

INTRODUCTION TO 9TH + 10TH BIBLEBOOK

1 SAMUEL AND 2 SAMUEL (before and after 931 B.C.)

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A. THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL.

1. The name of the book.

The two books of Samuel were originally one book, but due to their length they were divided into two books in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The name *Samuel* was given to these books, because the prophet Samuel is the main figure in the first 12 chapters as well as the head of the school of prophets, whose writings served as the source of these books. The name *Samuel* (Hebrew: Shemuel) means 'heard of God', that is, God heard Hannah's prayer.

2. The writer, the date and the place of writing.

How were the books of Samuel written?

Because the book relates events from the birth of Samuel in 1105 B.C. to the end of David's reign in 970 B.C., a period of at least 130 years, the writer must have made use of other oral and written sources of information to write these books. In 2 Samuel 1:18, the writer makes use of *the book of Jashar*, which already existed in the days of Joshua and probably was a collection of poems from different periods of time. The fact that he does not mention other sources of information is probably due to the fact that such documents were not readily available for the general public. However, the Bible makes very clear that other written documents existed. 1 Chronicles 29:29 mentions *the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Gad the seer and the records of Nathan the prophet*. The contents of the books of Samuel is largely and literally the same as that of 1 Chronicles. Therefore the writer must have made use of these writings to write the books of Samuel. The writer must have made use of the writings of the prophet Samuel to write about Samuel in 1 Samuel chapters 1 to 15. He must have made use of the writings of the prophets Gad and Nathan to write about king David. The writer also made use of *the book of the annals of king David*¹. These records probably contained the important political events of David's time. We conclude that the most important task of the writer was *to collect the written materials of the prophets and to compile a history of the transition from the time of the judges to that of the kings in Israel*.

When were the books of Samuel written?

The designation 'Israel and Judah' in 1 Samuel 17:52 and 18:16 during the reign of Saul as two separate states instead of one united state show that the writer probably wrote the books just after *the division of Israel into the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel in 931 B.C.* But because the writer uses the written materials of the prophets Samuel, Gad and Nathan, the writer probably collected these materials during the reign of king Solomon before 931 B.C., even if the materials were compiled in its present form after the death of the writer.

Who was the writer of the books of Samuel?

The Bible does not say who wrote these books. Nevertheless, like all the other writers of Bible books, he stood in the service of the divine Author, the Holy Spirit, and compiled and wrote exactly those things that God wanted the people of the world to know!

B. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL.

The theme of the books of Samuel: **"God's direct rule through earthly kings (theocracy) could not be realised through the sinful and weak kings of Israel."** Thus, the books of Samuel prepared Israel and all other nations on earth for the coming of the only true theocratic King, the Messiah, Jesus Christ. *The kingdom of God through Jesus Christ during the New Testament period is the true realisation and fulfilment of the Old Testament theocracy.*

The books of Samuel may be divided as follows:

1. 1 Samuel chapters 1 to 12. Samuel the prophet.

- Chapter 1-3 describes his birth, youth and calling as prophet, and parallel to that, the corruption of the priesthood of Eli's house.
- Chapter 4-6 describe the capture of the ark by the Philistines and God's judgement on Eli's house.
- Chapter 7 describes Samuel's work as judge of Israel together with the defeat of the Philistines at Ebenezer ('stone of help').
- Chapter 8-11 describes how Israel got their first king.
- Chapter 12 describes Samuel's farewell speech to Israel.

¹ 1 Chronicles 27:24

2. 1 Samuel chapters 13 to 31. King Saul.

- Chapter 13 to 15 describes Saul's military operations against the Philistines and Amalekites, in which his son Jonathan figures as the hero, and Saul's disobedience leads to his rejection as king.
- Chapter 16 to 18 describes the relationship between Saul and David, in which the writer especially describes David's anointing, his employment at the court of Saul, his victory over Goliath, his friendship with Jonathan, his growing military successes and his marriage to Michal.
- Chapter 19 to 20 describes the definite break between Saul and David, in which Jonathan chooses David's side.
- Chapter 21 to 26 describes David's wanderings in Judah's deserts and caves, while Saul was persecuting him.
- Chapter 27 to 31 describe David living in the Philistine territory and Saul's last battle against the Philistines. This part ends with the death of Saul and his sons.

3. 2 Samuel chapters 1 to 24. King David.

