

1 Samuel 13-14

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[0:00] 1 Samuel and chapter 13. We've been studying through 1 Samuel for a little while. We're on session number 8. And we believe that the majority of 1 Samuel was written indeed by Samuel, with the prophets Nathan and Gad filling in the sections that he obviously didn't write, like the bit where he died, for example.

But broadly, by and large, it's written by Samuel the prophet, who also features prominently in the narrative. Now, in terms of the historical background, we're familiar with the Exodus. In fact, we were just reading about that in Psalm 78.

That was around 1400 BC or so. Moses led Israel, the nation, out of Egypt. And then Joshua led the people into the land of Canaan, the promised land.

And while Joshua cleared out a lot of the native population, actually the Lord arranged for some to be left to test Israel, to see if they would trust him and remain faithful.

Judges chapter 3 lists some of those people, and one of them, in fact the first on the list, is the five kings of the Philistines. Philistines. And the Philistines are featuring abundantly in our narrative today, so it's good to remember why they're there.

[1:21] They're there because God intended for them to be there to see, will Israel believe? So then we've studied through Judges, and some of the Judges' studies are up on the podcast, and hopefully the remainder will follow.

And what we see there is this cycle of good times, sin, persecution, repentance, deliverance. You know, God rages up a judge to save, and then there is peace for a few years or decades until the cycle begins again. And different antagonists arise. The Philistines, again, are prominent, particularly for Samuel.

No, sorry, Samson. In the days of Samson, the Philistines are very, very prominent. But Judges doesn't really conclude with anything other than, in those days, there was no king in Israel.

Everyone just did what was right in their own eyes. So you kind of feel like, well, we haven't, you know, with these 100, 200, 300 odd years have passed, and Israel haven't really developed. If anything, they've gone backwards.

[2:28] And that's the context into which 1 Samuel opens. There's no king. There's no progression towards faith and peace. Israel is really not passing that test of, will they trust the Lord or not?

Now, in 1 Samuel so far, we've seen, again, the Philistines rising up against Israel. We even saw them take the Ark of God, if you remember, and it was left to God to give the Philistines a good spanking for that.

Very humiliating. But, again, they've been able to regather their strength and subdue Israel again. And by the end of, or during our reading today, we'll see how the Philistines have effectively subjugated Israel to the extent that Israel has no weapons.

And they have to go to the Philistines, even just to, you know, sharpen their pitchforks and whatever else farmers use. Sickles, I guess. Scythes. Let's go with that.

Thank you. So it's a tough time, a dark time. But God is working. We've seen him raise up the prophet Samuel, who has acted as a judge, but in many ways he's the last of the judges and the first of this new group, the prophets.

[3:42] And Samuel has been raised, among other reasons, to anoint Saul as king. And one of God's stated goals for Saul, if you refer to 1 Samuel 9, 16, one of the goals for Saul is to save Israel from the Philistines.

So he's been lifted up to fulfill that role of judge, if you like, but as a king, as an anointed king, and the first king.

And in the last session we saw Saul confirmed where he was able to, by the power of the Holy Spirit, respond to that nasty threat from Nahash, or Nahash if you remember, the Ammonites. And Saul was able to muster 330,000 soldiers to defeat him. And so Saul has been confirmed as king. Samson, no, Samuel, hang on, these guys mixed up. Samuel delivered his address. I think I said last time that he was, it was a farewell address and his last as a judge. Actually, that's not true. I must correct that. [4 : 48] 1 Samuel 7, 15 says very clearly that Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And Samuel has probably another two decades or so of ministry still to go.

So Samuel is diminishing from sort of the front lines and prominence, if you like, as Saul takes on his kingship. But Samuel remains judge doing his annual circuit that we've read about. But Samuel delivers his address there. He says, you know, I'm handing over leadership duties to Saul. You asked for a king. Your motives were bad. God sends a big thunderclap or thunderstorm to show them that they were, you know, they were off with this request for a king. But we closed last time, chapter 12, verse 24, with Samuel trying to, I guess, allay their fears somewhat and say, look, only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you. But if you still do evil, both you and your king will be swept away. And so, in those days, there was no king in Israel. [5 : 59] Now there is a king in Israel. But they still all need to obey. They need to follow after the Lord and serve him. The king cannot do that on their behalf.

Right, I think we're ready now to begin. And I wanted to just start with an overview because I have a habit of running over. I thought what I'll do is I'll give you the bottom line up front, as they say. We're going to cover chapters 13 and 14. And in those chapters, what we're going to see is Saul falling short. Although it's actually in the next chapter, chapter 15, where we see it's the end for Saul.

God's had enough. It's like, dude, you're out now. It's over. But if you step back from these two chapters, as we read through, what you'll see is Saul is actually a very strong, very capable, and you could even say successful military leader. Particularly at the end. And what we'll see in our text is a lot of detail about some very foolish things that Saul did. But in the end of chapter 14, it says, actually, Saul took all the land of Israel, pretty much.

[7 : 18] He subdued all the enemies round about. He was very, very valiant. And he saved Israel. It says that explicitly.

