

# The Book of Samuel

Lesson 1

An Introduction to Samuel

Lesson Guide



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## HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video lesson. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the lesson and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

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- **Before you watch the lesson**
  - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
  - **Schedule viewing** — In the Notes section of the lesson guide, the lesson has been divided into sections that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. Thirdmill lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
  - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each section and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
  - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
  - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
  - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
  - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

## Notes

### I. Introduction (0:20)

1 and 2 Samuel were originally one undivided book which was probably divided into two books to fit on ancient scrolls.

### II. Background (2:58)

#### A. Authorship (3:30)

##### 1. Traditional Outlooks (4:35)

Ancient rabbis identified Samuel as the author, but there's little to no evidence to support this view.

The "Chronicles of Samuel the seer," (1 Chronicles 29:29) most likely refers to a non-canonical collection of Samuel's prophecies.

According to 1 Samuel 25:1, Samuel died *before* a number of events in 2 Samuel, so someone other than Samuel was the author.

## 2. **Critical Outlooks (7:32)**

Martin Noth argued that Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, were a unified work by a scribe or group of scribes called “the Deuteronomist.”

While these Old Testament books have similarities, Noth failed to take into account the distinctive features of each individual book.

Noth and critical commentators have argued that the book of Samuel contains identifiable, pre-existing literary sources:

- stories about Eli and Samuel (1 Samuel 1–3)
- stories about the ark of the covenant (1 Samuel 4–6; 2 Samuel 6)
- pro- and anti-monarchical stories (1 Samuel 7–15)
- succession stories that explain why Solomon became the king of Israel (2 Samuel 9–20; 1 Kings 1, 2)

These viewpoints have reflected beliefs that are contrary to Scripture and have detracted from correctly interpreting Samuel.

### 3. **Evangelical Outlooks (13:00)**

Evangelical outlooks affirm the full authority of Scripture and shape our views on authorship by the testimony of Scripture.

Two important insights about the unidentified author:

- He was a compiler of sources:
  - 2 Samuel 1:18 – refers to “the Book of Jashar” (cf. Joshua 10:13).
  - 2 Samuel 22 – incorporates a well-known Psalm of King David’s court (cf. Psalm 18).
  - 2 Samuel 23:1-7 – “The Last Words of David”; draws from pre-existing records of David’s court.

Knowing that the author compiled various sources affects how we interpret Samuel’s:

- literary qualities
- flow
- temporal references (e.g., “to this day”)

- He was a leader in ancient Israel:
  - had access to written materials reserved for high-ranking officials
  
  - wrote for other leaders
  
  - was primarily concerned with national political and religious issues

**B. Date (19:26)**

- Latest possible date

*“Primary History” – The history of Israel that stretches from Genesis through Kings, excluding Ruth*

The author of Kings knew the record of David’s life in Samuel, so Samuel had to have been completed before Kings was written.

Kings was written between 561 B.C. and 538 B.C., so the latest the book of Samuel could have been written was 538 B.C.

- Earliest possible date

The content of Samuel strongly suggests that it could not have been written earlier than the period of the divided monarchy.

In 930 B.C., the northern tribes rebelled, leading to the formation of the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

The author of Samuel indicated that he was aware of this division (1 Samuel 11:8; 18:16; 2 Samuel 5:5; 12:8; 21:2; 24:1).

The repeated distinction between Israel and Judah suggests that Samuel could not have been written until after 930 B.C.

### **C. Circumstances (26:32)**

The author of Samuel knew that the circumstances he and his audience faced had led to a major crisis of faith.

The circumstances God's people faced didn't fit easily with the hopes they'd placed in David's house.

Scripture places the blame for the divided monarchy and the Babylonian exile on the sins of David's house (see 1 Kings 11:29-40; 12:1-24; 2 Kings 20:12-19; 21:10-15).

The author of Samuel wrote his book to renew Israel's hope in the house of David.

### III. Design (29:11)

The author of Samuel wrote about "that world" – the world of the historical events reported in his book.

