

ABIDE

DISCOVERING YOUR OLD TESTAMENT



WHEN THERE WERE KINGS

1 & 2 SAMUEL

From the book of Ruth, we mentioned that this was the book that was the beginning of a bridge that led to a completely new form of government, and coming to the section of 1 & 2 Samuel we have crossed that bridge. When we were in Ruth, the nation of Israel was a Theocracy. A theocracy is a people or culture ruled by God. Now, we have entered into the realm of a Monarchical form of government. A Monarchy is a form of government where there is one ruler who oversees the entire nation. 1 Samuel is where all of this begins.

Also, as we watch this young nation grow politically as the new office of “king” is put into place, at the same time, we get to watch a new spiritual facet begin to form as the new office of “prophet” is put into place. 1 Samuel is where we see the office of prophet emerge and it begins with none other than Samuel himself.

Another interesting fact about this book that many do not know is that 1 Samuel, along with its counterpart, 2 Samuel, is known as a doublet book. A ‘doublet’ in literature are two words (or, in this case, narratives) derived from the same source but end up with different routes of transmission. For instance, take the words potion and poison. These words have the same source and are very similar, but take a different route in transmission. That is a doublet.

Well, the same is true with 1 & 2 Samuel. 1 & 2 Samuel is a doublet to 1 & 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles. You may have noticed this if you’ve read these books together how they convey similar portions of history but take different routes when it comes to transmission.

Furthermore, another interesting feature is the divisions of 1 & 2 Samuel (as well as Kings and Chronicles) are relatively new. In the original Hebrew writings of these historical accounts, there was only Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. The “1” and “2” divisions were separations placed there by English translators as a study aid to the reader. These books were divided (just like the chapter and verse divisions) so that a Bible student could easily find the significant portions of history associated with those books.

It is also important to note how these doublet books operate with one another. And the best way to see this operation is to look at the synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These gospels are overlapping accounts of the ministry of Jesus and provide the reader with additional insights and perspectives that provide an altogether clearer picture of the events that occurred during the life of Christ. Well, this is exactly how Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles operate. They are overlapping historical accounts of this nation that together provide a clearer picture of the events that occurred during the life of this nation.

With this information, in these next few chapters we will combine each of these doublet books and present each as whole sections.

How to Think About 1 & 2 Samuel

This first and second part of Samuel are really about four main individuals: Eli the priest, Samuel the prophet, Saul, the peoples' king, and David, God's king.

Understanding this will help you tremendously when trying to navigate your way through Samuel. That said, let's take a brief look at the lives of each of these individuals:

Eli (1 Samuel 1-4): There is not much written about Eli and what is written about him is not flattering. Eli really was a failed priest and a failed parent. As a priest we see his failings in recognizing the spiritual depth of Hannah as he mistakes her prayer life for drunkenness. As a parent we see his failings by way of his sons in the fact that he continued to allow them to commit abominations before God and allow God's people to be carried away in their worship of Him.

It is true that every God fearing parent would love to see their children grow in the knowledge and respect of the Lord. But it is also true that this is the personal decision of the child and if it ever comes down to a parent having to choose between God and their children, God must win.

Samuel (1 Samuel 1-25): The life of Samuel spans from the time of Eli all the way to just before the death of King Saul. Samuel had a particularly long and influential ministry as God set him up to be the first of the prophets. We find ample evidence as we come into the New Testament as Samuel was mentioned as part of Israel's history. For instance, in Acts 3:24 the Bible says, "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." Also, in Acts 13:20, we read, "And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet."

Another interesting fact about Samuel is that he set up different schools for prophets. You see, the office of a prophet was an office of "forth-telling" and usually came on the scene when something was wrong in the lives of God's people. However, Samuel was under the persuasion that these men needed to be good at their craft. And so as he traveled around as a kind of circuit preacher, he also set up institutions that taught men how to teach God's people.

Furthermore, as a prophet, it was this man whom God used to institute the kingdom of the nation of Israel. It was by Samuel's hand that God anointed the first two kings of Israel (Saul and David) during this government transition from a Theocracy to a Monarchy.

Saul (1 Samuel 9-31): This is an interesting man. If you try to understand him, prepare to be disappointed. In reading the story from the beginning of his life, apparently, if we were able to see him, Saul would look like a person that you would identify as a king. The Bible says he stood head and shoulders above everyone else and everything from his outward appearance suggested that he was the best candidate for the job. However, this was just it; he was right on the outside but wrong on the inside.

During Saul's reign we find that he battled with severe mood swings, he was captured easily by jealousy, and that he had a low view of God. The reason we know this is because this is what ultimately costs Saul his throne. Two major sins come out in the life of Saul 1) the sin of presumption and 2) the sin of disobedience. Both of these sins were very public in nature and we learn later on that Saul's primary concern was his own name being protected in his failure instead of God's name being protected because of his failure.

God then takes the throne from Saul, but not before attempting to overthrow God's replacement for the position of King. During Saul's reign, David was anointed king of Israel and once jealousy invaded Saul's heart, we find that he tried to kill David nine different times, causing David to be on the run for years.

David (1 Samuel 16- 2 Samuel 24): When you are reading 1 Samuel, this spans from the birth of Samuel to the death of Saul, which is a period of about 115 years. Once we get into 2 Samuel, this section of the book is dedicated to covering the forty year reign of David.

