

1 Sam 13:1-23 [15]-SAUL'S SINFUL SACRIFICE

PRELIMS. Israel now have their king – Saul. A Benjamite instead of God! Sam re-news the covenant terms, assuring them that **if** they fear the Lord and follow Him, both them and their king “*it will be well*” [15]. Sam promises to **continuing praying** for them “*far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you*”[23]

The Writer obviously wanted to inform us of how long Saul had been reigning before the events of chapter 13, but there are **spaces** in the mss as if some letters/numbers dropped out!

In the original it is ‘Saul chose **for himself** 3,000 men’! The rest “*he sent home*”[2] Only those good in warfare were chosen and from them Saul kept **twice** as much for himself, 2,000 and 1,000 to Jonathan. **Double** for himself - this may be the beginning of what God had said – **selfishness** of the king!

“These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you... appoint them to his chariots...his horsemen...he will appoint for himself commanders of 1,000 and commanders of 50s”[8:11cf]

So we today can testify that government line their own pockets with pension schemes and handouts at the expense of taxpayer!

But hey presto – albeit having only **half** the resources that Saul had, it is **Jonathan** who **takes the lead** in a **victory**! He

“defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was a Geba”[3] This was the **catalyst** and **encouragement** which enabled Israel to go out to battle and “*the Philistines heard of it*” (the victory) And **Saul** *blew the trumpet throughout all the land of Israel saying ‘Let the Hebrews hear’. And all Israel heard that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel became a **stench** to the Philistines”*[4]!

Now Saul, being king, was the one that was supposed to **lead** Israel in battle “*No, but there shall be a king over us...that our king may...go out before us and fight our battles*”[10:20]. But

Saul does not seem to be there! **But**, nevertheless, Saul takes the **glory** of victory “*all Israel heard that Saul had defeated the garrison*”![4] It does remind us of Saul’s character later in his life when pursuing/hunting David – he is **neglecting** his duties at home! And perhaps **jealousy** is getting at Saul here in that **Jonathan** is in the forefront – when it **should** be Saul!!

APP As Ralph Davis points out, a **dereliction of duty** by those responsible, does **not frustrate** the **purposes** of God! When the ‘appointed’ authority is reluctant to perform his duty, God has other willing servants! Jonathan can do what Saul ought to have done. History testifies! **Whitefield** preached in the fields when **Anglicans** refused to preach the gospel in the churches! Be sure of this, God has other Xns, ‘**ready and willing**’, to step into our place, when we fail to perform our Xn duty to the world! God’s **purposes** of ‘a multitude no man can number’ singing His praises in heaven, will **not fail** despite our **lethargy**!

Anyway, Saul does now **muster** the Israelites together. So did the Philistines – they had **30,000 chariots** to choose from “*like the sand in the seashore for multitude*”[5] **Ten** times what Israel had! Humanly speaking, that was **threatening** – **if** you did not have a lot of **faith** in God! And Israel didn’t! Do you know what the **soldiers** did? They “*hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns*” – those who were brave enough to follow Saul “*followed him trembling*” [6,7] It was frightening! **APP** How would **you/I** fare in such circumstances? You/I **as believers** have the very same **promises** and **more** than these believers had! Their ‘feelings’ would be identical to your feelings when threatened!

Now it was **under** such circumstances that we read of **Saul’s great sin** which lost him his kingdom, and I fear, **lost** him his **soul**! When we read of the circumstances at the time, we wonder what **was so evil** about what he did?

Lets look at **the facts**. Sam told Saul to **wait** for **7 days until** he

(Sam) turned up to give **instructions** regarding the battle!
“Behold I am coming 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**”[10:8] Well, Saul “**waited seven** days, the **time appointed** by Samuel. But Samuel did **not** come to Gilgal, and the **people were scattering** from him”[8] The people were **scared stiff** and went into **hiding** – you can **understand** why Saul was **panicking!**

As he says “When I saw the people **scattering** from me and that **you did not** come within the days appointed and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, I said ‘Now the Philistines will come down **against me...and I have not sought the favour of the Lord**’. So I **forced** myself and **offered** the burnt offering”[11,12] What was wrong with that? Not much on the **surface**. But when you dig deeper – and God friends, digs deep

Sam “You (Saul) have **done foolishly**. You have **not kept** the commandment of the Lord your God”[13] **Twice** in [13,14] it is said that it is the **commandment** of the **Lord** that he failed to keep! It is **not** the commandment **of** Sam or anyone but the commandment of God. That command was: to **wait** for Sam to offer burnt offerings **and** to give **instructions** regarding the battle! It was really a lack of **trust/reliance** on **God’s Word together with** a **trust** in his **own authority!** **APP** As so often today, **ritual** was more important than God’s Word! To be **seen** to **perform outwardly** the right things, rather than the Word!

Some say Saul’s sin was **usurping** the **priest’s office** by sacrificing (only **priests** permitted to do so). That may be true also! But Saul, being king, probably had his **entourage** (staff) with him. Bible here as in many places, **assumes** we know that!

People in **high position** find it hard to keep low! **Pride** often subtly **forces** itself through. Saul after all, was **king** – had he not a right to give orders! Attitude: ‘No one is going to tell me what to do?’ Ralph Davis tells of **James VI of Scotland**. He

was **rude** – he would talk to those around him during the preaching as he sat in his gallery! This day **Robert Bruce** was preaching. As usual King James talked to those around him as Bruce preached. Bruce stopped. King stopped. Bruce resumed. King resumed. Twice! Then Bruce “It is said to have been an expression of the wisest kings ‘When the lion roars, all the beasts of the field are quiet: the lion of the Tribe of Judah is now roaring in the voice of His Gospel, and it becomes all the petty kings of the earth to be silent’! It is **difficult** for a **king** to take **orders**! It is **also** difficult for any **proud** man to take orders! Thus Xnity is a religion of **humility** You cannot be a strong Xn **unless** you have **humility** and can **submit**!

The **Judgment! Saul:** (a) “*your kingdom shall not continue*” [14a] Sam indicates that it is his **heart** that was wrong “*the Lord has sought out a man after His own heart*”[14b] (2) No **hereditary** passing on of the kingdom. David was to be king, not Jonathan! To be unable to pass on any blessings to your family is judgment! Children **deprived** of their **inheritance**! The **worst** sort of deprivation is **spiritual**, which Saul also was unable to give (he turned to seek counsel of witches, etc!)

Judgment for **Israel:** (1) **Deprived** of the means of **self-defence**! “*on the day of battle there was neither sword not spear found in the hand of any of the people*”[22] When a nation is **dependent** on other nations it has **lost** its **sovereignty** – that is judgment. UK are losing its sovereignty to **Europe**! In **economics**, our **finances** are **dependent** on **outside sources**!

Greatest tragedy was Saul’s **loss** of **spiritual guidance** Sam **leaves** Saul! “*And Samuel rose and went up from Gilgal*”[15] Saul is **on his own** from now on! Judgment! To be deprived of a ‘prophet’, a man of God to **lead/guide/warn** is a great loss! A nation **loses** when its **leaders** are **disobedient**! But **everything** is **not lost**! Israel **knows** God **can** deliver them in desperate situations! And they have that **promise** if they **repent**!