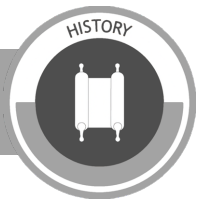


The Bible's Big Story



1 Samuel

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel are among the most pivotal in the Old Testament. They mark major turning points in both the history of Israel under the Old Covenant—as the nation transitions to monarchical rule—and in God’s unfolding plan of redemption through the establishment of the Davidic line, which became central to Messianic hopes.

Introductory Information

Title: The title comes from the name of Samuel, a prophet and the last of the judges who helped establish the monarchy by anointing the first two kings of Israel.

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel were originally a single book in the Hebrew Bible. The Septuagint divided them into separate volumes, calling them “1 and 2 Kingdoms,” while the Vulgate listed them as “1 and 2 Kings.”

Authorship: The book is anonymous, though Jewish tradition attributes it to the prophet Samuel. Samuel could not be the sole author, however, since his death is recorded in chapter 25. This is consistent with the biblical record that Samuel, Nathan, and Gad each recorded the acts of David (1 Chr. 29:29).

Date: ca. 1050 BC–870 BC. The book appears to have been written and edited over a span of time, beginning around 1050 BC with Samuel’s early writings and reaching its final form sometime after the division of the kingdom, perhaps as late as 870 BC.

Theme & Purpose: The primary purpose of 1 Samuel is to record Israel’s transition from the period of the judges to the early monarchy. Running through the entire book is the theme of divine kingship: God sovereignly sets up and removes kings, humbles the proud, and raises up the lowly. The repeated pattern of divine reversal—the rejection of the mighty because of sin and the exaltation of the faithful—underscores that true, lasting kingship must be marked by obedient trust in the Lord. This is ultimately fulfilled, not in David, as he disobeyed also, but in Jesus, the promised heir of the Davidic covenant.

Summary Theme: *Israel transitions from the ministry of the judges to the reign of the monarchy. God’s sovereign rule is displayed in the rise of Samuel, the failure of Saul, and the anointing of David, a king after God’s own heart.*

Redemption Revealed in Samuel (Part 1)

Samuel exposes the inadequacy of human kingship, pointing to the need for a greater king.

Every human leader in 1 Samuel ultimately fails. Eli’s leadership is corrupt, Samuel’s sons are unworthy,

Saul rebels against God’s word, and even David, who ends the book as a fugitive, will have his own downfall. The book does not hide these failures; it uses them to show that no mere human king, however gifted or chosen, can perfectly fulfill the covenant or rule God’s people righteously. The narrative is designed to create a longing for a greater king—one who will obey God fully, rule without sin, and reign forever. That longing is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Son of David, of whose kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:32–33).

The pattern of reversal woven throughout Samuel reveals the ultimate design of God’s redemptive work.

The theme of divine reversal, introduced in Hannah’s song, runs through the entire book. Barren Hannah is exalted over fruitful Peninnah. Eli and his sons are overthrown by the boy Samuel. Tall, proud Saul is rejected and replaced by a shepherd. Goliath falls to a boy with a sling. This consistent pattern is not incidental; it reveals something essential about how God works. The mighty are humbled, and the lowly are raised up. This pattern finds its ultimate and definitive fulfillment in the Incarnation and the cross. The Messiah is exalted through humiliation, and those who are far off are brought near through him. As Hannah declares: “The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up” (1 Sam. 2:6).

Samuel demonstrates that human unfaithfulness does not frustrate God’s covenant purposes; rather, it becomes the means to display his faithfulness.

The persistent unfaithfulness visible throughout 1 Samuel could lead a reader to despair of God’s promises ever being fulfilled. Yet the book consistently shows that God’s redemptive purposes are not merely preserved despite human failure—they advance through it. Hannah’s barrenness is the very instrument God uses to raise up Samuel. Saul’s opposition to David is the means through which God prepares and positions David for the throne. The lesson is clear and foundational: God’s covenant promises do not depend on human faithfulness for their fulfillment. God sovereignly governs every circumstance, including sin and rebellion, to accomplish his eternal purposes.

Structure of 1 & 2 Samuel

