

Samuel

1 Samuel 1:1 - 2 Sam. 24:25

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2019-05-12

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Introduction - three writers, one Author

Years ago I preached through every verse related to the life of David. And that is where most of the practical application of these books will be found. So today I will primarily give a bird's eye view of 1 and 2 Samuel, which (by the way) were originally one book in the Hebrew. They only later got divided because of size, but they really are a unity. And instead of constantly referring to 1 and 2 Samuel, I will from here on speak of Samuel, or the book of Samuel, unless I am directing you to a very specific reference.

Whereas Kings and Chronicles each had a single author, Samuel had at least three authors. Even though the book takes its name from the first author, Samuel, he died in 1 Samuel 25, so he couldn't have written the next 31 chapters that occurred after his death.

Jewish tradition holds that Samuel wrote 1 Samuel 1-24 with the remainder of the narrative being written by "Nathan the prophet" and "Gad the seer." And Scripture seems to back that tradition up. 2 Chronicles 29:29 certainly indicates that those three prophets did indeed write the entire history of David.¹ I won't get into all of the arguments back and forth on that subject, but I agree that the Bible itself indicates that the book of Samuel was authored by a minimum of three early prophetic authors.

Once you understand that fact, you begin to appreciate the supernatural qualities of Samuel - because on many levels it sure doesn't seem like it is written by three authors. All the chapters of Samuel are seamlessly worked together as if they were written by one author. In fact, the structure of these books is so intricately woven together that it is astounding that three authors wrote it. Though there are internal hints of multiple authors (and I don't think those can easily be denied), those authors wove the book together so beautifully with detailed parallelism, chiasms, inclusios, and other structural designs that the book is clearly one work.

Themes that were anticipated by the prophet Samuel at the beginning are

¹ It says, "Now the acts of King David, first and last, indeed they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer..." So many commentators believe that 1 and 2 Samuel were originally written in three parts. But 2 Chronicles 9:29 may be a clue that the prophets Ahijah and Iddo may have been involved in the final edits, such as the comment in 1 Samuel 27:6 that says, "Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day." Others argue that Gad the Seer did the final edits.

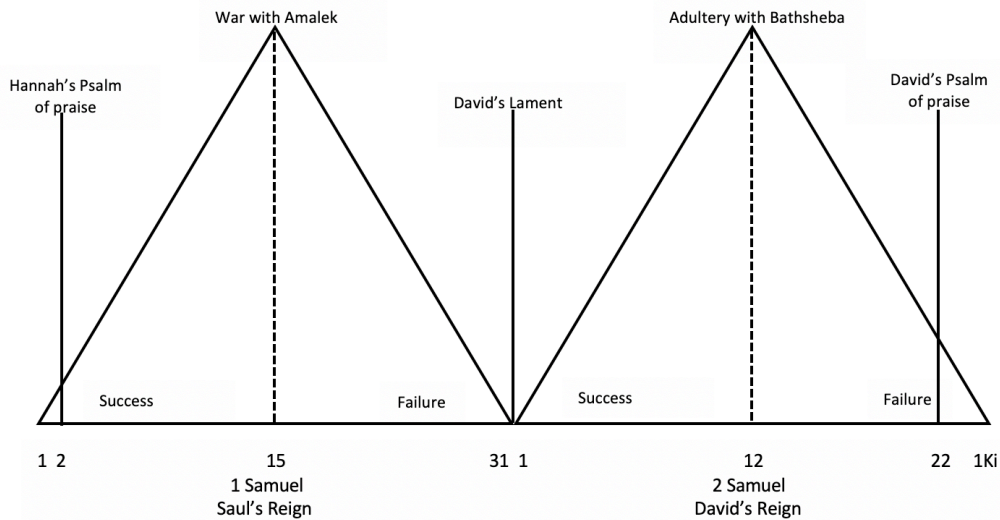
perfectly matched by Nathan and Gad as if they had planned for the writing all along. The chiasmic structure that is begun by Samuel is finished after Samuel died, but is finished in a way that perfectly mirrors Samuel's writing. And if I was teaching a seminary level course, I would spend a couple hours going through 42 charts that show the finely tuned structural techniques used in this book that make it a piece of artwork from beginning to end. The three summaries that I have put into your outline do not do it justice, but I think you would be overwhelmed if I gave you more.

