

1 Samuel: An Introduction

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[0 : 00] I mentioned three weeks ago that we would start a study in 1 Samuel.

! I'm going to start a study in 1 Samuel.

We've already been through Joshua and Judges and skipped over Ruth this time. I've already preached through Ruth.

But Ruth also fits in this scheme during the time of Judges. And now we're drawing to the close of the Judges period. And yet 1 Samuel opens still in that period.

And so it just kind of gives a quick kind of overview of the life of Israel during this time in her history.

We can start, really don't have to go back too far, we can start just with the Exodus.

[1 : 40] Start with God's deliverance of Israel out of the Egyptian bondage, slavery. We know about that event, key event in the life of Israel.

And of course the Exodus, the deliverance out of Egypt, had a goal. And that was to lead Israel into the promised land.

And they didn't get in there as soon as they had hoped to. And I guess you could say, didn't get in there as maybe, in a sense, God planned for them, intended, wanted them to.

God knew what was going to happen. And so after the deliverance from Egypt, because of their unbelief, and you all know the story.

And the first generation, out of the Exodus, failed to enter into their promised land. Failed to get in there. And so they wandered.

[2 : 40] And that generation, all but just a few, Joshua and Caleb, passed on. And so then the second generation comes along, and they're under the leadership of Joshua.

And they did enter into the promised land, of course, after which things went pretty well. For a number of years, as long as Joshua was alive. All right?

A few problems there. A few times of doubt and rebellion and not following God as they should.

But kind of some minor times, and even those were instructive for them. But primarily we could say things went pretty well under the leadership of Joshua. But then after Joshua's death, things began to go downhill.

Really kind of falling apart. So Israel then started a spiral, kind of, a downward spiral into rebellion and idolatry, sin.

[3 : 44] And you know, as we studied through the book of Judges, it was a repetitive cycle. And yet not staying on the same plane, not losing ground and then regaining it, losing ground, regaining it.

But losing ground and coming back a little and losing more ground, coming back a little and spiraling downward. This repetitive cycle of rebellion and judgment and repentance and deliverance.

And then, of course, going back to rebellion again. And this, of course, began the period of Judges. Again, when Israel disobeyed and rebelled, God did what?

He gave them over to their enemies. To oppression and bondage and affliction and wars and battles and death and all kinds of things with their enemies.

All a part of God's chastisement, his judgment upon them. All to bring them back around, get their attention. And Israel then would repent and cry out to the Lord for mercy, for deliverance.

[4 : 57] And God would raise up a judge, a deliverer, and deliver them. But then when the judge died, what happened? Israel returned back to their sin, their idolatry.

And God would raise a judge and deliver them. And then right back to the same thing. And on and on and on the cycle continued. But again, each time Israel got further and further and further away from God.

So this period of time was especially dark spiritually for them. And Judges 21-25 kind of records this epitaph.

In those days there was no king in Israel. And everyone did what was right in his own eyes. And that describes Israel.

And not just in this period of time. Really you can see how that described them for much of their history. Even on end to our own day. And so when we enter into 1 Samuel, things are not really a whole lot better.

[6 : 07] Not at all. Because when we enter into 1 Samuel, we're still in the period of the judges. In fact, in close proximity to Samson. In fact, I think most scholars think that we pick up the history of Israel really right after Samson dies.

Samuel then becomes the judge. So we're just kind of continuing on the story. And so when we get to 1 Samuel, the first thing we understand is that Eli's son, Eli the high priest, his sons have turned the priesthood into a mockery.

And so God raises up the last of the judges. And that would be Samuel. Samuel would be the last of the judges.

Really, Samuel was a kind of transition. Kind of a key person. Not only the last of the judges, but the first of the notable and the writing prophets. It's kind of moving from an emphasis away from judges to an emphasis now on prophets.

Even diminishing an emphasis upon the priesthood. And moving to the importance and significance of the prophets of Israel. So it's a key kind of turning point in that regard.