David is no doubt the most famous king in Israel's history and truly led the people into a golden age of both prosperity and justice. Now, in a moment we talk about his great pride and moral failures, but as a whole, David's life and reign are nothing short of amazing. By God's grace David experienced great victories, and by God's grace David experienced great forgiveness.

What to Look for in 1 & 2 Samuel

Because of the narrative-style flow in Samuel, there are numerous people, accounts, and places to look as you are reading this book. Every page is filled with events that are not only compelling to read over and over again, but also exhilarating spiritual truths that can give both assurance and warning to the heart that is open.

Look for Victories— It would be completely overwhelming to accumulate all of the victories mentioned in these volumes. So instead, what we want to look at is the primary spiritual mindset and attitude that led ultimately to each victory.

Allow God to Make You in Times of Waiting: David was anointed at a very young age, but it was years before he ascended to become Israel's king as God had promised. David served as a shepherd and a court official before he would be king, but he was patient in his waiting and allowed God to use these common experiences in service to bolster his effectiveness as king.

Allow God to Mold You in Times of Trouble: Once Saul became jealous to the point that he felt he needed to take David's life, David quickly found himself on the run as a fugitive. This was no doubt a miserable experience for him. However, many of the Psalms were written in these times of trouble and David began to know God in a way that he had never known Him before. As a result, there was real maturity that took place in David's life. David found himself running from man; but at the exact same time, God was molding a man.

Look for Failures— Just like the victories, there is not enough time to go through each and every failure that exists in both volumes of Samuel. It would be better just to read it for yourself. But while you do,

Don't Run Ahead of God: When the children of Israel wanted a king, they wanted a king at that moment. We'll speak about this to give a little more insight in a moment, but for now, what is important to see is that God already had a king in mind and would establish His king in His own time. However, God's people ran ahead of God and chose a king that they had no business choosing.

Don't Run Around God: When king Saul was well established, we find that there were two occasions where he completely went around God. The first occurred in 1 Samuel 15 when Saul was instructed to destroy the Amalekites and everything they owned. However, instead, Saul decided that he would keep the livestock and keep the king of the Amalekites alive. It was for this sin that Saul lost his kingship. The second occasion happened when Saul went to a psychic so that he could speak to Samue, who had died. He said that he did this because God wasn't listening to him and he needed a word from the Lord (1 Samuel 28). This was a form of witchcraft and strictly prohibited in terms of God's law, labeled as a capital punishment.

Don't Run Away from God: In David's terrible sin with Bathsheba, and the infinitely worse sin of having her husband killed, a careful study of the narrative will reveal that David ignored his sin for about a year. He just pretended like nothing had ever happened. Also, it is important to take note about how David got to this spiritual drought in his life. This didn't happen overnight. This came during peace in David's life. He was the

king and was now extremely successful. But this success caused David to slip in his spiritual life. Suddenly he was adrift from God and by the time these sins occurred he was in a full-stride run (spiritually speaking) from God.

Look for Promises—

God Promised Israel a Special Kind of King: It was always God's plan to give Israel a king. However, what they experienced with Saul was the result of God's people failing to wait on God. They not only wanted to have a king as other nations had, but to choose their king as other nations did. But when God's king took the throne, though he was not perfect, he led Israel into a true golden age.

God Promised David Special Kind of Rule: No doubt the most significant promise that occurs in this section in the Bible is known as the "Davidic Covenant." This is found in 2 Samuel 7:11-13 when God made a promise to David:

"And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

God told David that He would not only give David a dynasty, but that his dynasty would last forever. This will be covered in greater detail in a moment, but God did exactly what He said He would do.

What to Gain from 1 & 2 Samuel

Examples for the Cause of Christ: When we look at the four main characters who consume the whole of 1 and 2 Samuel, we are brought to some sobering lessons regarding leadership. We learn that a leader has the ability to cause people to rise, or cause people to fall. In terms of our life, we have to understand that we all have some sphere of influence in the lives of eternal souls. It could be that you have employees. It could be that you are a parent, a Christian employee surrounded by unsaved co-workers, a teacher, an older brother or sister, or friend. No matter what, you exhibit some form of leadership with someone. And as we read the accounts of these men, we find that their godliness, or lack of godliness, affected people for better or worse.

As God's people we have to strive to be His representatives in all that we say and do.

Exclusivity of Christ: As we move through Messianic prophecy in the Bible, we find this progression:

- 1) **Genesis 3:15** *"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; and it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."* This is the first Messianic prophecy. In this conversation between God and Satan, God said that He would send a Savior by way of the Human Race.
- 2) **Genesis 22:18** *"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."* In this Messianic prophecy, God moves from telling us that the Messiah would not only be part of the human race, but part of a specific race of people that He, Himself, would create to be a nation.
- 3) **Genesis 49:10** *"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come..."* A third step in Messianic Prophecy is that the Messiah would be from the tribe of Judah.
- 4) **2 Samuel 7:13** *"He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."* In this prophecy in the Davidic Covenant, God promised David that his throne would last forever. Well, where

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is David now? He is passed from the scene and done with his earthly reign; but Christ isn't. God said that the Messiah He would send would be a member of the human race, from the people of the Jews, from the tribe of Judah, and from the family of David— and that once He began ruling, His throne would never pass away.

Excellency of Christ: In a final thought for 1 & 2 Samuel, we see four flawed men who in some way or form, corrupted their office. Eli failed the priesthood. Samuel had failings in his prophetic office. Saul failed as king, as did David.

However, in contrast to these failed offices of men, Jesus the Christ fulfills each of them perfectly.



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