OVERALL STRUCTURE OF 1 SAMUEL 1:1—1 KINGS 2:46

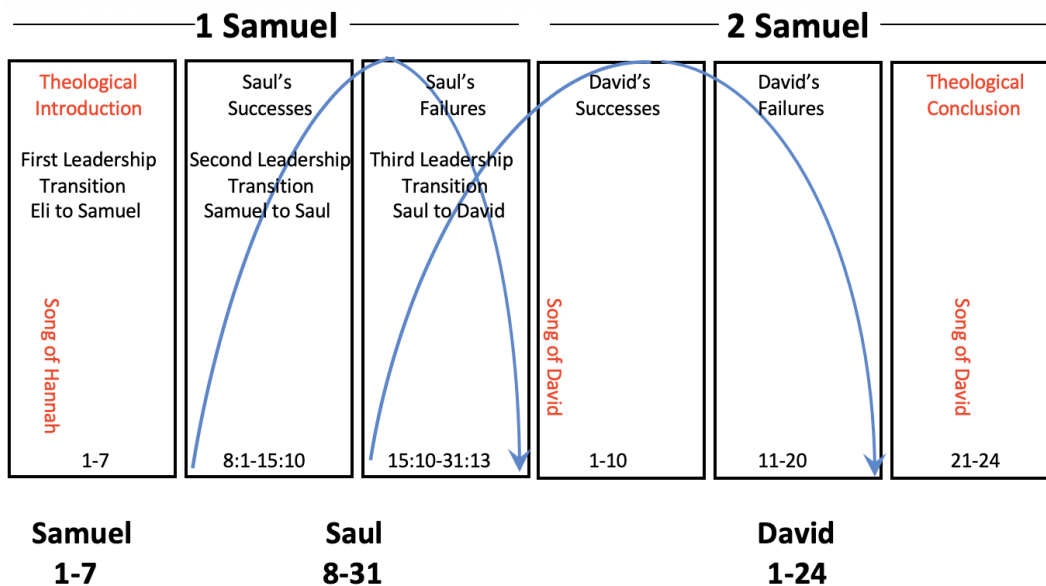
- A Samuel succeeds elderly Eli and rules over all Israel (1 Sam. 1—7)
- Hannah's song: my horn, my rock, grave, death, thundered against them from heaven, exalt, armed with strength, darkness, feet, anointed one, He gives the king, humble, proud; God's uniqueness; etc.
 - theme: fall of Eli's priestly line
 - The LORD's plagues and human efforts that stopped them (4:1—6:21)
 - people offer up the two cows pulling the ark's cart, as burnt offerings (after plagues ceased), using wood of cart as fuel, setting ark on rock
- B Saul's failure (1 Sam. 8-15)
- war against King Nahash of Ammon triggered by Nahash's threatened humiliation of Israelites in Transjordan
 - Saul's sins and their uncovering and condemnation by prophet Samuel
 - Saul's response: he makes excuses
- C David's initial rise to popularity in Saul's kingdom (1 Sam. 16—20)
- Saul initially accepts David, then turns against him
 - David is anointed by Samuel; Michal's marriage to David
 - theme: members of Saul's family were kind to David
- X THE LORD REVERSES FORTUNES OF SAUL AND DAVID; SAUL SEEKS TO KILL DAVID BUT IS HIMSELF KILLED (1 Sam. 21—31)**
- C' David's initial rise to power over all Israel (2 Sam. 1—8)
- Saul's kingdom initially opposes David, then accepts him
 - David is anointed by Judah; Michal's remarriage to David
 - theme: David was kind to members of Saul's family
- B' David's failure (2 Sam. 9-20)
- war against King Nahash of Ammon triggered by Nahash's humiliation of David's ambassadors in Transjordan
 - David's sin and its uncovering and condemnation by prophet Nathan
 - David's response: he repents
- A' Solomon succeeds elderly David; David's final years (2 Sam. 21—1 Kings 2)
- David's song (obviously echoing Hannah's): my horn, my rock, grave, death, thundered against them from heaven. exalt, armed with strength, darkness, feet, anointed one, he gives the king, humble, proud; God's uniqueness; etc.
 - themes: fall of Eli's priestly line: Zadok replaces Abiathar, "fulfilling the word Of the LORD had spoken at Shiloh about the house of Eli" (1 Kings 2:27)
 - LORD's plagues and human efforts that stopped them (2 Sam. 21, 24)—one plague involves place where ark would rest
 - David offers the two oxen pulling the threshing sledge as burnt offerings (after plague ceased), using wood of sledge as fuel (ark will rest on this rock)

But take a quick glance at the chart that has two triangles on it. I took this chart from Yeltuda Radday in the *Linguistica Biblica*.² and I think it accurately shows the movement within the book. There are a number of other commentators that have come to the same conclusion from their own studies.

2 Radday, Yeltuda T. "CHIASM IN SAMUEL." *Linguistica Biblica*. The original form of the chart can be found here <https://cdm15999.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15999coll24/id/43684>



Each of those triangles represents a perfectly symmetrical overview of success and failure. They are actually chiasms within the overall structure of a chiasm that I have put onto the back page of your outlines. And there are actually even more detailed layers of chiasms within that overall one that makes this an exquisitely structured book. The more detailed work that I haven't included for you show that the heart of each intermediate chiasm is God's rejection of a prideful ruler and transitioning to a humble ruler. The elbow of each chiasm hits home the central themes of this book that we will look at in a bit.



But one little curiosity that you might have noticed is that the last little bit of the second large triangle contains the first two chapters of 1 Kings, just like

the last little bit of the overall chiasm of the book does so.

When I was in seminary back in 1981, there were scholars who pointed out that the last part of the chiasm is messed up; it's missing; there is a defect in the book's structure. But in the last three decades, several scholars (both conservative³ and liberal) have shown that the chiastic structure is perfect if you continue into 1 Kings 1-2. Now, when I first pointed that fact out to my Old Testament professor at seminary, he could see the chiastic structure going into 1 Kings so clearly, but he thought that it just can't be since the two books are separated in time. But very detailed work has been done in the last 36 years that has shown that this chiastic connection has been very deliberately crafted.⁴ It is not an accident of history.

And actually, when you study the structures of all the historical books, you will see that they are interlocked with each other by divine inspiration and linked together in a watertight way by that structure. It is one of the proofs of the canonicity of these books. You can't reject one without rejecting the others. Each subsequent prophet wrote his prophetic material by divine inspiration directly into the inspired book of his predecessor, continuing the narrative as if it is being written by one mind.

