

1 SAMUEL

INTRODUCTION

The book of 1 Samuel begins immediately after the end of the book of Judges. 1 and 2 Samuel covers a period extending from the birth of Samuel through the reign of David.

The purpose of 1 Samuel is to trace the advance of the people of Israel under the Divine guidance to a state of settled prosperity and union in the Promised Land.

David is very important to the story of God's dealings with mankind. He is introduced in chapter sixteen and the rest of 1 Samuel and all of 2 Samuel are devoted to the story of David.

Chapter 1

Samuel's father, Elkanah, was a righteous and pious man who went to the tabernacle regularly. Samuel's mother, Hannah, was Elkanah's favorite wife. But being childless at the time, Peninah, Elkanah's other wife, chided her for her barrenness.

Elkanah gave Hannah a double portion as an expression of his love for her, but Peninah seems to have been jealous. Hannah was still unhappy with her lot. She wept and would not eat, and was sore grieved.

Samuel's mother was faithful in her attendance at the house of God. While there she made a vow in her prayer that if God would grant her a son she would dedicate him to the temple service.

Eli, the high priest saw Hannah's lips moving and heard no sound which led him to believe that she was intoxicated. Hannah explained that she was not drunk but that she was of a sorrowing spirit.

God was faithful in answering Hannah's prayer. Samuel was a child of prayer. Samuel was of the tribe of Levi who later will replace Eli as the spiritual leader of Israel.

Hebrew children were not weaned as early as modern American children. It was not uncommon for them to be nursed by their mother for several years. True to her promise, Hannah brought Samuel to God's house and gave him to God.

Chapter 2

The first eleven verses are Hannah's song expressing her heartfelt thanks for God's blessings in their lives.

Beginning in verse 12, we learn that Eli's sons were worthless or wicked sons who lead the people to be contemptuous of the sacrifices. The sons demanded raw meat of those who sacrificed.

In verse 21, we learn that Hannah had three sons and two daughters.

We also learn from verse 22 that Eli's sons committed adultery with the women who served around the tabernacle. Eli rebuked his sons, but his rebuke was very weak. God was going to slay them, for they could not continue in their rebellion.

An unnamed prophet, a servant of God, came to Eli and pronounced God's judgment upon Eli's house. The life of Eli would not expand, this would be the end of Eli's house.

Chapter 3

Eli is growing old and his eyesight is dim. This must have put more responsibility on Samuel. Samuel has a vision in which he learns of the destruction of Eli's house. He was afraid to tell Eli what he had learned. When Eli finally was told of the vision by Samuel he quietly resigned himself to the will of God.

The people accept Samuel as the prophet.

Chapter 4

Israel's fortunes fell when the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines. This is a fulfillment of the prophecy made by the unnamed prophet and by Samuel.

The news of the loss of the Ark was a shock to Eli. Eli fell back from his seat and broke his neck and died. Israel had fled before the Philistines; there was a great slaughter of the people; Eli's two sons were dead; and the Ark of the Covenant had been captured; all this news caused Eli's death.

The error in taking the Ark of the Covenant into battle was the error of idolatry. It seems that the Israelites thought that the power was in the chest covered with gold, when the power was in God.

Chapter 5

The Philistines treated the Ark of the Covenant as they would the spoils of war taking it to the temple of Dagon. Dagon's upper part of the body resembled a bearded man, wearing clothes of royalty adorned with elephant's tusks. The lower part of the body resembled the body of a fish.

The next morning when they went to the temple Dagon had fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark of the Covenant. The second morning they found Dagon with the palms of his hands cut off, his head cut off, and the remaining parts lying upon the threshold of the temple.

After this no part of the country wanted the Ark of the Covenant because wherever the Ark of the Covenant went, the people were afflicted.

Chapter 6

The Philistines had defeated Israel in battle but they were being defeated in their attempt to make a prize of war out of the Ark of the Covenant.

The Philistines put a trespass offering beside the Ark of the Covenant to see if the Ark should be returned to Israel. The Philistine diviners said to put five golden tumors and five golden mice beside the Ark of the Covenant which was to be placed on a new cart pulled by two milk cows. The cow's calves were to be left at home. If God would guide the cows to remove the Ark of the Covenant from their country, they would know they were not to have the Ark of the Covenant.