[7 : 30] And yet, very little has changed in the spiritual condition of Israel. So Samson then becomes this transition. And Samuel again, last of the judges.

And he begins the first of the writing prophets. Along with a prophet by the name of Nathan. And one named Gad. And in fact, with 1 Samuel, the role of the priesthood is minimized.

And the role of the prophet becomes prominent. Alright, now, since the enemy is still the Philistine. I want to again mention this. The enemy is still the Philistines here.

So that connects us with how things close with the last judge that we studied in the book of Judges. That would be Samson. The enemy there was Philistine. So we know we're in that same kind of time period.

Samson and Samuel were very likely contemporaries. Samson and Samuel. Not that they necessarily knew one another. They may have. They most likely grew up together.

[8 : 33] And they were both Nazarites. Both Samson and Samuel. So it's kind of interesting to see those two characters. When you put them side by side, there were some similarities.

Not only in the sense of the time period in which they lived. But also in their dedication to the Lord. Though Samson never really did live up to his dedication to the Lord as a Nazarite.

And so Samuel will then eventually anoint the first king of Israel. Right? And what is his name? Saul, the first king of Israel.

Because the people demanded it. And we'll study that passage when we get to Samuel chapter 8. People came to Samuel. And they said, make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

They wanted a king just like every other nation. And that's really exactly what they got. They chose the king. And they got a really good one. Not really good. A really bad one.

[9 : 41] And Saul was a miserable failure as a king. And primarily because they chose him. But Samuel anointed the first king. And then Samuel will anoint Israel's second king, David.

And he is the one, of course, that we think of most when we think of the kings of Israel. He was the great king. The most beloved king in all of Israel's history.

And Samuel anointed both the first and the second king of Israel. We could say that he anointed the king chosen by the people. Then he anointed the king chosen by God.

And that really marks the difference between those two kings. And so the king chosen by the people ended in a miserable failure. And the king chosen by God, of course, became the greatest of the kings.

And even more than that, a more significant, a type of the eternal king. And, you know, there's been much said about how Israel demanded a king.

[10 : 49] And how, you know, we'll study this, how Samuel was quite upset by that. That they would demand a king. And he felt like this was not only some kind of an assault upon his own leadership, but it was also an assault upon God who was to be their king.

It was to be a theocracy and not a monarchy. And so Samuel was against the whole notion. But God said, allow them to have that king.

Now, why would he allow them to have a king if the kingdom of Israel was to be a theocracy? Because they had to have a king eventually. A king that would set the stage and be the forerunner and foreshadowing of the king of kings.

Who would be our king as well as not only the king of Israel, but the king of all of the redeemed. Those are part of God's plan. But Israel had to be taught a lesson that it is God who chooses the king and not they themselves.

And, by the way, I think not only 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel, it is the introduction of David as king and his life and his person and how it coincides with the king of kings.

[12:15] That, I think, marks the chief value of 1 and 2 Samuel. Alright, now let me say a word about the date. And I don't mean the date of when it was written, but the time period.

And say a little something about the title of the book and also the authorship of both books, 1 and 2 Samuel. This is just kind of information, just an introduction, kind of get us ready to delve into the book itself.

The date of the events of 1 and 2 Samuel, the date begins with somewhere around 1100 B.C. So this gives you an idea.

We're talking about 1100 years before Christ when Samuel was born. So it begins with Samuel's birth. That's how the book begins, describing the birth of Samuel.

And then it ends, and I mean 2 Samuel ends, with the death of David. So we begin with the birth of Samuel, who will eventually anoint the first king, Saul, who will eventually anoint the second king, David.

[13:26] And it ends with the death of David. So that gives you the parameter. So from 1100 B.C. to 970 B.C. when David died.

Now, you know, you work backward when you're moving up in your dates to Christ. Alright, so the events recorded in both the books, both books, 1 and 2 Samuel, those events span a relatively short period of time.

You kind of do the math, about 135 years, give or take. All these years are not exact. So that's a pretty short period of time.