But that should not surprise an orthodox Christian. If the books were prophetic, there was one Mind behind them - God's mind. 2 Peter 1:20-21 says, "knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private exposition, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." Though God used various musical instruments (each prophet's persona) to play the score of His symphony, every note of that symphony came from His mind.

It may not surprise you to know that studying the structure of the historical books sends shivers of delight down my spine because I see God's supernaturally hand crafting it over centuries. It is beautiful. Actually, it is miraculous. I don't know how any modern author could write genuine sequential history and manage to do so within the confines of the interlocking structures of this book. It shows God's hand. Deuteronomy is structurally locked with Joshua. And Joshua says that he had written his own prophecies directly into the Book of the Law (or the canon). Judges is structurally locked with Joshua. 1 Samuel is structurally locked with Judges.

3 A conservative example would be Bill Mounce, who says, "Positively, the unity of Samuel is attested by the following: (1) the orderly and consistent plan of the work; (2) the interrelations of parts of the books, as noted by Driver; and (3) uniformity of language throughout. The unity of 2 Samuel is generally recognized." <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/books-samuel>

4 For one fascinating study, see <https://www.inthebeginning.org/chiasmus/xfiles/xsamuel.pdf>

1 Kings is structurally locked with Samuel. And this interlocking nature of these books is so clear that many liberal authors are (wrongly) convinced that Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings were all written by the same author. That's a ridiculous conclusion, but for people who don't believe in inspiration, it's the best explanation for its unity that they can come up with. And they call them the Deuteronomistic histories because of how tightly those books link together.

But there is more to this that shows the supernatural hand of God in the development of these books. God not only had to inspire the prophets who wrote 1 and 2 Samuel, but God also had to inspire some of the subjects of the history like Hannah. What do I mean? Well, her inspired song in 1 Samuel 2 uses the expressions of my horn, my rock, grave, death, thunder from heaven, exaltation, being armed with strength, darkness, feet, anointed one, He gives the king (before there was any king), humble, proud, and expressions of God's uniqueness. Yet those key phrases (every one of them) is paralleled with the exact same phrases in David's song at the end of the book. Yet they didn't compose those songs with any realization that each word would factor into the chiastic structure of a book that would later be written. God has to providentially orchestrate even those independent prophecies so that they would line up into a marvelous symphony. I think you can see why I get excited about the structure of books of the Bible.

But theological Liberals, who refuse to acknowledge the divine authorship of any books of the Bible, have had a very hard time explaining both the structural unity of the book and the clear evidence of multiple authors. They go to one extreme or the other; they cannot account for both. Liberals are still fighting with each other over whether this book has one author or multiple authors.

Some liberals (like Martin Noth), will say that only one author wrote it, but he cannot adequately explain how it is obvious that the author was a first hand witness of events that span more than one lifetime. Various books have proven that the author has first hand evidence. Even some liberals admit that. So how could one author be a first hand witness to events covering 135 years? So other liberals say that is impossible. So they think that a later editor pulled together already existing documents and edited them into a unified whole. But the first set of liberals thoroughly debunks this second set of liberals by showing that very pieces that show unity were not written by an editor, but were written by the original historian. And so it goes, back and forth. Right now the dominant liberal view is that it is a unity by a much later editor.

The orthodox Christian has no problem with the internal evidence. We believe that the book of Samuel was written by at least three prophets, but these three prophets reflected God's mind in providentially weaving together an intricately developed inspired history that also shows the covenantal outworking of Deuteronomy, a unified theology of God, and a unified prophetic perspective - and what I mean by prophetic perspective is that 1 and 2 Samuel are considered to be the writings of the former prophets, who deliberately showed that none of the kings (not even David or Hezekiah who is structurally shown by the book of Kings to be a second David⁵) - none of those kings can possibly fulfill the promises of a coming Messiah. Even these historical books were prophetically looking forward to the coming of Jesus. So God was the Master Architect of the book, and He used three main prophets to write this marvelously structured book. Now, I don't usually get into the complicated aspects of structure in my preaching, but I thought it might help you to appreciate the book from a bird's eye perspective.

As I mentioned, the book covers 135 years of history. There are three main characters being described: Samuel, Saul, and David. Samuel becomes an illustration of how even the ideal judge (the last of the judges) was not the Messiah prophesied in Numbers 24:17. Nor was Saul, the political king like the kings of the world. Nor was David, the king after God's own heart. They were still looking forward to Jesus.

I. Key chapter 2 Samuel 7

The key chapter of the book is 2 Samuel 7, which speaks of God's covenant made with David and with David's seed, Jesus. Jesus is the answer to all the failures we see in this book.

II. Key verse: 2 Samuel 7:12,13

And the key verse (or actually paragraph) is 2 Samuel 7:12-14. It says, 2Sam. 7:12 "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son.

