

1 Samuel 13

November 4, 2020

Saul puts himself in an awkward middle ground here. His disposition of troops – 1000 with Jonathan at the front in Gibeah and 2000 in reserve with Saul in Micmash – would seem reasonable. But militarily speaking it's completely insufficient compared to what the Philistines can muster as we read in verse 5. And on the other hand, the number is too large to demonstrate dependence on the Lord.

Saul's troops are melting away in verse 8. The thousands he started with have dwindled to 600 in verse 15. It's no wonder he gets a bit panicky and decides to proceed with the sacrifice. But does he ever think back to the example of Gideon? He started his campaign against the Midianites with 32,000 men (Judges 7). But in obedience to the Lord Gideon pruned the army down to a mere 300. Saul should have confidence in his complement of 600 if viewed with confidence in the Lord.

Jonathan in contrast shows great faith, attacking the Philistines with the smaller division here, and accompanied only by his servant in the next chapter. As he says to servant, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few" (1 Samuel 14:6).

Notes

13:1 It seems clear that some words have been lost in the Hebrew in this verse. The NIV reads "Saul was thirty years old when he became king and reigned over Israel forty-two years<" based on Acts 13:21. ESV and King James say "**when** he had reigned two years ...". Both ESV and Darby substitute an ellipsis for "one" year.



Questions for study and discussion:

1. Saul creates the first standing army here. Is this a good idea? How does it fulfill Samuel's prophecies about kings?
2. What were the short term and long term consequence of Jonathan's successful attack on the Philistine garrison at Geba?

3. What was another time when the people of Israel hid in caves from invaders? How were they rescued?

4. What is wrong with Saul's sacrifice? Why does it have such drastic consequences?

5. What does verse 14 mean? Was it ever possible that Saul's kingship would endure?

6. Do verses 19-22 tell us anything about the relations between the Lord's people and the outside world?