When you think about all that transpired, familiar with the stories of 1 and 2 Samuel, Samuel to Saul to David and all that transpired there, you kind of have this idea that we're talking about a large span of time.

But it's really a relatively short span of time. And about 130 or so years. Now, the title of the book, of course, there's nothing really profound about it.

[14:33] Originally, just to let you know, 1 and 2 Samuel, if we have it in our Bible, originally it comprised just one book in the Hebrew Bible. It's one book. Samuel, although it wasn't named that.

And later, when the Hebrew text was translated into the Greek, and we're talking here about the Septuagint, perhaps you've heard of the Septuagint. I'll refer to it from time to time, especially when you're studying through the Old Testament and looking at various resources to help you understand the wording and so forth, the meaning of the text.

Quite often, commentators will refer to the Septuagint. And that's just simply the Greek translation of the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible.

Now, in the Septuagint, the book is divided into two parts, as we have it in our Bibles today. But the name of it is a little different.

The name of it is First and Second Books of the Kingdom, or of kingdoms. First and Second Books of Kingdom. It's still kind of lumped together together in one book, but it has two parts.

[15:44] First part, second part of kingdoms, and that's what they call it. The Hebrew Bible, the title in the Hebrew Bible is still retained in our Bibles today, and it is divided into two separate books, of course, first and second Samuel.

And the books, of course, are named after Samuel for a reason. Not necessarily because he was the author of both books.

We'll talk a little bit about authorship here in a minute. But because he is, at least initially, the principal character. And he's a key character.

So it's named Samuel because he was the one that anointed the first two kings of Israel. So these books are about these two kings, first about Samuel and then about these two kings, and so the

book goes by his name.

Now, what about the authorship? Who wrote it? Again, quite often we look at a book in the Bible, and if it has a person's name on it, like Samuel, then we might just come to the conclusion that means Samuel is the author of it.

[16:53] But not necessarily so. The book is unsigned. Both first and second Samuel, within the text itself, does not tell us who the author was.

And so we have to then kind of speculate as well as look at at least one other passage of Scripture. Now, tradition, and I'm not talking about Christian tradition, I'm talking about Jewish tradition.

Jewish scholars have held that at least the better part of 1 Samuel was written by Samuel. Now, obviously, he couldn't have written all of it because we have many events in the latter part of 1 Samuel and all of 2 Samuel that occurred after Samuel's death.

We have the account of when Samuel died here in 1 Samuel, so he didn't write it all, but he very likely wrote the first 24 chapters of Samuel.

And so then who wrote the rest of it? Well, we don't know. Tradition holds that two prophets wrote the rest of it, Nathan and Gad.

[18:06] We don't know a whole lot about those guys, but if you look at 1 Chronicles, you don't need to turn to it, I'll read it to you, but in 1 Chronicles 29, verse 29, the passage talks about David, King David, and the life of King David.

And in that verse, it says, now the acts of King David, first and last, all of his acts, indeed they are written in the book of Samuel, the seer, the prophet, in the book of Nathan, the prophet, and in the book of Gad, the seer.

All right, so there are three people mentioned there and given credit for the accounting of David's life, first and last. And so that maybe clues us in that the authors of these two books are these three people, Samuel first and Nathan and Gad.

And which parts of, did Nathan write and Gad wrote? We don't have any idea. Because we don't have the book of Nathan or the book of Gad anymore.

But these were sources for 1 and 2 Samuel. All right, so that kind of gives you a little bit of an overview of the time period we're talking about.

[19:25] The authors of it, of this, kind of puts it side by side with the history of Israel and what was going on in Israel during this time.

What we had been studying back in Judges, we're going to still be dealing with that as we get into 1 Samuel about Israel's relationship with God and rebellion and all of those things still existing.

And so we'll deal with that as we study through these books. And finally tonight, let me just give you kind of the main divisions of 1 Samuel. And you can almost guess these yourselves if you've read these books at all.