This is a unique descendant of David because the the chapter as a whole shows that this future descendant will not only be David's Son, but God's Unique Son. And as God's Son, He will not have any of the problems that

5 Michael Press, Iain Provan and others have shown how the structure, thematic parallels, sequence of events, type scenes, and vocabulary of the Hezekiah story in 2 Kings 18-19 make Hezekiah out to be a second David. Press, Michael D. "A SINGLE COMBAT TYPE-SCENE IN THE HEBREW BIBLE?" *Hebrew Studies* 57 (2016): 93-115. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44072296>.

the previous rulers of Israel or the subsequent rulers of Israel would have. Whereas David was a type of Christ, Christ was declared to be the final David. (And there are many later prophets that explicitly say that.) And so, I'll skip ahead in the outline and say that the key word in this book is David. It is used over and over again to prophetically foreshadow the final David. Whereas David's throne was only a type or symbol, it was still called the throne of Yehowah. When Solomon sits on David's throne toward the end of his life, 1 Chronicles 29:23 says, "Then Solomon sat on the throne of Yehowah as king instead of David his father." So there is rich symbolism going on there. 2 Samuel 7 is an incredibly important chapter that lays out the Davidic Covenant - a covenant that includes even the political realm under the feet of King Jesus.

III. The Christ of Samuel

A. Samuel, who is a prophet, priest, and ruler

So you can see that I have already dealt with the Christ of Samuel, haven't I? The symbolic foreshadowing of Christ is primarily done by David. I put in your outline that Samuel was also a type of Christ. He was the last of the judges, and all the judges foreshadowed the work of Jesus. But Samuel was unique. He was the Judge that keeps all three offices of prophet, priest, and ruler into one person. And as such, he himself is a marvelous type of Jesus. We won't have time to get into how he symbolizes Christ so well.

B. Sacrifices, tabernacle

Yes, there are sacrifices that point to Jesus. And yes, there is a tabernacle that also symbolizes the work of Jesus in this book. And yes there are priests. I've included those as part of the Christ of Samuel.

C. David

But most scholars say that the primary picture of Jesus was David. He is presented as the ideal king. He was not a perfect king, but he is still portrayed among all other kings as an ideal king. Like Jesus, he was born in Bethlehem. Like Jesus he is called a shepherd. And as a shepherd he rules over Israel. He is the king said to be "after God's own heart" (2 Sam. 13:14). And there are many other ways in which David was a type of Jesus.

IV. Key word: David

V. Thematic structure (see previous charts)

VI. Key themes

A. Failure of prophets, priests, and kings

Before I give a quick overview of the book, let me note the seven most important themes that are dealt with in Samuel. First, a note of failure runs all through Samuel. In the first three chapters we see the failures of Eli and his sons. In chapters 4-7 we see the failures of Israel as a whole. In chapter 8 we see the failure of Samuel to discipline his sons. In fact, Eli, Samuel, and king David all had that same failure. Because they didn't discipline their sons, their sons did not imitate their good characteristics. The same chapter (chapter 8) shows moral failure on the part of Israel. The rest of 1 Samuel shows the failures of Saul. After a meteoric rise to power on the part of Saul who starts off well, we see the failure of Saul to be the kind of king he should be in chapters 15 to the end of 1 Samuel. But even before Saul becomes a king God tells us that Saul will be a failure in chapter 8. And though David rises to power with integrity and as the ideal king, even he is shown to have failures. All of these cumulative failures impress upon the reader that we are still waiting for the long expected Messiah who would be the final Prophet, Priest, and King without failure.

And when we get to Chronicles we will see that this issue of failure is one of the big contrasts between Samuel and Kings on the one hand, and the book of Chronicles on the other. Chronicles does not highlight the sins of the kings like Samuel and Kings do. Chronicles is written from the perspective of encouraging the postexilic community, whereas Samuel and Kings were written to warn kings who were disobedient to God of what would happen. So most of Samuel and Kings is negative and most of Chronicles is positive.

B. The call for all kings to be covenantal, not like the surrounding nations

The second major theme is that this book calls for all kings to be covenantal, and not like the surrounding nations who acted independently of God's law. Even liberals agree that this book is a call to the kings of Israel to follow the law of God in Deuteronomy.

Instead, the people insisted in 1 Samuel 8:5 that they wanted a king like all

the other nations had. They were tired of the insecurity that small government gave. Even though that small government gave far more liberty, they were tired of it. So God obliges them. He gives them Saul, a king just like the nations had; a king who did not rule in terms of God’s law. In other words, Saul would be a covenant-breaking king like the nations rather than a covenant-keeping king like David.

Saul is contrasted with Eli, Samuel, and David, all of whom ruled in terms of covenant. They represented God’s delegated authority, which covenantally only had enumerated, specified, and very limited powers. Saul hugely centralized government whereas David returned civil government back to the decentralized and limited powers of a theocracy. It was covenantal kingship. And our series on the life of David went through all the practical ramifications of that concept.

And I will skip over my material that deals with whether the Davidic covenant is based upon the covenant of Abraham or Moses. I think it is a ridiculous debate since every covenant builds on the previous ones. But I have strong proofs that the Davidic covenant has both Mosaic and Abrahamic aspects to it.⁶

C. Divine sovereignty

The third major theme is God’s divine sovereignty. You can see God’s sovereignty not just in the narrative sections, but also in all the poem sections. You have missed a central lesson of Samuel if you have not come to the conclusion that God is sovereign and man is not.⁷ It may sometimes seem as if kings are sovereign, but this book shows that they are not. God’s

