

1 Samuel

Summary

The book begins with Samuel's mother, Hannah, vowing that if Yahweh gives her a son, she will dedicate him back to the Lord. God grants Hannah's prayer, and she keeps her promise. Samuel was raised by Eli, the priest of Shiloh (Shiloh was where the Ark of the Covenant was kept). As a boy, Samuel hears from God, and he responds by committing to follow the Lord. Samuel is said to be a *prophet like Moses* (Deuteronomy 18:15-22). He has direct contact with God and he is a well-respected leader. We continue to read about how the Ark was captured by the Philistines and placed among their gods. God sends plagues to the Philistines, who then recognize the supremacy of Yahweh and return the Ark.

We then see a transfer of leadership in Israel, from judges to a kingship. This results from the people asking to have a king like the other nations. This request angers both Samuel and God, as God has been their King since the time of Abraham. However, God agrees to give them a king. Samuel warns the people that the king is to be appointed by Yahweh and that he will stay with them only as long as they are faithful to Yahweh and no other gods. If they reject the true God, it will result in the destruction of both the king and the people.

Saul is anointed as the first king, who is appointed by Yahweh. Saul starts off well and wins many battles with the help of the Lord. However, he then loses favor with God because of his disobedience. He makes a sacrifice without Samuel, and he also chooses not to follow God's instructions to destroy the Amalekites. Because of this, God tells Saul that the kingdom will be taken from him and his family and given to another. God tells Samuel to anoint David as king. The Spirit of the Lord came upon David and became committed to God for the rest of his life. Saul remained king when David was anointed as a youth.

We then hear the story of how young David killed the nine-foot-tall Philistine champion, Goliath, with a sling and a stone. He gives full credit to God. David enters into Saul's service as harpist and armor-bearer. As David grows older, he becomes one of Saul's army commanders, winning many battles. The people begin to praise David over Saul for his many victories, so Saul becomes jealous of David and tries to kill him. David is protected by

Saul's son, Jonathon (David's best friend), and Saul's daughter, Michal (David's wife). David flees to the desert, and Saul continues to pursue him. David has a chance to kill Saul twice but does not, swearing his allegiance to Saul and his family. Despite this, Saul still wanted to kill David. David then goes to live among the Philistines and fights against Saul and Israel. The night before a decisive battle, Saul asks the Witch of Endor to call up Samuel's ghost to ask him who will win. Samuel is angered by Saul's inquiry. He tells Saul that he and his sons will be killed and that the kingdom will be taken from his family. As predicted, Saul's sons die in battle, and Saul takes his own life by falling on his sword. Through this action, David legally gains the throne. He never attempted to take the throne away from Saul, he was always loyal to Saul and his family, and he followed God's leading.

Author

Scholars are unsure of who wrote 1 and 2 Samuel, but most scholars believe it was a combination of numerous authors. It is believed that Samuel wrote the first part of the book, although we know Samuel did not write the entire book, as evidenced by his death recorded in chapter 25. Gad and Nathan may have contributed to the writings, as well as others, and they were all gathered together by an unknown author who may have incorporated into his own composition as much as possible in their original, unedited form.

Date

Scholars are unsure of the exact date this book was written. Sections of the book may have been written by Samuel as early as the year 1000 B.C. Some scholars suggest it was compiled around 930 B.C., but others suggest it was around 600 B.C. or later.

Primary Characters

Samuel (1 Samuel 1-25)

Saul (1 Samuel 9-31)

David (1 Samuel 16-31)

Historical Moments

God Calls Samuel and Samuel Commits His Life to God (1 Samuel 3:1-21)

The Ark of the Covenant Is Captured and Recovered (1 Samuel 4:1-22 & 6:1-7:2)

Saul Anointed First King of Israel (1 Samuel 10:1-27)

The Rejection of Saul by God (1 Samuel 13:1-15:35)

Samuel Anoints David to Replace Saul (1 Samuel 16:1-13)

David Kills Goliath (1 Samuel 17:1-58)

Saul Consults the Witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:3-25)

Saul's Sons Are Killed and Saul Commits Suicide (1 Samuel 31:1-13)

Major Theological Themes

The Sovereignty of Yahweh - God is ultimately in control of all the events that happen on earth, and He interacts with humanity through real action.

God Is King - Although God allowed for the people of Israel to have an earthly king, God's concept of kingship is different. He is the true King over all, and He allows earthly kings to prosper as long as they follow and obey His commands.

Davidic Covenant - God promises an eternal covenant and kingdom through the lineage of David, including divine provision for Jerusalem in the present and distant future.

Lessons Learned from 1 Samuel

Our Actions Matter - God blesses those that love Him and keep His commands, but He punishes those who serve other gods or who do not keep His laws. Throughout the course of 1 Samuel, the leaders and people were blessed for their good decisions but faced consequences for their poor ones.

God Keeps His Promises - God made a covenant with David and the people of Israel. This promise can be seen throughout the remainder of the Old Testament as well as in the fulfillment through Jesus Christ in the New Testament. We can know that God is consistent and that His promises can be trusted.