

Jonathan 1

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[0 : 00] I seek this evening to begin a series on the person, the individual of Jonathan, one of the, you could say, heroes of the Old Testament, perhaps not one of the major heroes, not like the prophets or whatever, but one who has a key place in Israel's history, coming as he does, we might say, sandwiched between two kings, a current king and a future king.

Jonathan is defined essentially by two relationships, his relationship to his father Saul and his relationship to his dear friend David. And we'll come to the relationship with David in due course, but this is the first mention that we have of Jonathan in chapter 13 of 1 Samuel.

And it brings him to prominence early in Saul's reign. Saul reigned one year, and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose in 3,000 men of Israel, where of 2,000 were with Saul in Michmash and in Mount Bethel, and 1,000 were with Jonathan and Gibeah of Benjamin, and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

So rather than maintaining a sort of large militia or sort of rabble army, he's obviously chosen out to himself those whom he would hope to train up and to be dedicated, disciplined soldiers in Israel, whereby he might defend the land better against its enemies.

And we need to remember that Israel at this point is effectively overrun with enemies. It is extremely weak. And we see that at the end of the chapter, because we read that none of the Israelites had any weapons, and they didn't even have a blacksmith in the land, verse 19.

[1 : 43] If they wanted their farm tools sharpened, they had to go to the Philistines for it. They might have a little hand fire, but other than that, they didn't have anything. They didn't have any weapons. Only Saul and Jonathan, the king and the prince, had a sword apiece.

Other than that, nobody had any weapons. That's how weak they were. So even Saul's chosen 3,000 men are not going to be a huge amount of power or good against a well-equipped Philistine army.

The Philistines then are a major power in the land at this time. Remember, if you will, a previous couple of chapters that Saul rises to power in the fight with Nahash the Ammonite, who attacks the city of Jabesh-Gilead, who then asks for help, and Saul rises to the fore and calls everybody after him to go and relieve Jabesh-Gilead.

But the Ammonites were like sort of rebel bandits. They sort of were nomadic bandits who lived to the east of the Jordan. Jabesh-Gilead was quite far to the north, about two-thirds of the way between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee.

It was quite far north from where Saul's main power base was. It was on the other side of the Jordan. They were vulnerable. It was more of a raid against Jabesh-Gilead by these sort of bandits rather than an organized military power.

[3 : 10] It's the difference between fighting off the Ammonites and fighting the Philistines. Now, it's really like if in modern day politics or turmoil, let's say you were in Ukraine, and let's say in seeking to re-establish law and order, you beat off some of the mafia bandits or the crime gangs or whatever.

Maybe you lock some of them up or some of them get executed or killed in shootouts with police, and you seek to restore a bit of law and order. You declare war on the mafia gangs or on the bandits that are perhaps running a bit of the country.

The country. That's one thing. But if in the Ukraine you then attack a Russian garrison, who maybe shouldn't be in your land anyway, but they are. So, the difference between taking on organized crime on the one hand and mopping up the lampposts of it, or taking on a major power like Russia in Ukraine, that's what it's like taking on the Philistines in Israel.

They are a major power. Now, where do the Philistines suddenly come from? Well, it's not sudden, of course. The Philistines originated in Crete, or Kaphtor as it was more anciently referred to. In Amos chapter 9, at verse 7, we read, Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel, saith the Lord? Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Kaphtor, and the Syrians from Kerr?

[4 : 40] Now, Kaphtor are the ancient names for Crete. And again, Jeremiah chapter 47, verse 4, Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Titus and Zidon every helper that remaineth, for the Lord will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Kaphtor.

Now, the Philistines, they've got that name, but almost certainly they had begun to arrive in sort of perhaps little colonizing groups or whatever early on in Israel's history.

It's probably them who are referred to in Deuteronomy chapter 2, verse 23, where we read, The Athens which dwelt in Hazorim, even unto Azah, the Kaphtorins which came forth out of Kaphtor destroyed them, and dwelt in their stead.

Now, it doesn't say Philistines there, but it does say Kaphtorins, basically people from Kaphtor, from Crete, came and sailed across the sea, and settled in that portion of what became the Holy Land and defeated the local pagan tribes that were there.

That is probably the beginnings of Philistine settlement in what became the land of Israel. They're not referred to as Philistines there, but then people's labels of identification change.

[6 : 00] By way of example, most of you know, we're recently down south in Holiday. Now, if you take the Targut Ferry, and then you're heading south, and you go south by then Kyle Maculch, and then Glencoe, or William and Glencoe.