6 The Mosaic aspects are obvious from all the Deuteronomistic features of Joshua, Samuel, and Kings. Many commentators (both conservative and liberal) have demonstrated this unity with the Mosaic covenant. But many scholars have also shown how the features of the Abrahamic covenant are deeply imprinted into 2 Samuel 7, including the promises to Abraham of a great name, a land, a seed, and an eternal kingdom. <<<<<<< HEAD | Davidic Covenant | Abrahamic Covenant | |
 _____|_____|| A great name (v. 9) | a great name (12:2) | | a place/land (v. 10) | land (Gen. 12:7) | | Shalom (v. 11) | | | A house = dynasty (v. 11) | | | a seed (v. 12) | Gen. 22:18 | | A future temple (v. 13) | | | Father/Son relationship (v. 14) | | | An eternal kingdom (v. 16) | Gen. 17:6) | |
 _____|_____|| ===== | Davidic Covenant | Abrahamic Covenant | |
 _____|_____|| A great name (v. 9) | a great name (12:2) | | a place/land (v. 10) | land (Gen. 12:7) | | Shalom (v. 11) | | | A house = dynasty (v. 11) | | | a seed (v. 12) | Gen. 22:18 | | A future temple (v. 13) | | | Father/Son relationship (v. 14) | | | An eternal kingdom (v. 16) | Gen. 17:6) | |
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7 Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology says about the theology of Samuel, “There is only one God, the Lord God of Israel (1 Sam 2:2 ; 2 Sam 22:32). This God has spoken, and his word is true (2 Sam 22:31 ; 23:2). The Lord God of Israel is sovereign over all things (1 Sam 2:6-10 ; 2 Sam 22:33-46). He is a Rock, a place of refuge and security for those who trust in him (1 Sam 2:2 ; 2 Samuel 22:2 2 Samuel 22:3 2 Samuel 22:32 2 Samuel 22:47 ; 23:2).”

sovereignty stands as both an encouragement and a warning. It is a warning to any rulers who defy His law that they will be broken. God is still sovereign.

D. The sufficiency of God and Scripture for rule

The fourth major theme that is found throughout Samuel is the sufficiency of God and the sufficiency of Scripture for all rule. The “word of the Lord,” “the Lord said,” and the calls to obey God’s Word are strewn throughout the book as the only road to success. In chapter 12 Samuel tells Israel, Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.

Rulers were constantly tempted to go beyond the Scripture’s limits, but doing so always brought disaster, without exception. Another term for this sufficiency is the regulative principle of government - civil government was not allowed to go beyond what the Scripture said, and what it said was sufficient for absolutely everything a civil government is allowed to do. You can see that principle presupposed throughout 1 and 2 Samuel. As we saw in our Life of David series, this book is a rebuke to modern nation state, national armies, welfare states, universal suffrage, and many other outrageous and anti-Scriptural practices. All civics must be regulated by the Word of God alone.

E. Jurisdictional balance between governments and within governments

The fifth major theme is the jurisdictional balance between governments and within governments. (And of course, there are three governments - family church and state.) As my sermons on the Life of David showed, God has authorized one government to interpose its protection of citizens against the tyranny of another government. When Jonathan and Ahimaaz acted as spies for David and against Absalom, they were representatives of family government interposing against a civil government. So was the lady who hid them. When Ahimilech gave Goliath’s sword to David in 1 Samuel 21, it was an example of the church interposing against the civil government. So was Abiathar’s joining of David’s ranks. When Jonathan stuck up for David when his father was trying to murder David, it was an example of balance within governments. And many examples can be shown that ultimate loyalty in any government can only be to God. All submission is in the Lord. In other words, it is limited by God’s Word. And my sermon series showed the Biblical checks and balances to keep us from trouble.

F. The role of the ark as God's throne within Israel - a throne that cannot be manipulated or used

The sixth major theme of Samuel is the role of the ark of the covenant as God's throne within Israel. It is a throne that cannot be manipulated. It is called the ark of the Lord of Hosts. He is the one who calls the shots. So when Eli's sons took the ark into battle and sought to use it as a tool for victory, it brought disaster because God can't be used. He is the Lord. When Zadok and Abiathar do exactly the same foolish thing - when they bring the ark out of Jerusalem when David is fleeing Jerusalem in the parallel of 2 Samuel 15, David refuses to take the ark into battle with him. He knows God cannot be manipulated. The ark represents God's sovereign rule over all other thrones and authorities, including family, church, and civics. David is not over the ark; the ark is over him. This book makes clear that there is no jurisdiction over which God's throne does not claim ownership. When Obed-Edom housed the ark in his home, his home was blessed in 2 Samuel 6. So the ark is a major theme.

G. The prophecy of the Messiah as a son of David and Son of God

The seventh major theme is the prophecy of the Messiah as the son of David and as being at the same time the Son of God. So those are the major themes woven into this book. They help you to see the big picture.

VII. Overview of the book of Samuel

And I want to now give you a very, very quick overview of 1 and 2 Samuel to give you hints of how to see those seven major themes beautifully woven together in every chapter.

