

ESV Expository Commentary

VOL. III

1 Samuel–2 Chronicles

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EXPOSITORY
Commentary

VOL. III

1 Samuel–2 Chronicles

1–2 Samuel
John L. Mackay

1–2 Kings
J. Gary Millar

1–2 Chronicles
John W. Olley

 **CROSSWAY**[®]
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

ESV Expository Commentary, Volume 3: 1 Samuel–2 Chronicles

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Published by Crossway
1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Cover design: Jordan Singer

First printing 2019

Printed in Italy

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Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-4335-4636-5

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15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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PREFACE

TO THE ESV EXPOSITORY COMMENTARY

The Bible pulsates with life, and the Spirit conveys the electrifying power of Scripture to those who lay hold of it by faith, ingest it, and live by it. God has revealed himself in the Bible, which makes the words of Scripture sweeter than honey, more precious than gold, and more valuable than all riches. These are the words of life, and the Lord has entrusted them to his church, for the sake of the world.

He has also provided the church with teachers to explain and make clear what the Word of God means and how it applies to each generation. We pray that all serious students of God's Word, both those who seek to teach others and those who pursue study for their own personal growth in godliness, will be served by the ESV Expository Commentary. Our goal has been to provide a clear, crisp, and Christ-centered explanation of the biblical text. All Scripture speaks of Christ (Luke 24:27), and we have sought to show how each biblical book helps us to see the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

To that end, each contributor has been asked to provide commentary that is:

- *exegetically sound*—self-consciously submissive to the flow of thought and lines of reasoning discernible in the biblical text;
- *robustly biblical-theological*—reading the Bible as diverse yet bearing an overarching unity, narrating a single storyline of redemption culminating in Christ;
- *globally aware*—aimed as much as possible at a global audience, in line with Crossway's mission to provide the Bible and theologically responsible resources to as many people around the world as possible;
- *broadly reformed*—standing in the historical stream of the Reformation, affirming that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, taught in Scripture alone, for God's glory alone; holding high a big God with big grace for big sinners;
- *doctrinally conversant*—fluent in theological discourse; drawing appropriate brief connections to matters of historical or current theological importance;
- *pastorally useful*—transparently and reverently "sitting under the text"; avoiding lengthy grammatical/syntactical discussions;
- *application-minded*—building brief but consistent bridges into contemporary living in both Western and non-Western contexts (being aware of the globally diverse contexts toward which these volumes are aimed);

- *efficient in expression*—economical in its use of words; not a word-by-word analysis but a crisply moving exposition.

In terms of Bible translation, the ESV is the base translation used by the authors in their notes, but the authors were expected to consult the text in the original languages when doing their exposition and were not required to agree with every decision made by the ESV translators.

As civilizations crumble, God's Word stands. And we stand on it. The great truths of Scripture speak across space and time, and we aim to herald them in a way that will be globally applicable.

May God bless the study of his Word, and may he smile on this attempt to expound it.

—The Publisher and Editors

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ABBREVIATIONS

General

abr.	abridged by	ibid.	<i>ibidem</i> , in the same place
c.	circa, about, approximately	i.e.	that is
cf.	confer, compare, see	lit.	literal, literally
ch., chs.	chapter(s)	LXX	Septuagint
d.	died	mg.	marginal reading
ed(s).	editor(s), edited by, edition	MT	Masoretic Text
e.g.	for example	NT	New Testament
esp.	especially	OT	Old Testament
et al.	and others	repr.	reprinted
etc.	and so on	rev.	revised (by)
ff.	and following	s.v.	<i>sub verbo</i> (under the word)
Gk.	Greek	trans.	translator, translated by
Hb.	Hebrew	v., vv.	verse(s)
		vol(s).	volume(s)

Bibliographic

AB	Anchor Bible
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Edited by James B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
ApOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BCBC	Believers Church Bible Commentary
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BST	The Bible Speaks Today

- BTB *Biblical Theology Bulletin*
- CoBC Cornerstone Biblical Commentary
- COS *The Context of Scripture*. Edited by William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002.
- DNTB *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. Edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000.
- DOTHB *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*. Edited by Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005.
- DSB Daily Study Bible
- EvQ *Evangelical Quarterly*
- FAT Forschungen zum Alten Testament
- GTJ *Grace Theological Journal*
- HALOT *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000.
- HTR *Harvard Theological Review*
- IBC Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
- Int *Interpretation*
- ISBE *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988.
- JANES *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
- JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*
- JETS *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
- JHebS *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
- JSCS *Journal of Septuagint and Cognate Studies*
- JSJSup Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
- JSOT *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
- JSOTSup Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
- LHBOTS The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
- NAC New American Commentary
- NCBC New Century Bible Commentary
- NEA *Near Eastern Archaeology*
- NIB *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Edited by Leander E. Keck. 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004.
- NICOT New International Commentary on the Old Testament

- NIDOTTE** *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis.* Edited by Willem A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997.
- NIVAC** NIV Application Commentary
- NPNF2** *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2*
- NSBT** New Studies in Biblical Theology
- OBO** Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
- OTL** Old Testament Library
- OTS** Old Testament Studies
- OtSt* *Oudtestamentische Studiën*
- Proof* *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History*
- SBLDS** Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
- TDOT** *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.* Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis et al. 8 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974–2006.
- Them* *Themelios*
- TNTC** Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
- TOTC** Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
- TynBul* *Tyndale Bulletin*
- UBC** Understanding the Bible Commentary Series
- VT** *Vetus Testamentum*
- VTSup** Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
- WBC** Word Biblical Commentary
- WTJ** *Westminster Theological Journal*
- ZIBBCOT** *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Old Testament.* Edited by John H. Walton. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.