- Samuel's birth around 1070 B.C. (1 Samuel 1:1-28)
- David's last words around 970 B.C. (2 Samuel 23:1-7)

The century from 1070-970 B.C. went from disarray under the failing leadership of judges and Levites to the establishment of David's permanent dynasty.

The author wrote of "that world" to teach God's people its significance for "their world" – the world of the author and his audience. He provided:

- backgrounds — the historical origins of the realities they faced in their own day
- models – characters to emulate or reject
- foreshadows – events in the past that prefigured his audience's current experiences

**A. Structure and Content (33:46)**

Three main characters:

- Samuel – ordained as the one who brought Israel into the age of kingship
- Saul – failed as Israel’s first king
- David – established as the instrument to strengthen and spread God’s kingdom

**1. Samuel’s Prelude to Kingship, 1 Samuel 1–7 (36:17)**

The author idealized Samuel to stress why God sent, equipped and approved of him as the one who introduced kingship to Israel.

- *Samuel’s Earlier Years (1 Samuel 1:1–2:11)*

Samuel’s miraculous birth marked a new day for Israel.

With Samuel’s arrival, there was good reason to believe that God was about to send Israel a king (see 1 Samuel 2:10).

From his birth, Samuel had been called by God to usher Israel into the age of kingship.

- ***Transition in Leadership (1 Samuel 2:12–7:17)***

Many Levites, including Eli and his sons, were unfaithful to God and led Israel into disobedience to God's law.

Samuel's humble, righteous service to God led to his exaltation as the most prominent Levitical prophet in Israel.

## **2. Saul's Failed Kingship, 1 Samuel 8–2 Samuel 1 (42:40)**

The author contrasted Samuel and Saul by offering a remarkably negative characterization of Saul.

Saul repeatedly rebelled against God, and divine judgment came against him and his family.

The original audience's hope for God's kingdom should not be in any king other than the one whom God endorsed, namely David.

- ***Saul's Earlier Years (1 Samuel 8–15)***

Saul became king, united the tribes of Israel, and led them to victories over Israel's enemies.

Saul violated Moses' law and Samuel's instructions so flagrantly that God rejected him and his entire lineage (1 Samuel 15:28-29).

- ***Transition in Leadership (1 Samuel 16–2 Samuel 1)***

God endorsed the transition of royal authority from Saul to David.

Saul drifted into madness, abused his royal authority, unjustly sought David's death, and even consulted the dead.

David remained innocent and responded to God's mercy with humility toward Saul and faithfulness to God.

### **3. David's Enduring Kingship, 2 Samuel 2–24 (49:35)**

The author related David's positive qualities and accomplishments but acknowledged his moral failures and the troubles he brought to Israel.

God favored David and ensured that his dynasty will endure to lead the expansion of God's kingdom throughout the world.

- ***Earlier Blessings (2 Samuel 2–9)***

God blessed David and Israel in response to David's faithfulness.

God promised that David would be the head of Israel's permanent royal family (2 Samuel 7:16).

God warned that if David's sons turned from him, he would punish them, but his house would never be utterly cut off.

- ***Later Curses (2 Samuel 10–20)***

These chapters reflect David's sins and abuses of power (adultery with Bathsheba, killing of Uriah the Hittite).

God cursed David and warned that troubles would come upon David's kingdom.

Still, God did not break his promise of an enduring dynasty for David (see 2 Samuel 12:24-25).

- ***Ongoing Benefits (2 Samuel 21–24)***

Many interpreters call this summary an “appendix” since the author arranged it topically rather than chronologically:

- Revelations through David confirmed his dynasty.
- Mighty warriors accomplished great victories.
- David’s intercessions won forgiveness and healing for the entire nation.

God’s favor toward David demonstrated the blessings that righteous kings from David’s house could bring to Israel (2 Samuel 22:51).

**B. Overarching Purpose (57:10)**

*Israel’s transition to kingship culminated in God’s covenant with David.*

The author concentrated on the lifetimes of three main leaders in Israel: Samuel, Saul and David.

