

1 & 2 SAMUEL OVERVIEW

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE MONARCHY BOOKS

A. Generalities

1. Historical monarchy books

- a. 1 & 2 Samuel
- b. 1 & 2 Kings
- c. 1 & 2 Chronicles

2. These were originally three books

- a. Division of each into two books occurred when the Septuagint translation was made in 3rd c. BC
- b. Heb language had no symbols for vowel sounds, but Gk did
- c. Translating Heb to Gk about doubled the size of the text and scrolls, so the scholars separated each Monarchy book into two sections

B. Books of Samuel

1. General

a. Greek and Latin manuscripts were two books

- 1). Christian Greek manuscripts of ca 350 AD called them 1 & 2 Kingdoms

- a.) Jerome's Latin Vulgate initially followed this
- b.) Later editions shortened it to Kings

- 2). Older English versions, e.g. King James version

- a.) Called them

“The First Book of Samuel otherwise called the First Book of Kings.”

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2. Background to the books

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a. The person of Samuel

- 1). Eli was a priest in the Shiloh Tabernacle who judged Israel for 40 years before Samson
- 2). During this time, Samuel was born and grew up in the Tabernacle, training to serve the Lord
- 3). He is considered the last of the judges and the first of the new line of prophets
- 4). God used him to found Israel's monarchy
 - a.) He anointed the first two kings, Saul and David

b. Battling the Philistines (re-do of Judges' history)

- 1). Sea Peoples came to Mediterranean coast of Palestine ~ 1200 BC
 - a.) Coalition of nine sea-faring groups
 - b.) Invaded Asia Minor, the Levant and Egypt
 - c.) Massive destruction associated with the end of the Bronze Age
- 2). Formed the five large city-states along the coast
 - a.) Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath

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- 3). ~ 1126 BC, pushed into the interior and highlands, clashing with the Israelites

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- a.) Superior weapons and chariots
- b.) Samson's 20-year battle against them

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3. Circumstances of the writing

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a. Author is unknown

- 1). Jewish tradition is that Samuel wrote it
- 2). But the writing extends far beyond his death in 1 Sam 25.1

b. Likely that the author was a prophet, himself

- 1). The span of events is more than one lifetime, so that the Holy Spirit probably directed the person to sources (1 Chron 29.29)
- 2). Since the death of David is not recorded in Samuel, but in 1 Ki 2.10, it was likely written before his death in 970 BC

c. Book's objectives

1). Give the circumstances of the monarchy's founding

- a.) 1 Samuel > birth of monarchy
- b.) 2 Samuel > monarchy expands to become a world power

2). Ultimate purpose

- a.) Reveal the messianic founding of the house of David as the family through which the Messiah would come

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4. Chronology of the books

a. Covers about 140 years

- 1). 1 Samuel covers about 100 years
 - a.) Birth of Samuel opens at about 1110 BC
- 2). 2 Samuel covers about 40 years
 - a.) Closing event of David's death at about 970 BC

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5. Contents of the books

a. Primarily a historical narrative

b. Four main divisions

1). Div # 1 - 1 Sam 1-12: Transition to Monarchy

- a.) Begins with Samuel's birth & ends with his valedictory address
- b.) Two subdivisions
 - Ch 1-7: Last days of judgeship government
 - .. Failures of Eli, high priest & judge
 - In the worship center
 - Coping with the Philistine menace
 - .. Samuel arrives as a combined prophet & judge
 - .. Concludes with Yahweh granting victory over the Philistines in response to Samuel's prayer
 - Ch 8-12: Interaction between Samuel & Saul
 - .. Saul ...
 - ... is selected by God
 - ... is anointed privately & publicly by Samuel
 - ... is accepted by the people after achieving military leadership
- c.) Once the people accept Saul as king, Samuel leaves his position in a brilliant farewell address

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2). Div # 2 - 1 Sam 13 - 31: Saul's monarchy

a.) Two subdivisions

- Ch 13-15: Saul's actions as king

- .. Saul receives public support & guidance from Samuel
- .. Ch 15 highlights Saul's disobedience and sin
- .. Samuel sees God's design in allowing Saul to be king
- The people got exactly the kind of king that they wanted

- Ch 16-31: Saul thwarting David's ascendancy

- .. Samuel anointed David as God's newly chosen king, a man after God's own heart
- .. Saul now acted vigorously on his two objectives
- Consolidate his own power
- Keep David from taking the throne