Books of the Bible

Gen.	Genesis	Ruth	Ruth
Ex.	Exodus	1 Sam.	1 Samuel
Lev.	Leviticus	2 Sam.	2 Samuel
Num.	Numbers	1 Kings	1 Kings
Deut.	Deuteronomy	2 Kings	2 Kings
Josh.	Joshua	1 Chron.	1 Chronicles
Judg.	Judges	2 Chron.	2 Chronicles

Ezra	Ezra	Mark	Mark
Neh.	Nehemiah	Luke	Luke
Est.	Esther	John	John
Job	Job	Acts	Acts
Ps., Pss.	Psalms	Rom.	Romans
Prov.	Proverbs	1 Cor.	1 Corinthians
Eccles.	Ecclesiastes	2 Cor.	2 Corinthians
Song	Song of Solomon	Gal.	Galatians
Isa.	Isaiah	Eph.	Ephesians
Jer.	Jeremiah	Phil.	Philippians
Lam.	Lamentations	Col.	Colossians
Ezek.	Ezekiel	1 Thess.	1 Thessalonians
Dan.	Daniel	2 Thess.	2 Thessalonians
Hos.	Hosea	1 Tim.	1 Timothy
Joel	Joel	2 Tim.	2 Timothy
Amos	Amos	Titus	Titus
Obad.	Obadiah	Philem.	Philemon
Jonah	Jonah	Heb.	Hebrews
Mic.	Micah	James	James
Nah.	Nahum	1 Pet.	1 Peter
Hab.	Habakkuk	2 Pet.	2 Peter
Zeph.	Zephaniah	1 John	1 John
Hag.	Haggai	2 John	2 John
Zech.	Zechariah	3 John	3 John
Mal.	Malachi	Jude	Jude
Matt.	Matthew	Rev.	Revelation

Apocrypha and Other Noncanonical Sources Cited

1 Esd.	1 Esdras
1 Macc.	1 Maccabees
2 Macc.	2 Maccabees

1-2 SAMUEL

John L. Mackay

INTRODUCTION TO 1–2 SAMUEL

Overview

The books of Samuel chart the process of major constitutional change in Israel: from judgeship to monarchy. This was accompanied by the transition of Israel from a loose affiliation of tribes oppressed by their neighbors to a unified nation with a strong central government exercising control over surrounding lands. This reorganization was not consolidated by human political or military maneuvering but occurred under the direction and governance of God, who was determined to maintain Israel as his special people and who provided for them the leadership and victories they needed.

The initial chapters of Samuel overlap the end of the period of the judges—a time of political decline into anarchy among the Israelites and spiritual deterioration into apostasy. Even the sons of the high priest, Eli, did not remain loyal to the Lord but instead abused their office for personal gain and licentious pursuits. The nadir of Israel’s fortunes occurred with the capture of the ark by the Philistines, whose control over the land became equivalent to a return to the oppression of Egypt. But the Lord had already made provision to turn the situation around. In response to godly Hannah’s prayers, he gave her a son, Samuel, who as a judge, prophet, and priest was equivalent to a second Moses, providing deliverance for the nation.

However, when Samuel grew old, Israel demanded that he appoint a permanent successor, “a king . . . like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). This proposal was a slight to the Lord and the adequacy of his provision in repeatedly raising up judges to deal with emergency situations as they arose. Even so, Samuel was directed to comply with Israel’s request, and Saul was anointed as king. Though he outwardly looked the part, Saul never really appreciated the unique nature of the monarchy instituted in Israel, leading to his contravening of God’s requirements. When Saul was rejected, Samuel was instructed to anoint David as his successor.

The closing chapters of 1 Samuel record Saul’s increasingly desperate struggles to cling to royal status for himself and his family by eliminating David, who survived three attempts on his life. Refusing to attack Saul, David became a fugitive as he awaited God’s will in making his promise of kingship come true. After roughly

ten years Saul took his own life upon being wounded by the Philistines in battle, and David became king.

David's reign, first for seven years over Judah and then for thirty-three more years over the whole nation, forms the subject matter of 2 Samuel. David enjoyed military victories over Israel's aggressors and was able to expand the area under his control. He also brought the ark of God to his new capital of Jerusalem, and the peak of his reign occurred when God entered into a covenant with him, promising to establish for him a dynasty in perpetuity (2 Samuel 7). That commitment was fully realized centuries later when Jesus Christ was born to descendants of David's royal house and subsequently inaugurated the kingdom of God in its fullness. Jesus' kingship is flawless, and by his death and resurrection he enabled all who commit themselves to him not only to be citizens of his kingdom but also to "reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12).

However, David's reign was far from flawless. He fell into grievous sin, and, although he was forgiven, the consequences of his transgressions marred the remainder of his reign. Indeed, his sins' aftermath was felt throughout the subsequent history of the monarchy in Israel. David's kingdom was plunged into internal upheaval, particularly with the rebellion of his son Absalom. Although David's political and religious legacy to his son Solomon was substantial, in his declining years he was no longer the resolute and wise ruler he had once been. Perfect kingship and enduring provision for God's people awaited the coming of David's greater Son.

Title

The title "Samuel" is not primarily a designation of authorship, since Samuel's death is recorded in 1 Samuel 25:1, or of theme, since David has a far more prominent role in the work. Rather "Samuel" derives from an ancient scribal convention of naming a text by the first major character or object in it.

First and Second Samuel were originally composed as a single work. However, when the Septuagint translation of the OT into Greek was prepared in the third and second centuries BC, the resultant manuscript of Samuel was so long that it proved convenient to divide and record it on two scrolls. The same course was followed with the Greek translation of Kings, and all four parts were subsumed under the title "Of the Kingdoms" or "Of the Reigns," which was perpetuated in the Latin Vulgate as "Kings I–IV." At the time of the Renaissance the Septuagintal divisions were introduced into the Hebrew text, but the original Hebrew titles remained.

Author

Samuel is an anonymous work, with no internal statement concerning its authorship. Jewish tradition recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (*Baba Bathra* 14b–15a) regarded Samuel as its author but, aware that he died in 1 Samuel 25:1, acknowledged the book as completed by Gad the seer and Nathan the prophet. This obviously drew on the evidence of 1 Chronicles 29:29, which attests to the writing

activities of these three prophetic figures. It is more probable that their records and other contemporary sources such as “the chronicles of King David” (1 Chron. 27:24) were used by a later unknown author (termed “the narrator” in these comments) to compose the document we now possess. See also Date and Occasion.

Date and Occasion

Samuel is a well-structured composition, with clearly distinguishable blocks of material in differing styles, demonstrating it to be a composite work drawn from a number of sources. Among these are the ark narrative of 1 Samuel 4:1–7:1 (often extended to include 2 Samuel 6), the history of David’s rise (1 Samuel 16–2 Samuel 5), and the succession narrative, more accurately labeled the “court history” of David (2 Samuel 13–20 and 1 Kings 1–2). Such sources existed as independent documents before their incorporation into the present work. But when did that incorporation take place?

