

An Introduction, Background, and Overview

What happens in 1 Samuel?

First Samuel basically tells the story of how Israel went from having no king to having a king. The events happen around 1050 BC. In the first few chapters, we meet Hannah, a godly woman who becomes the mother of Samuel, and Eli, an elderly priest. Later on, Saul is anointed (by Samuel) as Israel's first king. As Saul turns away from God, young David is appointed by Samuel to be the future king. David later famously kills the giant Goliath. He goes on to become the leader of Saul's armies, which makes Saul increasingly jealous. Before the book ends, things have gone from bad to worse for Saul, culminating in his death in battle, while things continue to get better and better for David. The book ends on the cusp of David beginning to reign over the people of God.

What is the main message of the book?

The big idea of this book is that God honours those who honour Him. We see this in the life of Hannah who honours God in the midst of her suffering, and God blesses her with a baby boy. We see this in the ministry of Samuel as he honours God wholeheartedly and is used tremendously in the life and leadership of Israel. We see the principle that God honours those who honour him in the contrasting lives and leadership of both Saul and David. Saul does not ultimately honour God and so, despite his privileges, has his kingship and life taken from him. In contrast, David the shepherd boy honours God and God raises him up until he is the imminent king of Israel. Therefore the key lesson for us today is simply, profoundly and certainly that God honours those who honour Him.

An overview of 1 Samuel:

There are four main sections in the book. Chapters 1-3 describe Samuel as a little boy and the context into which he is born and raised. Chapters 4-7 see Samuel established as a judge over Israel. Chapters 8 to 12 are the heart of the book, covering the transition from judgeship to kingship. This section begins with the request for a king from the people and ends with Samuel's long speech in which he hands over leadership of Israel to Saul. The final section is the longest, from chapter 13 to 31, and covers Saul's reign from its beginning to his death. In this final section Saul progressively disintegrates whilst David progressively becomes stronger. Hannah's song in chapter 2 is a richly theological passage, which summarises the essence of the book's theology (Mary's song in Luke chapter 1 echoes Hannah's song). In summary, Hannah's song in chapter 2 and Samuel's speech in chapter 12 are two key pillars of the theology of the book. They can both be summarised in the phrase 'God honours those who honour him'.



Breakdown of 1 Samuel

Section 1: Samuel, the last judge of Israel 1.1-12.25

Birth and boyhood of Samuel 1.1-4.1a

- 1) Hannah's prayer is answered 1.1-1.28 Feb 22
- 2) Hannah exults in the Lord 2.1-2.10 Mar 1
- 3) Samuel encounters corruption at Shiloh 2.11-2.36 Mar 8
- 4) The Lord calls Samuel 3.1-4.1a Mar 15

Disaster, repentance, and deliverance 4.1b - 7.17

- 5) Defeat and loss of the ark of the covenant 4.1b-22 Mar 22
- 6) The Philistines fall foul of the Ark, and return it 5.1-7.2 Mar 29
- 7) Repentance and recommitment at Mizpah 7.3-17 Apr 12

The question of Kingship 8.1-12.25

- 8) The request for a king 8.1-22 Apr 19
- 9) Saul's secret anointing 9.1-10.16 Apr 26
- 10) Saul elected, proclaimed, and confirmed as king 10.17-11.15 May 3
- 11) Samuel hands over to Saul 12.1-12.25 May 10

Section 2: Saul, the first King 13.1-31.13

Key incidents in the reign of Saul 13.1-15.35

- 12) Jonathan attacks the Philistine garrison 13.1-13.23 May 17
- 13) Jonathan's second initiative 14.1-14.23 May 24
- 14) Saul's rash oath and a survey of his reign 14.24-52 May 31
- 15) Samuel's confrontation with Saul 15.1-35 Jun 7



David comes into prominence 16.1-19.17

- 16) David's secret anointing and role as musician 16.1-23 Jun 14
- 17) Saul needs a warrior to fight Goliath 17.1-18.5 Jun 21
- 18) Saul's jealousy and fear of David 18.6-30 Jun 28
- 19) Jonathan and Michal save David's life and he seeks refuge with Samuel 19.1-19.24 Jul 5

