



Overview for 1 Samuel

Purpose: The two Books of Samuel, together with Joshua, Judges, and the two Books of Kings, offer a history of God’s providential dealings with His people. The Book of 1 Samuel records the life of Samuel, the first prominent person in the history of the monarchy; the reign and decline of Saul, the first king; and the selection and preparation of David, Israel’s greatest king.

Author: Unknown, but some think Samuel had much to do with the compiling of information later put in this book. Some have suggested that Nathan’s son Zabud may have been the author (1 Kings 4:5). The book also includes the writings of Nathan and Gad (1 Chronicles 29:29).

Date Written: The exact date is unknown, though a general time frame can be made based on internal evidence. Samuel was born prior to 1100 B.C., during the Philistine oppression.

Setting: The Book of 1 Samuel describes Israel’s transition from a theocracy (led by God) to a monarchy (led by a king). It was a time of spiritual degradation, when every man did what was “. . . right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). The cycles of sin, oppression, repentance, and deliverance were escalating into a deadly spin to destruction. Samuel was God’s man of the hour, and he led the people through this time of transition.

Key People: Eli, Hannah, Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, and David.

Summary: In the Hebrew, the manuscripts forming 1 and 2 Samuel are one book. The book was separated into two volumes by the Septuagint translators, later adopted in the Vulgate translation, and was first translated in the Hebrew Bibles at Venice in 1518. The division between the books was appropriately made at the death of Saul, which was a turning point in the history of Israel.

The books bear many evidences of being compiled from pre-existing documents. History was documented

and kept by scribes, and these records became the principal authorities from which historical works were established.

An example of historical documentation is in 1 Samuel 10:25, where it said that Samuel wrote a book descriptive of the manner of the kingdom; he may also have written other books. Most of the accounts and descriptive narratives may be the accounts of eyewitnesses. These were written down by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, so that the finished product was neither strictly history nor biography, but the living Word of God.

The Book of 1 Samuel is divided into three main sections: the history of Samuel (I Samuel 1-12), the history of Saul (I Samuel 9-31), and the beginning and early life of David (I Samuel 16-31). It is a book of both great beginnings and tragic endings.

Eli was judge and priest at the time of Samuel’s early years and had ruled for forty years. However, he was a careless father and did not correct his sons, who were also priests. Their immorality and corruption brought the downfall of Eli’s house. Eli’s death marked the decline of the priesthood, and the rise of the prophets in Israel.

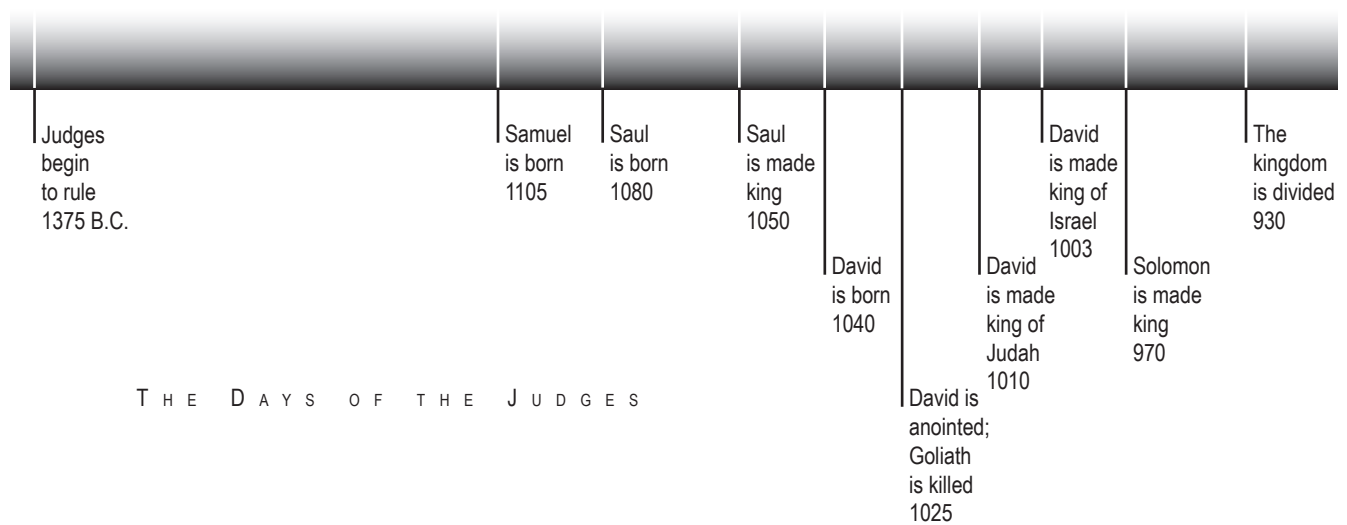
Samuel, who was dedicated by his mother to God’s service, became one of Israel’s greatest prophets. He was a man who was closely in touch with God—a spiritual leader who completed the work of the judges, initiated the school of the prophets, and anointed Israel’s first kings.

Saul, God’s choice as Israel’s first king, started well—humility, leadership, and bravery marked his early reign. However, he disobeyed God, became jealous of David, and finally had his kingship removed from him by God.

The early years of David occurred during the reign of Saul. A man who followed God, David ministered to Saul, and became a great and acclaimed warrior. His story is continued in the Book of 2 Samuel.

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. The judgeship of Samuel (1:1 — 7:17)
 - A. The birth and parentage of Samuel (1:1 — 2:10)
 - B. The call of Samuel (2:11 — 3:21)
 - C. The deliverance by Samuel (4:1 — 7:17)
- II. The reign of Saul (8:1 — 31:13)
 - A. The rise of King Saul (8:1 — 15:35)
 - B. The decline of King Saul and the rise of David (16:1 — 31:13)