While many parts of the text (such as David’s laments for Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sam. 1:19–27 and for Abner in 2 Sam. 3:33–34) originated contemporaneously with the events to which they refer, there are also indications of a later perspective. “To this day” frequently reflects the passage of time until the narrator’s day (1 Sam. 5:5; 6:18; 27:6; 30:25; 2 Sam. 4:3; 6:8; 18:18), as do comments such as those found in 1 Samuel 9:9 and 2 Samuel 13:18. For the implications of references to Israel and Judah, cf. comment on 1 Samuel 11:8. One such significant statement occurs in 1 Samuel 27:6: “Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day.” The avoidance of the expression “the kings of Israel” points to a time after the division of the kingdom after the death of Solomon in 931 BC.

Modern scholarship has generally adopted the hypothesis of a Deuteronomistic History comprising Joshua to 2 Kings, supposing the text of Samuel not to have been finalized until the period of the exile.¹ In fact, Samuel was more likely produced in its present form much earlier than that, possibly within three generations of David’s death. After the northern tribes broke away, a prophet in Judah was guided by the Spirit to compose a history of the kingdom to explain to his contemporaries why it had disintegrated and to provide guidance for the future. He presented the lives of Saul and David as embodying the warning that, for a king of Israel to be successful and maintain control of his realm, he must remain loyal to God and acknowledge the distinctive role of the monarchy in Israel. The disaster of a divided kingdom had occurred because lessons had not been learned. Even so, there was in God’s grace a continuing promise to the house of David, which, imperfect though it was, should have been recognized as rightfully ruling in Judah.

Genre and Literary Features

The primary genre of 1–2 Samuel is historical prose narrative, although other styles, such as prayer (1 Sam. 2:1–10) and lament (2 Sam. 1:17–27; 3:33–34), are

¹ For further information, see J. Gordon McConville, “The Old Testament Historical Books in Modern Scholarship,” *Them* 22/3 (1997): 3–13.

also found. The three poetic sections of the work play an important structural and interpretive role by highlighting the major themes of the book (1 Sam. 2:1–10; 2 Sam. 1:19–27; 22:2–23:7).

The Historical Books of the OT do not provide an exhaustive chronicle of the period they cover, nor do they seek to explain the events they describe in terms of political or sociological factors. Their focus is on demonstrating how God works out his purpose by directing and shaping human affairs, particularly those of his chosen people, and the incidents these books record are selected with that end in view. Thus these books are an exercise in tracing God’s hand in the events of this world through the guidance of an inspired writer, who provides direct insight into both God’s purpose (e.g., 1 Sam. 16:14) and human motives (e.g., 1 Sam. 18:17) and indirect insight through the literary form of his presentation.

In the Hebrew canon, 1–2 Samuel are included among the Former Prophets, which hints at when this book was produced (cf. Date and Occasion) and also at the perspective embodied in it. The prophets were preeminently spokesmen for the standards of the covenant. In keeping with that role, the narrator of Samuel, while providing vivid details of various characters, particularly through extensive dialogue, is not concerned primarily with providing a modern-style biography. He does not present epic tales or hero stories to glorify individuals but instead writes with the specific purpose of evaluating conduct in terms of obedience or disobedience to God’s covenant demands, while also recording the divine reaction to such behavior. In this the narrator, like the prophets in general, was guided by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

The theology of Samuel is not presented in direct, didactic fashion. Rather than telling his audience what to think, the narrator is generally content to provide sufficient information in order for his readers to draw their own conclusions by applying the norms of the covenant set out in the Mosaic law. It is therefore all the more significant when he does provide evaluative comments (e.g., 1 Sam. 2:12, 17; 2 Sam. 11:27).

The narrator deploys the techniques of a storyteller’s craft in order to suggest entry points into the process of evaluating conduct and events. For example, examples of wordplay include puns on words (such as in 1 Sam. 1:18; 4:18), where the same Hebrew root letters may convey a variety of meanings. This is inevitably evident only in the Hebrew text. Puns are made not for comic effect but in order to encourage listeners/readers to ponder possible nuances in what is being described. However, the use of key words is generally evident in translation, as significant terms are repeated in order to draw attention to the point the writer wishes to highlight, e.g., repetition of “take” in 1 Samuel 8:10–18, of the term *nagid* and related words in 1 Samuel 9:1–10:16, or of “listen” and “voice” in 1 Samuel 15.

Other literary techniques found in Samuel include chiasm, inclusion, and narrative analogy.² *Chiasm* refers to a pattern of nested words, phrases, or themes

2 For a survey of the literary techniques to be found in Samuel, see V. Phillips Long, *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul: A Case for Literary and Theological Coherence*, SBLDS (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 7–42.

arranged in a concentric pattern such as A-B-C-B'-A', with the central element being the thematic focus. Chiasm was undoubtedly employed by ancient authors, but the extent to which it is presumed present in extended pieces of literature may be influenced by overly imaginative scholarly labeling (cf. Section Overview of 2 Sam. 15:1–12; Overview of 2 Samuel 21–24; Section Overview of 2 Sam. 23:1–7). *Inclusion* employs similar or identical words or phrases at the beginning and end of a section of narrative. This bracketing effect draws attention to the unity of the episode and invites the audience to consider the episode as a whole.

Narrative analogy, on the other hand, looks beyond an immediate literary unit and encourages comparison with earlier action or speech.³ One instance of this is how Jonathan serves as a foil for his father, Saul, in 1 Samuel 13–14. Another analogy deeply embedded in the narrative is the analogy between the reigns of Saul and David. Both enjoy early success (1 Sam. 11:1–13:7 and 2 Samuel 2–9), both lapse into sin (1 Sam. 13:8–15:35 and 2 Samuel 11–12), and both experience the consequences of their transgressions. In Saul's case his sin's consequences are evident in his alienation from God and his paranoid jealousy of David (1 Samuel 16–31), but the outcome in David's case is different (2 Samuel 13–24). Certainly there are still dire consequences of his sin, but he is not divinely rejected. Understanding why David heads a dynasty while Saul is cut off is one of the key aims of the book.

Theology of 1–2 Samuel

THE KINGSHIP OF THE LORD

The theology of Samuel is essentially covenant theology. The Lord had established a special bond between himself and the Israelites by delivering them from servitude in Egypt and constituting them as a nation, with a unique role in his redemptive purpose (Ex. 19:4–6). By formalizing his relationship with them in terms of the covenant he instituted at Sinai, God taught Israel to view him as their King, who “will reign forever and ever” (Ex. 15:18; cf. Deut. 33:5), and themselves as his subjects. He undertook to provide for them and to defend them from their enemies. He also set out via Moses, the covenant mediator, the norms by which his people were to conduct their lives. They would enjoy divine blessing if they adhered to his requirements, but disobedience would entail the imposition of the curses of the violated covenant. This covenant provision conferred on Israel a special status, enhancing their privileges and heightening their responsibilities.

