

Samuel

Title:

The First and Second Books of Samuel were originally only one book in the Hebrew, but were divided by the translators of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament). The books of Samuel are not named for the holy writer, but for the chief figure of the books. Although Samuel is not the holy writer, the book is entitled “Samuel” because the time period documented here could well be termed “The era of Samuel”. Samuel is the leading figure of this period in Israel’s history: Samuel was the last judge of Israel, a great prophet of the LORD, and the man who anointed the first two kings of Israel. So, such a title is certainly appropriate.

Purpose:

The purpose of the book is to continue the narration of the LORD’s care for His people. The Books of Samuel show how the LORD raised Israel from a nation battered by her neighbors to victory over the Philistines, and emerged as the most powerful nation of that time under King David.

First Samuel picks up where the Book of Judges leaves off. In the book of Judges, Israel was under the direct rule of the LORD God, who used the judges to deliver Israel from their enemies. Samuel describes the transition of leadership from the dark days of the judges to the establishment of the monarchy of David.

Though Israel desired a king so that they could be like the other nations (1 Samuel 8:5-7), there is no doubt that Israel actually remained under God’s rule. Even as it was the LORD who had appointed the judges, so also it was the LORD who gave the people permission to anoint a king (1 Samuel 8:22). It was the LORD who anointed first Saul (1 Samuel 10:1; 11:15), then David (1 Samuel 16:1, 10-13; 2 Samuel 2:4) and his descendants (2 Samuel 7:4-17). It was the LORD who gave them orders (1 Sam 12:14-25; 15:2-3), and who removed and/or disciplined Israel’s kings (cf. 1 Samuel 15:35; 16:1; 28:6; 2 Samuel 12:1-12).

In the books of Samuel we are presented with both historical and biographical information (note that the author does not try to gloss over the sins of chief characters). They are individuals who face the temptations of this sinful world just like us, and who do fall into such sin. But within these narratives of the lives of God’s people, we find the patience of God and His faithfulness to His promises; we see a God who answers prayer and who finds a way to deliver His own no matter how bad the situation; and we learn that no sin is so terrible that it cannot be forgiven.

The Holy Writer:

The identity of the holy writer cannot be established. It certainly is not Samuel, for his death is recorded in First Samuel 25:1 (see also 28:3). Passages from the books indicate that at the time of writing the nation had been divided, for he writes of “*the kings of Judah*” (1 Samuel 27:6); and points to the division of the tribes (1 Samuel 11:8; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Samuel 3:10; 24:1). In addition, the writer finds it necessary to explain words and customs of the time of Samuel and David which were no longer current (cf. 1 Samuel 9:9; 2 Samuel 13:18), and also uses the phrase “*to this day*” often in the two books (1 Samuel 5:5; 6:18; 27:6; 30:25; 2 Samuel 4:3; 6:8; 18:18).

It has been suggested that the writing of the books was done compositely, first by Samuel, then by others following Samuel’s death. It is true that Samuel kept a record of Israel’s history during his time in office (1 Samuel 10:25; 1 Chronicles 29:29). However, the unity of the books seems to contradict this idea. They are arranged according to specific divisions with uniformity. The writer cannot be a contemporary of the figures described in the books since the events cover around one hundred years. Some have suggested Solomon as the holy writer, though this cannot be verified.

Because the identity of the writer is uncertain, no date can be placed on the writing. The events occurred from approximately 1100 B.C. to 970 B.C.

In spite of the uncertainty regarding the identity of the holy writer, the authenticity of the book cannot be questioned, for several passages in the New Testament verify its authenticity: Matthew 12:3-4 (1 Samuel 21:2-6); Luke 1:52 (1 Samuel 2:7f); and Acts 7:46 (2 Samuel

7:2). More certainty is given by the inclusion of David's song of praise from 2 Samuel 22 in the Book of Psalms (18), as well as the many Psalms that refer to specific incidents in the life of David as they are recorded in the Books of Samuel (cf. Psalm 3, 7, 30, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 60, 63, 142).

The Christ of Samuel:

While Samuel resembles Christ in that he is a prophet, priest, and ruler, David is the only *type* of Christ to be found in Samuel according to the strict sense of the term. The LORD calls David a man "*after His own heart*" (1 Sam. 13:14). The New Testament calls Christ the "*Seed of David according to the flesh*" (Romans 1:3), and "*the Root and the Offspring of David*" (Rev. 22:16). (Cf. also Isaiah 9:7; Matthew 21:9; 22:45; and Luke 1:32). In addition, we find the Messianic prophecies previously listed (2 Samuel 7:12-16; 23:1-7). We also find Christ in the forgiveness the LORD grants to David through the prophet Nathan in Second Samuel 12:13.

Division of the Books and Outline:

Briefly, **First Samuel** covers Samuel's origin and call to be a judge and a prophet (3:19ff), the transition of leadership from judge to king (ch. 8-12), the reign of King Saul (ch. 13-15), and the transition of leadership from Saul to David (15:10-35; 16:1-13). The first book closes with the death of Saul (31:1-13).

I. Samuel, The Last Judge (1:1-7:17)

- A. The First Transition of National Leadership: Eli - Samuel (1:1-3:21)
- B. The Judgeship of Samuel (4:1-7:17)

II. Saul, The First King (8:1-31:13)

- A. The Second Transition of National Leadership: Samuel - Saul (8:1-12:25)
- B. The Reign of King Saul (13:1-15:9)
 1. The Early Success of Saul (13:1-4)
 2. The Failures of King Saul (13:5-15:9)
- C. The Third Transition of National Leadership: Saul - David (15:10-13:13)
 1. The Transition (15:10-16:13)

2. Saul Attempts to Kill David (18:10-20:42)
3. The Rise of David in Exile (21:1-28:2)
4. The Final Decline of Saul (28:3-31:13)

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**Second Samuel** begins with David triumphing over his enemies (5:17-25; 8:1-12), and reigning over a united kingdom (5:1-5). However, the report of the kingdom soon turns to transgression and trouble as David neglects his work and sleeps with Bathsheba, then murders her husband (11:1-27). This brings the sword upon David's house that lasts until the final chapters of David's rulership. The book closes with David's song of thanksgiving (chapter 22) and the final words of David (chapter 23).

### I. The Triumphs Of David (1:1-10:19)

- A. The Political Triumphs of David (1:1-5:25)
  1. The Reign of David in Hebron over Judah (1:1-4:12)
  2. The Reign of David in Jerusalem (5:1-25)
- B. The Spiritual Triumphs of David (6:1-7:29)
  1. The Transportation of the Ark (6:1-23)
  2. The Institution of the Davidic Covenant (7:1-29)
- C. The Military Triumphs of David (8:1-10:19)

### II. The Transgressions Of David (11:1-27)

- A. The Sin of Adultery (11:1-5)
- B. The Sin of Murder (11:6-27)

### III. The Troubles Of David (12:1-24:25)

- A. The Troubles In David's House (12:1-13:36)
  1. Prophecy by Nathan (12:1-24)
  2. David's Son Dies (12:15-25)
  3. Joab's Loyalty to David (12:26-31)
  4. Incest in David's House (13:1-20)
  5. Amnon Is Murdered (13:21-36)
- B. The Troubles in David's Kingdom (13:37-24:25)
  1. Rebellion of Absalom (13:37-17:29)
  2. Absalom's Murder (18:1-33)
  3. David Is Restored as King (19:1-20:26)
  4. The Commentary on the Reign of David (21:1-24:25)