The cows, with the Ark of the Covenant, headed for Bethshemesh in Israel's territory. Some men did not respect the Ark of the Covenant and upon its arrival decided to look inside it. As a result God smote 50,070 men of Israel. Here the Ark of the Covenant remained for twenty years.

Chapter 7

The Ark of the Covenant was placed in the house of Abinadab, evidently a Levite and Eleazer was appointed to care for it.

God's people had strayed from Him, being led by two wicked priests, Hophni and Phineas, and as a result the Ark of the Covenant had been captured. Once back in Israel, Samuel began a campaign to lead the people back to God.

Samuel was the fifteenth and last judge who led the Israelites from the depressed state of disobedience to deliverance. The Philistines came up to battle against Israel

and the Israelites were afraid. So Samuel offered a lamb as a sacrifice to indicate Israel's total dependency upon God's mercy.

God caused a great thunder, perhaps accompanied by a great storm and God and the Israelites overcame the Philistines. Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shem and called it Ebenezer, meaning "the stone of help." The Philistines never gained supremacy over Israel again during Samuel's lifetime. Samuel probably reigned a short period of time because the people soon rejected him, wanting a king. His death is mentioned near the end of Saul's reign. (1 Samuel 25:1)

Chapter 8

In the first five verses the people ask for a king. God had long foreseen the day Israel would have a king. He had told Abraham that kings would come out of his loins. (Genesis 17:6) God had also instructed Moses and told him to pass along to the Israelites instructions in the selection of a king to rule over them. (Deuteronomy 17:14-20)

When Samuel was old he made his sons judges over Israel. But the sons did not walk in the way of their father. They set their hearts upon gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.

The people requested a king. In verses 6-9, God told Samuel to accept the people's request and instruct them in the nature of a king. Instead of the Israelites calling on God, they wanted to be like other nations and demanded a king to be given to them.

In verses 10-18, Samuel describes what a king is and what it would be like to be governed by a king. What was a king to be like?

1. Demand their best young men for his chariots and horsemen.
2. The king would need an army.
3. Some men would be required to till the ground and some to make implements of war. Young women would have to serve as cooks and bakers.
5. Their property would be confiscated.
6. They would be required to give a tenth to the king.

It is rebellion against God to rebel against God's form of government. Christians should be very careful not to make such moves.

In rejecting God as King and wanting to be like all other nations, ruled by an earthly king, this became a turning point in the history of the people of Israel.

Chapter 9

Saul became the first king of Israel and reigned for forty years. Saul was in the prime of his life and strong when appointed as king of Israel. As we first see Saul, he is searching for his father's donkeys which had strayed away.

Samuel tells him where he could find his father's donkeys. God had told Samuel that he was sending a man to him who was to be anointed "prince" over my people.

Chapter 10

Samuel took a vial of oil and anointed Saul. This anointing with the oil was a symbol of endowment with the Spirit of God.

Saul was anointed a second time, publicly, at Mizpah.

The task of reigning over the Israelites must have seemed overwhelming to Saul because he ran and hid in the baggage but the people found him and brought him before Samuel and all the people shouted, "Long live the king."

Chapter 11

Israel was seldom free from oppression and opposition. They were attacked by the Ammonites, a very idolatrous people who worshiped the false god named Molech. Nahash, the Ammonite commander, demanded that in order for a covenant to be made with Israel, the Israelites must have their right eye gouged out.

When Saul heard of the oppression of the Ammonites, his anger was aroused. Saul then kills his oxen and cuts it into twelve pieces and sends a piece to each tribe demonstrating that their help was needed in the war against the Ammonites.

Saul's strategy was to divide his people into three companies so that they would be able to attack from both sides and from the front or the rear. The men of Jabesh-Gilead were to go out to the Ammonites as if they were coming out that Nahash might gouge out their eyes. This would throw Nahash off guard and make him less watchful.

Such strategy took the Ammonites by surprise and the victory was complete for the men of Saul.

Chapter 12

This chapter is a review of Samuel's career, how they had rejected him and demanded and received a king. Samuel speaks to the people and reminds them how God had been with them. In no case had they found God to be unfaithful to them, but they had been unfaithful to God.