Throughout Samuel there is no doubt of the Lord's providential governance of events on earth. He exercises his prerogative as Lord over history to intervene in human affairs to further his purposes for his people. He both closes Hannah's womb and answers her plea for a son (1 Sam. 1:9–20). His control is evident in the way that “he brings low and he exalts” (1 Sam. 2:7). He calls Samuel as his prophet

³ Robert P. Gordon, “David's Rise and Saul's Demise: Narrative Analogy in 1 Samuel 24–26,” *TynBul* 31 (1980): 42–43.

(1 Samuel 3) and uses him to restore Israel's fortunes and to anoint both of her first two kings to office. He controls the details of Saul's search for his father's lost donkeys (1 Samuel 9–10) and David's preservation while being hunted by Saul (see especially 1 Samuel 23). He answers prayer (e.g., 2 Sam. 15:31) and sways the thinking of a group of individuals (2 Sam. 17:14). The universal scope of divine sovereignty is seen in the way that even the Philistines are compelled to "give glory to the God of Israel" (1 Sam. 6:5).

Furthermore, in the outworking of God's providential rule, he judges human conduct, including that of his own people. Deviation from his standard is never without serious consequence. This is seen at a national level when the Philistines defeat Israel and at a personal level in the death of Eli's sons, who had abused their office (1 Sam. 4:1–11). Lack of reverence for the ark leads to the death of Israelites (1 Samuel 6; 2 Samuel 6). Saul's disobedience results in the withdrawal of his right to rule (1 Sam. 15:23) and loss of spiritual blessing (1 Sam. 16:14). The extended study of the later years of David's reign in 2 Samuel 11–20 details the disastrous impact of his sin on himself and his realm.

COVENANT KINGSHIP

The Lord, as the covenant lord of Israel, granted the nation the right to settle in the Promised Land. When they did so, their form of government was theocratic—God ruled directly over them. The only stated officials were priests and elders of the tribes, who administered local affairs. At each crisis brought on by Israel's sin, God raised up a "judge," a specially endowed individual who acted as his agent to deliver the people and superintend their affairs on his behalf. When a judge died, he had no immediate successor. Another judge was not appointed until a subsequent crisis required divine intervention.

When Samuel, who held the office of judge, grew old, the people were dissatisfied with this seemingly ad hoc procedure and requested the establishment of a dynastic monarchy. They failed to recognize that the fundamental problem facing Israel was their own spiritual insensitivity and rebellion, not the nature of the Lord's provision for their need. They advocated conformity to the pattern of surrounding nations, demonstrating that they no longer grasped their unique status as the people of the Lord.

However, dynastic kingship had always been part of the Lord's intention for his people. Indeed, as early as Genesis 17:6 God had promised Abraham, "Kings shall come from you." Jacob had predicted of Judah, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet" (Gen. 49:10). In Deuteronomy the requirements of a covenant king had been set forth (Deut. 17:14–20) and the establishment of kingship envisaged (Deut. 28:36; cf. also Num. 24:17).

But this was all subject to an important caveat. Kingship in Israel would not be permitted to compromise the Lord's sovereignty or undermine the nature of the covenant community. Thus Deuteronomy 17:14–20 required a king of Israel to be divinely chosen, to be a member of the covenant community, and to

act contrary to the self-aggrandizing fashion of heathen kings, who multiplied armaments in the form of horses, sought political alliances via polygamy, and pursued great wealth. Like any other Israelite, he was to observe God's law and rule with reverence, "that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers" (Deut. 17:20) to lord over those he was to shepherd. If the norms of covenant kingship prevailed, the dynasty would be perpetuated. Samuel himself spelled out the disastrous results of existing models of kingship (1 Sam. 8:10–18) and set Israel's kingship in the context of the people's covenant obligations to the Lord (1 Sam. 12:13–15).

Thus it was not the establishment of kingship per se which caused problems, but the way in which the people sought to preempt divine timing on the matter, pursuing the deficient and pagan concept of kingship of the surrounding nations. Israel's king was to be a *covenant king*, a special type of constitutional monarch who accepted the divine dimension of the "rights and duties of the kingship" (1 Sam. 10:25). He was to be God's deputy on earth, doing his will and so preserving the Lord's status as Israel's true king. Moreover, Israel's king was to promote the well-being of his subjects and to respect their status under God by adhering to "the good and the right way" (1 Sam. 12:23). If the king adhered to these requirements, Israel would remain a theocracy—a mediated theocracy anticipating Christ's kingly rule.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

One important result of the establishment of kingship in Israel was the covenant that God instituted with David and his descendants (2 Samuel 7). The origin of the redemption the Lord had promised through the offspring/seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15) had been narrowed in God's promise to Abraham, in which he declared, "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3; cf. Gen. 15:9–21; 17:4–14). That line of promise was further restricted to Isaac's offspring (Gen. 26:3–5) and through Jacob to the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10). Now, building on those promises, the promised seed is shown to be a kingly deliverer for Israel and the world from the line of David, the perpetuation of whose dynasty was established as "instruction for mankind" (2 Sam. 7:19).⁴

From this royal household, David's greater Son, Jesus Christ, eventually arose. He was the one able to fulfill perfectly the role of covenant king. It is through the Davidic covenant that the term "Son of David" comes to be applied to the Messiah (Matt. 1:1; 20:30; Luke 1:32–33; Rev. 22:16). Indeed, God's promise to David concerning his descendant, that "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son" (2 Sam. 7:14), is cited in Hebrews 1:5 as anticipating Christ as the "Son of God."

⁴ Further discussion of the Davidic covenant is found in O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 229–252.

Relationship to the Rest of the Bible and to Christ

HISTORY OF SALVATION

During the period of the judges, the prevalence of anarchy and intertribal tension hampered—indeed eclipsed—Israel’s calling to be a light to the nations. So there is a key development in the history of salvation with the institution of covenant kingship, which provided greater clarity regarding the messianic hope involved in redemption. However questionable the timing of the arrival of kingship in Israel, it was not covenant kingship that was flawed but the failure of those who held office to live up to its requirements. Although much was promising in the reigns of Saul and David, they both failed in different ways to realize the ideal of a covenant king. This paved the way for subsequent decline in the land and tensions between north and south that shattered the unity of the people. Although there were a few exceptions among subsequent rulers of the south, neither nation’s kings led their land in righteousness. Both kingdoms were destroyed and their people exiled. What was needed was the coming of a greater ruler to institute the eternal kingdom that will never perish.