He saved Israel. And yet, our author has chosen to zoom in and focus on the errors and the failures. And only sort of, oh, by the way, also, he did all this stuff. So, and we have to ponder, why is the author taking such great pains to show us and highlight the error and failure? And I guess it's because for all of his successes to humanize, to God, his partial and incomplete obedience and his lack of faith render him unfit for service. So, it doesn't matter if he's able to, you know, perform all these exploits and succeed in the material plane, if you like. As far as God is concerned, this isn't the kind of king we need. And therefore, his errors are made very prominent. And at the same time, as we review these two chapters, what we'll see is we're introduced to Jonathan.

[8 : 31] And we'll see how he is a very different, he's cut from a very different cloth. Great in his faith, great in his understanding of God. And he knows and understands that God can do the impossible if I just make myself available.

That's it. And I think ultimately, as we read this, we're led to conclude that our faith is best placed in God. Men, and the best of men, are fallible.

And therefore, we need the warrior king who is perfect, Jesus Christ, God incarnate. So, there we go. There's the bottom line up front. I wanted to say this. We're going to read from the New American Standard Translation, which we have done and we always have done in this fellowship. I am reading from the 2020 edition, by the way, in case it reads slightly different from your 1995.

But what I found today, in particular, in these texts is there are some problems. The NASB, like most of our Bibles, is, in the Old Testament that is, is primarily based on the Hebrew Masoretic texts, generally regarded as very reliable.

[9 : 40] But they're not perfect. And the oldest copies we've got date from around the 10th century AD, I think. So, super old.

But bearing in mind this all happened 2,000 years before that, you have to realise that a lot of time has passed. And so, there are some textual issues, and I'll highlight them as we go.

In order to try and do the best I could, I've also read through the, I've referred to the Septuagint Bible, that is a Greek translation of the Hebrew that was done actually around sort of 2, 300 BC, so before Christ.

And, in particular, thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls, we have really good records of the Septuagint as well. And I also spent a bit of time digging through the Antiquities of the Jews by Jewish historian Josephus.

That dates to around 95-ish AD, so just after the time of Christ. And while the writings of Josephus are not Scripture, they're very useful, historically speaking.

[10 : 46] And what I found them as useful for is, how were these texts understood in the time of Christ? How did the Jews read this?

So, let's see how we get on. Chapter 13 and verse 1. Saul was 30 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for 42 years over Israel.

And we immediately have a problem. Have we all got NASB here? And what does it say? Saul was 30 years old.

Yes. Saul was dot, dot, dot, years old. There's a problem here. And your NASB, you'll know, has got some italics that show you where there are words that are missing.

Yes. Yes. So, there's two pieces missing. The age of Saul when he began to reign and the length of his reign are both missing.

[11 : 47] Lost for a long time. The Septuagint does not, actually most Septuagintes don't even have this verse. They're just like, well, I guess we're done with that. That's missing.

Josephus, he doesn't know. The narrative in Chronicles, 1 Chronicles, begins after this, so that doesn't know. So, what do we know?

What do we know? Well, look, here's what we know, okay? We know that Saul has been described for us as young and handsome. Right, when he was introduced and when he was installed, not a great deal of time has passed, you know, maybe a couple of years.

But Saul is young and handsome. However, we also will see that Saul has a son named Jonathan who is already old enough to be a military leader. So, for me, 30 is a bit on the young side.

I don't really see how, you know, if Saul had his son when he was 15, and Jonathan is only 15, and has already become a military leader, it's not impossible, but it's, I don't know, tricky.

[12 : 53] So, we don't know. What we also know from Acts 13, 21, Paul says there that Saul was given to Israel for 40 years.

Likely, that's a rounded number, and that's why our interpreters here have said, well, maybe it was supposed to be 42 years. And that's really all we know. I will also say this, though, that the rabbis today will assume that the Masoretic text is good, and when it says, it actually literally says, Saul was a son of a year when he became king, or he was one year old.

He wasn't one years old. And it says he reigned for two years. But what they do actually is similar to what the King James and the New King James Bibles do, is they say, Saul reigned for a year, and when he'd reigned two years, these things happened.

It's not the usual meaning of the Hebrew, so I don't think that's correct. Anyway, it's difficult, and what we need to realise at the end of the day is for some reason, God saw fit to allow the age of Saul and the length of his reign to drop out of the record.

So, do with that what you will. Verse 2. Now Saul chose for himself 3,000 men of Israel, of whom 2,000 were with Saul in Michmash.

[14 : 17] I can't say that. I'm just going to say Michmash. And in the hill country of Bethel, where 1,000, while 1,000 were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin, but he sent the rest of the people away, each to his tent.

So if you remember, he had an army, a standing army of 30, well, he had an army of 330,000. Now that Nahash has been dealt with, most of them have been dismissed home, leaving only a standing army of 3,000.

And so, we're introduced to Jonathan, or rather, we're not really introduced, he just kind of shows up. So who is he? I've mentioned already, he is the son of Saul.

Who is his mother? We never explicitly told that, actually. Although we would assume it is Saul's wife, who's named later. According to 1 Chronicles 8, 33, he was the first born of Saul, and Saul had four sons, and he's the first.

And it is implied later in 1 and 2 Samuel, that he would be heir to the throne. So that's Jonathan. His name means, Yahweh has given.

[15:34] Nathan means given, and obviously the yo at the front, often yeho is Jehovah or Yahweh. So Jehovah's given, or Yahweh is given. And then this place, Michmash, this is a new location for us, and because I'm nice, I've got a map.