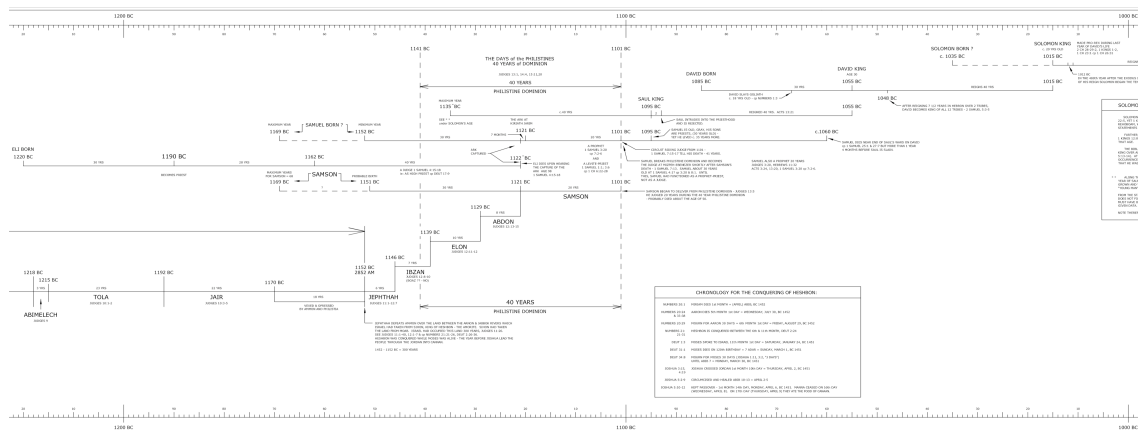
I've given you a chart that outlines six main sections of the book. The main body of Samuel are the four sections in the middle. But those four sections are bookended by a theological introduction in 1 Samuel 1-7 and a theological conclusion in 2 Samuel 21-24. Because the conclusion is driving home some theological points, the stories are not in chronological order in those last four chapters. The author simply picks stories from earlier in David's life to illustrate certain themes. And while the introduction is chronological, it is very selective in narrating stories that will establish the main themes of the book. So the introduction and the conclusion parallel each other - and that first and sixth section of the book teaches us how to interpret the theology of the rest of the book. You will see all seven major themes most clearly in the first and last parts of the book. But once you see

them there, you will see them all over the book.

So let's start at the first chapter. The story begins with a Levite by the name of Elkanah traveling with his family to Shiloh, where the tabernacle was located. As a Levite, he was one of the pastors that God had scattered in the synagogues throughout the land. He was already shown to be compromised in that he was a polygamist (married to two wives), and the horrible problems of polygamy that are displayed in this story fit right into the period of the Judges and show how God's people were not thinking biblically. Not even the pastors were thinking biblically.

Another sin of this pastor was that Elkanah played favorites with his wives, which led the less loved wife, Penninah, to envy the loved one, Hannah, and to persecute her. Verse 6 says, "And her rival also provoked her severely to make her miserable." You don't have to read far in the Bible to discover that God's original plan was one man to live with one woman in a life-long relationship of marriage, and that any other union than Biblical marriage leads to misery. While the law of God makes clear that it is not a crime, it is a sin to be avoided.

But Hannah was not just miserable over her relationship with the other wife. She was miserable because God had not given her a son. Verse 6 says, "the LORD had closed her womb." God is even the Lord of fertility. In the book of Samuel, He is the Lord of everything. So Hannah goes to the Lord in the temple and prays her heart out. She vows to give her son to the Lord if God will bless her with a son. The high priest who misjudges her and interacts with her is Eli, a man who is also a Judge. In your outlines I have given a detailed chronology from Floyd Nolan Jones so that you can see where you are at any given point in this 135 year history.



The story of Hannah is a fun story that we won't have time to get into, but God grants Hannah her heart's desire. Her son is Samuel. And God's Holy

Spirit enables her to pray a remarkable song of praise in chapter 2. Believe it or not, this song introduces virtually every theological and thematic topic that will be dealt with in the rest of the book. As I mentioned earlier, the very phraseology is given by the same Holy Spirit to David when he sings His song of praise towards the end of 2 Samuel. Especially central to her speech are three things:

- God's opposition to the proud and exaltation of the humble. He casts down the proud and exalts the humble.
- Second, she says that despite the presence of human evil God is still at work accomplishing his purposes. God's sovereignty is not overcome by evil.
- And third, she says that God will raise up a Messianic king in the future, or as she worded it, "The LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to His king, and exalt the horn of his anointed." There hadn't been any kings to this point when Hannah spoke, but God put this inspired word into her mouth.

Now, all seven of the major themes are in her speech, but those three are especially important to the story.

In chapter 3, we find that Samuel is made a prophet by God. In chapters 4-7 we have this story about the ark of the covenant being captured by the Philistines. What had happened was that the Philistines attacked Israel, and the Jews lost. Then the Jews came up with the foolish idea of using the ark as a lucky rabbit's foot. They said, "Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies" (1 Sam. 4:3). They superstitiously thought that if they brought the ark into battle, no one could defeat them. In 2 Samuel David rejects a similar idea. Anyway, God does not take kindly to being manipulated and used by Israel, so He allows the Philistines to defeat Israel and steal the ark. This is God's doing. He is still sovereign. When the high priest, Eli, hears that the ark has been captured and that his morally corrupt sons have been killed, he keels over and dies - something God had prophesied would happen. Why? Because God humbles the proud and exalts the humble.

In the meantime, God shows the Philistines that they have no power over Him. Just because God left Israel and symbolized that by letting the Philistines take the ark does not mean that the Philistines in any way conquered Him. No, they were pawns in God's hands to teach God's theological truths.