However, it was also the case that under David there was fulfillment of the divine promise to Abraham regarding possession of the land: “To your offspring I will give this land” (Gen. 12:7). Its boundaries were specified in Genesis 15:18–21, and although it was under Solomon that the full realization of this promise was reached (1 Kings 4:21), this land was the legacy of divine blessing that Solomon’s father bequeathed to him (2 Samuel 8).

The significance of the land promise derived from the fact that the land functioned as the locus of the Lord’s manifestation of his presence among his people—where he would meet with them and they could enjoy fellowship with him. During David’s reign there were two significant advances in the implementation of that promise. First, Jerusalem became David’s capital (2 Sam. 5:8–10) as “the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there” (Deut. 12:11). In this way Jerusalem came to symbolize the eternal dwelling place of God with his people (Rev. 21:2). Also, throughout the course of the book the tabernacle at Shiloh is destroyed and preparations are begun for the erection of the temple in Zion/Jerusalem, with the promise that David’s own son would build a house for the Lord’s name (2 Sam. 7:13). This even more specific localization of God’s presence with his covenant people foreshadowed Christ’s role as the living temple (John 2:18–21), which in turn provides the foundation for the “spiritual house” built out of the “living stones”—his followers (1 Pet. 2:5).

In the outworking of God’s redemptive plan, hints of Christ’s threefold office of prophet, priest, and king are progressively unveiled. The focus in 1–2 Samuel is clearly on the office of king, but priests and prophets also play a significant role in the life of God’s people. Unfortunately, the principal development as regards the priesthood is the demise of Eli and his household because of their dereliction of duty (1 Sam. 2:27–36; 3:13–14), also reflected in Saul’s slaughter of the priests at Nob (1 Sam. 22:18–19). Mention is also made of the roles of Abiathar and Zadok as

high priests in David's reign (2 Sam. 8:17; 15:24; 20:25). The general failure of the priests to live up to the demands of their office functions negatively to heighten the desire for one whose priesthood would be flawless (Heb. 4:14; 9:11–14).

In the era of the founding of the monarchy, the institution of prophecy advanced significantly. Prior to Samuel there had been prophetic figures, such as Moses (Deut. 18:15) and the unnamed figures in Judges 6:8 and 1 Samuel 2:27, as well as groups of prophets (1 Sam. 10:5; 19:20), but the phenomenon of prophecy was not widely present (1 Sam. 3:1). That changed with Samuel, who was reckoned as the first of the prophets (Acts 3:24). "One way of seeing the two roles of prophet and king is to see them as differentiations of roles formerly combined into one person, the judge. The judges were charismatic; they were leaders in the struggle for deliverance. The prophets perpetuate the charismatic quality associated with the judges; the kings perpetuate the military role."⁵

This is evident in the way Samuel's prophetic ministry acts as a counterbalance to Saul (1 Sam. 13:10–15; 15:10–23). The role of court prophet was perpetuated in the ministries of Gad (1 Sam. 22:5; 2 Sam. 24:11, 18) and Nathan (2 Sam. 7:2, 4; 12:1–15) with respect to David. They challenged the king to remain faithful to the terms of his divine appointment. It was only in Christ that the prophetic and regal roles were again combined in a figure whose obedience was impeccable.

LINKS WITH OTHER BIBLICAL BOOKS

Since the history related in Samuel is continued in Kings, there are various points of contact between these books, particularly in the early chapters of Kings, where Solomon is enthroned as David's successor and privileged to be the one to build the Jerusalem temple. When the Chronicler retells OT history from his particular point of view, he has little to say about Saul (1 Chron. 9:35–10:14) and even less about Samuel. He does, however, pick up the story of David as he becomes king in Hebron and follows it through to his death, particularly emphasizing the preparations he made so that Solomon could begin to build the temple at the start of his own reign (1 Chronicles 22–29).

Direct quotations from Samuel in the NT are relatively rare: 1 Samuel 13:14 in Acts 13:22; 2 Samuel 7:14 in 2 Corinthians 6:18 and Hebrews 1:5; 2 Samuel 22:50 in Romans 15:9. There are, however, a number of other texts in Mark, Luke, and John that are primarily concerned with salvation accomplished by the messianic Son of David, reflecting the seminal promise of 2 Samuel 7.

One very significant linkage to the books of Samuel is the book of Psalms. Although the authenticity of the superscriptions of various psalms is questioned by many, they are part of the canonical text. Along with references in the text of the psalms, they connect these psalms to various events in David's life. This is of considerable help for approaching these incidents from another perspective, that of David himself, and for setting out the theological significance of the events depicted (table 1.1).

⁵ Elmer A. Martens, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), 149.

TABLE 1.1: Links between David's Career in 1–2 Samuel and the Book of Psalms

1 Samuel	19:11	David's house surrounded	Psalms	59*
	21:10–11	David seized in Gath		56*
	21:12–22:1	David escapes from Achish (called Abimelech in Psalm 34 superscription)		34*
	22:1; 24:3	David in cave		57*; 142*
	22:9–19	Doeg the Edomite		52*
	23:6–13	Trapped in Keilah		31:21–22
	23:14–15 (?)	Wilderness of Judah		63*
	23:19	David betrayed by Ziphites		54*
2 Samuel	6	Return of the ark to Jerusalem		24, 68, 132
	7	Davidic covenant		89
	8:1–14	Battles against foreign foes		60*
	11–12	David's transgression and repentance		51*, 32
	15–17	Absalom's revolt		3*
	15:31	Defection of Ahithophel		41:9
	15–17 (?)	Wilderness of Judah		63*
	22	Victory over all enemies		18

*based on psalm superscription

TYPOLOGY

Even though God spoke “at many times and in many ways” (Heb. 1:1) during the OT era, there was an underlying unity in his action and communication. All of it prepared for the coming of the Messiah and the redemption he would accomplish. Furthermore, God structured the life of Israel as his covenant people not only to prepare for the coming of Christ but also to foreshadow who he would be and what he would do. This was true of their religious life in terms of institutions such as sacrifice, the tabernacle, and the priesthood, and also in the political and social arrangements God ordained for Israel. Kingship in Israel was designed not only to provide for the immediate political and military needs of the nation. The office of king was always intended to foreshadow the coming ruler. Scripture is concerned ultimately not with King David but with another king, Jesus.