Can someone drive this for me, actually? It might help. Well, actually, that doesn't look so great. So we'll refer back, and I'll just leave this up for now, but Michmash is here.

So Jerusalem is there. This is a scale of about two miles. So that's eight, 10 miles northeast of Jerusalem. So a lot of these places we'll see as we go through.

But that's Michmash. What do we know about it? Actually, there is still a village there today. It's called Muchmash. And it's the same place.

Amazing, huh? Well, generally considered to be the same place. Of course, we don't know for sure. This is 3,000 years ago. But yeah, there is still a place there in the land.

[16:43] As we go through, we'll read some details to help us picture it. And I've got some slides from that area today that we'll look at as well. Right, let's read on.

Verse 3. And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geber. And the Philistines heard about it. And then Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land saying, let the Hebrews hear.

And all Israel heard the news that Saul had attacked the garrison of the Philistines. And also that Israel had become repulsive to the Philistines. Then the people were summoned to Saul at Gilgal. So there's been this kind of awkward kind of peace, if you like. The kind of peace that happens when one nation is completely subdued by another.

The Philistines, again, as I said earlier, have suppressed Israel. They won't allow them to have weapons. They won't allow them to even sharpen their own farming instruments. And now there's peace.

[17:45] But what we see here is Jonathan is very brave. He's very proactive. He steps up and begins the attack. And it's made Israel repulsive, odious to the Philistines.

And, you know, I like that. I like Jonathan. He's ready to, he's like, bring it on. He's ready for this. Even though Saul is the one whom God had said would be the one to save them from the Philistines, Jonathan's like, let's get this done.

So Saul musters the army to Gilgal. That's on the slide way over there on the east. And Gilgal was a key town in the tribe of Benjamin.

You may remember from chapter 11, that's where Saul was crowned. So that's where the mustering is taking place. Verse 5. Things are heating up now.

Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel. 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance.

[18:54] And they came up and camped at Michmash east of Beth-Avon. When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble for the people were hard-pressed, then the people kept themselves hidden in caves, in crevices, in cliffs, in crypts, and in pits.

And some of the Hebrews crossed the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead. But as for Saul, he was still in Gilgal and all the people following him trembling.

It's not clear, it's not stated how many Saul was able to muster. Evidently not enough to match 30,000 chariots and 6,000 cavalry and an innumerable number of foot soldiers.

And so it's not a surprise, I guess, that many of the army of Saul are like, I'm out, and they flee. From Gilgal further over to the east, over the Jordan River there, that is where you would find the lands of Gad and Gilead.

So it makes sense to flee that way because the Philistines are over this way on the west. Now, it's possible at this point, before we get into verse 8, that there is a little bit of text that's dropped out from the Greek.

[20:11] Sorry, from the Hebrew. Josephus, the historian, notes that at this point, Saul sent for Samuel to come and Samuel commanded him to wait there, prepare some sacrifices and then he'd come in seven days to offer the sacrifices, seek the Lord and join the battle.

None of that is in the Bible. But what we have otherwise is a bit of a weird, sharp turn. So we've read about that and then verse 8, let's read on.

Now he waited seven days until the appointed time that Samuel had set. And we think, what appointed time that Samuel had set? So Josephus' comment is probably true but it's not Bible again.

But Samuel did not come to Gilgal and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, bring me the burnt offering and the peace offering. And he offered the burnt offering.

But as soon as he'd finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came and Saul went out to meet him and to greet him. And Samuel said, what have you done?

[21 : 20] And Saul said, since I saw that the people were scattering from me and that you did not come at the appointed time and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, I thought, now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal and I have not asked the favour of the Lord.

So I worked up the courage and offered the burnt offering. But Samuel said to Saul, you have acted foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God which he commanded you for the Lord would now have established your kingdom over Israel forever but now your kingdom shall not endure.

The Lord has sought for himself a man after his own heart and the Lord has appointed him ruler over his people because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.

Eesh. Well, I think we should appreciate that Saul was in a difficult position. Israel was looking to him as king as also the one who was going to deliver us from the Philistines.

You're the guy. You're the strong man. Well, here we are. Deliver us. Save us then, Saul. What are we doing, Saul? And Saul's waiting. He's going to wait seven days and apparently do nothing.

[22 : 44] That's a long time, seven days when you've got this big old army bearing down. Many of the people have already hidden themselves. They're leaving probably on a daily basis.

People are going, do you know what? I'm out. So Saul decides to do what he feels he can but it's a mistake because he is doing the things, the duties that are reserved for the priesthood.

He's offering these burnt offerings and these peace offerings and the consequences of this as Samuel declares, your kingdom is not going to endure. What it doesn't say is that he's going to be removed immediately.

What it's saying is that his posterity, his line will not be an enduring line of kings because God is seeking for a man after his own heart, a man who's loyal, a man who agrees with God and a man who will walk faithfully with him.

And of course we know that in the first application that's David and ultimately it is Jesus Christ. But it's interesting to I think consider the application for this.

[23 : 55] What do we take from this? Because on the one hand the key thing that's important and we'll see this explicitly in chapter 15, the key thing that God cares about is not so much that which is done but the intent and the desire of the heart.