David the outlaw 19.18-26.25

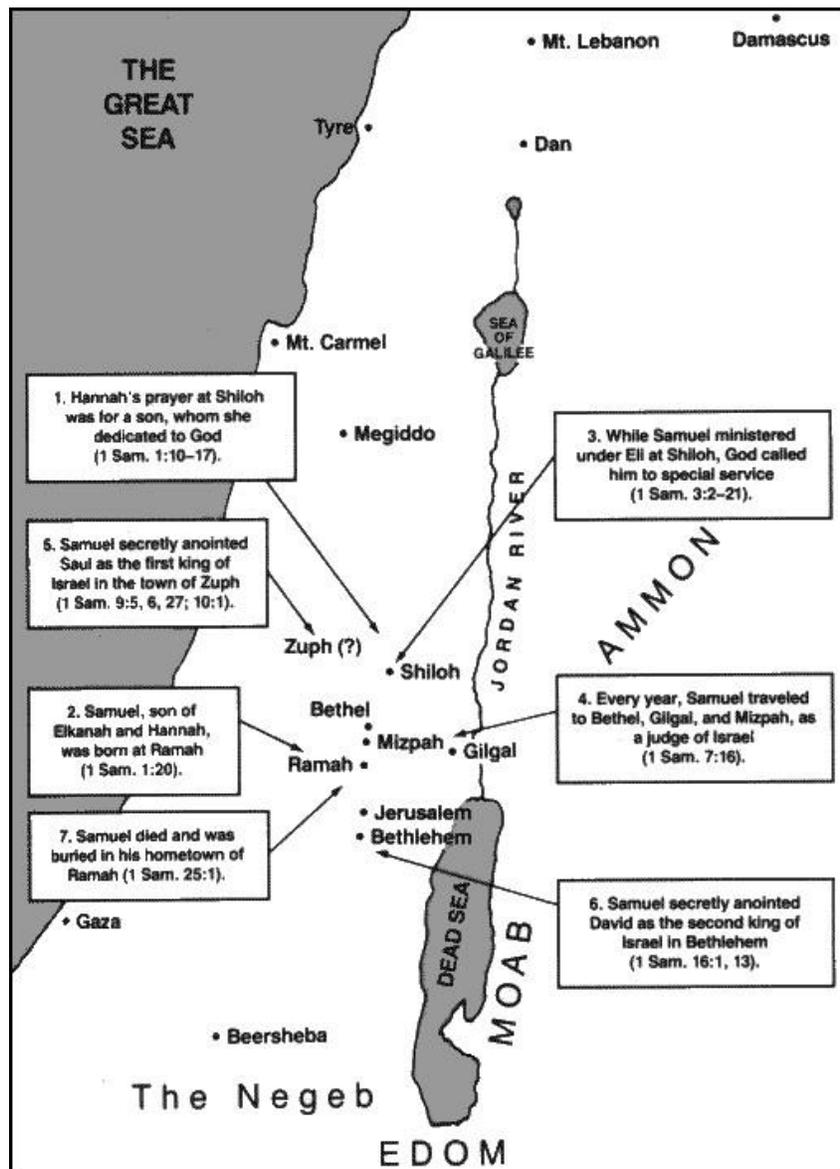
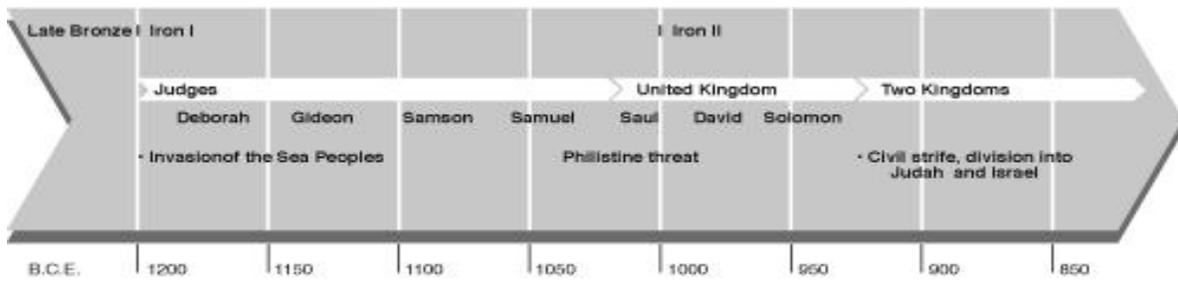
- 20) David and Jonathan make a pact 20.1-20.42 Jul 12
- 21) David in danger 21.1-22.5 Jul 19
- 22) The price of protecting David 22.6-22.23 Jul 26
- 23) Saul hunts David, who spares him 23.1-25.1a Aug 2
- 24) David wins Abigail 25.1b-44 Aug 9
- 25) David spares Saul a second time 26.1-26.25 Aug 16