God administered every stage of his kingdom on earth through covenants:

- Adam, Noah
- Abraham, Moses, David
- new covenant

All of God's covenants included:

- divine benevolence
- human loyalty
- consequences of blessings and curses

God made his covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7:1-17.

In 2 Samuel 23:5, David said that God had made an “everlasting covenant” (*berith olam*) with him (cf. Psalms 89, 132).

Despite the troubles that David and his sons brought to Israel, David's dynasty would represent the people of Israel before God forever.

*The author wrote so that Israel would put their hopes for the kingdom of God in the righteous rule of David's house.*

Throughout these centuries, God poured out curses on Israel because of the sins of David's house.

They were not to lose their hopes for the kingdom of God because God's kingdom would not fail.

History will reach its ultimate destiny when God establishes his reign over the earth through the faithful service of human beings:

- Adam
- Noah
- Abraham
- Moses
- David

The author opened the book with Hannah's confidence about the future of the kingdom of God (1 Samuel 2:10).

Israel's hope for the kingdom of God must be placed in the righteous rule of David's house and in no other.

Israel must have a son of David who followed God's commands and ruled in righteousness (Samuel 23:3-5).

#### **IV. Christian Application (1:15:22)**

##### **A. Divine Covenants (1:16:45)**

God made divine covenants:

- with all of humanity in Adam and Noah
- with Israel in Abraham, Moses and David
- with God's people after the exile called the new covenant (see Hosea 2:18; Isaiah 54:10; Ezekiel 34:25, 37:26)

##### **1. Samuel's Prelude to Kingship, 1 Samuel 1–7 (1:18:10)**

Every event in this division is presented in terms of the covenant God made with Moses at Mount Sinai.

Moses' covenant focused on:

- God's benevolence toward Israel as a nation living in the Promised Land.
- the requirement of human loyalty according to the law of Moses.
- the consequences of curses and blessings in response to disobedience and obedience.

In this division, the author concentrated specifically on:

- God's benevolence in raising up Samuel as Israel's new leader.
- the standard of Moses' law for human loyalty.
- the consequences of curses (Eli's family) and blessings (Hannah and Samuel).

## 2. **Saul's Failed Kingship, 1 Samuel 8–2 Samuel 1 (1:19:41)**

The author also appealed to God's covenant in Moses in the second division of his book by focusing on:

- God's benevolence in granting Israel's request for a king.
- the requirements of human loyalty, including Moses' regulations for worship and against the abuse of royal authority.
- curses against Saul for his blatant disobedience and blessings on David for his humble obedience.

## 3. **David's Enduring Kingship, 2 Samuel 2–24 (1:20:37)**

God's covenant with David realigned the dynamics of his covenant with Moses to demonstrate the centrality of David and his dynasty:

- God showed Israel great benevolence by establishing David's house as Israel's permanent dynasty.
- The requirement of human loyalty remained in effect in the regulations for worship and against the abuse of royal authority.
- Israel's curses and blessings depended heavily on the disobedience and obedience of David's house.

The author's attention to the dynamics of these covenants provides connections between the book of Samuel and the Christian faith.

The new covenant realigns the dynamics of God's earlier covenants by focusing on the special role that Jesus plays in biblical history.

Jesus, as the final, righteous heir of David's throne:

- demonstrated God's greatest benevolence to his people.
- fulfilled every standard for human loyalty.
- received endless blessings from the Father.

Jesus, as the great son of David:

- stands in utter contrast to every example of disobedience in the book of Samuel.
- exceeds every example of obedience in the book of Samuel.

Just as the book of Samuel points to the dynamics of God's covenants in daily life, the new covenant also applies to the lives of Christ's followers:

- God shows benevolence to his church.
- We must show grateful loyalty to God for what he has done for us in Christ.
- Christ uses temporary curses to discipline and temporary blessings to reward his church.

**B. Kingdom of God (1:26:11)**

The hope for God's kingdom that the author of Samuel held out before his original audience is fulfilled in the kingdom of Christ.

Between the time of the book of Samuel and the New Testament age:

- Representatives of Israel returned from Babylon to Jerusalem (approx. 538 B.C.), but Zerubbabel failed to rule in righteousness.
- Israel continued to turn away from God, and he poured out curses on them.
- The Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans ruled over God's people for more than five centuries.
- A remnant believed God's promise to send a righteous son of David.