Their hearts were stirred as they realized they had been ungrateful to God and to Samuel. As they repent, they ask Samuel to pray for them.

Chapter 13

Chapters 13 through 31 tell of the reign of Saul. The victory over the Ammonites must have given Israel courage to go against their chief oppressor, the Philistines.

Jonathan wins the first battle and the Philistines are infuriated. The Philistines attack the Israelites at Michmash catching them in a trap. So the Israelites hid themselves in caves, pits, thickets, cellars, and in the cliffs. Saul was in Gilgal at this time to meet with Samuel. Samuel did not meet with Saul at the appointed time.

In verse 9, we see Saul's first act of disobedience. Saul impatiently took matters into his own hands and sinned greatly by offering a sacrifice himself. Saul was not a priest so he openly disobeyed the Law of God. Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin. As soon as Saul had finished offering the burnt sacrifice, Samuel appeared telling him he had disobeyed God and that God would appoint one who would obey God. (Verse 14)

The Philistines had made it illegal for a blacksmith to practice his art in Israel. Therefore, the Israelites could defend themselves only with their farming tools, like axes, goads, and forks.

This period of history is known as the "captivity of the land." Judges 18:30

Chapter 14

The Philistines thought they could not be beaten and that the Israelites were so poorly equipped that they had nothing to fear. But Jonathan and his armor bearer started a skirmish that caused such confusion that the Philistines attacked each other, and a great victory was won for Israel.

The victory over the Philistines would have been greater but Saul issues a prohibition saying they were not to eat until evening. The people were weak with hunger so they seized the Philistines' sheep, oxen, and calves and without proper care

they killed and ate the animals saturated in their own blood sinning against God's law found in Leviticus 19:26.

Saul's son, Jonathan, did not know of Saul's edict not to eat until evening. Being hungry and finding some honey he ate. When it was reported to Saul he set about to kill his son, but Jonathan was rescued by the people. Most of Saul's time on the throne was spent in battle.

Chapter 15

The Amalekites had been constant aggressors against Israel after Israel left Egypt. Saul was now ordered to completely destroy the Amalekites. Saul did destroy most of the Amalekites, but he spared the king and some of the best of the animals.

Once again it was Samuel who must deliver a message of judgment from the Lord to Saul. The message was to be one of God's rejection of Saul. Saul begs Samuel to stay with him, even seizing Samuel's robe and ripping it. This was God's way of telling Saul that his kingdom would be removed from him.

Samuel did stay long enough to kill Agag, the Philistine king. Saul lost his humility and disobeyed God on many occasions. God had ordered Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites. This may have seemed cruel but God had given them more than 400 years in which to repent of their hostility towards God's people. God finally called a halt to the rebellious ways of the Amalekites.

Agag is the common name for all the Amalekite kings like the name Pharaoh was for the kings of Egypt.

Chapter 16

Samuel had anointed Saul, so it was natural that he should be grieved at the failure of the first king. God then tells Samuel to anoint David as king. Samuel was afraid that Saul might try to kill him, but he carries out God's command.

Verse 12, says that David was "ruddy" with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. "Ruddy" is used to denote the reddish color of the hair, which is regarded as a mark of beauty in lands where the hair is generally black.

In verse 14, God sent an evil spirit upon Saul as a punishment. This spirit deprived Saul of his peace of mind and stirred up his failings, ideas, imaginations, and thoughts.

Saul's servants suggested he secure a musician to bring him comfort. David was mentioned and summoned by Saul to his court as his musician. Saul had no idea that

David had been anointed to succeed him until he saw David's potential and popularity, then Saul was afraid and jealous of David.

David being in the king's court, had the opportunity to learn the responsibilities of a leader of state. At the same time he was in a position to demonstrate his abilities and talents to the people.

Chapter 17

Once again Israel and the Philistines are at war. The conflict reached a stalemate when a champion, Goliath, came out to challenge the best to be found in the army of Israel.

While Saul was at war, David returned to his father's house in Bethlehem. While there Jesse, David's father, sends David to the battle to inquire about his sons' welfare. Here David hears Goliath's challenge and was not afraid to answer the challenge.