Anyway, when the Philistines put the ark into the temple of their god, Dagon (and they did it as a sign that their god Dagon had conquered Yehowah), God makes sure that the statue of Dagon falls over, breaking off its head and hands and lies prostrate before the throne of God. And in case they didn't get

that hint, God inflicts horrible tumors on the Philistines in chapter 5:6 - just the Philistines in that area. They get the connection and get rid of the ark to another area of Philistia, and they get the plague too. So the Philistines get scared and think that they don't want the ark. So they send the ark of the covenant back to Israel. But they do it in a way that shows God's hand. They attached milk cows to the cart that the ark is on, keep the calves behind bawling for their mother's milk. It would take a miracle to keep those cows away from their new calves, yet the cows go straight to Israel with their load. Already this story is illustrating some of the themes of Hannah's song - God's opposition to pride wherever it may be, the importance of obedience to God, and that God cannot be manipulated or controlled. Instead, He is sovereign. And I won't say more about the judgments that the ark brings to Israel itself, but they teach them same theological truths.

In chapters 8-10 the people reject Samuel's sons as Judges because they were corrupt. I don't blame them. Apparently, Samuel, as good as he was as a leader of Israel, was a lousy parent. He imitated Eli's lousy parenting, and the failure of both parents sets up a whole series of thematic failures and successes in this book. And the modern church must learn to avoid the parenting techniques of Eli, Samuel, and David if they are to avoid having covenant succession broken off.

So Samuel's sons are corrupt judges. But rather than impeaching the bad judges and replacing them with godly ones (which would have been the biblical process), the people decide they want a strong centralized ruler like the pagan nations had. In chapter 8 God makes it clear that their desire for a king like the nations around them was a direct rejection of Him and of His laws. This has always been the temptation for governments. And Samuel predicts exactly what this kind of a king will do. He will become more and more tyrannical. And Saul did indeed become a tyrannical king like Samuel described. And when I previously preached on 1 Samuel 8, I showed how every characteristic of a worldly non-theocratic king looks like the modern highly centralized nation-state. So God arranges for a candidate that will be just like the kings of the world. He will be outwardly appealing, with a dynamic personality, but he will also systematically erode the liberties that Israelites had long enjoyed under most of the judges.

Chapters 9-14 show the success/failure cycle of the king who was crafted after the people's own heart. Samuel makes it quite clear that the people and the king deserved each other. But initially the people are thrilled with Saul's successes. They don't see the problem. They think they made a good decision, and they give him more and more power. But they are failing to

notice the deep character flaws in Saul.

- His insecurity will be contrasted thematically in these chapters with David's faith.
- His pride and arrogance will be contrasted thematically with David's humility.
- His inability to admit to wrong will be contrasted thematically with David's instant repentance when he does something wrong.
- Saul's dependence on power will be contrasted thematically with David's dependence on God.

In other words, character is a non-negotiable in the rulers we elect. No matter how good they are in other areas, we should not vote for them if they have bad character because their character flaws will end up bringing ruin. So this is just illustrating a couple of the major themes of the book from the introduction.

And Saul's character flaws are exposed in chapter 15 in a battle against the Philistines. It is clear from this story that Saul is going to operate in terms of the wisdom of the world, not the wisdom of Scripture. God says, "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments." You know what? Most modern Americans who read that verse would be mystified because what Saul did didn't seem like that big a deal. Most of the Israelites didn't think it was that big a deal. But he was not acting like a covenantal king. And God rejects him as being a candidate because he represents everything that the Messiah will not be. As Hannah words it, God exalts the humble and puts down the proud.

Samuel's speech in verses 22-23 gets to the heart of the problem. He said, Sam. 15:22 ... "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 heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king."

Wow! That is a pretty black and white application of the themes of this book. The proud Saul will start his downfall in chapter 15 and the humble and unknown David will start his rise to power in the next chapter, chapter 16.

Of course, the fear and trembling of the people in chapter 16 when Samuel comes around is a hint that the people feared Saul already. Their strongman would not hesitate to hurt anyone who was a threat to his power, and they know it. And other hints of Saul's bad characteristics begin to come fast and furious as the chapters progress.

So God in His providence allows two candidates for kingship to develop

side by side so that for all time Christians can reject candidates like Saul and support candidates like David. But we haven't learned. To this day Christians support candidates like Saul and won't vote for candidates like David because they don't think they stand a chance. If they are conservative, that is good enough for them.

Saul represents a non-covenantal ruler and David represents a covenantal ruler. No human candidate for office will be perfect, but David's humility, repentance, faith, loyalty to God's law, and other characteristics establish him as the ideal human king for all time. All that God asks is that kings vow submission to God's Lordship, to stay in covenant with Him, and by His grace to restrict their reign to the provisions in Deuteronomy. It's not that much to ask. He is not asking them to be perfect. He is asking for covenantal kings like David.

As can be seen in the outline that has two blue rounded arrows, the first arrow shows the rise and then the fall of Saul. He shows success in chapters 8:1-15:10, and shows failure after failure in chapter 15:10 through the end of 1 Samuel where he dies. But chapter 16 starts a similar rise to power by David and a similar downward fall into disaster for himself and his family following the Bathsheba event. Of course, it shows one big difference. Because of David's humility and repentance, his dynasty will be allowed to continue.

Chapter 16 shows the anointing of David. And that story should also instruct us on our choice of rulers. David would have been the last choice for the world's wisdom, just as he was that last choice in that chapter. But God's covenantalism in rulership proves to be the wise choice. These are chapters that inform our civics today.

The story of Goliath is yet another marvelous illustration that God humbles the proud and arrogant and exalts the humble who have faith in Him and all of the other great themes.