3). Div # 3 - 2 Sam 1 - 20: David's 40-year reign

a.) Note it is divided, like Saul's reign, into a before-the-sin and after-the-sin pattern

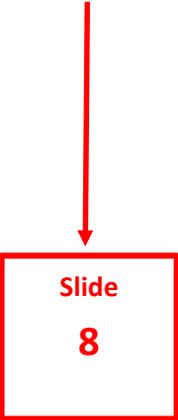
- Before the sin with Bathsheba, David was under God's blessing
- After the sin, David was under a curse

4). Div # 4 - 2 Sam 21 - 24: Appendix

a.) A reflection of David's reign

b.) Scholar Brevard Childs, in his *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, summarizes this division as ...

“a highly reflective, theological interpretation of David’s whole career.”



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II. I SAMUEL

A. General

1. Eli

- a. Both a Judge and high priest in Shilo
- b. Reigned for 40 years before Samuel (1145 - 1105 BC)
 - 1). Paved the way for the monarchy
 - 2). Samuel followed him as the next Judge

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2. 1st seven chapters of 1 Sam contain two major events

a. Capture of the ark of God in battle

- 1). A mother dying in childbirth called his name "Ichabod" > the glory has departed
- 2). A new law for Israel

b. A major victory in battle over the Philistines

- 1). Twenty years later
- 2). Samuel raised a stone to commemorate the victory
- 3). Ebenezer ...
 - a.) The name of the lost city where the ark was taken
 - b.) Means "stone of help"
 - Shown in 2nd verse of *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

"Here I have raised my Ebenezer;
Hither by Thy help I'm come; ..."

c. Samuel is used by God to bring the people back to Him

- 1). They were at their national low
 - 2). He restored their national pride, power and purpose
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B. Chapters 1-7

1. Hannah's problem (1 Sam 1.1-8)

a. One of two wives of Elkanah, a Levite living in Ephraim

- 1). Hannah was barren
- 2). Perhaps this was why Elkanah had a second wife, to provide heirs

b. Her added problem

- 1). Peninnah, the other wife, tormented her over her barrenness, particularly on the family's annual trip to Shiloh to sacrifice

c. Elkanah tried to show his greater love for her by giving her extra portions to sacrifice

- 1). This didn't help Hannah

2. Hannah makes a request of the Lord (1.9-19a)

a. Hannah prays silently by the Shiloh temple door

- 1). Note her reverent approach in vs 11
 - a.) Three times she refers to herself as "Your maidservant"
- 2). She asks the Lord for a son
- 3). She promises to raise him as a Nazirite for his life if He answers her prayer
 - a.) Remember the three rules of dedication of a Nazirite
 - Can't consume a product of the vine
 - Can't touch a corpse
 - Can't cut their hair

b. The high priest Eli sees her lips moving

1). He assumes she is drunk and muttering, and shames her

- a.) Part of his duty is to guard the sanctuary against desecration

2). But she respectfully makes him aware of her prayer

- a.) She wasn't a worthless woman
- b.) She had a great need ..."provocation" > vexing, bothering
- c.) This caused a great sorrow in her spirit, which she was pouring out to the Lord for a solution

3). Eli responds concerning her petition to the Lord (vs 17)

- a.) Eli seems to be adding his request that God honor her request
- b.) But if the verb is imperfect, then he is stating that God WILL grant her request (KJV, ESV, NRSV, NASB)

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c. Hannah is confident that God will honor her request

- 1). She is no longer sad
- 2). The family returns home

3. Samuel is born (1.19b-28)

a. Hannah becomes pregnant and gives birth to the promised son

- 1). She names him "Samuel" > *heard of the Lord* because God answered her request and gave him to her

b. The annual festival and sacrifice time arrived again

- 1). Elkanah gathers the family to go make their sacrifices
- 2). Hannah decides to not go
 - a.) Under Jewish law, wives are not obligated
 - b.) She wants to wait until she weans Samuel, and can then deliver him to serve the Lord, as she promised
 - Her husband agrees, saying "...only may the LORD confirm His word", i.e. he is confident the vow will be kept
 - He may also be concerned that withholding the child may not honor God's giving him

c. Hannah completes the weaning & travels to Shiloh
for the annual festival with Samuel

- 1). Jewish women weaned their children up to three years
- 2). She also took a special offering to be made among the three bullocks
 - a.) Sin offering
 - b.) Burnt offering
 - c.) Nazirite vow offering

d. Hannah completes her vow

- 1). She reminds Eli of her prayer and presents the boy
- 2). She declares him dedicated to the Lord's service

e. (vs 28) "he" worshipped = ??

