

1 Samuel

Authorship: Though Samuel was involved in producing written records (10:25). The whole of 1 and 2 Samuel cannot be from him since he died (25:1) before many of the events of those books transpired. Accounts from prophets Samuel, Nathan, and Gad were probably joined together by an unknown author (see 1 Chronicles 29:29).

Date: 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one book, which was later divided simply because it was too long. The events covered in the two books – from the birth of Samuel to the end of David's reign – took place 100-971 BC. Since the compiler did his work during the time of "the kings of Judah" (27:6), the books must date from the time of the divided kingdom and were likely completed not long after the death of Solomon (931 BC).

Location: Samuel apparently had a school of prophets at Ramah (19:20) in the central part of Israel. Initial records about Saul and David would have been kept there. Once Jerusalem was established by David as the capital, court records began to be kept there, and this is probably where the two books were compiled.

Overview and Background: The book of 1 Samuel records the bumpy road in the peak of Israel's history following the spiritual decline in the book of Judges. The book captures this transition from the chaos of the time of the judges through the tragic reign of Saul to the choosing of Israel's greatest king, David. While Samson was the last judge mentioned in the book of Judges, Samuel also "judged" Israel (7:6,15-17); Acts 13:20); therefore, the period of the judges could be said to have lasted till the coronation of Saul as Israel's first king (10). The low ebb of religious life seen in 1-10 certainly prolongs the sad note sounded at the end of the Judges account (Judges 21:25). Israel's next true "deliverer" or "judge" would be their second king, David (16-31), who would himself be the forebear of Israel's final great deliver, the Messiah (see 2 Samuel 7:12-17).

Purpose: (1) Along with numbers, Deuteronomy, and Judges, the books of Samuel sought to promote the "prophetic viewpoint." Obedience to God brings reward; disobedience brings punishment; (2) 1 Samuel shows the dangers of making demands on God, specifically Israel's desire to have a king just as their pagan neighbors had (8:4, 20); and (3) 1 Samuel records the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy that Israel's kings would come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:8-12).

Key Verses

"And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you"
(1 Samuel 13:13-14 ESV).

Outline:

I. The Story of Hannah (1:1-2:11)

- A. Her sorrow (1:1-8)
- B. Her supplication (1:9-18)
- C. Her son (1:19-28)
- D. Her song (2:1-11)

II. The Story of Eli (2:12-3:21)

- A. Eli and his sons (2:12-36)
- B. Eli and Samuel (3)

III. The Story of the Ark of God (4:1-7:2)

- A. The Ark captured in battle (4:1-11)
- B. Death of Eli (4:12-22)
- C. The Ark removed to Philistia (5)
- D. The Ark returned to Israel (6:1-7:2)

IV. The Story of Samuel (7:3-10:27)

- A. His leadership: The covenant at Mizpah (7:3-17)
- B. His sons' failure: Israel asks for a king (8)
- C. His anointing of Saul (9-10)

V. The Story of Saul (11-15)

- A. Saul the sovereign (11-12)
- B. Saul the sinner (13-15)
- C. Disobedience concerning a sacrifice (13)
- D. Poor leadership of his troops (14)
- E. Disobedience concerning the Amalekites (15)

VI. The Story of David (16-31)

- A. David the selected (16:1-13)
- B. David the singer (16:14-23)
- C. David the soldier (Goliath) (17)
- D. David the hunted (18-26)
- E. Saul hopes the Philistines will kill David (18)
- F. Saul tries to capture David (19)
- G. Jonathan warns David (20)
- H. Saul punishes those who help David (21-22)
- I. Saul tries to capture David at Keilah (23:1-13)
- J. Saul tries to capture David in the wilderness (23:14-29)
- K. David takes part of Saul's robe at En-gedi (24)
- L. David and Abigail (25)
- M. David takes Saul's spear and jug (26)

VII. David the Sidetracked (27-31)

- A. David lives among the Philistines (27)
- B. Saul and the witch at Endor (28)
- C. The Philistines prepare to fight Israel (29)
- D. David avenges the raid on Ziklag (30)
- E. Death of Saul; defeat of Israel (31)

People to Remember from 1 Samuel

I. Eli

Key Fact: High priest served by the young Samuel (1-4)

Sons: Hophni and Phinehas (1:3)

Age at Death: 98 (4:12-18)

Key References: 1-4

Total Bible References: 33

Some Spiritual Lessons from Eli: (1) When you judge others too quickly, we usually judge them wrongly (1:9-16; Matt. 7:1); (2) Spiritual leaders need to be careful not to neglect the spiritual education of their own children. To rephrase Mark 8:36, "What shall it profit a father if he gains great spiritual stature and loses his own sons?" (2:12-17; 3:13).