- Chapter 1 to 4. David, the king of the tribe of Judah in Hebron.
- Chapter 5 to 9. David, the great king of all the twelve tribes of Israel in Jerusalem. These chapters describe David at his peak: as *the true theocratic king*. He conquers Jerusalem and defeats the Philistines (chapter 5). He creates a place for the ark in Jerusalem (chapter 6). The Lord not only blesses him with fame and honour, a large family and great wealth, but also with the promise that kingship would remain with his descendants forever. In response, David prays and praises God and desires to be no more than *the servant of the Lord* (chapter 7). He shows priestly mercy and royal kindness to the son of Jonathan (chapter 9).
- Chapter 10 to 20. David, a weak human. These chapters describe the dark shadows of David's rule and show that *the ideal of theocracy could not be realised even under king David*. During the time of war against the Ammonites, David committed adultery with Bathsheba and killed her husband (chapter 11). Although the Lord forgave him, his sins had disastrous consequences: the death of his child (chapter 12), the incest committed by his son Amnon and his murder by his other son Absalom (chapter 13), the estrangement with his son Absalom (chapter 14), the conspiracy of Absalom and the flight of David (chapter 15), the curse of Shimei and the rape of David's concubines (chapter 16), the death of Absalom (chapter 18) and the revolt of Sheba (chapter 20).
- Chapter 21 to 24. Complementing the life of David through prose and poetry. Chapter 22 is Psalm 18, a song and retrospective view of the Lord's mercies shown to David. Chapter 23:1-7 contain the last prophetic words of David, a prophecy about the coming Messiah. Chapter 22 to 23:7 was probably originally planned as the end of the book, but the writer later decided that the list of David's mighty men and the story about how the place of the temple was chosen, ought to be included as a preparation for the building of the temple.

C. THE MESSIAH, JESUS CHRIST, IN THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL.

1. The Messiah would be both the faithful High Priest and the Anointed King.

This prophecy in 1 Samuel 2:35 is worked out in the next section.

2. The Messiah would be the Son of God and his throne and kingdom would endure forever.

This prophecy in 2 Samuel 7:11b to 16 is explained in Luke 1:32-33 and Hebrews 1:5. In Luke 1:32-33, the angel reveals to Mary that Jesus would be "great and called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." He does not say that the Messiah would be God's *physical son*, but that he would be God's *unique son!* The relationship between God the Father and God the Son is beyond our human understanding. It is expressed in human terms as the close relationship of a father and a son. Important is that *about 1000 years B.C., it was prophesied that the Messiah in his human nature, would descend from the house of David, but in his divine nature would stand in a unique relationship to God.* And it was prophesied that his kingdom would be everlasting.

3. The Messiah would be the Righteous Ruler who brings salvation to those who fear God, but destruction to those who do not fear God.

In 2 Samuel 23:1-7, David prophesies concerning the coming Messiah. He says that God through the Holy Spirit told him that "A righteous Ruler over people, a Ruler in the fear of God will be like the light of morning at sunrise." *The task of the Messiah would be to rule over all nations and all people on earth. The nation of Israel would be no exception.* The glory of the Messiah's reign would be to make an end to the reign of darkness, to bring the morning of salvation, and through his righteous rule over all people, to make them enjoy the wealth of his blessings². *The Messiah would receive this authority, not through political intrigues or military violence, but as a God-decreed right.* The influence of his reign would be like the renewal of the earth after it has rained!

David connects the Messiah to God's promise made to him in 2 Samuel 7:11-16. God's promise was an everlasting covenant with David. God's covenant would not depart from David's descendants and would not be jeopardised by the sins of his descendants.

As sure as God's covenant would bring salvation and the fulfilment of every desire to God's people, so sure the Day of the Messiah would be a day of judgement for all people who do evil and who do not fear the God of the Bible. They will be like thorns, plucked up with an iron hoe and totally burned with fire on the spot (23:6-7)!

² Compare Psalm 72:1-7,17

D. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL.

1. Priests in the light of the Bible.

Priests represent the people of God before God with prayers and sacrifices. True priests are servants of people before God and faithfully do to people what is in God's heart and mind. Chapter 1 to 3 in 1 Samuel describes the decay of the priesthood in Israel. At that time, the priesthood was led by Eli and his corrupt sons in a place called Shiloh. *The ark* was a wooden box in which the written laws of God were kept. It stood in the most holy place in the sanctuary. The ark represented the presence of God among his people³.

The ark was captured by the Philistines, but later returned. It remained in Kiriath Jearim for twenty years in almost total forgetfulness until David brought it to Jerusalem. Later, David built an altar on the place where the temple was later to be built. While in the beginning of the books of Samuel it seemed as if the service of worshipping the Lord in Israel was doomed to perish, the end of the books of Samuel shows that this service was given a new impetus by preparing the place of the future temple.

1 Samuel 2:35 contains a prophecy made by an unknown prophet. God said, "I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his house, and he will minister before my anointed one always (Hebrew: all the days)." The parallel of the expression "not for all the days" in verse 32 shows that this prophecy cannot refer to just one person. This prophecy does not concern one faithful priest or one anointed king, but concerns the future priests of Israel under its future kings. Its fulfilment began partially with the ministry of Samuel, but actually points to *the fulfilment of this prophecy (1 2:35) in the ministry of the priests in the line of Zadok⁴ under all the kings in the line of David.*

Finally, Psalm 110:4 and Zechariah 6:13 teach that this prophecy is completely and perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ and his kingdom during the New Testament period. According to 1 Peter 2:5 and Revelation 20:6, through his Holy Spirit, all true Christians are "priests of God and of Christ, who reign with Jesus Christ, the true High Priest and true Anointed King, from his first coming right up to his second coming!