- 1). Likely Eli, Samuel too young ?
- 2). Or maybe it was Elkanah, completing his worship

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4. Hannah's prayer (2.1-10)

a. Overall

- 1). This is an incredible prayer/song for a young woman out of the hill country !
- 2). Must have been inspired by the Holy Spirit
- 3). God is the central figure throughout

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b. She first gave four sources of joy

- 1). God has rescued her from her personal affliction (vs 1)
 - a.) "my horn" > my strength

- 2). She rejoiced in God's character (vss 2-3)
 - a.) His holiness, strength and knowledge
 - b.) His justice & judging

- 3). God's government (vss 4-8)
 - a.) The rich, powerful, blessed are often humbled
 - b.) The poor, weak, dishonorable are sometimes exalted
 - c.) (vs 7) "...He brings low, He also exalts" > God evens things out over the long haul
 - Her own experience is an illustration

- 4). She rejoiced in her hope (vss 9-10)
 - a.) God watches over and supports the righteous
 - b.) The wicked do not get that support

c. She then makes predictions about what God will be doing (10b)

- 1). He will judge the whole world
- 2). He will give strength to His king
- 3). He will exalt the power of His anointed
 - a.) 1st reference to the Messiah in the OT

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5. (vs 11) Elkanah and his family return home

- a. But Samuel stays at Shiloh, ministering to the Lord
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6. Sins of the Priests

a. Eli's Sons

1). Remember the statement repeated throughout Judges

"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

- a.) This period where Eli was high priest was also the low point in Israel's spiritual condition
- b.) Eli and his family gave bad examples and leadership for the people to follow, to repent and reverse

2). (2.12) - what a statement, particularly for priests !

- a.) "worthless men" translated from "sons of Belial"
Heb = of wickedness, personified wickedness
- b.) Then "they did not know the Lord"

3). (2.17) - they " ...despised the offering of the Lord"

- a.) Eli's sons interrupted the people's sacrifices to take the choice meat for themselves (vss 13-16)
 - They took the priestly portion before the sacrifice was completed
- b.) If the one making the offering objected, he was threatened with confiscation of the offering by force

4). Further, they engaged in fornication in the Tabernacle area (2.22)

5). Eli rebuked them for these evil deeds (2.23-25)

- a.) Paul warned about these people (Phil 3.17-19)
- b.) Yet they didn't listen to him, and continued their evil ways
- c.) Eli did not follow the Lord's instructions for dealing with such children (Deut 21.18-21)

b. Note the contrast with Samuel

1). (2.18-21) Samuel grew as a boy in service at the Tabernacle

- a.) Eli pronounced blessings on his parents for giving him to this service
- b.) God blessed them with three sons and two daughters

2). (2.26) Samuel continued to grow

- a.) His stature increased = he matured
- b.) He also gained favor...
 - with God, as a dedicated servant
 - with men, as one to be respected in the Lord's service

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c. God deals with Eli's failure to correct his sons' evils

1). God's denunciation of Eli (2.27-29)

- a.) Delivered through a "man of God" > prophet or angel ?
- b.) He first reminds Eli of the privilege of becoming a priest
 - God gave Aaron's family the priesthood advantage, even before the exodus
 - But Eli allowed disrespect for God's sacrifice, favoring his sons instead of God's glory
 - He was responsible for allowing evil through the priestly office

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2). God's pronouncement of judgement (2.30-34)

a.) Note God declares He will only honor those who honor Him

- A major pronouncement of God's character & intent
- Also shows that God expects obedience/allegiance in return for His support
- Should be a warning to societies who set Him aside
- Therefore, Eli's family will be punished

b.) God will end Eli's priesthood and his family's line as priests

- 1st: The sons of the family will all die before reaching old age
 - .. Stressed three times that this would happen
- 2nd: (vs 32) Eli will live to see the "distress" of the Tabernacle
 - .. The coming destruction of it, and the taking of the ark
- 3rd: (vs 33) The family would lose its altar rights
 - .. Note ESV better wording implies it
"...The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar ..."
- 4th: (vs 34) The sign these elements of prophecy will occur
 - .. Hophi and Phineas will die on the same day
 - .. Doesn't say when

d. But God will not do away with the priesthood altogether (2.35-36)