II. Hannah

Key Fact: Mother of Samuel (1:19-20)

Husband: Elkanah

Key References: 1-2

Total Bible References: 13

Some Spiritual Lessons from Hannah: (1) God often pours His richest blessings on those most despised by the world. Hannah despised by Peninnah because she was barren (1:2, 6), bore six children including one of Israel's greatest prophets (1:20; 2:21; 3:19-20; see Psalm 113:9); (2) Hannah realized what all parents must realize: God gives us our children that we might give them back to Him (1:11, 27-28).

III. Jonathan

Key Facts: Saul's son, David's closest friend (14:1, 18:1-4)

Mother: Ahinoam (14:49-50)

Son: Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 4:4)

Key References: 13-20; 23:16-18; 31:1-2

Sisters: Merab, Michal (14:49)

Death: Recorded in 31:1-2

Brothers: Eshbaal, Malkishua, Abinadab (14:49; 1 Chron. 8:33)

Some Spiritual Lessons from Jonathan: (1) Real friendship often demands sacrifice. Jonathan's unwavering support of David provoked the hatred of his father, Saul (20:30), eliminated any possibility of his own future kingship (20:31), and nearly cost him his life (20:33); (2) The benefits of close friendship often continue even after death. David would later honor and care for Mephibosheth, Jonathan's crippled son (2 Samuel 9:1-13; 21:7).

IV. Samuel

Key Facts: Prophet and priest, anointed both Saul and David as king (3:1, 20; 9:27-10:1; 16:13)

Place of Birth: Near Mount Ephraim (1:1, 19-20)

Death: Recorded in 25:1

Father: Elkanah (1:19-20)

Mother: Hannah (1:19-20)

Total Bible References: 134

Sons: Joel, Abijah (8:1-3)

Brothers: 3 unnamed (2:21)

Sisters: 2 Unnamed (2:21)

Key References: 1-16; 19:18-24; 25:1; 28; Jer. 15:1; Heb. 11:32

Some Spiritual Lessons from Samuel: (1) Even young children can know when God is speaking to them (3:1-10); (2) A spiritually mature person will be approved by God and respected by others, as seen in the lives of both Samuel and Jesus (2:26; Lk. 2:40, 52); (3) An obedient life is a productive life, as God assures that none of our works or words "fall to the ground" (3:19, KJV, NKJV, NIV); (4) We should find ways to remember the good things God does for us, just as Samuel established the stone called Ebenezer to remind Israel of God's help (7:12); (5) It is tragically possible for godly fathers to raise ungodly children, as did both Eli (2:12-17) and Samuel (8:1-5). See Proverbs 22:6 for the answer to this tragedy; (6) It is easy, but dangerous, to judge people by outward appearances rather than by the content of their character (9:2; 13:13-14; 16:7).

V. Saul

Key Fact: Israel's first king (9:27-10:1)

Father: Kish (9:1-2)

Daughters: Merab, Michal (14:49)

Wife: Ahinoam (14:50)

Sons: Jonathan, Eshbaal, Malkishua, Abinadab (14:49; 1 Chron. 8:33)

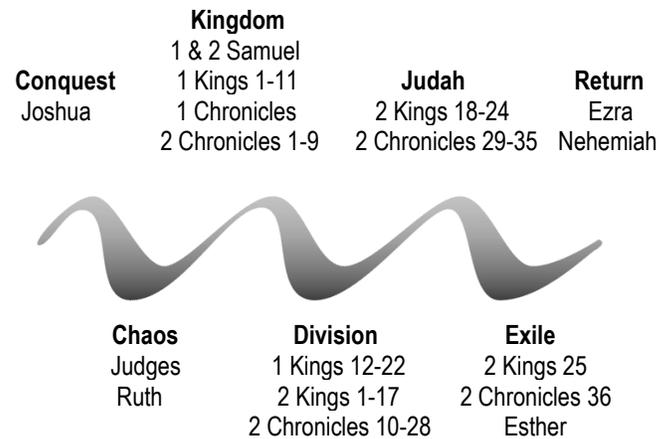
Death: Recorded in 31:1-6

Total Bible References: 388

Key Reference: 9-31

Some Spiritual Lessons from Saul: (1) The Christian life is a marathon, not a 100-yard dash. Saul began well, displaying obedience (9:3-5), respect (9:7), humility (9:21), courage (11:1-11), and a forgiving spirit (11:12-13). But ultimately he failed God miserably in all these areas and many more; (2) Don't try to assume a responsibility God has not given you (13:9-14); (3) God values obedience more than the careful observance of religious traditions (15:22); (4) The inward enemy of envy is far more dangerous than any outward enemy (18:9-12; 19:1; 20:30-31; 23:7) (5) To refuse the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to invite the presence of an evil spirit (16:14) (6) A life of disobedience always brings regret (26:21) (7) If we reject God, He will reject us (15:23; 2 Tim. 2:12-13).

Peaks and Valleys of Historical Books



Sources:

Journeying with God: A Survey of the Old Testament, Purposeful Design Publications.

Wilmington, Harold L. *Wilmington's Bible Handbook*, Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 1997.