We know this, right? God is always concerned with heart over actions and hence why he says I'm looking for a man who is after my own heart. So God always looks on the heart and not the actions. But on the other hand we aren't free to invent our own forms of worship. As long as I'm sincere I'm going to worship God by whatever it is.

We're not free to do that if it's been forbidden in the scriptures. So there's sort of two things in balance there. In fact, actually I'm just going to read in chapter 15 verse 22 when Samuel gives Saul his sort of second rebuke he says this in verse 22.

He says Does the Lord have as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than a sacrifice and to pay attention is better than the fat of rams.

[25 : 16] Obedience. Now for us today what is obedience? In the first place number one top priority above all else John 6 29 this is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent.

That's it. it is believing in the gospel believing in Jesus Christ. Nothing else matters if that work of God if that act of obedience is not done.

And then it is to live in submissive obedience to follow and obey that which the Bible instructs us to do as Gentile believers. We don't have a priesthood so we approach we all approach God as equals we all study and open our Bibles as equals.

Ray and I have nothing over and above anyone in this room to understand these things. We don't have that. And I think we should say we do have considerable freedom of expression for worship. We can use guitars. Yes! We could even use drums if we wanted to. The scriptures has nothing to forbid it. But for others they prefer to worship a cappella choral whatever and these are all acceptable to God because the scripture says nothing about those things and it's acceptable if scripture is not broken.

[26 : 44] Anyway, let's move on before we run out of time. We are as far as verse 15 in chapter 13. Things are still heating up. So Samuel verse 15 Then Samuel set out and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin and Saul counted the people who were present with him about 600 men.

He's down to 600 men. Now Saul, his son Jonathan and the people who were present with them were staying in Gibeah of Benjamin while the Philistines camped at Michmash.

Then raiders from the camp of the Philistines in three companies one company turned towards Ofra to the land of Shual. Another company turned towards Beth Horon and another company turned toward the border that overlooks the valley of Zeboim towards the wilderness.

And those are on the map if you feast your eyes. Michmash is here, Gibe is here, and you can see these three lines going to the north, west and south respectively.

Those are the raiding parties coming out just to give you an idea of how that looked. Now, no blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel because the Philistines said, otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears.

[28 : 07] So all Israel went down to the Philistines, each to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, and his hoe. The charge was two thirds of a shekel for a plowshare, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to fix the cattle goads.

So it came about on the day of battle that neither sword nor spear was found in the hands of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan, but they were found with Saul and his son Jonathan. And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the gorge at Michmash. So that is setting the scene as we close out chapter 13. 600 men against an innumerable host, a whole bunch of chariots, although to be honest I'm not sure how much good they would be in this terrain, and the 3,000 cavalry, or was it 6,000?

The odds are not looking good. The distance between Geber and Michmash is only a couple of miles, and whether they could actually see one another I don't know, and then to top it all off, they haven't really got any weapons.

The prophet Samuel came, and now he's gone, and all he's done really is rebuke Saul. What's going to happen? Well, let's find out.

[29 : 33] Verse 1 of chapter 14. Now the day came that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who was carrying his armor, come, and let's cross over to the Philistines garrison that's on the other side.

But he did not tell his father. Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree that is in Migron, and the people who were with him numbered about 600 men, and Hiphai, the son of Hytub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the priest of the Lord at Shiloh, was wearing an ephod, and the people did not know that Jonathan had gone.

Now, we read that Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah. Now, Gibeah is a Hebrew word, and it just means hill.

And what I was interested in is that in the Hebrew there is a definite article before Gibeah, so it's Hagibiah, so really it's the hill. And outskirts is a word that means extremity.

So I think what this is saying is actually he's on the peak of a hill. And there were two or three places called Gibeah, presumably named after the hill that they were on.

[30 : 50] But I don't think that Saul is in a place called Gibeah specifically. And actually that understanding corresponds with the Septuagint. But I couldn't find any Hebrew translators who agree with me on that point, so do take it with a pinch of salt.

But either way, I think if it is a town called Gibeah or if he's on a hill, either way, I think what we're seeing is Saul has a perspective, he's under this pomegranate tree, and you can see these raiding parties going out.

And the pomegranate tree I think is significant, delicious. But moreover, from Deuteronomy 8.8, the pomegranate tree is one of the blessings of the promised land.

And I think there's something poignant about Saul being there under the tree of blessing, looking out and seeing the devastation of the land of Israel by the Philistines, going, you know, three of the four compass points, his people fleeing, and he is just helpless.

He feels completely helpless. Except for this guy Jonathan, because Jonathan, he steps up and he makes this plan to cross over into the Philistine camp.

[32 : 07] You know, the one with the innumerable, the uncountable army in it, that one. Jonathan is going to cross over. Now between, let's read on, sorry, verse four.

Now between the gorges by which Jonathan sought to cross over to the Philistines garrison, there was a rocky crag on the one side and a rocky crag on the other side, and the name of the one was Bozes and the name of the other Sena or Sena.

The one crag rose on the north, opposite Michmash, and the other on the south, opposite Geber.

Well, I tried to find some photos and I did get a couple for you.

So this is one and I'm like, I looked at it, I thought, that's great and all, but I don't really know the sense of scale here because there's no people in the picture.

But I think it gives you an idea of that big old gorge there, so Michmash would have been on this side, Geber on that side, and so they're looking across, and that's the kind of terrain.