So, once you get up out of Glencoe, and you're going south towards Glenorchy, to your right, to the west, as you're going south, there is a mountain off in the distance, which is entitled, if I can remember it, Stob Cor and Albanich.

Stob Cor and Albanich. In other words, if I can, let me see if I can get this bit right, the peak of the Corrie of the Albanich, or the Albanich thing, oh, Alban, that means Scotland.

It means Scotland now in modern parlance, modern Gaelic. But remember, who is naming the mountains? The mountain is being given a Gaelic name. What is Gaelic?

It's the language of the Gales. Where were the Gales coming from? The Gales were in Erregale, Argyle. Where did they come from? They came from Ireland. The Scothai were the Gales.

[7 : 07] They came, they settled there. They are the ones naming this mountain. And this mountain, Stob Cor and Albanich, in other words, the peak of the Corrie of the Albanich, nowadays we'd say, oh yes, of the Scotsman.

But in those days, named by the Gales, it doesn't mean Scots as in Irish Scots. It means the Albanich, the Picts, the inhabitants of the native land that they were now coming into.

The label turns around. It changes. We now all identify ourselves as Scottish, the whole of Scotland. But in ancient times, the Scots, of course, were a very distinct tribe, settling only in Erregale, the land of the Gales.

Now, we adapt to southwestern Scotland. And the rest of the country was filled by various Pictish tribes, or Britons, or Saxons in the southeast, or whatever it was. The Scots were a very distinctive people.

But now, of course, the name, the label has changed. So likewise, as does that would have almost certainly been a mountain that denoted the border of the land of the Gales over against the land of the Albanich, which would have been those who were probably their lookout post, that mountain, you know, the peak of the colony of the Albanich, probably where they defined their border from where Argyleshire ended, which, of course, is pretty much in the border between old Argyleshire, Perthshire to the east, and Burnessshire to the north, in the old counties.

[8 : 33] And there is where the different peoples would almost certainly have had their borders. But now, of course, we think, oh, Albanich, it all means Scottish. Scots, it means the whole land, the whole people, the Kaptorim, those from Kaptor, those from Crete.

Later on, we identify them as Philistines. But there's only one group of people ever identified as coming out of Kaptor of Crete, and that is the Philistines, a sea people.

People who traded initially by sea, people whose god, Dagon, who, of course, we read of in the early chapters of 1 Samuel, the Ark of the Covenant's there, Dagon falls in his face.

Dagon was a fish god, a sea kind of god in that sense. And these are the people who gradually colonized and settled into the fertile coastal plain, the western part of what became the Holy Land, the land of Israel.

And because they were in the fertile land, they became powerful, they became strong. If you've got a good, solid food supply in fertile land, your people will be strong.

[9 : 39] They will be wealthy. They will be rich. They will be well provided for militarily as well. If you're in comparative poverty in mountains and rocks and so on, you will be poor, just as the Israelites were at this time.

So taking on the Philistines was opening a whole new chapter in Saul and Jonathan's career. So far, Saul has only tackled the bandits on the eastern periphery of Israel's territory.

Now he, or more collectively, if you see in the detail, his son Jonathan, in smiting the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba, verse 3, the Philistines heard of it and they might, oh, come on, their reaction's a bit disproportionate, isn't it?

They know like everybody knows. If you allow the Israelites to get away with attacking one garrison and you don't do anything about it, then the next thing you know is lots of other people groups are going to start attacking you from lots of different directions.

You've got to make an example. You're going to completely squash this rebellion. By attacking the Philistines, you are opening Pandora's box. You are beginning a whole new sphere of conflict.

[10 : 55] And this sphere of conflict, we read in chapter 14, at the end of chapter 14, this continued throughout the reign of Saul. Verse 52 of 1 Samuel 14.

There was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul. And when Saul saw any strong man or any valiant man, he took him on to him. Now if we know that it was his whole kingdom, his whole reign that this warfare was going on, because if you remember, how does Saul die in the end?

He dies in battle. He dies in battle against the Philistines. And it's his whole reign that's taken up with this warfare. This warfare that you might think, well, Jonathan really kicked this off.

He's the one that caused all this problem, isn't it? Well, not really. Because when you've got this kingship that the people had asked for, which God, of course, subsequently gave his approval to, then you've got to ask yourself, are you intending to live free in this kingdom, or are you content to be a slave?