David had a deep faith in God because God had been with him when the sheep were attacked by lions and by bears. David refused Saul's armor, taking only his trusty sling and five smooth stones for it. After hitting Goliath with the stone, he beheaded Goliath with Goliath's own sword.

Saul had promised his daughter in marriage to any who would kill Goliath. It was, and is, an Arab custom for a warrior to vaunt his own prowess and to satirize his enemies, as a challenge to simple combat.

David called Goliath an "uncircumcised Philistine." This was a reflection upon Goliath's heritage and the fact that he was not under the covenant of God. The covenant of circumcision was made with Abraham before Isaac was born. This covenant extended to Ishmael, but the Hamitic line had received no covenant of circumcision.

Chapter 18

Jonathan, Saul's son, was attracted to David and between them they made a covenant not to harm each other.

David became a national hero. Saul's jealousy was aroused because of the song which the people sang concerning David's military victories. David killed 200 Philistines as a dowry for Saul's daughter, Michal.

After killing Goliath, Saul made David his armor-bearer. Later, he removed David as his armor-bearer and made him captain over a thousand men, thinking that this would put David in a better position to be killed.

Chapter 19

Saul enlisted all over whom he had any control to do whatever they could to catch David and kill him.

In verse 9, while under the influence of the evil spirit, he hurled a spear at David, missing David, but struck the wall as David escapes.

In verse 13, Michal takes a household idol, called a teraphim, and put it in David's bed to make the king think it was David. In the meantime David is escaping from Saul.

Chapter 20

David turns to Jonathan to ask him to find out why his father wants to kill him. At the new moon feast David asks Jonathan to check and see if he, David, was missed and if Saul was planning David's death. A signal was arranged between David and Jonathan so that the outcome of Jonathan's inquiry would be known.

Saul thought David's absence from the feast may have been because David may have touched a dead body since he was a man of war. Saul realized that Jonathan was taking second place to David and not filling the prominent role which Saul thought belonged to the crown prince.

Jonathan became angry and left the feast determined that his father intended to kill David. Jonathan informed David of his father's intentions by shooting arrows past the lad. After the lad had retrieved the arrows Jonathan sends him back into the city and David came out of hiding to meet Jonathan.

Chapter 21

This chapter begins David's flight from Saul. He first went to the tabernacle at Nob to worship God. While there David and his young men ate the consecrated bread which was a departure from the Levitical law. The priest may have justified himself in giving this bread to David on a higher law of love for a fellow man in need.

Doeg, the Edomite, overheard David's conversation with the priest when David asked for Goliath's sword. David fled to Gath where he thought that Achish would give him political asylum.

David pretends to be out of his mind carrying out all the acts of a maniac.

Chapter 22

David leaves the land of the Philistines and headed back through Judah being joined by members of his own family. Altogether he had a company of about 400 men. God sent His prophet, Gad, to tell David not to flee outside the land of Israel.

Saul became so enraged that he accused his family and his officers and soldiers of being in a conspiracy with David. This caused Doeg, the Edomite, to reveal David's brief association with the priests of Nob. As a result, Saul orders all the priests killed but none of his soldiers would obey. Finally, Doeg, killed all but one of the priests. This young priest sought refuge with David. David assured him that he would protect him.

One by one the leading citizens of Israel were coming over to David's side.

Chapter 23

Escaping from the slaughter at Nob, Abiathar the priest, served as the priest for David and his men while they fled from Saul. Saul learned that David was hiding in Keilah and went out to get him.

David asked God if the men of Keilah would deliver him up to Saul. God said they would. David and his men left Keilah after he made inquiry of the God. David used the priest's ephod to commune with God. Part of the ephod was the breastplate which contained the "urim and thummin." Exodus 28:30

The rabbis indicated that these stones would glow with an unnatural iridescence to indicate the Lord's will. If the answer was negative, they would remain dull and dark.

Verse 13 shows that David's following had increased from 400 to 600. Saul continues to hunt for David and almost had him trapped in the wilderness of Moan, but as Saul went around one side of the mountain, David went around the other side.