New Testament authors saw Jesus as the fulfillment of every hope that the book of Samuel placed in David's house.

Luke explicitly referred to Christ's fulfillment of events from the book of Samuel several times:

- *Samuel's prelude to kingship*
  - Mary's song parallels Hannah's song (Luke 1:46-55; 1 Samuel 2:1-10).

- The Gospel of Luke refers to Samuel's prelude to kingship as it describes Jesus' youth (Luke 2:52; 1 Samuel 2:26).

- ***Saul's failed kingship***

- When the Pharisees accused Jesus and his disciples of breaking the Sabbath, Jesus compared himself to David (Luke 6:1-5; 1 Samuel 21:1-6).

- By noting Jesus' reference to the book of Samuel, Luke revealed that Jesus was the righteous son of David.

- ***David's enduring kingship***

- Peter explained why God had raised Jesus from the dead by referring to God's covenant with David (Acts 2:14-41; 2 Samuel 7:12-13).

- Luke's references to the book of Samuel stressed that Jesus is David's righteous son who fulfills Israel's hopes for God's kingdom.

Three stages of God's kingdom:

- Inauguration – Jesus began to fulfill the book of Samuel's hopes in his first advent.
- Continuation – He continues to spread his reign of righteousness throughout church history.
- Consummation – Jesus will bring God's kingdom in its fullness when he returns in glory.

### 1. **Inauguration (1:36:16)**

During his earthly ministry, Jesus:

- kept every requirement of human loyalty, securing eternal salvation for all who believe in him.
- began to destroy the power of Satan.
- poured out his Spirit on his church as the down payment of the blessings of the world to come.

We must put our hope in what Christ has already accomplished as David's great son in the inauguration of his kingdom.

### 2. **Continuation (1:37:19)**

Throughout church history, Jesus:

- has extended his righteous rule from his throne in heaven.

- continues to defeat God's adversaries through the preaching of the gospel.

We should turn our hearts toward the success of Christ as king during the continuation of his kingdom.

### **3. Consummation (1:38:28)**

When Christ returns in glory:

- God's enemies will fall under his everlasting curses
- His redeemed people will live in the fullness of God's blessings in the new creation.

The book of Samuel calls us to renew our hopes in the righteous rule that Christ will establish when he returns in glory.

## **V. Conclusion (1:39:27)**







7. What are the three stages of God's kingdom? Describe each stage and explain how Jesus satisfies the Israelites' expectations in the book of Samuel in each stage.

## Application Questions

1. The book of Samuel reports events that occurred centuries before Christ. How would you respond to someone who says that this book is no longer relevant for us today?
2. Does the fact that the author of Samuel edited and incorporated previously written materials into his book lead you to question the book's authority as Scripture? Explain your answer.
3. The century of transition from the time of the judges to the period of kingship was vital to God's plan for his kingdom. How important is this period for us today?
4. When Saul turned away from God, he not only brought troubles on himself, but also on the whole nation of Israel. Do you believe that Christian leaders today are accountable for what happens to the people in their ministries? Why or why not?
5. What characteristics of Samuel, Saul and David did the author of Samuel offer his original audience as models to emulate or reject?
6. Why should we be concerned about God's Old Testament covenants now that we are under the new covenant in Christ?
7. The author of Samuel wrote his book, in part, because the failures of David's house had caused many people in Israel to doubt God's promises. What causes people to doubt God's promises today?
8. In Samuel's day, many Israelites were tempted to put their hopes in something other than God. How can you encourage Christians today to hold fast to the hope we have in Christ?
9. Since Christ fulfilled every requirement in the new covenant, are we still bound to keep the dynamic of human loyalty dictated in the divine covenants? Why or why not? Support your answer with biblical references.
10. Read Hannah's song of praise in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and Mary's song of praise in Luke 1:46-55. Write your own "song" to God, praising him for his mighty deeds.
11. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