David resorts to the Philistines 27.1-31.13

- 26) With Achish, king of Gath 27.1-28.2 Aug 23
- 27) Saul consults a medium 28.3-25 Aug 30
- 28) David's providential rejection from the Philistine army 29.1-29.11 Sept 6
- 29) David and the Amalekites 30.1-30.31 Sept 13
- 30) Saul's last battle 31.1-13 Sept 20



Timeline and Map



Psalms and the Life of David

There are fourteen psalms that were written by David to commemorate some event in his life, which you can read alongside our series in Samuel. These are:

Psalm 59: King Saul, in his jealousy, sent messengers to David's house to kill him, but he was able to escape before the men could enter. David's wife Michal (Saul's daughter) was able to deceive the men while David made his way to safety. [1 Samuel 19].

Psalm 56: This psalm was written by David when he went to live in Gath (in Philistine territory). He pretended to be mad so that he might be allowed into the city. David did this because he was afraid and thought that he would be safe amongst the Philistines. His act must have been believable since Achish would not let such a madman live in his city. [1 Samuel 21:10-15]. The psalm expresses both his fear of man and his faith in God.

Psalm 34: This was written for the same occasion as mentioned above [1 Samuel 21:10-15]. David praises God for His goodness despite the fact that he has been made to flee his wife and home. His faith told him that God would deliver him from all his enemies.

Psalm 142: After being cast out by Achish, David fled to a cave in Adullam [1 Samuel 22:1-3]. He is overwhelmed because of the desperate situation he was in. He was obviously lonely, but he found refuge in the Lord. He felt that this cave was a prison to him.

Psalm 63: David fled from Saul into the Judean wilderness [1 Samuel 22:5]. In the psalm he sees himself in a spiritual wilderness thirsting for God's presence and a place of refuge.

Psalm 52: David heard how Saul had sent Doeg the Edomite to Ahimelech's house and slew eighty-five priests, including their wives, children, and animals. David was heartbroken over such wickedness. [1 Samuel 22:9-19].

Psalm 54: The Ziphites went to Saul and told him that David was hiding amongst them. They told him exactly where they could locate David [1 Samuel 23:19-29], but God delivered him out of the king's hands.

Psalm 57: Saul went after David again when he heard that he was hiding in the wilderness of Engedi. Saul entered a cave to relieve himself, the very cave where David and his men were hiding. David managed to get close enough to Saul to cut off a piece of his cloak. David revealed to the king that he would have killed him if he had wanted to. David proved that he was more merciful than Saul. [1 Samuel 24:1-22].

Psalm 7: Cush the Benjaminite had been feeding Saul with lies about David. He told Saul that David had been seeking to kill him all along. [1 Samuel 24:9-12]. In this psalm David reveals that he freed him that was his enemy rather than seeking to destroy him. He prays that the mischief of Cush return upon his own head.



Psalm 60: This was written to commemorate David's victory over the Philistines, Moabites, and the Syrians [2 Samuel 8; 1 Kings 11]. David praises God for the great victory.

Psalm 51: This is probably one of the best known of David's songs and there is little difficulty in placing it within the context of his life. In 2 Samuel 12 we read of David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Not only did he commit adultery, but he also arranged the murder of Uriah. It was only when the prophet Nathan rebuked him that David repented of his wickedness. This psalm expresses his deep sorrow over his sin. Psalm 32 may be part of this repentance also.

Psalm 3: Absalom, David's son, sought to take the kingdom from him. He was very successful in persuading the people that he would make a better king than his father. Because of his son's success he was forced to flee Jerusalem [2 Samuel 15]. This psalm is David's lament over this situation.

Psalm 30: Written to commemorate the plans for the building of the Temple in Jerusalem and dedication of the site [1 Chronicles 22]. He is both thankful to God for freeing him from all his enemies, the forgiveness of sin of numbering his people, and the privilege of laying plans for a house for the Lord.

In total, there are seventy-three Psalms written by David. These are:-

3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32

34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70

86, 101, 103, 108, 109, 110, 122, 124, 131, 138, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 145