[33 : 13] Now that is not really a passable gap. What would normally happen is if you wanted to cross, you'd go all the way up to the north where it's a bit more flat up there. That's another view of the same area.

How would you get up there? I don't know. As I say, not great for chariots, right? So, did I have another?

Oh, no, we'll go there in a minute. So, those are, that's the kind of place we're talking about today.

And Jonathan looks at that and goes, yeah, I can get across there.

No problem. But it was going to be difficult, right? And as we read on, we'll see he's on his hands and knees. Now, the structure of the camp up the top there is such that it was, the Philistines would have considered it to be impenetrable, open on three sides, impenetrable on this side.

You can't get up there. It's not going to happen. Impossible to climb, and even if you wanted to attempt it, sharp, very dangerous rocks, no one would be mad enough to do that.

[34 : 25] Verse six, then Jonathan said to the young man who was carrying his armor, come, let's cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised men. Perhaps the Lord will work for us because the Lord is not limited to saving by many, or by few.

His armor-bearer said to him, do everything that is in your heart, turn yourself to it, and here I am with you as your heart desires. And I think here, with Jonathan's comment, we've got a very key point, and this is the heart of Jonathan, the Lord is not limited to saving by many or by few.

In chapter 11, that was where we read about Nahash and Saul's defeat of him. But how did that happen? It happened by Saul mustering this huge great army of 330,000 men, and you remember the story how Saul did that.

But God's spirit rushed on Saul and prompted him to action. And Jonathan, presumably, I don't know how old he was at the time, but presumably old enough to understand what's going on.

He could have come away thinking, well that's how it works. The spirit rushes upon a person, they do a thing, and then suddenly they've got this army of a third of a million, and that's how God works.

[35 : 54] But no, Jonathan has managed to get a true and right understanding. That's not, God isn't limited to work in one way or another way. But I also want you to observe what Jonathan says.

He says, perhaps the Lord will work for us. Jonathan hasn't had a word from the Lord, he hasn't had a prophetic utterance that said, Jonathan, go, the Lord will be with you.

Jonathan's like, I'm just going to make myself available, because I know my theology is such that God isn't restricted to save in any way. Lord, I'm available, maybe the Lord will want to save through me.

Here I am, Lord, I'm going. So, no certain promise. And so I would say to you that this is an act of great courage as well as great faith.

And also, I think we should commend the armor bearer too, right? I mean, he has enough commitment and courage and faith in Jonathan to say, bro, I'm with you, let's do this. So, all right, let's read on now, verse number eight.

[37 : 09] So, then Jonathan said, behold, we are going to cross over to the men and reveal ourselves to them. If they say to us, wait until we come to you, then we will stand in our place and

not go up to them.

But if they say, come up to us, then we will go up, for the Lord has handed them over to us, and this shall be a sign to us. When the two of them revealed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines, the Philistines said, behold, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have kept themselves hidden.

So the men of the garrison responded to Jonathan and his armor bearer and said, come up to us and we will inform you of something. And Jonathan said to his armor bearer, come up after me, for the Lord has handed them over to Israel.

So Jonathan has devised a test, a sign, based on how the Philistines respond when they see them for the first time.

And I think that the scene is best imagined with Jonathan down the bottom of the gorge and the Philistines up top, the watchman seeing them emerging from behind a rock or whatever it is.

[38 : 24] and they have this exchange shouting. And obviously the watchman would have expected them to have, there's no threat here, these two dudes at the bottom of the gorge.

But Jonathan interprets it, okay, the Lord has handed them over. The Philistines say, come up and we will inform you of something. It's overly literal, I think.

the Net Bible, the New English Translation Bible puts this, come on up to us so that we can teach you a thing or two. It's probably a better understanding of the gist of what they're saying.

Now, it might seem that what follows happens immediately, with the watchman not taking their eyes off of them. But what we'll see is Jonathan manages to catch them by surprise.

And you think, how does that happen? Well, for Josephus' telling of this in Antiquities, this is a long and difficult climb. And they obviously went out of sight of the camp as they climbed, and the camp just kind of got bored and went to sleep.

[39 : 39] You know, they considered this face to be unassailable. There are no guards, they're like, it's fine, let's just go to sleep. Verse 13.

So, it's probably night time, the camp is asleep, Jonathan and armor bearer are silently climbing, ninja style. then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet with his armor bearer behind him.

And the men fell before Jonathan and his armor bearer put some to death after him. Now, that first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor bearer inflicted was about 20 men within about half a furrow in an acre of land.

And there was a trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. Even the garrison and the raiders trembled and the earth quaked, so it became a great trembling. Now, the Philistine camp was multi-ethnic.

Different ethnicities of people within the army. And what that meant was that there was an inherent distrust in the army.

[40 : 51] And when it became apparent that the camp was under attack and that the camp was taking losses, all these groups immediately thought, it's them, they're the invaders, they're the invaders.

And so there was, I think, a divinely appointed confusion as they sought to find out what was going on. And we also read here that God caused an earthquake.

So God was active on behalf of Jonathan. While he took the initiative, stepping out in confidence that God could use him, God then intervened miraculously to bring about this defeat.

Verse 16. Now Saul's watchman in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude dissolved, and they went here and there.