The interplay between the two levels of historical reality represented by these two kings is what biblical scholarship has in mind when it describes David as a type of Christ. God established parallels between the two so that the earlier figure anticipated the later, and thus it is possible to trace parallels between David's career and the person and work of Jesus, who was given the right to sit on David's throne (Luke 1:32). Both were divinely recognized through prophetic ministry, David by Samuel (1 Sam. 16:13) and Jesus by John the Baptist (John 1:29–34; 5:31–35).

Both experienced the coming of the Spirit of the Lord upon them (1 Sam. 16:13; Matt. 3:16) and were able to perform mighty deeds (1 Samuel 17; 2 Samuel 8; Matt. 11:4–5; Acts 2:22). David was rejected by King Saul, who persecuted him (1 Sam. 19:2; 20:33), just as Jesus had to flee the land because of King Herod (Matt. 2:13). Both also suffered rejection by their own people (1 Sam. 23:12; 2 Sam. 15:13; John 1:11; 19:15), yet God extended honor and renown to both (2 Sam. 7:9; 23:5; Acts 2:33; Phil. 2:9). Many such resemblances between God’s treatment of David and of Jesus can be traced.

However, describing David as a type of Christ has to be properly understood. If it is David as a person who foreshadowed Christ, how then are we to interpret David’s transgression? David (or any other Israelite monarch who held the God-appointed office of king) was a type of Christ when he lived up to the divine stipulations pertaining to that office. When that occurred, we may legitimately descry in his conduct something of the character of the Messiah, the perfect king, and in his achievements something of how Christ administers his kingdom. David is not idealized. His faults are starkly exposed. Even so, in David there is, albeit imperfectly, something hinted at that was consummated by Jesus, who as God incarnate in the flesh harmonized in his person divine and human kingship and merited the title “The LORD is our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6). Furthermore, when David complied with God’s requirements, God employed him as his instrument to bring blessing on himself and the nation and to advance the history of salvation by doing the good works that God had prepared in advance for him to do (cf. Eph. 2:10).

Preaching from 1–2 Samuel

In preaching from Samuel, it must not be forgotten that there are not three main characters in the book—Samuel, Saul, and David—but only one: God himself. The principal lesson taught in the books of Samuel is that God is the one who shaped the action and outcome of the narratives, from his initial withholding of children from Hannah in 1 Samuel 1 to his acceptance of David’s sacrifice in 2 Samuel 24. It is the Lord’s providential control that shapes events according to his purpose and ensures the preservation of his chosen people, in particular the Davidic dynasty, from whom will come the Messiah himself. God displays his wisdom and power despite the sin and folly of his people, and he achieves his purposes.

That said, the detailed information concerning individuals depicted in Samuel constitutes an invitation to engage in character studies by providing ample material for doing so. Many lessons may be learned by considering how individuals met their life situations in light of God’s revealed will and the circumstances of his providence. This is particularly true of the narratives of David, in which the testimony of Psalms provides further insight into his spiritual condition. Moreover, the lives of David and Samuel provide entry points into the life of Christ at points in which they live up to the requirements of their office (cf. Relationship to the Rest of the Bible and to Christ: Typology). Even when they (and Saul) fail to do so, much instruction is available by way of warning: “Now these things took

place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did” (1 Cor. 10:6, which addresses other historical events that similarly inform the NT people of God). Such negative conduct also serves to enhance appreciation of the perfect behavior of Christ.

While a typological approach enables a preacher to bring the text forward from its OT setting to Jesus’ earthly ministry, there is room for further application. When David and others lived up to the standards of commitment and conduct in their respective roles, they prospectively mirrored Christ. The challenge facing the Christian is to behave similarly retrospectively, displaying attitudes and conduct consciously patterned on the life of Christ (Phil. 2:5). This is why Paul could urge the Corinthians, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1; cf. also 1 Thess. 1:6). Since Christ is the living embodiment of the practical and ethical principles that should govern our lives, it is appropriate to move from OT anticipation to Christ himself and to continue on from there to derive applications of immediate relevance to modern living. External circumstances may have changed markedly, but human nature has not, and the divine norms for human living remain constant.

Because its narrator provides significant detail regarding many individuals, it is possible to distinguish two broad groups of characters in the books of Samuel. Some are sketched in a one-dimensional fashion as displaying a single trait. This group would include Eli’s sons, Nabal, Achish, and Ahimaaz. However, many others are rounded figures, whose attitudes and motives are diverse and of varying degrees of complexity. Who can really grasp every aspect of Joab’s character? It is also possible to detect contrast between individuals, such as between Jonathan and Absalom: one of these men, aware of God’s choice of David, graciously ceded his rights as crown prince and Saul’s heir; the other treacherously grasped power by rebelling against his father. Also notable is the extent to which women play a significant role in 1–2 Samuel. Hannah (1 Samuel 1–2), Michal (1 Samuel 18–19; 2 Samuel 6), Abigail (1 Samuel 25), and two wise women (of Tekoa, 2 Samuel 14; of Abel of Beth-maacah, 2 Samuel 20) all repay close study. One particularly fruitful approach is to evaluate their lives in terms of how God weighed their actions and intervened to reverse their circumstances, just as Hannah outlined in her prayer (1 Sam. 2:1–10).

Interpretive Challenges

TEXT

The Masoretic Text of Samuel has been poorly preserved. In addition to differing from the synoptic portions of Chronicles (e.g., at 2 Sam. 21:19), the traditional Hebrew text of Samuel varies by way of both additions and omissions when compared with the early Greek translation (the Septuagint), differences attested in a number of manuscripts that themselves diverge in many places. More recently, one manuscript containing about 10 percent of Samuel (4QSam^a), as well as two more fragmented texts, has been discovered at Qumran. This additional evidence

frequently—but not universally—supports readings found in Chronicles or in the Septuagint.

Evaluating this evidence is a difficult and skilled task, but the general reliability of the Masoretic Text should not be underestimated.⁶ However, each passage requires separate consideration. Where significant textual uncertainty exists, it is noted in the ESV footnotes.

CHRONOLOGY

Historical narratives inevitably raise questions of dating, and some of the chronological challenges posed by Samuel are as complex as any in Scripture. Since the narrator's focus was on the theological significance of events, the available information frequently resembles an incomplete jigsaw puzzle, whose pieces may be brought together in various ways.

