

Why You Really Should Read 1 Samuel

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The Bible is full of poems, parables, and prophecy as part of a larger story about God's plan for humanity. Over the course of thousands of years recorded in the Word, different writers and prophets check in on one particular family - the descendants of Abraham through his son Isaac, and grandson Jacob. This family is the Messianic line from whom Jesus would descend.

The Book of 1 Samuel is one of those books that focuses back on a specific member of the line, David, and his place in history. 1 Samuel, and its companion 2 Samuel, are believed to be the product of the titular individual, the prophet Samuel.

In this book of the Bible, there is first-hand information about one of God's great prophets, its first king, and the feats of one of its greatest kings. Reading 1 Samuel gives a glimpse into how God works and who the Messiah would be.

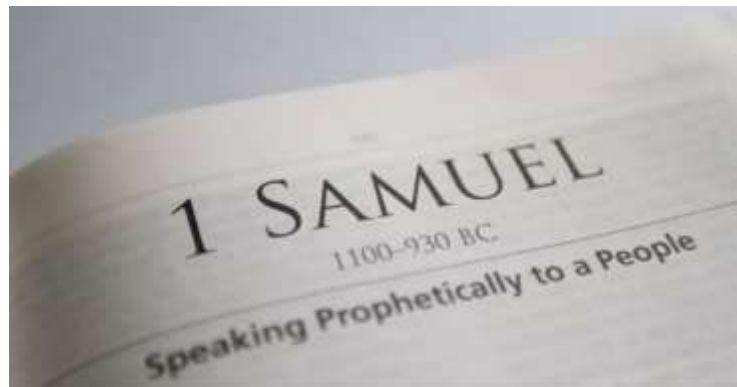


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What Happens in 1 Samuel?

1 and 2 Samuel contain mostly history, with individuals who foreshadowed traits of the Messiah, the Savior and King of Israel.

1 Samuel begins with the cry of a mother. Samuel's mother, Hannah, was unable to have children, and she asked God for a son, dedicating that child to His service. When the child came of age, Hannah took him to the Temple to serve the Lord. As a teen, God famously called him three times in the night, and Samuel responded each time. As an adult, he witnessed as the people of Israel called for a king, and the failure of its first [king Saul](#). This king exhibited pride, weak will, fear, cruelty, and even indulgence in witchcraft. His son, Jonathan, turned out very different from his father, and did sometimes have to choose between his father and doing the right thing.

During Saul's reign, God had Samuel anoint David as the future king, and settled His Spirit on the young man. Because of his [faith](#), David stood up to a giant Philistine, evaded Saul's assassination attempts, and became best friends with Jonathan.

1 Samuel ends after the death of Samuel, and then a few chapters later the death of Saul and his son Jonathan in battle against the Philistines. The reign of David is discussed in 2 Samuel. It is a book of epic battle and personal struggle, of friendship and violent hatred, as well as of vice and virtue. Both books feature flawed and faithful individuals who can serve as relatable heroes, as well as warnings for pursuing goals that differ from God's will.



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Who Was Samuel?

Samuel was many things during his lifetime. His father, Elkanah, had two wives, but only one had any children. Elkanah loved Hannah, who was barren. She begged the Lord in prayer for a child, promising the child to God, and shortly after Samuel was born. He was the oldest of six children born to Elkanah and Hannah.

Samuel grew up in the temple, serving the Lord. He became a Nazirite, meaning he took a vow to God which included abstaining from wine, from cutting his hair, and avoiding anything that would make him unclean such as touching a carcass. He served as a prophet and a judge. “Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. And he judged Israel in all these places. Then he would return to Ramah, for his home was there, and there also he judged Israel. And he built there an altar to the Lord” ([1 Samuel 7:15](#)). God called on Samuel to anoint two kings, and serve as the voice of God to the first. He died before the reign of David.

The most common theory of authorship among scholars is that Samuel wrote most of 1 Samuel, up until his death, which is noted. After his death, the rest of 1 Samuel, as well as all of 2 Samuel, they attribute to the prophets Gad and Nathan - the latter of whom famously pricked David’s conscience when he had the affair with [Bathsheba](#). There are some scholars who argue the texts were written later in history, probably during the time of Hezekiah. Regardless of authorship, both texts are named after the first major figure in the text - Samuel.



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Why Are 1 and 2 Samuel Split Up?

The earliest versions of 1 and 2 Samuel were one text. Some broken copies of the Samuels have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. These date back to the first and second centuries BC. The original Hebrew texts were one book called the Book of Samuel.

During the 2nd century, they were translated from Hebrew into the Septuagint Greek, but the scrolls were not big enough for all of it. This lack of sufficient space led the scribes to break up the text. There is also a logical break in the narrative, which chronicles the end of the era of the judges and Israel’s first king, and the rule of David, a Messianic figure who became the forefather of Jesus Christ.

Favorite [Verses](#) from 1 Samuel

1 Samuel is full of wisdom, insight, and important messages applicable as much today as they were when they were first written down. Wisdom is found not just in the Books of Wisdom written by Solomon.

Some of the more powerful and memorable verses in 1 Samuel include:

[1 Samuel 1:27-28](#) “For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him. Therefore I have [lent](#) him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord.’ And he worshiped the Lord there.”

[1 Samuel 2:2](#) “There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.”

[1 Samuel 3:10](#) “And the Lord came and stood, calling as at other times, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ And Samuel said, ‘Speak, for your servant hears.’”

[1 Samuel 12:14-15](#) “If you will fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well. But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you and your king.”

[1 Samuel 15:22](#) “And Samuel said, ‘Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.’”

[1 Samuel 16:13a](#) “Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward.”

[1 Samuel 17:45-47](#) “Then David said to the Philistine, ‘You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand.’”



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What Do We Learn about God from This Book?

Like all books of the [Bible](#), 1 Samuel shows the reader something about the Divine Author, whose Spirit influenced the human writer. God's nature and desires can be found by looking for how He works in the text.

A few of the things shown about God in 1 Samuel include but are not limited to:

God keeps his promises, and expects us to keep ours.

God promised Hannah blessings and gave her a child. She kept her word and gave Samuel back to God. Conversely, the Lord gave Saul a great victory over his enemies, but Saul disobeyed God. God is always faithful to His promises, and He knows people will not always keep their promises to Him, but He does want them to do so.

God wants people to form good friendships.

Jonathan and David were best friends, and nowhere in the Bible does it say that God felt about Jonathan the way He did about his father. They had a covenantal friendship, and Jonathan saved David's life. David took in his friend's son after Jonathan died in battle. God wants people to have strong, fulfilling friendships that glorify Him.

God can use anybody, and wants to use everybody.

David was the smallest and youngest of his brothers, unimpressive to the world around him. God chose David to be the King of Israel, to work through him, and ultimately to continue the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that would lead to the [birth of Jesus](#) Christ.

The Books of Samuel document some of the most important years of Israel's history, and look forward to the salvation of all people from a descendent of David. From a broken-hearted woman to the rise and fall of a potential dynasty, the people who

feature in this story speak to real experiences whose lives teach the importance of faithfulness and relying on God.

Sources

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