So Saul said to the people who were with him, look carefully now and see who has left us. And when they looked, behold, Jonathan and his armorer were not there.

[41 : 57] Then Saul said to Ahijah, bring the ark of God here. For at that time the ark of God was with the sons of Israel. While Saul talked to the priest, the commotion in the camp of the Philistines continued and increased.

So Saul said to the priest, withdraw your hand. Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and came to the battle. And behold, every man's sword was against his fellow Philistine and there was a very great confusion.

Now the Hebrews who were with the Philistines previously, who went up with them all around in the camp, even they also returned to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan.

When all the men of Israel who had kept themselves hidden in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines had fled, they also closely pursued them in the battle.

So the Lord saved Israel that day and the battle spread beyond Beth oven. So things have escalated quickly and Saul is sort of on the back foot trying to figure out what's happened.

[43 : 13] Who's left? And they muster to try and find out who among their 600 is left. And they find out, well it's only Jonathan and the armour bearer. And then they inquire of the Lord.

And as we read through that you may have noticed that it referred to the ark of God. The ark of God? The ark of God? So in the Septuagint it's not the ark of God, it is the ephod of the high priest. And the ephod would make more sense because the ark of the Lord is not used for, the ark of God is not used for discerning God's will. You don't go to the ark of God, you use the ephod to do that. The priestly garment worn by Hyder the priest. So I'm not sure why the Hebrew Masoretic says ark. It's possible that the ark was there, but bearing in mind what happened last time, the Hebrews took the ark into battle, it didn't go well.

So I'm not sure, to be honest, I'm not sure. But everything that's happening is happening outside of Saul's control.

[44 : 30] Saul has very, very little input into this. Saul's inquiring of God doesn't really have any effect. The Lord is bringing about this defeat of the Philistines in spite of him.

And we read Saul there saying, withdraw your hand to Ahijah. And I'm not 100% sure on what that means. I think it means, never mind inquiring of the Lord, let's just join the battle.

But again, not too sure what to make of that. Oh, it could be that, yeah.

It could be that. But again, the lack of detail in the passages, yeah, it could be the Urim and the Tumim, and we'll talk about those in a bit, actually. Now, we are on verse 24.

Now, the men of Israel were hard-pressed on that day, for Saul had put the people under oath, saying, cursed be the man who eats food before evening, before I have avenged myself on my enemies.

[45 : 41] Thanks. So none of the people tasted food, all the people of the land entered the forest, and there was honey on the ground. When the people entered the forest, behold, there was honey dripping, but no man put his hand to his mouth, because the people feared the oath.

However, Jonathan had not heard it when his father put the people under oath, so he put out the end of his staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb, and he put his hand to his mouth and his eyes brightened.

So we discover this mandatory fast that Saul has Yeah, about that. I just need five, ten minutes.

Well, we could stop, I suppose. Well, let's see how we go. Let's see if we find a sensible place to stop. So Saul has enforced this fast. Interestingly, again, the Septuagint Greek version has got this edition there, verse 24, which amused me.

It says this, Now Saul lacked discernment with great ignorance on that day. I thought, wow, tell us what you really think.

[47 : 00] And Josephus actually had a similar commentary about it, although Josephus would have been reading from the Septuagint. So, anyway, it was foolish. Jonathan doesn't seem to know, or Jonathan doesn't know about it.

So, it would seem that this edict, or this oath, or whatever, was given to those 600 men after Jonathan had left the camp, but before the battle had begun.

So, it shows you there was a bit of a time lapse as he scrambled across. Although, actually, Josephus says that Saul pronounced it while the battle raged, and the thinking was that that would mean, don't anyone dare pause to eat, let's just give these Philistines as much of a wallop as we can.

Anyway, we're not sure, Saul's motives aren't given in the text. Now, Wild Honey, I watched this little video of this, in one of those survival things, it was a guy in the Amazon, and he was like paddling along down the Amazon River, and I know that's a different place, but he looks up in the tree and sees this wild honey, this wild beehive, I guess you would call it, and he's like, oh, amazing, scrambles up there, gets stung a billion times, and comes away with these two handfuls of honey.

But what he says was noteworthy to me, it's like, all that stinging, and you've just got two handfuls of honey, he says, this is going to keep me going for days. That's how much in terms of calories and sugar energy that's there.

[48 : 41] Now, he's on a bit of a survivalist diet, but it's immense, immense food. So no wonder it's said to brighten Jonathan's eyes.

One picture that I will show you, so this is harvesting wild honey in modern times, this is in Indonesia, and you can see these wild beehives, and there can be up to a hundred of those in a tree, and so these guys, their livelihood comes from climbing up and collecting that wild honey. Now, but for Jonathan, in this particular forest, in the land of Israel, he doesn't have to get his beekeeping outfit on and climb a tree, it's flowing.

And what did God say about the land of Israel? It's flowing with some things, wasn't it? Yeah, flowing with milk and honey, and amazing, amazing to see it. And so honey on the ground, honey dripping from the trees there, and all the guys are like, I can't even eat it, right there, and it's superfood, it is superfood, it's so good.

And I can just imagine this, I'm just imagining this chorus of rumbling bellies as they traipse through the forest, and Jonathan's like, what's wrong with you people? Anyway, verse 28, then one of the people responded and said, your father strictly put the people under oath, saying, cursed be the man who eats food today.