- 1). He will raise up a faithful priest who will conduct the office perfectly
- 2). God will reward this by building him an "enduring house" = he would have the priesthood forever

3). Who is this new priest ??

a.) Many scholars say it is Samuel or Zadok

- Samuel did not have an unending reign (if he was a priest)
- Zadok was high priest under David's reign
 - .. The prophet said that Aaron's house would cease to have the priesthood
 - (vs 31) "your father's house" >> Aaron's house
 - This occurred with the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD
- So neither Samuel nor Zadok are the new high priest referred to

b.) Further cessations of priesthood

- Saul slaughters all 85 priests at Nob (1 Sam 22.11-23)
- Solomon banishes the last member of Eli's house, Abiathar, the only survivor of the Nob slaughter

c.) So, who is this perfect high priest ?

- Jesus Christ, the expected Messiah
- "enduring house" > (I Pet 2.9)
- vs 36 fulfillment > (Act 6.7)

7. Samuel's Calling

a. Preliminary insight

- 1). At this point in Israel's history, prophetic messages in any form were rare
 - a.) Quite the contrast to earlier days where He led them and they responded obediently & in faith
- 2). Chapter 3's account is likely in much detail because of this



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b. The Lord calls Samuel (3.1-9)

1.) The scene

- a.) Eli nearly blind
- b.) He and Samuel retire for the night
 - Note he retires close to Eli and within the confines of the Tabernacle, likely a side area for priests open to the courts
 - .. Can hear him call
 - .. Is within the Tabernacle light

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2.) The "lamp of God had not yet gone out" (vs 3)

- a.) (Ex 25.31, 27.20-21, 30.6-8)
 - The golden lampstand of the Tabernacle
 - It was to NOT go out, oil must be refreshed
- b.) Here, the lamp was dimming
 - Because of the Evil priests, the people weren't bringing offerings > less oil
 - God was allowing the dimming because of the evil as a sign of His withdrawing ??
 - Or, it may simply be that this occurred toward morning, when the lamps needed to be trimmed & oil refreshed

3.) God calls Samuel in the darkness

- a.) God called him three times, but Samuel thought Eli was calling him
 - He rushed to Eli
 - But Eli denied it the first two times
 - (vs 7) Samuel had no experiences with God to this point, so he didn't sense what was happening
 - Note Samuel's demeanor
 - .. A young man, ready to spring into action for his master
 - .. A young man without a temper, reacting to being summoned from sleep
- b.) On the third call, Eli discerned that God was calling Samuel
 - (vs 9) Eli instructs Samuel on how to answer the Lord's call

c. God instructs Samuel on His coming actions (3.10-14)

1). He calls Samuel again, Samuel responds as Eli instructed

- a.) Note Samuel's youth matters as a beginning prophet
- He is young enough that he would be regarded as repeating what the Lord said, not his own imaginings
 - God also mentions that, when Samuel reveals it, the people's ears will tingle
 - .. God is once again speaking to His people
 - .. They will also tingle when they hear of the terrible punishment to come on Eli's house

2). God warns Him that He is about to take action against Eli

- a.) God spoke in Chapter 2 directly to Eli for his failure to take action against the evils of his priest sons
- God will end Eli's priesthood and his family's line as priests
 - .. 1st: The sons of the family will all die before reaching old age
 - Stressed three times that this would happen
 - .. 2nd: (vs 2.32) Eli will live to see the "distress" of the Tabernacle
 - The coming destruction of it, and the taking of the ark
 - .. 3rd: (vs 2.33) The family would lose its altar rights
 - Note ESV better wording implies it
"...The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar ..."
 - .. 4th: (vs 2.34) The sign these elements of prophecy will occur
 - Hophi and Phineas will die on the same day
 - Doesn't say when
- b.) (vs 14) No sacrifice can atone for their sins !
- Did Hophni and Phineas continued to sin after God warned Eli ?