David is initially exalted by Saul, but when David wins praise for his exploits, Saul becomes jealous. The insecure and prideful Saul slowly descended into madness and he tries to do anything he can to destroy David.

David, on the other hand, has times when he could have easily destroyed Saul, but he refuses to do so. He illustrates covenantalism, not revolution; the two are quite contrary. He trusts God and waits for God's timing, and he does things God's way even if it is inconvenient. That shows loyalty - chesed. And some of my favorite Psalms in the Bible come from this period

of time when David was fleeing from Saul. In the last chapter of 1 Samuel, Saul and his sons come to a grisly death at the hands of the Philistines.

2 Samuel begins with the aftermath of Saul's death, and then surprises the reader with a deeply emotional poem of David that laments the death of his enemy, Saul. All the way through both books of Samuel we see this kind of humility on the part of David - a humility that God honors. And that poem balances the theology of the book with the poems at the beginning and the end. And you can see that in the diagram.

I can't get into all the remarkable thematic parallelisms in this book, but I will briefly mention the fact that the parallel parts of the story each have an ark of the covenant story. In the first half of the story, God's throne (or ark of the covenant) leaves Israel when God abandons Israel. Ichabod means that the glory of God has departed from Israel. But it is represented by His throne leaving Israel. Now in the second half of the chiasm, David reverses that. David conquers Jerusalem, renames it as Zion (because it will be God's capital), and brings the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem so that Jerusalem will be both the spiritual and political capital of the nation. God returns to bless humility. And earthly Zion is a symbol of the heavenly Zion ruling over the earth. It's a wonderful image and a beautiful reversal.

Then in chapter 7 David tells God that he longs to see God dwelling in a permanent and beautiful house (and by house he means a temple) in Jerusalem. God tells David "Thanks but no thanks." But it is not rejecting the spirit of David's request at all. He tells David that his son will build him a temple, but in the meantime, God is going to build David a house (same word, but this time meaning dynasty).

As I have already mentioned, chapter 7 is the central chapter of the whole story because it relates all the theology involved in the Davidic covenant. This was God's last covenant, preparing for the New Covenant. God promises that one of his descendants will become a universal king over the world and through that Messianic king God will bring blessing to the entire world.

But on that chart you will see that chapter 7 is the very height of David's exaltation (the height of that second rounded blue arrow), and because of pride he starts his downward slide in the very next chapter. How could that be?! It happened because of pride. David's pride gave Satan a foothold in his life, and set David up for a massive fall. He falls into the sin of adultery with Bathsheba, gets her pregnant, tries to cover it up, and when that is not successful, he murders her husband and marries her. This is a horrible blot

on David's character. Nevertheless, when he is confronted by the prophet Nathan, David repents. God forgives him, but does not erase the consequences of his sin. Sorry, but even though God forgives us, there are still the laws of harvest. Those laws of harvest should motivate us to avoid sin like the plague. God tells David that the same kinds of things are going to happen to his children. And in the Life of David series we saw that David had been sowing the seeds of these disasters through polygamy and by failing to discipline his children and failing to disciple them consistently.

From here on in, it is a downward series of failures in David's life that leads to one disaster after another. David's son, Amnon, rapes his sister Tamar, Absalom takes revenge and kills Amnon, Absalom flees, when he comes back he undermines David's right to rule and leads a coup, and David's best friend joins the coup. And later, Adonijah leads another coup. It is disaster after disaster.

David has to hide in the wilderness from his son Absalom just as he used to hide from Saul. Absalom is killed, and David gets back on his throne. But it isn't the same. He is a broken man in many ways, illustrating the damage sin can do even to a person who is a man after God's own heart. It is clear from the way the story is crafted that even David is not the Messiah to come. He is looking for another, even as chapter 7 had prophesied. Kings will tell you that Solomon is not the Messiah either. He is only a faint type of Jesus.

And then comes the theological conclusion in chapters 21-24 that is crafted very artistically as well. It's a chiasm. The very first part of chapter 21 deals with a moral failure of Saul and is matched by the very end of the book that reminds us of the moral failure of David.

The next section in chapter 21 is matched by the next to last section in the book, both of which deal with David's mighty men. There is a deliberate splitting up of the descriptions of those mighty men in order to form a chiasm. And interestingly, whereas the earlier part of the book showed David's might, the way the stories of the mighty men are told, it shows David's vulnerability and weakness. Again, this is deliberate in pointing to a mightier King, Jesus, whom David's Psalms will also celebrate.

Then the very heart of the small chiasm in chapters 21-22 are the two poems that act as memoirs of God's faithfulness to David despite David's occasional unfaithfulness; God's grace to David despite David's sins. And both poems look forward to a future king, the King Messiah that we call Jesus. And as I mentioned earlier, both of David's poems cover exactly the same theological points that Hannah's poem brings up at the beginning of 1

Samuel. But David's go into much more detail.

In conclusion I will say that the character studies in Samuel are character studies that all leaders and all followers need to learn from. But ultimately the book of Samuel makes it unmistakably clear that without the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, we will never see the glorious times of history that the prophets looked forward to when peace and righteousness will fill the earth. Jesus alone will perfectly fulfill the Davidic covenant and provide a rule of righteousness.

If you now read 1 and 2 Samuel with these key points in mind, all kinds of new things will fall into place. And I think it will give added meaning to the detailed application that I made of these books several years ago. Let's pray.