

1 & 2 Samuel

The Authorship and Dating

Considering Samuel lived during part of the events covered in 1 Samuel and in keeping with the Jewish Talmud,¹ it is easy to recognize the man after whom the book is titled as the author. However, as we get into second Samuel and beyond the years of Samuel other authors are noted such as the prophets of Gad and Nathan (1 Chronicles 29:29). It is impossible to say with certainty who penned the later parts of 1 and 2 Samuel.²

The books cover the period from the ending of the Judges (1051 B.C.) through the reign of David (1011-971 B.C.). Because of multiple authors we should recognize that these books were penned over a period of time starting with Samuel and working beyond the years of David. Although some critical scholars would date this book well into the 500's BC,³ several items must be remembered. First, on one end of the scale, the detailed stories indicate a date close to the events. The mention of Israel as well as Judah indicates a divided land which took place in 931 BC. The fall of Samaria is not mentioned in 1 Samuel thus terminating our scale at 722 B.C. While certainty can't be established for a date,⁴ I cautiously date this writing shortly after Solomon's reign (931 BC).

“First Samuel is appropriately named after Samuel, the principal character of the early narratives and the one who anointed Israel's first two kings, Saul and David. First and Second Samuel were originally one book, “The book of Samuel” in the Hebrew Scriptures. When these Scriptures were translated into Greek, around 150 B.C., Samuel and Kings were brought together into a complete history of the Hebrew monarchy. This unit of Scripture was divided into four sections: First, Second, Third, and Fourth Kingdoms. Samuel and Kings were later separated again, but the divisions of the Greek translation persisted. The result was a 1 and 2 Samuel and a 1 and 2 Kings.”⁵

The Recipients

The readership of this book is hard to identify. However, assuming an approximate date of 931 B.C., the book would have been written for the newly divided kingdom.

¹ “The Jewish Talmud states that Samuel wrote part of the book (1 Samuel 1-24) and that Nathan and Goad composed the rest. (cf. 1 Chronicles 29:29). The idea of there being several authors does not detract from the unity of the books or from the doctrine of inspiration... a date of 975 B.C. is give for these books.” Paul N. Benware, *The Essential Bible Survey of the Old Testament*(Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003). 111.

² Eugene Merrill, "1 Samuel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. Roy B. Zuck John F. Walvoord(Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983). 483.

³ Gleason L. Jr. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*(Chicago: Moody Press, 1994). 313.

⁴ Merrill. 431.

⁵ *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, ed. Ronald B. Allen Earl D. Radmacher, H. Wayne House(Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999). 343.

The Purpose

A couple of purposes may be noted concerning 1 and 2 Samuel. First, the books have the obvious historical intention. These books provide the only biblical information available concerning the early monarchy of Israel. Second, there is also a theological purpose. With the Torah in mind, each leader is judged throughout the narrative for his ability to reign as God's representative. For example, both Eli and Samuel failed to control their sons according to covenant (1 Sam 2:29-30; 8:5; 12:2; Deut 16:18,19), Saul failed to send home the fearful (1 Sam 13:6; Deut 20:8), and David married multiple wives (1 Sam 18:27; 25:42-3; Deut 17:17). While there are highlights in the lives of each leader, the resulting theme of their actions (based on the covenant demands found in the Torah) is that Israel should continue to look for a faithful leader who reigns according to covenant. God's graciousness shines through as He promises such a faithful leader with the giving of the iconic Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

The Message

1 and 2 Samuel chronicles the success and failures of Israel's early leadership including Eli, Samuel and Saul demonstrating the continued need for a righteous covenantal ruler.

First Samuel opens with the rule of Eli in the setting of mid 11th century B.C. Eli's incompetence is highlighted through several events. First, Hannah's godly prayer for a child and the giving of her child for the Lord's service contrasts Eli's lack of concern and leadership concerning his own family (1-2). Second, Eli's incompetence is further contrasted with the young Samuel. Although Eli is obviously the accepted spiritual leader, young Samuel's close relationship with the Lord shadows that of Eli (2-3). Eli's failure as a leader is solidified by the capture of the Ark and his own demeaning death (4-6).

The second leader that is established is Samuel. However, Israel's desire for a King rather than a theocratic Judge becomes evident and Saul is nominated as the nation's leader in chapters 9-10. Although Saul secures a military victory (11-12) he fails spiritually (13-14) and is consequently rejected as God's anointed man over the nation Israel (15). After His rejection of Saul, God instructed Samuel to anoint David the Son of Jesse as God's appointed ruler (16). Through the remainder of the book, Saul's hatred for David grows resulting in several murderous attempts. However, David, God's appointed man behaves righteously providing well grounded anticipation for a righteous ruler who would lead Israel into covenantal blessing (16-29). The last two chapters record the death of Israel's first king (30-31).