## Glossary

**Abraham** – Old Testament patriarch, son of Terah, father of the nation of Israel with whom God made a covenant in Genesis 15 and 17 promising innumerable descendants and a special land

**ad olam** – Hebrew term (transliteration) meaning "forever"

**Adam** – The first man; husband of Eve; man with whom God made the covenant of foundations in which humanity was to fill and subdue the earth

**Babylonian exile** – Deportation and exile of ancient Israelites to Babylon from approx. 586 B.C. to 538/9 B.C.

**Babylonian Talmud** – A record of traditional rabbinic commentaries and teachings

**Bathsheba** – Wife of Uriah the Hittite and later King David's wife; mother of Solomon (by David)

**berith** – Hebrew term (transliteration) most commonly translated "covenant"

**berith olam** – Hebrew term (transliteration) meaning "everlasting covenant"

**Book of Jashar** – An unknown work that may have celebrated heroic Israelites; quoted in Joshua 10:13 and 2 Samuel 1:18

**consummation** – Third and final stage of inaugurated eschatology when Christ will return and fulfill God's ultimate purpose for all of history

**continuation** – Second or middle stage of inaugurated eschatology; the period of the kingdom of God after Christ's first advent but before the final victory

**covenant** – A binding legal agreement made between two people or groups of people, or between God and a person or group of people

**David** – Second Old Testament king of Israel who received the promise that his descendant would sit on the throne and reign forever

**de novo** – Latin expression meaning "anew" or "entirely from scratch"

**Deuteronomist ("D")** – According to source criticism, the third literary source responsible for the Pentateuch; called "D" because these materials appear primarily in the book of Deuteronomy

**Deuteronomistic History, The** – (1943) Book by Martin Noth concerning the authorship and date of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings

**Eli** – Jewish priest at the tabernacle in Shiloh who blessed Hannah and raised up Samuel to succeed him; father of two wicked sons, Hophni and Phineas

**Elkanah** – The prophet Samuel's father and husband of Hannah and Peninnah

**Hannah** – Wife of Elkanah who prayed to God for a child and became the mother of Samuel

**inauguration** – First stage in inaugurated eschatology; refers to Christ's first coming and the ministries of his apostles and prophets

**Jehoiachin** – (also Joachin, Jeconiah, Coniah) Son of Jehoiakim and king of Judah for three months before surrendering to Babylon

**Jeroboam I** – First king of the northern kingdom after the nation was divided; corrupted the northern tribes of Israel by establishing idol worship in Dan and Bethel

**Levites** – Those from the tribe of Levi; served as priests for the nation of Israel

**Moses** – Old Testament prophet and deliverer who led the Israelites out of Egypt; man with whom God made a national "covenant of law" and who administered the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant to the Israelites; also appeared with Elijah at Jesus' transfiguration

**Nathan** – Prophet and trusted advisor to King David

**Noah** – Man who, under God’s direction, built an ark and survived the Flood; individual with whom God made a universal covenant that promised the enduring stability of nature

**Noth, Martin** – (1902-1968) Influential German scholar who wrote *The Deuteronomistic History* and other books detailing his hypotheses on the history of Israel

**Peninnah** – One of Elkanah's wives who had several children and mistreated Hannah because of it

**Primary History** – The history of Israel that stretches from Genesis through Kings, excluding Ruth

**Samuel** – Prophet, priest and last judge of Israel; born in answer to Hannah’s prayer; grew up under Eli the priest; led the Israelites from the period of the judges into the time of the monarchy

**Saul** – First king anointed by God to rule over the nation of Israel

**Septuagint** – Greek translation of the Old Testament

**Solomon** – Son of King David and third king of Israel who was known for his wisdom and wealth; expanded Israel’s borders and built the first temple in Jerusalem

**that world** – The world that biblical authors wrote about

**their world** – The world of Scripture's original audience

**Uriah the Hittite** – Faithful soldier and husband of Bathsheba who was sent to his death to cover up David’s sin with Bathsheba

**Zerubbabel** – Descendant of David and head of the tribe of Judah who led the return from exile in 539 B.C. and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem