ministry, there is a piece of advice that is very solid that says never do anything urgently, do things prayerfully, carefully and thoughtfully.

HISTORICAL FACT #5 – Saul's sin led to his Divine sentence. **13:13-14**

Samuel responded to Saul with four responses:

Response #1 - Saul acted foolishly. **13:13a**

To take it upon ourselves to usurp the authority of God's word makes us a fool.

Response #2 - Saul did not obey the commandment of God. **13:13b**

Blatant disobedience to the word of God that is non-repentant will always lead to disaster.

Response #3 - Saul's kingdom could have been established forever. **13:13c**

This is what God could have done.

Responses #4 - Saul's kingdom will not be established forever. **13:14**

Samuel says your dynasty will not be established.

Samuel says that God has another man who is a man after His own heart that He will appoint to be ruler over His people.

Why did God do this? Because Saul would not obey what God told him to do.

Do you see this? What could have been will never be because of disobedience.

Saul dared to disobey God in a public and corporate setting in a sacred matter, offering sacrifices to God and even though he had his reasons, he was wrong and in sin.

When we blatantly defy God and His word, we will miss out.