

Old Testament Survey 08 - United Monarchy 1 and 2 Samuel

Kingship and the Davidic Covenant for the Bible Institute at Gulf Coast Baptist Church Spring 2026 by Steve Thomas

Introduction

The time of the Judges was characterized by the fact that the people did what was right in their own eyes. Samuel records that the Word of the Lord was precious (rare). As this time came to a close, poor leadership (Eli and his sons) led to the rise of the final judge - Samuel. During his time of leadership the people rejected Samuel, tantamount to a rejection of God. Saul was chosen to be the people's choice of king, who later was replaced with David, the man after God's own heart. God re-established His covenant with Israel by making a covenant with David. The covenant "ladder" from Abraham to Moses and now to David adds clarity to what God will one day do through Israel. Each new covenant does not erase earlier promises, but gives progressive revelation to God's redemptive plan.

Key Themes of 1 Samuel

Hannah's Prayer & Praise: 1 Samuel 1:15, 1:27, and 2:6-9 highlight God's power to lift up the humble and turn situations around.

Samuel's Judgeship: 1 Sam 2:26, 3:1, 7:3. God rejected the poor leadership of Eli's sons and chose Samuel to be the next judge.

The Request for a King: 1 Samuel 8:6-7 shows the shift in leadership and the people's rejection of God as their direct king.

Saul's Disobedience: 1 Samuel 15 chronicles the downfall of King Saul due to his failure to obey divine commands.

David's Rise: 1 Samuel 16-17 covers the transition of divine favor to David, emphasizing his heart for God.

God's Word was Precious

1Sa 3:1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.

The word of the Lord was precious in those days — It was very rarely known to the Israelites; and in point of fact only two prophets are mentioned as having appeared during the whole administration of the judges (Jdg 4:4; Jdg 6:8).

there was no open vision — no publicly recognized prophet whom the people could consult, and from whom they might learn the will of God.

1Sa 7:3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroath from among you, and

prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

Samuel, the product of faith and promise from his mother Hannah, stepped into the role that God prepared for him. As the last judge and the rare prophet of this time, Samuel carried God's will to the people and led them as God directed. He is clear with the people that it will take intentional effort to get to a place of service, by the clearing away of idol worship that had become the norm during this time. The ark of the covenant was absent during the entire book of 1 Samuel, being captured by the Philistines in chapter 4. This sign of abandonment by God was not corrected until David brought it back in 2 Samuel when he took over as king.

"...they have rejected me"

Samuel's sons did not follow in his ways, being turned aside towards lucre and bribery. The people wanted something else, and did not trust God to give it to them in His timing. God caused Samuel to warn the people of this rejection and how having a king would cause hardship. The people would not be swayed and demanded a king. Saul was the choice and God sent His Spirit upon Saul to testify and to deliver the people from the Ammonites. Saul's victories were short-lived however and he struggled against the Philistines. This event led to Saul's missteps and God's rejection of him as king. David was chosen and anointed, but it took 20 years until David was to take the throne of a united Israel. The remainder of the book of 1 Samuel chronicles David's rise to power while Saul headed towards disaster and death.

Key Themes of 2 Samuel

The book of 2 Samuel primarily chronicles the reign of King David, tracing his rise to power, his triumphs, and the consequences of his moral failures.

The Davidic Covenant

This is arguably the most significant theological moment in the book, where God establishes an eternal promise to David's lineage. The continuing dynasty that is promised will be fulfilled by the Messiah, Who will be a perfect example of leadership. The Promised One will come, but be rejected by the people in the gospels. This will lead to a Second Coming, where the people will call on Him to deliver them from certain destruction.

2 Samuel 7:12-13: "When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you... and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever".

2 Samuel 7:16: "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever".

2 Samuel 7:22: "How great you are, Sovereign Lord! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you..."

David's Triumphs and Character

These verses highlight David's military success and his desire to seek God's guidance.