Second Samuel opens with David's ascension into the political Kingship (1-5). David's righteousness is highlighted early as he laments the death of his persecutor (1). His righteous attitude is rewarded as his political strength grows ultimately bringing the death of his political enemy (2-5). David proves himself militarily as he conquers Jerusalem and defeats the Philistines and thus rescues the Ark of the Covenant lost by Eli (6). Although David expressed a desire to build the Lord a temple, the Lord rejected David's request and instead promised to make his house great (7). David continued his military victories (8) and afterwards enjoyed a kind and peaceful rule (8-10). Throughout the last part of the book there is a decline in David's Rule. After showing little concern for the Israelite battles (11:1), David pursues an adulterous and murderous relationship with Bathsheba (11:2-12:25). David's decline as King seemingly continues as Joab adamantly demands the King's presence at the Battle of Rabbah (12:28). His decline is further demonstrated through David's lack of leadership concerning with respect to Tamar's defilement (13:1-39). David's Lack of leadership is exemplified further by surrender of Jerusalem to his rebellious son (15:1-18:33). After a long decline, David's return to a more

godly role is highlighted in the last section. After Joab noted forthright David's lack of concern, David not only physically returns to a place of leadership (19:8) but also demonstrated wisdom in his dealing with the people (19:16-40) as both Israel and Judah dispute their claim of David as their King (19:41-43). Although David successfully wars as King (20:1-23:39), his sinful nature continues (24:1) and thus the book closes, like 1 Samuel, with anticipation of a more Godly ruler.

Theme

Israel's Rule under Anointed Leaders

Outlines

1 Samuel Outline

1. **The Rule of Eli 1:1-6:21**
 - A. Eli's Leadership Demonstrated through Hannah 1:1-2:10
 - B. Eli's Leadership Demonstrated through Samuel 2:11-3:21
 - C. Eli's Leadership Demonstrated through Philistine's Capture of Ark 4:1-6:21

2. **Samuel and His Rule 7:1-8:22**
 - A. Samuel leads Nation to Victory over Philistines 7:1-17
 - B. Samuel rejected as Israel's Leader 8:1-22

3. **Saul and His Rule 8:1-31:13**
 - A. Saul Chosen as King 9:1-10:27
 - B. Saul's Victory 11:1-12:25
 - C. Saul's Rebellion as Godly Leader 13:1-14:52
 - D. Saul's Rejection 15:1-35
 - E. Saul's Rejection of David 16:1-29:11
 - F. Saul's Death 30:1-31:13

2 Samuel Outline

1. **David's Ascension 1:1-5:5**
 - A. The Death of Saul 1:1-26
 1. The Report of Saul's Death 1:1-12
 2. David's Inquisition of the Report 1:13-16
 3. David's Lament for Saul 1:17-26
 - B. David's Inauguration 2:1-11
 - C. David's Expansion of Power 2:12-5:5
2. **David's Victories 5:6-10:19**
 - A. David Conquers Jerusalem 5:6-16
 - B. Defeat of the Philistines 5:17-25
 - C. David's Return of the Ark 6:1-23
 - D. David's Desire to Build a Temple for the Lord 7:1-29
 1. God Rejects David's Plan to Build Temple 7:1-11a
 2. God Promises to build David's House 7:11b-17
 3. David's Praise for God's Kindness 7:18-29
 - E. David's Continued Military Victories 8:1-18
 - F. David's Kindness to Saul's House 9:1-13
 - G. David Defeats Ammonites after Peaceful Offer 10:1-19
3. **David's Decline 11:1-14:33**
 - A. David And Bethsheba 11:1-12:25
 - B. David Wars after Joab's Demand 12:26-31
 - C. David Loss of Rule 13:1-15:37
4. **David's Exile as King 15:1-18:33**
 - A. David Honored by Ziba 16:1-4
 - B. David Cursed by Shimei 16:5-15
 - C. Absalom's Defilement of David's Concubines 16:16-23
 - D. Hushai Deceives Absalom 17:1-23
 - E. David's Men Defeat Absalom 17:24-18:33
5. **David's Return as King 19:1-24:25**
 - A. Joab Encourages David 19:1-15
 - B. Shimei Pleads Forgiveness from David 19:16-23
 - C. Mephibosheth Honors David 19:24-30
 - D. David Shows Kindness to Barzillai 19:31-40
 - E. Judah and Israel Dispute for David 19:41-43
 - F. Joab Defeats Sheba 20:1-26
 - G. David Seeks Peace with Gibeonites 21:1-14
 - H. David's Psalm of Praise 22:1-51
 - I. David's Last Words 23:1-7
 - J. David Wars with the Philistines 21:15-22
 - K. David's Mighty Men 23:8-39
 - L. David Sin of Numbering the People 24:1-25

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