

## #9. THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL

1. **Samuel is the story of Samuel the Prophet, the rise and fall of King Saul, and the reign of King David.** In our English Bible, it is divided into two books, First and Second Samuel. The account was considered one book in the earliest Hebrew manuscripts, but was divided into two books when the translation of the book into Greek occurred. This translation was called the Septuagint, and is sometimes referred to as LXX (from the seventy scholars who did the translation). In the LXX, the books were referred to as the *First* and *Second Books of Kingdoms*. The Latin Vulgate referred to them as *First* and *Second Kings*, and therefore named the books we call *First* and *Second Kings* by the titles *Third* and *Fourth Kings*.
  
2. **The author is unknown.** Jewish tradition credits Samuel with writing the books, but the notable prophet was dead long before the reign of David was completed. On the basis of 1 Chronicles 29:29, Nathan and Gad, along with Samuel, were cited as possible authors. The probability is that the accounts were the results of writings by Samuel, Nathan, and Gad, but the actual compiler of these books is unknown to us.
  
3. **The Date:** The events of Samuel took place during the years between 1105 BC and 970BC. (about 135 years). We know the composition took place after the division of Israel into two kingdoms (1 Samuel 11:8; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Samuel 5:5; 11:11; 12:8; 19:42, 43; 24:1, 9; 27:6), but probably at a time before the Exile, possibly as early as 930BC.
  
4. **Key Chapters**
  - 1 Samuel
    - Chapters 1:1-7:17 is the story of Eli and young Samuel.
    - Chapters 8:1-15:35 is the story of Samuel and Saul, Israel's first king.
    - Chapters 16:1-31:13 is the story of Saul and David. Saul is declining, while David is increasing.
  
  - 2 Samuel
    - Chapters 1:1-10:19 is the record of David's successful reign. He is seen as a man pursuing God's heart.
    - Chapters 11:1-24:25 - is the record of David's failure and recovery. Unlike Saul, he

ends well because of his repentance and the resulting mercy of God.

## 5. Key Verses

- **1 Samuel 1:27, 28 NASB** “For this boy I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him. <sup>28</sup>So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord.” And he worshiped the Lord there.
- **1 Samuel 8:7-9 NLT** “Do everything they say to you”, the Lord replied. “for it is me they are rejecting, not you. They don’t want me to be their king any longer. <sup>8</sup>Ever since I brought them from Egypt they have continually abandoned me and followed other gods. And now they are giving you the same treatment. <sup>9</sup>Do as they ask, but solemnly warn them about the way a king will reign over them.”
- **2 Samuel 5:1-5 NASB** “Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “Behold, we are your bone and your flesh. <sup>2</sup>Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and in. And the Lord said to you, ‘You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel.’” <sup>3</sup>So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the Lord at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel. <sup>4</sup>David was thirty years old when he became king, *and* he reigned forty years. <sup>5</sup>At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.

## 6. Key People

- **Hannah** - the mother of Samuel. She *gave her son back to The Lord* as thanksgiving for His blessing of motherhood.
- **Samuel** - the final judge and perhaps the first national prophet of Israel. He transitioned Israel from a confederation of loosely governed clans into a national entity.
- **Eli** - the High Priest in the early years of Samuel’s life. He raised Samuel in the house of God in Shiloh.
- **Saul** - the first King of Israel. A product of the people’s wishes, not the will of God.
- **Jonathan** - a son of Saul; a great military leader and best friend of David.
- **David** - The central character in Samuel. Youngest son of Jesse; the second king of

Israel. Along with Hezekiah and Josiah, he was known as one of the three greatest kings of Israel.