2. Prophets in the light of the Bible.

Prophets represent God before the people of God by proclaiming God's message to them. True prophets are mediators of revelations from God, especially explaining God's will and God's laws to people. Although there were prophets in Israel before⁵, it is especially from the time of Samuel onwards that they became a permanent and regular phenomenon in Israel. Samuel was the last judge in Israel. As prophet he repeatedly received revelations from the Lord (1 3:10,19-21). Samuel conveyed the Lord's words to all Israel (1 4:1) and to the king (1 15:10). He anointed king Saul and king David (1 10:1; 1 16:13) and as a response to his prayer the Lord did wonders (1 7:9; 1 12:18).

Also groups of prophets developed around Samuel (1 10:10; 1 19:20). The development of the prophetic school next to the theocratic kingship is not accidental. The task of the prophets was to convey the will of God to the highest officials in the government (II 7 en 12) and to counter-balance every wilful and arrogant action by the kings. For example, in 1 Samuel 15:17-23, the prophet Samuel revealed God's will unafraid to king Saul. He said that "to obey God's Word is better than bringing sacrifices to God", and he explained that "rebellion against God is like the sin of occultism (divination) and arrogance is like the evil of idolatry".

3. Kings in the light of the Bible.

Kings represent the reign of God over the people of God with justice. True theocratic kings are servants of God and rule according to God's Word.

The purpose of the books of Samuel is to describe *the establishment of kingship in Israel*. It is not simply secular history describing political events in the history of Israel. *It is divine history describing the establishment of true theocratic kingship in Israel*, a kingship as God wanted it to be, namely, the direct rule of God through the medium of earthly kings. The theocratic kingship was necessary, because the priesthood under the house of Eli had become weak and corrupt and Israel was suffering under the yoke of the Philistines.

The prophet Samuel became the forerunner of this theocratic kingship. At the outset, Samuel opposed Israel's quest for a king, because Israel's motive to have a king like all the nations around them was wrong. Nevertheless, at God's command, he anointed Israel's first king, Saul. King Saul, however, showed that he was not the true theocratic king as Samuel envisioned and as God desired. Although Israel got what they wanted, they were punished together with king Saul. The emphasis in 1 Samuel falls on *the failure of king Saul's kingship*.

God's purpose of a theocratic kingship. It may not fail and cannot fail. Therefore, 1 Samuel describes the history of David. God called David a man after his own heart (1 13:14). *God chose David to be the true theocratic king in Israel and the type of the true theocratic King of the whole universe, namely, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.*

³ 1 Chronicles 13:6

⁴ 1 Kings 2:35

⁵ Deuteronomy 18:16-20

Already during the time of Moses (1407 B.C), *God had prepared Israel for this coming kingship*⁶. The theocratic king must not acquire great possessions or many wives for himself. He must keep a copy of God's Law with him and read it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to revere the Lord and obey all the laws of God. And because he is just a servant of God, he must not consider himself higher than his subjects. *The task of theocratic kings was to make Israel's ownership of the land Canaan effective by taking possession of the whole land Canaan, which God had promised to Abraham in Genesis 15:18-19 and which Joshua could not fulfil*⁷.

The first part of king David's history.

The first part of king David's history proves that the ideal of theocracy, that is, the direct rule of God through earthly kings, is exemplified by being a servant-king and a righteous king. The theocratic king David sees himself only as a servant of God. When he goes out to war, he first inquires of God, who is the real King, what he should do. He brings the forgotten ark of the covenant to Jerusalem and thus restores the reign and presence of God in the midst of his people. The theocratic king is also a righteous judge. 2 Samuel 8:15 says, "David did what was just and right for all the people." He was also humble and submitted himself to the things the prophets of the Lord said to him. In summary, the kingship in Israel was the most powerful when the king ruled as God's servant and ruled according to the high ethical and spiritual norms of God's Word! Under king David, the kingdom of Israel reached its greatest extension. 1 Kings 4:20-21 says, "The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore. ... Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River Euphrates ... to the border of Egypt."

The second part of king David's history.

The kingship in Israel was, however, the weakest when the king ruled like the other kings in the world and did what pleased himself. Even king David failed to be an ideal theocratic king. 2 Samuel chapters 10-20 describe how he committed adultery and murder. His sins put his own life and the life of his whole family and the life of his whole nation in severe danger. *The second part of king David's history proves that the ideal of theocracy, that is, the direct rule of God through earthly kings, could not be fully realised through sinful and weak human beings. This prepared Israel and all other peoples on earth for the coming of the only true theocratic King, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.*

⁶ Deuteronomy 17:14-20

⁷ Joshua 15:63, 16:10 and 18:2-3