[50 : 17] And the people were weary, and then Jonathan said, my father has troubled the land, see now that my eyes have brightened because I tasted a little of this honey, how much more if the people had freely eaten today of the spoils of their enemies which they found, for now the defeat among the Philistines has not been great.

It's interesting, I think, for Jonathan to speak against his father, the king, in this way. Even if it was objectively foolish, and as the Septuagint writer said, it was foolish.

I don't know that Jonathan did well to speak the way that he did to the army, to call it out, and especially to the men, but he did, and the text doesn't say anything about whether that was good or bad.

We've probably got, if I go all the way through, we've got about ten minutes. We can stop, or we can continue. What do we want to do? About ten minutes.

Is everyone happy? All right, let's get through this. I think it will be better, otherwise we'll lose the flow. So verse 31.

[51 : 36] They attacked the Philistines that day from Michmash to Eglon, but the people were very tired, so the people loudly rushed upon the spoils and took sheep and oxen and calves, and they slaughtered them on the ground, and the people ate them with the blood.

Ew. Then informers told, informed Saul, saying, look, the people are sinning against the Lord by eating meat with the blood. And he said, you have acted treacherously, roll a large rock to me today.

Then Saul said, disperse yourselves among the people and say to them, each one of you bring me his ox or his sheep and slaughter it here and eat, and do not sin against the Lord by eating it with the blood.

So all the people brought them that night, each one his ox with him, and they slaughtered them there, and Saul built an altar to the Lord. It was the first altar that he built to the Lord.

So in their hunger, they are failing to properly drain the meat of blood before they cook and eat it. I don't think we should interpret this as eating raw meat.

[52 : 45] It doesn't say that. It says they were eating it with the blood. And that I think means that they weren't taking the time to properly string up the meat and make sure all the blood is drained out. Eating with the blood, this is a prohibition that goes all the way back to Genesis chapter 9 and verse 4.

So that's Noah. So Noah is our ancestor as well. Chapter 9 verse 4, but you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

And then this is repeated multiple times in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. And I should say, also in Acts 21 verse 25, where James is speaking to Paul, says, regarding the Gentiles who have believed, we sent a letter, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and what is strangled and from sexual immorality.

So blood is a no-no and gross anyway, right? Ew. So Saul is, I think, to be commended and to his credit, he does take measures to stop the people sinning in this manner.

And verse 36, then Saul said, let's go down after the Philistines by night and take plunder among them until the morning light and let's not leave a man among them alive.

[54 : 08] And they said, do whatever seems good to you. So the priest said, let's approach God here. So Saul inquired of God, shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you hand them over to Israel?

But he did not answer him on that day. And Saul said, come here, all you leaders of the people, and investigate to see how this sin has happened today. For as the Lord lives, who saves Israel, even if it is my son Jonathan, he shall assuredly die.

But not one of the people answered him. Then he said to all Israel, you should be on one side, I and my son Jonathan will be on the other side. And the people said to Saul, do what seems good to you.

Therefore Saul said to the Lord, the God of Israel, give a perfect lot. And Jonathan and Saul were selected by lot, and the people were exonerated.

Then Saul said, cast lots between me and my son Jonathan, and Jonathan was selected by lot. So Saul wants to crack on and finish off the Philistines, but the high priest there says, hey, let's inquire of the Lord first.

[55 : 20] Let's not forget that although there has been a rout, they still have got chariots and horsemen and an army beyond number. And so the high priest I think is wise to say, hey, that's a check of God.

And they seek the Lord, but he doesn't answer. Now the seeking of God was typically done using two rather mysterious elements, the urim and the tumim.

And this is one of those texts that people will often look at as, how did they use the urim and the tumim? But here in this text we see that there was this casting of lots and this one or the other.

And Saul's remark there, give a perfect lot. And you notice that the word lot is in italics. Again, it appears there's been some measure of textual corruption here.

The word perfect or perfection is tumim. And it's, I think it was, I forget which version it was now, I didn't make a note, but in the longer reading that I think was in the subduation, Saul is saying if it's those guys give urim and if it's me and Jonathan give tumim.

[56 : 36] So, anyway, in either way that's what's happening here. They are seeking the lords. But ancient commentators and modern commentators alike all disagree on the meaning of urim and tumim, how they were used.

The Wikipedia page is actually quite interesting on this, on some of the different views. And they've got various references as well. But, anyway, so they draw lots and it turns out it's Jonathan.

Verse 43, So Saul said to Jonathan, tell me what you have done. And Jonathan told him and said, I did indeed taste a little honey with the end of the staff that was in my hand.

Here I am, I must die. And Saul said, may God do the same to me and more also, for you shall certainly die, Jonathan. But the people said to Saul, must Jonathan die?

He who has brought about this great victory in Israel, far from it. As the Lord lives, not even a hair of his head shall fall to the ground, because he has worked with God this day. And so the people rescued Jonathan and he didn't die.

[57 : 45] Then Saul went up from pursuing the Philistines and the Philistines went to their own place. So Jonathan is, he confesses that he's broken the oath that he didn't know about.

According to the text, it's not that Jonathan was flagrant in this disregard. When he heard about it, he didn't take any more honey. But this is, I'm honestly not sure what to make of this, because this seems to me to be a humiliation for Saul.