Dating of this period is best approached backward, because there is general agreement that Solomon's forty-year reign (1 Kings 11:42) ended in 931 BC and thus began in 971. Since the reigns of David and Solomon overlapped by anywhere between a few months and two years, the dates of David's reign of forty years and six months (2 Sam. 5:4–5) are somewhat less well anchored, but 1010–971 functions as an adequate approximation.

While understanding 1010 BC as the start of David's reign would also mark that date as the end of Saul's, establishing when Saul became king is an unresolved conundrum, because the text of the key passage for dating Saul's reign (1 Sam. 13:1) has not survived intact. The Jewish historian Josephus, writing in the first century AD, used two different figures for the length of Saul's reign, twenty years (*Antiquities* 10.143) and forty (*Antiquities* 6.378). Josephus's chronological calculations are not always accurate, but it would seem that the latter figure of forty years is supported by Paul in Acts 13:21, and this is commonly adopted in conservative chronologies.

Some corroboration for a forty-year reign is provided by the age of Ish-bosheth, Saul's son. Ish-bosheth was forty when he was made king in the north (2 Sam. 2:10), probably around 1006 BC, toward the end of David's reign in Hebron. Thus he was thirty-five years old when his father died. His absence from the earlier list of Saul's sons in 1 Samuel 14:49 would therefore be accounted for by placing the formation of that list at the start of Saul's reign, with Ish-bosheth being born within a forty-year (not twenty-year) reign for Saul.

Also missing from 1 Samuel 13:1 is Saul's age when he became king. In 1 Samuel 13, Saul's son Jonathan serves not only as a soldier but also as one in charge of a division of the Israelite army (1 Sam. 13:3). Since twenty years of age was the threshold for military service, Saul was probably over forty years old at his accession. A reign of forty years (1050–1010) would then entail that he was over eighty years old at the battle of Gilboa (1 Samuel 31), which, while possible,

⁶ Stephen Pisano, *Additions or Omissions in the Books of Samuel: The Significant Pluses and Minuses in the Massoretic, LXX, and Qumran Texts*, OBO (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984).

does not readily cohere with the account of his activities at that point. A forty-year reign would also imply a considerable stretch of time earlier in his reign about which we are told little.

It is therefore not possible to dismiss entirely the view that Saul’s reign was much shorter, perhaps twenty to twenty-two years.⁷ This makes use of Josephus’s alternative figure for Saul’s reign—he would then have been over sixty years old at his death—and is harmonized with Acts 13:21 by noting that the mention of “forty years” comes at the end of that verse and perhaps includes both Samuel’s judgeship and Saul’s reign. Ish-bosheth’s absence from the list of Saul’s sons may be otherwise accounted for (cf. comment on 1 Sam. 14:49).

There are also issues in dating Samuel’s judgeship as described in 1 Samuel 7:13–17. One proposal is that it took place within the twenty years mentioned in 1 Samuel 7:2 and that Saul’s appointment as king followed the Mizpah revival with virtually no break, but this makes the reading of various passages in 1 Samuel 7 difficult.⁸ It is preferable to assume that Samuel judged Israel for eighteen to twenty years before Saul became king. If Samuel was about ten when Eli died after the battle of Aphek, he would have been around thirty when he became judge and over eighty-five years old (alternatively, sixty-five years) when he died several years before the end of Saul’s reign.

Eli was ninety-eight years old when he died (1 Sam. 4:15). He judged Israel for forty years (1 Sam. 4:18), the last twenty of which coincided with the first twenty years of the Philistine oppression of forty years mentioned in Judges 13:1. Shortly after the start of that oppression, Samson was born. Samson would only “begin to save Israel” from the Philistines (Judg. 13:5). His judgeship began when he was of marriageable age, perhaps eighteen or twenty, and lasted for twenty years (Judg. 16:31), contemporaneous with the closing years of Eli’s judgeship and terminating not long before the battle of Aphek.

TABLE 1.2: Overview of Chronology from Eli to Solomon

	Chronology A: 40-year reign of Saul		Chronology B: 20-year reign of Saul
Eli’s Judgeship	1130–1090 BC		1110–1070 BC
Samuel’s Judgeship	1070–1050		1050–1030
Saul’s Reign	1050–1010		1030–1010
David’s Reign		1010–971	
Solomon’s Reign		971–931	

While the terminal dates of David’s life and reign are anchored by 2 Samuel 5:4–5, the sequence of events within his career cannot be established with such pre-

⁷ This was argued for by the nineteenth-century conservative scholar C. F. Keil in Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996 [originally 1886–1891]), 2:207.

⁸ For an attempt to do so, see Andrew E. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2011).

cision. Disputed dates include that of Hiram’s building of David’s palace (cf. comments on 2 Sam. 5:11–12). Whether this occurred early or late in his reign impacts the dating of the return of the ark and of the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 6–7). Another contentious issue is whether all the events of 2 Samuel 21–24 occurred after Absalom’s revolt. In view of the thematic rather than chronological presentation adopted by the narrator of Samuel, table 1.3 presents a tentative outline as a framework for the major events in David’s life.

TABLE 1.3: Approximate Dates for Major Events in David’s Life

Birth of David		1040 BC
David anointed	1 Sam. 16:13	1023
David slays Goliath	1 Samuel 17	1021
David marries Michal	1 Sam. 18:27	1019
David in wilderness	1 Samuel 19–26	1017–1012
David serves Achish	1 Samuel 27–30	1012–1010
David reigns in Hebron	2 Sam. 2:4	1010–1003
David reigns in Jerusalem	2 Sam. 5:3	1003–970
Capture of Jerusalem	2 Sam. 5:6–10	1003
Philistine Wars	2 Sam. 5:17–25	1003–1002
Three-year famine begins	2 Sam. 21:1	1000
Restoration of Mephibosheth	2 Sam. 9:1–13	998
Ammonite wars begin	2 Samuel 10	997
David’s adultery	2 Samuel 11	996
Rape of Tamar	2 Samuel 13	988
Absalom’s exile	2 Sam. 13:38	986–983
David’s palace built	2 Sam. 5:11–12	979–976
Absalom’s rebellion	2 Sam. 15:7–18:33	late 976–975
David’s census	2 Samuel 24	973
Solomon becomes co-regent	1 Kings 1:39	971
David’s death	1 Kings 2:10	970