- **Goliath** - a powerful Philistine giant; an intimidating warrior who was defeated by David while Saul remained paralyzed by the taunts of the giant.
- **Joab** - the nephew of David and commander of his army.
- **Michal** - a daughter of Saul and David's first wife. She was taken away from David by the treachery of Saul.
- **Abigail** - widow of Nabal; eventually a wife of David
- **Bathsheba** - the wife of Uriah the Hittite; committed adultery with David; later taken as his wife. The mother of Solomon.
- **Nathan** - a prophet and royal advisor to King David.
- **Abner** - a cousin of Saul and the Commander of the King's army. He held Israel together for several years under Ishbosheth, son of Saul.
- **Absalom** - a son of David who led a rebellion against his father; he was the murderer of his half-brother Amnon, who raped his sister Tamar.

## 7. Key Places

- **The majority of events in Samuel occurred in the Central Highlands of Israel.** This was an area about 90 miles long (from north to south; Ephraim down to Judah) and up to 35 miles wide (east to west).
- **Ramah** - the hometown of Elkanah, Hannah, and Samuel.
- **Shiloh** - The city where the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle resided.
- **Mizpah** - a place of repentance when Samuel called Israel together after a devastating military defeat. It was also the place where Saul was anointed to be Israel's first king.

- **Gilgal** - the scene of Saul's first victory as king of Israel.
- **The wilderness** - the dwelling place of David during the 10 years or so he was a fugitive from Saul. What is referred to generally as *the wilderness* was actually as many as three different areas of desolation that provided shelter for David, his 600 men, and their families.
- **Gath** - a city in Philistia that provided refuge for David and his men.
- **Ziklag** - a city given to David in return for his feigned loyalty to Achish, King of Philistia.
- **Mount Gilboa** - the scene of Saul's final military defeat and death.
- **Hebron** - the city where David was crowned as King over the land of Judah following the death of Saul.
- **Jerusalem** - formerly known as Salem and Jebus; this *stronghold of Zion* was captured by David and became the capitol of national Israel.

## 8. Key Themes

- ***Political remedies are not necessarily God's remedies*** - although Israel wanted a king to provide stability and justice, the idea of a king (or at least the timing of it - Deuteronomy 17:15) was not God's choice for them. Politics can be a great help, but a valid political system should always flow from God's scriptural principles. Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:34).
- ***Obedience is central to the idea of entering covenant with God*** - Israel's fortunes would rise and fall in direct correlation to their obedience to Jehovah.
- ***Sin carries consequences*** - Though God loved David and never removed him from the throne of Israel, the King paid heavily for his transgressions.
- ***God is faithful, even when we are not*** - Though Israel was often chastised severely, God's mercy preserved them, even in the face of their enemies.

## 9. The Contents of Samuel

- Samuel: Prophet and Judge to Israel (1 Samuel 1:1-7:17)
  - Samuel's Prophetic Call (1:1-4:1)
    - Samuel's birth (1:1-28)
    - Hannah's prayer of dedication (2:1-10)
    - The childhood of Samuel (2:11-26)
    - The prophecy against Eli's family (2:27-36)
    - Samuel's anointing (3:1-4:1)
    - Samuel as Judge of Israel (4:1-7:17)
    - The loss of the Ark of the Covenant (4:1-7:1)
    - Victory over the Philistines and the leadership of Samuel (7:2-17)
  
- Saul: First King of Israel (1 Samuel 8:1-15:35)
  - The Rise of Saul (8:1-12:25)
    - Israel demands a king (8:1-22)
    - The selection and anointing of Saul as king (9:1-11:13)
    - Samuel establishes the grounds for the Monarchy (11:14-12:45)
  - The Decline of Saul (13:1-15:35)
    - The rejection of Saul's dynasty (13:1-15)
    - The chronicles of war (13:16-14:52)
    - Saul's utter rejection (15:1-35)
  
- The Conflict Between Saul and David (1 Samuel 16:1-31:13)
  - David revealed as God's choice as king (16:1-17:58)
    - David's service in the Royal Court of Saul (16:14-23)
    - David as warrior for Saul (17:1-58)
  - David rejected by Saul (18:1-20:42)