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d. Samuel's response to Eli (3.15-18)

1). Initially, Samuel was afraid to tell Eli what God told him

- a.) He went about his normal chores of opening up the Tabernacle's doors

2). Eli insisted that he relate everything

a.) He put Samuel under a prophetic curse if he withheld anything

- He wants to know the whole truth
- But notice he doesn't show any jealousy over Samuel being given the prophetic message over himself
- Samuel was much younger, this must have been very hard

b.) Samuel was resigned to God doing what He knew to be right

- His submission is both admirable & feeble
- .. The latter is what has cost him his sons & his family's position in the Lord's service

e. Samuel grows

- 1). (vs 19) God made sure that all of Samuel's prophecies came true
- 2). (vs 20) Because everyone saw his prophecies come true, all of Israel knew that God spoke through him
- 3). (vs 21-4.1a) Note the contrast that Samuel shows compared with Eli's weakness and his sons' evil ways

8. God's punishment enacted

a. Israel's defeat (4.1b-11)

- 1). In Eli's time, Philistine incursions into Israel were frequent

2). The Israelites decided to attack them to stop this practice

a.) The Philistines were camped at Aphek (map)

- Aphek is on the plain leading to the Mediterranean
- Israelites camped at Ebenezer, 2 miles east at the foothills

b.) The initial battle was unsuccessful

- (vs 2) "...on the battlefield..." suggests that it wasn't a total rout and defeat

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3). A disastrous scheme is concocted (4.5-11)

- a.) Israelites "reason" that bringing the ark to the camp will invest God into fighting for them once again
- The elders had no authority over the ark
 - .. The priests did, and should have been asked to inquire if this was in God's will or not
 - This was also misrepresenting God
 - .. What a superstitious move to believe that God was present in the battle just by moving the ark there
 - What an ignorance of the sin going on among them
 - .. They totally missed the connection between obeying God and God's backing !
- b.) The ark is brought from Shiloh to the camp
- Note it is brought by Hophni and Phineas
- c.) When the ark arrives, the camp breaks into thunderous shouting, so much so that the earth shook
- This shook up the Philistines, who were aware of God's reputation in dealing with Israel's enemies
 - Note (vs 9)
 - .. Someone among the Philistines shouted encouragement to have backbone against the Israelites
 - .. If they didn't succeed, then the Philistines would become their slaves
- d.) The Israelite loss
- This time the rallied Philistines inflict huge losses, and Israel is routed
 - The ark is taken captive by the Philistines
 - Hophni and Phineas are killed on the same day, as God had directed would happen

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MAP

b. Death of Eli (4.12-22)

1). A roughed up survivor of the battle ran back to Shiloh

- a.) Roughly an 18 mile run
- b.) He told the city about the losses, which produced an anguished uproar

2). Eli heard the uproar and called out for news

- a.) The man rushed to Eli
- b.) He told of the losses
 - The battle was lost
 - The ark was taken
 - His sons had been killed
- c.) Eli was shocked by the news
 - He was old and heavy, so he fell backward, breaking his neck and dying

3). The news caused Phineas' pregnant wife to go into labor

- a.) She gave birth to a son with great difficulty
- b.) As she was dying, she named the son Ichabod
 - *Heb* "glory has gone into captivity"
 - *Heb* "no glory"
 - *Heb* "where is the glory ?"

9. What did the Philistines do after defeating the Israelites ?

a. (Ps 78.60-64)

- 1). They drove to Shiloh, massacred the priests, and destroyed the city
- 2). About 1050 BC

b. (Jer 7.12-14, 26.6-9)

- 1). God was directing
- 2). The city remained desolate for a long period after
- 3). 400 years later, God spoke through Jeremiah
 - a.) God was telling Jerusalem He will do the same to them because of their sin

These notes were originally written as I composed this study for our Faculty & Staff Bible Study at the local university. It is important to note that they follow the narrative in *Old Testament Survey Series: The Books of History* by James E. Smith (1995, College Press Publishing Company) very closely. It is the best summary I found, so it is the foundation for the study. In many cases, I used Dr. Smith's words directly, sometimes paraphrased them for clarity, sometimes enlarged on them with other resources. Since I didn't expect to publish the notes, I did not cite them at the time. It is now difficult to distinguish quotes from Dr. Smith, material from other resources, or what thoughts the Spirit gave me. Suffice to say that, if it is insightful to your spiritual growth, give all the glory to the Spirit, some credit to Dr. Smith, and none to me. I'm just the Spirit-led editor and teacher.

Bob Kostrubanic, November 5, 2021