Because on the one hand, the rash oath or the vow or whatever, it has been violated. And he's like, he gives an order as to what should happen.

Jonathan put to death. And the people are like, no, you ain't doing that. That's not happening. Saul is made out as a fool. And Jonathan, in contrast, is presented to us as a faith-filled, courageous, and wise man, but ultimately one who is ready to die.

I couldn't help but liken that to Christ who was ready to die for us. But let's get this finished off because we run out of time.

[59 : 04] Verse 47. But what we have seen then is, because they didn't get an answer, they do let off, and the Philistines are not given a final walloping.

They let them go. Verse 47. Now, when Saul had taken control of the kingdom of Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the sons of Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobar, and the Philistines, and wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment.

And he acted valiantly and defeated the Amalekites and saved Israel from the hands of those who plundered them. Now, the sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi, Melchishua, and the names of his two daughters were these.

The name of the firstborn was Merab, and the name of the younger Michal, one of my favourite names. That's Ali's name, in case anyone doesn't know.

And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz. And again, so Ahinoam is presumably Jonathan's mother, but it doesn't say that specifically.

[60:12] And when Saul is having one of his bad turns later, he will call Jonathan the son of a foolish woman or something, I forget. So, anyway, we don't know.

And the name of the commander of his army was Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle, and Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner, the father of Abner, was the son of Abiel. Now, the war against the Philistines was severe all the days of Saul, and when Saul saw any warrior or any valiant man, he attached him to his staff.

And so ends our chapter, and note, this is very brief summary of the entire reign of Saul is given to us, and the balance of it is, Saul was successful. He was mighty, he was valiant, he subdued the land, the Ammonites, not the Ammonites, sorry, the Amalekites, they were fierce and big dudes, and Saul subdued them, he saved Israel, and yet, our attention as the readers is drawn to the preceding hundred or so verses, in which Saul is made into a fairly incompetent fool, and, wow, and we're given very, very sparse details about this evidently rather successful time as king.

So, as I said up front, the key point that the author wants for us to take is that the best humanity can offer, the guy who is head and shoulders tall and young and winsome and handsome is lacking. He's lacking. Even if he appears to be successful, even if he is able to subdue the land and do all these great and valiant things, he's not adequate and he's lacking in God's estimation.

[62:05] And what shines forth for us is the truth that Jonathan already understood that God is not restricted to save by many or by few. God doesn't need the strong and the mighty person.

God is the strong and the mighty one on behalf of his people. God is the one who can work these impossible miracles when the odds are impossible. Jonathan knew this.

How Jonathan knew, I don't know. I don't think he was taught that by Saul. But Jonathan understood that God is not restricted by the people on his side. And we might think that Jonathan is being set up for us as the great leader.

He's there. He's first born. He's going to be a great king, Jonathan. Well, actually, the seeds of doubt on that have already been sown. As we saw Samuel pronounce, your line isn't going to endure Saul.

And what's the word for us? Well, what I came away with was a sense of how much greater our Lord Jesus Christ is. Saul was the king, but he was not permitted to sacrifice on behalf of his people.

[63:13] Saul was the king, but he was impotent before these overwhelming numbers, before an overwhelming enemy. And he put this foolish restriction on his people. And Jesus isn't like that.

Jesus offered the once for all sacrifice, that defeats the biggest enemy that mankind faces, which is to say death and judgment for sin. Jesus offers the sacrifice to atone for us.

And Jesus offers us not restrictions, but freedom. Galatians 5:1 says that it was for freedom that Christ set us free. Therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. And that whole section there is about. Don't subject yourself to foolish laws about what you're allowed to eat. You are called to freedom. John 8:36 says, if the Son sets you free, you really will be free, or you will be free indeed.

And so that I think is the main word. I would just say one other application for us today before we close. And that is this. We see here how one man stepping out in faith.

[64:27] One man's courage and faith is infectious. Because Jonathan was prepared to step up in faith, actually, and his armor bearer, they stepped out in faith and God worked this great victory and we see all of these others who had been cowed and feared, they gathered to the battle.

At that point, they saw the courage of the one and they came forward. Now, primarily, this is Christ for our pattern. Christ is the forerunner, he is the one who stepped up and we, Christ got the victory and then we become part of that victory, we enter into his victory.

But I do think that secondarily there is a reminder that when we exercise our faith, when we make faith-filled decisions, they are inspiring and encouraging to the rest of us and I encourage us all to

share and talk about those things.

But I've gone way over and thank you for your grace. Let me just pray as we close. Lord God, we thank you for your word today, we thank you for what we've read and learned. Thank you, Lord God, for the fact that we do see this, just how great it is that we worship Jesus Christ, our warrior, king, lord, high priest, who is so much better than even the best.

Lord, he is far, far in advance and far better than Saul, he's even better than Jonathan here, he is our king, he is our lord and we praise you for him. And Lord, we thank you for the way that you work miracles on behalf of your people and we can trust you today because the same God who was able to save in an unrestricted way by many or by few, that same God is our God today, Lord.

[66 : 12] And I pray that we would trust you. And even though, Lord, sometimes we wish you would save sooner or we wish you would do this or that, Lord, help us to follow and trust and know that you know what is best and to put our faith and confidence in you and you alone.

Hallelujah, we praise you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.