And if you're surrounded by enemies on all sides, the major enemy of the Philistines, the lesser enemies of the bandit peoples, the Ammonites, the Moabites, and so on, and others that are going to just raid you whenever they like, or attack you whenever they like, or take away any weapons from you, or make you come down and pay their blacksmiths to sharpen your agricultural implements, you're effectively a slave in your own country.

[12 : 27] You're certainly weak and poor and despised. You can choose either to continue in that state into which you have been born, effectively, or you can decide that you're going to fight against it.

Jonathan here, the Prince of Israel, and this is the first mention that we have of it, indeed in the opening mention of it, we don't even know that he's Saul's son. He's just described as Jonathan at this stage.

It's a little further down that we have identified that he is the son of Saul. So, Jonathan is the one who smites the garrison, and Saul then capitalises over it, says, let the Hebrews hear, let all Israel recognise we have done this.

Some people say Saul is taking the glory to himself, as opposed to Jonathan, that's as maybe, but it was a tendency in ancient times for the king, equated with the nation state, to take credit to himself.

I mean, if you think about all the stuff that was done by explorers and by military achievements during the reign of Elizabeth Tudor in Israel, in England, sorry, then people would say, oh, the golden Elizabethan age.

[13 : 44] What did Elizabeth actually do? You know, she didn't do any of it. Her sailors and her armies, and they defeated the armada, or they explored new worlds, and they discovered new territory in North America, and so on.

She didn't actually do much, but she gets the credit for a golden age that is supposedly the Elizabethan age. So, it's not unusual for a king to say, look, we have done this, or I have done this. This has been done in the name of Saul. Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines. That Israel also has had an abomination with the Philistines. Whether or not it's Saul taking the credit to

himself, which is possible, or whether it is simply the people of Israel and Saul saying, aye, there came, look, we've done this.

The point is, he is letting it be known, it is being declared, proclaimed, we are now at war with the Philistines. And everyone is going to have to choose what they're going to do.

Now that we are at war, everyone is going to have to choose. The people were called together unto Saul to Gilgoth.

[14:58] And when they saw, of course, what the enemy was like against them, verse 6, when the men of Israel saw, they were in a strait, for the people were distressed. Then the people did hide themselves in caves and thickets and rocks and high places and in pits.

Some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead, in other words, to escape as far east as they possibly could. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgoth, and all the people followed him trembling.

You start a war, you have to be prepared to carry it through. They've struck the first blow, now it's really started in earnest. Why would you bother? Why wouldn't you just stay peaceable and cowed and say, yes, sir, no, sir, three bad school, sir?

Why not just accept the Philistine rule? Why not just accept the comparative peace that you've got? I mean, this is, you know, when Islam says, oh, Islam means peace.

It does not. The word Islam translates not as peace, but as submission. And it is that submission which that particular religion demands all over the world.

[16:07] If you are prepared to submit to it, then they will let you live. If you are not, well, you know what the consequences are going to be. But here, taking on the Philistines, we see, obviously, a spiritual dimension to this too.

We see that Jonathan, perhaps, has maybe greater valor, perhaps greater integrity than his father. He doesn't wait for permission.

We just read, Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines. We're going to read later, in subsequent weeks, in chapter 14 about Jonathan, then takes on another garrison, how he's the one who keeps striking the blows.

But there is also a sense in which this is a parallel without spiritual condition. None of us is born a saint.

We are all born dead in trespasses and sins. We are all born in a lost condition. We are all born with original sin. In other words, we are born as slaves.

[17:12] Slaves to sin. That is our natural, normal condition. When Jonathan was born, his father would not have been king. He would just have been an ordinary Benjamite in this sort of rabble confederation of Israel, ruled by occasional judges.

And the Lord would raise up a judge and then deliver them from whatever their enemies were. Samuel had been judged for a long time. He had been good. He had been godly. But his sons were a shower of dross.

And so there was no way that they were going to follow him in godliness. The people realized that they were weak. They were frightened. And perhaps tragically, they turned to monarchy instead of to the Lord to rule over them.

But the Lord subsequently accepted and blessed that and used it to his glory. But the point is, there is a spiritual comparison here. We are born into slavery.

We are born into our lost condition of original sin, whereby the Lord freely offers us a way out. He freely offers us a freedom, a redemption, a salvation.

[18:24] But that is not going to come by just sitting on our hands and wishing it. Yes, it is the Lord who does all the work. But it is we who must respond.

It is we who must strike a blow against the oppressor, who must actually act and respond to the Lord's great grace.