- Saul's anger and fear (18:1-30)
  - David protected by Jonathan and Michal (19:1-20:42)
- David flees from Saul (21:1- 28:2)
  - Saul murders the Priests at Nob (21:1-28:2)
  - Saul's life is spared twice by David (23:1-26:25)
  - David finds refuge in Philistia (27:1-28:2)
- The Death of Saul (28:3-31:13)
  - Saul's final night: visiting the witch at Endor (28:3-25)
  - David is dismissed by the Philistines (29:1-11)
  - David destroys the Amalekites (30:1-31)
  - The death of Saul (31:1-13)
- The Reign of David (2 Samuel 1:1-20:26)
  - David becomes king over Judah (1:1-3:5)
    - The deaths of Saul and Jonathan (1:1-27)
    - David anointed by Judah (2:1-7)
    - David's victories over the House of Saul (2:8-3:1)
    - David's family in Hebron (3:2-5)
  - David becomes king over all Israel (3:6-5:16)
    - The deaths of Abner and Ishbosheth (3:6-4:12)
    - David is anointed by all Israel (5:1-5)
    - David conquers Jerusalem (5:6-12)
    - David's family in Jerusalem (5:13-16)
  - David's early accomplishments (5:17-8:18)
    - David's victories over Philistia (5:17-25)
    - David, the Ark of the Covenant, and Building a Temple for God (6:1-7:29)

- David's victories over Philistia, Moab, Syria, and Edom (8:1-18)
- David's days of trouble (9:1-20:26)
  - David's kindness to Mephibosheth (9:1-13)
  - David commits adultery and murder (10:1-12:31)
  - David's family trouble (13:1-14:33)
  - Absalom's Rebellion against David (15:1-20:26)
- David's Memoirs (2 Samuel 21:1-14)
  - The Lord's judgment concerning Israel (21:1-14)
  - David's Heroes (21:15-22)
  - David's Song of Praise (22:1-51)
  - David's final words (23:1-7)
  - David's Mighty Men (23:8-39)
  - The Lord's judgment concerning David (24:1-25)

### **Worth noting**

- In Samuel, we see the setting of several Psalms written by David :
  - When being spied on by Saul: compare 1 Samuel 19:11 with Psalm 59.
  - When captured by the Philistines in Gath: compare 1 Samuel 21:10, 11 with Psalm 56.
  - When David feigned insanity before Abimelech: compare 1 Samuel 21:10-15 with Psalm 34.
  - When David fled from Saul: compare Psalm 22:1; 24:3 with Psalm 57 and 142.
  - When Doeg betrayed David and the Priests of Nob: compare 1 Samuel 22:9, 10 with Psalm 52.
  - When David fled in the Wilderness: compare 1 Samuel 23:14 with Psalm 63.
  - When David was betrayed to Saul: compare 1 Samuel 23:19 with Psalm 54.
  - At the dedication of David's house: compare 2 Samuel 5:11, 12; 6:17 with Psalm 30.

- When David fought against the Syrians: compare 2 Samuel 8:3, 13 with Psalm 60.
  - When David confessed his sin concerning Uriah and Bathsheba: compare 2 Samuel 12:1-14 with Psalm 51.
  - When David fled from Absalom: compare 2 Samuel 15:13-17 with Psalm 3.
  - When David was fleeing in the Wilderness: compare 2 Samuel 15:23-28 with Psalm 63.
  - Concerning Cush: compare 2 Samuel 16:5; 19:16 with Psalm 7.
  - Concerning David's deliverance from Saul: compare 2 Samuel 22:1-51 with Psalm 18.
- The major obstacle to Israel's rise was Philistia. This period was a time essentially devoid of *superpowers* in the region.

### **When reading Samuel**

- Remember that God is beginning to reveal His blessing through the idea of a monarchy. Central to the purposes of God is Christ becoming the ultimate king over Israel, a descendant from David himself.