Outline of 1–2 Samuel

- I. Samuel: The Last of the Judges (1 Sam. 1:1–7:17)
 - A. The Birth and Dedication of Samuel (1:1–28)
 - B. Hannah’s Prayer (2:1–11)
 - C. Corruption at Shiloh (2:12–36)
 - D. The Lord Calls Samuel (3:1–4:1a)

- E. The Capture of the Ark (4:1b–22)
- F. The Ark in Enemy Territory (5:1–12)
- G. The Return of the Ark (6:1–7:1)
- H. The Judgeship of Samuel (7:2–17)
- II. Samuel and Saul, Israel's First King (8:1–15:35)
 - A. Israel Requests a King like the Nations (8:1–22)
 - B. Saul's Private Anointing (9:1–10:16)
 - C. Saul Publicly Selected as King (10:17–27)
 - D. Saul Defeats the Ammonites (11:1–15)
 - E. The Need for Covenant Faithfulness (12:1–25)
 - F. Saul against the Philistines (13:1–23)
 - G. Jonathan Routs the Philistines (14:1–52)
 - H. Saul's Final Rejection (15:1–35)
- III. The Era of the Two Kings: David and Saul (1 Sam. 16:1–2 Sam. 1:27)
 - A. The Future King (1 Sam. 16:1–23)
 - B. David's Victory over Goliath (17:1–58)
 - C. Reactions to David's Success (18:1–30)
 - D. Saul's Further Attempts to Kill David (19:1–24)
 - E. The Friendship of David and Jonathan (20:1–42)
 - F. David Flees from Saul (21:1–15)
 - G. The Wanderer and the Wandered (22:1–23)
 - H. The Upholder of My Life (23:1–29)
 - I. David Spares Saul's Life a First Time (24:1–22)
 - J. David, Nabal, and Abigail (25:1–44)
 - K. David Spares Saul's Life a Second Time (26:1–25)
 - L. David Again among the Philistines (27:1–28:2)
 - M. Saul Consults a Medium (28:3–25)
 - N. David's Dilemma Resolved (29:1–11)
 - O. David Defeats the Amalekites (30:1–31)
 - P. The Death of Saul and His Sons (31:1–13)
 - Q. How the Mighty Have Fallen! (2 Sam. 1:1–27)
- IV. The Establishment of David's Reign (2:1–9:13)
 - A. David Is Anointed King of Judah (2:1–32)
 - B. The Murder of Abner (3:1–39)
 - C. The Murder of Ish-bosheth (4:1–12)
 - D. David Becomes King of All Israel (5:1–25)
 - E. David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem (6:1–23)
 - F. The Lord's Covenant with David (7:1–29)
 - G. The Greatness of David's Kingdom (8:1–18)
 - H. David's Kindness to Mephibosheth (9:1–13)
- V. The Dark Days of David's Reign (10:1–20:26)
 - A. David Defeats the Ammonites and the Syrians (10:1–19)
 - B. David's Compound Sin (11:1–27)

- C. Nathan Rebukes David (12:1–31)
- D. Amnon and Tamar—and Absalom (13:1–39)
- E. Joab Persuades David to Allow Absalom to Return (14:1–33)
- F. Absalom’s Conspiracy against David (15:1–12)
- G. David Quits Jerusalem (15:13–16:14)
- H. Whose Counsel Will Absalom Follow? (16:15–17:23)
- I. The Defeat and Death of Absalom (17:24–18:18)
- J. Joab Rebukes David’s Grief (18:19–19:8a)
- K. David Returns to Jerusalem (19:8b–40)
- L. Tension in the Land (19:41–20:26)
- VI. Retrospect and Prospect (21:1–24:25)
 - A. The Lord’s Anger against Israel—Saul’s Offense (21:1–14)
 - B. David’s Warriors (21:15–22)
 - C. David’s Praise of the Lord’s Deliverance (22:1–51)
 - D. David’s Last Words concerning His Dynasty (23:1–7)
 - E. David’s Warriors (23:8–39)
 - F. The Lord’s Anger against Israel—The Offenses of Israel and David (24:1–25)

OVERVIEW OF

1 SAMUEL 1:1–7:17

SAMUEL: THE LAST OF THE JUDGES

When telling a story, it is frequently difficult to know how to start. In explaining to a later audience how Israel came to be ruled by a king, the narrator of Samuel begins toward the end of the dark days of the judges. Externally the land is oppressed by its enemies, particularly the Philistines, and internally the nation is in spiritual decline as it drifts along without moral guidance, under a leadership that is weak (Eli) and corrupt (Eli’s sons). All that keeps it from utter shipwreck is the Lord’s continuing commitment to his people. He graciously intervenes to restore their fortunes, doing so in characteristically divine fashion. He hears the despairing prayer of a childless wife and gives her a son, Samuel, who becomes the last of the judges. Through Samuel, the Lord reverses the nation’s failure and defeat.

The narrative of Samuel's birth (1 Samuel 1) is followed by the prayer of Hannah (2:1–11), which provides insight into the thoughts and hopes of the pious in Israel during this period of spiritual decay. When Samuel as a young boy is dedicated to a life in God's service at the national shrine in Shiloh, his life and character contrast with the corrupt behavior of the priests there (2:12–36). The story of the Lord's call of Samuel as a prophet in chapter 3 provides a gleam of light in the darkness, but there are still many years of suffering to come upon the land.

While Samuel is growing up, the national crisis intensifies. The Israelites take the ark of God into battle with them, but when they are heavily defeated the Philistines capture it (ch. 4). This catastrophe threatens the identity and very existence of the people of God. However, when the victorious Philistines bring the ark into the temple of their god as a trophy of war, the Lord asserts his sovereignty over pagan deities by breaking the idol and bringing an outbreak of plague upon the Philistine cities (ch. 5). In despair the Philistines return the ark to Israelite territory (ch. 6).

Finally, the crisis is resolved in Israel. Twenty years pass, during which Samuel works steadily to reverse the nation's decline (7:3–4). Eventually he convenes a meeting of the tribes at Mizpah in which they display contrition and repentance (7:5–6). Since the people now accord the Lord his rightful place in their lives, when the Philistines attack them God intervenes to rout the Philistines, and Israel is enabled to defeat their armies (7:7–12). In the ensuing peace Israel regains lost territory, while Samuel is judge over the land (7:13–17).

1 SAMUEL 1:1–28

1 There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. ²He had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

³Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. ⁴On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. ⁵But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb.¹ ⁶And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. ⁷So it went on year by year. As often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. ⁸And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"