But I've already mentioned the principal characters, Samuel, Saul, and then David. Those are the principal characters. And so you can divide the book very neatly. You know, probably the first of eight chapters of 1 Samuel.

Samuel is the main character. He's the prophet and the judge. And then when you get to chapter 9 and all the way through to the end of chapter 15, then the principal character is Saul.

[20:41] So then we'll have King Saul, his reign, and then his rejection, and ultimately his death. And then we have David the king.

David the king. A king after God's own heart. Starting with 1 Samuel chapter 16 and running all the way through to the end of 1 Samuel.

So those are the main divisions. And then all of the various events, some of which we're pretty familiar with. We'll kind of start out with the birth and childhood of Samuel.

And we know a little bit about the birth of Samuel and Hannah and how she was barren. And it's just a really neat story.

And then how he's dedicated to the Lord. A Nazirite served in the temple, served with Eli. How he is raised that way.

[21:38] Eventually he's called to the ministry. We remember that story about God speaking to him at night and he thought it was Eli. You know that story. And you probably have told that and taught that to your children over the years.

And then we have the judgment of Eli. Eli and his sons. His sons, of course, had made a mockery, violated the priesthood.

And they, God judges them and takes them out of the way. And Eli is finally judged. We know a little bit about that story. And then, kind of in the course of that happening, the ark is captured by the Philistines.

Are you remembering some of these stories? The ark is captured by the Philistines. And things didn't work out too well for the Philistines when they took the ark and put it in the temple with Dagon.

And my boys always loved that particular story about the idol falling over and all that kind of stuff. Really an interesting part of the story. And then, really, there's a bright light that comes in Israel's life.

[22 : 47] They return to Yahweh and there's deliverance. And then Samuel begins to exercise his office. There's a lot about that toward the end of that section.

But then also Samuel's failure. Maybe you remember that part of the story. Very similar to Eli's failure. Samuel's sons as well. And it just, for me, has been a lesson for those who are in the ministry to pay close attention to how your children are doing.

and how if you neglect your children, they can really ruin your ministry. And so, Eli, both Eli and Samuel could give that testimony.

So, those are the stories, some of those that are familiar to us that are connected with the birth and life and ministry of Samuel.

But then the book doesn't end there with Samuel because he goes on to anoint the first king. And so, then we get to that section, King Saul, his reign and his rejection.

[23 : 54] And we know a little bit about, remember the story about Saul being anointed and how he, you know, was pretty reluctant about that and afraid and kind of a coward in many ways.

And then we remember Saul's first great victory in battle. And then we also remember Saul's great failure with the Amalekites and how God had commanded Saul and the armies of Israel to utterly destroy the Amalekites, even all of their animals.

And Saul obeyed to a point, you know, so it wasn't full obedience in God because that rejected him and tore the kingdom away from him.

And, and then we get to David. David, the king after God's own heart. And you know, how things progressed with David coming to the throne long before he became the official king.

Saul, of course, desired to have him destroyed. And we know the story of David and Goliath. We know the story of David and Jonathan and a really, really neat part of the story.

[25 : 13] We know the story about Saul's attempt to destroy David on many occasions and David still honoring Saul as God's anointed throughout all of that.

And Saul and the witch of Endor. You know, there's just so many stories here in 1 Samuel that are familiar to us. And we'll be studying all of those.

And then, finally, we have Saul's death that comes there near the close of the book of 1 Samuel.

So that kind of gives you an overview and maybe kind of whets your appetite to really delve into some of these familiar stories in the lives of Samuel, Saul, and David in the larger picture in the life of Israel and how all this fits in with God's redemptive plan.

And so every step of the way, by the way, we're going to want to notice how this fits in not just in the life of Israel during this period of time in their history, but how it fits into the larger redemptive history that started all the way back at the creation and there in Genesis and runs all the way through the Old Testament on into the New Testament.

[26 : 33] 1 and 2 Samuel, the things that God did there, and many of those things will fit in to that overall redemptive history and we'll want to notice that every step of the way as we go.

Thank you.