Now, the weapons of our warfare, as 1 Corinthians tells us, are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. We think, well, captivity, that's not a good thing there. When it says into captivity, it means into discipline. It's like Saul with his 3,000 disciplined soldiers here.

When we become disciplined, we're like an athlete getting him or herself fit. It means you have to put yourself through the paces. It means you have to be rigorous with yourself.

[19 : 29] You have to be disciplined with yourself. You're bringing into captivity all the wayward, lazy, soft and flabby sort of thoughts. You're seeking to bring your whole life under the command of God's truth and of his law.

For though we walk in the flesh, again, back at Corinthians, we do not war after the flesh. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. And once you start this war, just like Jonathan would find and like Saul would find, and remember how we said at the end of chapter 14, and there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul.

So likewise, once you are prepared to strike this blow and open up this conflict, then you're never going to have a nice, easy, quiet, slave being left alone sort of life ever again.

Because once you strike the blow, once the warfare starts, that warfare is going to continue, either until you cave in and are completely defeated, or it will go on until the process of sanctification, making us holy, making us more like the Lord, is complete.

[20 : 45] Galatians 5, verse 17, for the flesh, that is that which is earthbound, not just your physical body and its needs and appetites, but everything which is earthbound, everything which is concerned and makes its priority, this world.

The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary to one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would.

there is this ongoing warfare, the spiritual warfare between that which is earthbound, the flesh and its desires and its priorities, and that which is of the spirit, which looks to the Lord and looks to that eternal reward.

Now in this world, and in this life, that warfare is going to continue always. But as we go on with the Lord, as we go on in his spirit and in his strength, then, Lord willing, the spirit begins to gain more and more of the upper hand, and the flesh becomes weakened and weakened and weakened.

Now that doesn't mean it's the end of the war. You know, if you think back to the Second World War, for example, some people would have said that once you have the DDA landings, once all the Allies had landed in Normandy, well, that was it.

[22 : 10] It was a fate of conflict. It was only going to go in one direction. Russians coming in from the east, Allies coming in from the west, surely the Third Reich was finished. And in a sense, strategically, you could say it was, but, oh boy, that was not the end of the war.

And an awful lot of people lost their lives, an awful lot of people still suffered in the conflict that continued. But another year, another year is still to come in that particular conflict.

So like what? In the spiritual warfare, of which we have, if you like, a picture here in 1 Samuel, you strike the blow, you open up the conflict, and the devil is not going to sit back and say, okay, fair enough, you scored that point, I'm going to leave you alone.

No. What do we see here? Then all Israel heard that Saul had smited their gals and the Philistines, and that Israel also had an abomination with the Philistines, and that people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

The people were called to follow the king of Israel. So gather together and Gilgal. That's what you're going to do if you're going to be loyal. Or you can run and hide. Or you can go to the Philistines.

[23 : 18] But this is what the call is. And it's like the Lord calling you to follow the true king of Israel. Not just Saul. Not just Jonathan, his prince. Not even just David.

But the true David. The Messiah. The ultimate son of David. That is who we are called upon to follow. To gather for the conflict that is coming.

And it is frightening. The Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel. 30,000 chariots. 6,000 horsemen. People as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude.

They came up and pitched in Michmash eastward from Beth-Avon. Now, when it comes to Saul numbering the people that he's got with him, what has he got? 600 men.

600 men who followed him trembling. That's all that they had. The Philistines have got 10 times that number. Where are they going?

[24 : 14] Why are they gathering in Gilgal? It's not a militarily defensible position unlike Gibeah of Benjamin which is probably one reason why the Philistines didn't just attack them and wipe them out there.

In Gilgal they're vulnerable. Why are they gathering in Gilgal? Because that's where they gathered. That's where they rededicated themselves to the Lord when they first crossed the Jordan. And so

that is why Israel is gathering there for a rededication of the people to the Lord.

Samuel is meant to be meeting them there. They seek to devote themselves again to the Lord. Samuel has promised to rendezvous. Okay, he's late. But what did we find here? Part of the problem with Saul.

There is a right way and a wrong way to seek the Lord. The right way is to wait upon the Lord and to seek to obey him in all things.

No matter how jittery or impatient or anxious we might be getting the right way is to seek the Lord according to his word his truth. the wrong way is to say well come on I'm here come on Lord what are you doing?