2 Samuel 5:10: "And he became more and more powerful, because the Lord God Almighty was with him".

2 Samuel 5:12: "And David knew that the Lord had established him as king over Israel..."

2 Samuel 8:6: "And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went".

2 Samuel 9:1: "David asked, 'Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?'"

David's Failures and Mourning

These verses mark the major turning points and tragedies in David's life, starting with his affair with Bathsheba. Like many men of this time, David was a poor parent. He was permissive with his sons, more so than he was with his fighting men. Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah all showed wicked qualities which led to dire consequences to those around them. Along with the child of Bathsheba that perished, we see the fourfold restitution that David commanded to Nathan when Nathan confronted David with the sin of Uriah's murder and adultery with Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 11:1: "In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war... David remained in Jerusalem".

2 Samuel 12:7: Nathan the prophet confronts David, saying, "You are the man!" (after David's sin).

2 Samuel 18:33: David's lament for his son: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you..."

Praise and Deliverance

The book concludes with David's song of praise, reflecting on God as his protector.

2 Samuel 22:2-3: "The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge..."

2 Samuel 22:31: "As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord's word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him".

2 Samuel 23:3-4: Describing a ruler who leads in the fear of God as being "like the light of morning at sunrise".

Why Kingship Matters

The lack of vision and leadership during the time of the judges kept the people in a vicious cycle of rebellion and deliverance. The people needed representation, someone to mediate between God (often a prophet who spoke on behalf of God) and the people. God used the royal families

to hold Israel accountable. We see through these books and following God attributing to kings the failures (sin of Jeroboam, sins of Ahab etc.) and successes. Saul's poor choices in falling to obey God's commands through pretrial sacrifice and by his incomplete obedience with the Amalekites. Saul's pretrial sacrifice in 1 Samuel 13 was ill-advised because it was a direct act of disobedience to God and the prophet Samuel, marking the beginning of his downfall. Panicked by deserting troops and Samuel's delay, Saul improperly performed the priestly duties himself, prioritizing fear-driven action over faith-based obedience. Saul's failure with the Amalekites, detailed in 1 Samuel 15, was his refusal to completely destroy the Amalekites and their livestock as commanded by God, sparing King Agag and the best spoils. This partial obedience, motivated by self-preservation and greed, resulted in God rejecting Saul as king of Israel. God's practice of holding Israel responsible for the actions of its leaders would continue, showing them that a king was needed who had the courage to obey God, and who cared about what God's commands meant for the nation.

The Psalm Connection

King David is traditionally credited with writing 73 of the 150 Psalms in the Bible, explicitly attributed to him in the psalm headings. However, when including attributions in the New Testament (such as Psalm 2 and 95), some traditions credit him with 75 or more, often referring to him as the primary author. A study of these Psalms give us insight into why David was the leader that God wanted. He was a man who took accountability for his actions and relied on God's mercy for forgiveness, God's strength for battle, and God's wisdom for justice. These things could not be said about every king that Israel had.

Dispensational tie-in

The Davidic covenant is a major pillar in classic dispensational kingdom expectation. These events fall during the Dispensation of Law. The lax application of consequences during this time show the people's abandonment of justice. This set the stage for renewal. Many following kings will be judged on their proximity and respect for the law of God. Those kings that read it and caused the people to follow it will be recipients of God's blessing. Those that ignored it, and followed the sins of their fathers will be judged harshly.

Covenant Ladder

God had not forgotten the promises that He made to Abraham and to Moses. It seemed that the people had however. God continued to remind the people of His faithfulness, just as He had in Judges and Ruth. A promise to David, concerning the throne of Israel, did not negate the promises made to Abraham and to Moses. The fulfilment of all of those promises would be carried out by the coming of Christ. Land - Seed - Blessing (Genesis) followed by Blood - Deliverance - Worship (Exodus) followed by Substitution - Access - Purity (Leviticus and Numbers) followed by Promise (Renewed) - Stewardship - Accountability. These themes bring us to the chaos of the Judges where we are reminded of the failure of man but the faithfulness of

God. That theme is continued in the books of first and second Samuel with Saul and David's successes and failures. God chose the Israelites not because of their size and strength, but so that it would leave no doubt in the minds of observers that the power was of God when they succeeded. He chose to use broken men to reveal His mercy and sovereignty. God brought about His plan even through the "roller coaster" of the judges, and the failures of the kings.

Next Up...

We will see in the next portion of the Old Testament how covenantal failure will lead to fracture of the nation. Many prophets will speak to the judgement of God and the coming of One who will deliver Israel.