In verse 27, we see the providence of God working for David because the Philistines watching Saul realized he could not stop their raid on the land. So Saul stopped pursuing David and David went to Engedi to hide.

Chapter 24

This is an interesting chapter in David's life. We find him hiding in a cave at Engedi when Saul came to rest in the open mouth of the cave. As Saul sleeps, David creeps

out and cuts off the bottom of Saul's robe. When Saul left the cave, David reveals himself to Saul and shows him how he could have killed him if he had so desired.

David asks Saul to listen to him rather than to the false reports. He also asked that God judge between Saul and himself. Saul knew that what David said was true and even admitted that David was more righteous than he and that he would not pursue David any more. Saul asked David to enter into a covenant with him that David would not kill Saul's heirs; that David would not blot out Saul's name from the national record of Israel and from his father's line.

Chapter 25

Samuel dies and all Israel gathered together to weep and to bury him.

In verses 2-13, we read of a man named Nabal who was very rich and had a large number of sheep and goats. As Nabal was shearing his sheep David who at a time previous protected the shepherds and the sheep of Nabal, asked for some food and provisions. Nabal refused David's request. Nabal's wife was informed of her husband's action and secretly took provisions to David. When Abigail returned she found her husband in the midst of a drunken feast and told him nothing until morning. Then she explained how close he had come to being wiped out by David's followers and ten days later he died.

When the news of Nabal's death reached David, he went to Abigail and asked her to become his wife. She consented and they were married.

Chapter 26

In chapter 24, Saul promised to stop pursuing David but here we see he could not resist the temptation to try to kill David, the man who threatened his position as king.

In verses 6-20, once more David had an opportunity to kill Saul as he lay sleeping. He did take his water jug and his spear. David then awakened Saul showing him that he could have killed him. Saul knew he had broken his oath and that David was more righteous than he. He repented, promising that he would not try to kill David.

Chapter 27

Even though the prophet Gad had told David not to leave Israel, we find him once again in Philistia. As a result, David disobeyed God's commandment.

The king of Gath gave David the city of Ziklag for his residence. David and his followers dwell here for sixteen months. David invaded the Geshurites and others to

the south of Judah and then reported to the king of Gath, that he had been attacking Judah.

Chapter 28

The Philistines began to fight against Israel and David was forced to go along with the battle. Since Samuel had died, Saul had no one to give him guidance. God did not answer him because of Saul's disobedience. Saul had killed all the prophets except Gad and he was with David. So Saul went to the witch at Endor for advice.

The Law of Moses did not allow a witch to live in their midst and forbid witchcraft, so Saul disguises himself and went to her. The witch did not want to be killed because of her profession but Saul assures her that she would not be killed and asked her to bring up Samuel.

God permitted Samuel to appear before Saul and he announced to Saul that God had torn the kingdom out of his hand and had given it to David. He also told Saul that tomorrow the Philistines would kill him and his sons.

Chapter 29

The Philistines gather together to do battle with the Israelites and some of the Philistine leaders doubted as to whether or not David would actually do battle with his own people.

They asked Achish to send David back and not allow him to go into the conflict. Achish yielded to his leaders and sent David back from the battlefield.

Chapter 30

When David and his men returned to Ziklag they found their camp had been attacked, the city burned, and their families taken captives. The Amalekites were the people whom David and his men raided when they wanted to impress the king of Gath.

The Amalekites had probably seen David's departure and took advantage of the opportunity to capture their women, children, and possessions.

David made an inquiry to find out God's will and God, through Abiathar the priest, informed him to pursue and destroy the Amalekites. These were the very people God had told Saul to utterly destroy and he failed to do so. David took the enemy camp by surprise. Only four hundred young men riding on camels escaped. David recovered everything that the Amalekites had taken. In addition, he took all the spoils and

divided them among his men and among all who had protected him over the years as he fled from Saul.

Chapter 31

As Samuel had foretold, Saul died in battle at Mount Gilboa. Wounded, Saul fell on his own sword and killed himself. His sons were killed with him in battle. The Philistines cut off Saul's head and stripped him of his armor. They, then, fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan and put his armor in the house of their god, Ashtaroth.

The men of Jabesh-Gilead came by night and removed Saul's body and gave him a decent burial.