[25 : 20] Why aren't you helping me? Why aren't you getting involved in my life? Why aren't you changing things? Come on Lord I want you to do this I want you to get on I want you to do this for me I'm here I'm doing my bit why aren't you doing your bit?

And that's effectively what Saul is doing here. He wants God's help on Saul's terms. And so often we are like that. We want God's help God's power God's deliverance but on my terms.

there's not going to be my terms. There's going to be God's way or no way otherwise we're just like all the pagan nations round about. Now of course the right way the wrong way to seek the Lord often it is those to whom we may look for leadership or for guidance or for the established authority over us they're the very ones who do it wrong.

They're the very ones who lead the people in a wrong way. But here's Jonathan meanwhile in the background. Saul verse 16 and Jonathan his son and the people that were present with them abode in Gibeah and the people that were present with them but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.

There we have them still seeking to be united. Jonathan still being faithful by his father the one who kicked off this whole conflict but still abiding by his father.

[26 : 36] Now most of you will be aware of course of that verse in Ecclesiastes remember the creator in the days of thy youth. We have to remember here at this stage that Jonathan will be young at this stage.

They were told in Acts 13 at verse 21 Afterward they that is Israel desired a king God gave unto them Saul the son of Kish a man of the tribe of Benjamin by the space of 40 years.

Saul reigned 40 years. Now by the time he dies on the battlefield and David then becomes king after that David remember is 30 years old when he becomes king.

So at the beginning of Saul's reign and this is the beginning of Saul's reign Saul reigned one year when he reigned two years over Israel he chosen 3,000 men David isn't even born yet and Jonathan is already yes he may be an adult male he may be a young man but he is young.

If Saul is going to be young enough still to fight a battle against the Philistines at the end of his reign at the end of 40 years he must be well in his 70s by now well into his 70s so if then 40 years back before that he's in his 30s at the beginning of his reign 40 years previously if a man is in his 30s then even his eldest son can't be that old you know let's say if he's 38 and he had a son at 18 Jonathan's still only 20 and that's that's really getting right off the mark right away more likely Saul had Jonathan when he was maybe in his early 20s so maybe Jonathan is in his late teens at this point he's probably late teens maybe about the 20 mark the men will follow him because he is the prince of Israel if he wasn't the king's son they wouldn't follow him they wouldn't trust him as a commander but he is young at this stage he is young and he is full of not only vigour but he is full of enthusiasm to free the Lord's people from the oppressor who would grind them down now it is good to be fired up for the

[29 : 01] Lord in the days of your youth it is good to want to break the yoke of the evil one who would have control over you but just as we are to remember our creator in the days of our youth we have to also remember that the warfare that begins then will last a lifetime and it is a warfare Paul writes to Timothy remember in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 18 this charge I commit unto thee son Timothy according to the prophecies which went before on thee that thou by them mightest war a good warfare and he's talking about a spiritual warfare holding faith and a good conscience which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck faith and a good conscience this is going to be a lifetime of a war but the sooner you begin and the sooner you start with the Lord the more experience you are going to accumulate the stronger you are going to be in spiritual military terms

Jonathan continued to be an influence for good throughout his father's long reign he continued to be loyal he continued to be a capable fighter and he continued faithful right to the end we do not know exactly what age Saul and Jonathan were at the time when Saul's reign began but he must have been probably Saul in his 30s which means Jonathan must have been late teens there or thereabouts we don't know exactly but this is a young man this is a prince of Israel this is one who knows the lie of the land and who knows exactly what he's taking on this isn't just bandits and those having a big raid on a distant city of Israel this is the power in the land that Jonathan is prepared to take on that Jonathan is prepared to fight this battle and with his father's name yes and his father's strength and help and above all the help of the Lord is prepared to carry it through he is not going to be distracted he is not going to make his loyalty to his father blind and uncritical as we see in later chapters but this is where the lifelong battle with the Philistines begins and it is Jonathan who begins it it is Jonathan who starts it it is Jonathan who initiates if you like this conflict this war of independence this war for the freedom of the people of Israel just as we when we begin to strike a blow against the evil one we do it not in our own strength we can only do it in the strength of the Lord but it is the Lord who invites us to be free the Lord who says I have done all that is need for but you must respond he sounds the trumpet and says this is what I have done this is the blow that I have struck now gather to me all you who would be free let the Hebrews hear let those who follow the Lord hear let them be free let them gather yes they may be trembling but unlike in the case of Saul we are not following simply somebody who we trust is going to win we are following a king and a messiah who has already won the victory and invites us simply to share in it let us pray jan me