

# 1 & 2 Samuel

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A King after God's Own Heart

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- The events of the book took place in the last half of the eleventh century and the early part of the tenth century B.C., but it is difficult to determine when the events were recorded.
  - Threats to Israel posed especially by the Philistines necessitated a greater amount of cooperation among the tribes than was the case previously, and these are directly responsible (humanly speaking) for the decision to switch to a monarchic form of government.
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## **Writing of the Book**

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- I. The Shiloh Traditions** (1 Samuel 1:1-4:1a)
  - II. The Ark Narrative** (1 Samuel 4:1b-7:1)
  - III. The Institution of the Monarchy**  
(1 Samuel 7:2-12:25)
  - IV. The Reign of Saul** (1 Samuel 13-15)
  - V. David's Rise to Power**  
(1 Samuel 16:1 - 2 Samuel 5:10)
  - VI. David's Success** (2 Samuel 5:11-9:13)
  - VII. David's Failures** (2 Samuel 10-24)
    - A. Men Acting Against Him: The Succession Narrative** (2 Samuel 1-20)
    - B. God Acting Against Him: Appendix**  
(2 Samuel 21-24)
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# **Outline of 1 & 2 Samuel**

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- The major purpose of these books is not biographical, but **theological**.
  - As Genesis gives us the history of the establishment of the Abrahamic Covenant, so **Samuel gives us the history of the establishment of the Davidic Covenant** (2 Samuel 7).
  - The emphasis in these books and ultimately in the covenant itself is the development of the **proper concept of divine authority**.
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## **Purpose and Message**

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- The primary message is that **the Davidic Covenant was established by God.**
    - People may choose kings, as they did Saul, but **God chooses dynasties.**
  - This concern is pursued to make it clear that **God placed David on the throne**, lest anyone think of David as a renegade who plotted to seize the throne, assassinated the king and his rightful heirs, and then attempted to excuse his atrocities by claiming divine approval and guidance.
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## **Purpose and Message**

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- The narrative portrays David in all his humanity and refuses to obscure in any way his weaknesses or the punishments he received at the hand of God.
    - David's own failures were magnified in his children **to the extent that the covenant was put in jeopardy**, with the story to be continued into the books of Kings.
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## **Purpose and Message**

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## **Ark of the Covenant**

- The Ark of the Covenant was the most important religious artifact in Israel. Built at Sinai under the supervision of Moses, **it represented Yahweh's presence in their midst.**
  - One reason why idols were prohibited in Israelite religious practice is that they were commonly used in pagan rituals **to obligate or force the deity to act in the way desired by the worshippers.**
    - Unfortunately, the ark was at times subject to the same abuse.
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# **Major Themes**

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- The foremost example of this, recorded in 1 Samuel 4, occurred when the sons of Eli decided to take the ark into battle in an attempt to assure their victory over the Philistines.

- **It was the Lord himself who directed the comings and goings of the ark.**

- The ark was not really taken captive, **but instead departed from Israel** (1 Samuel 4:21).

- Likewise, when the time came, **the ark returned to Israel on a cart without a driver** (1 Samuel 6:10-16).

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## Major Themes

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- All of this demonstrated the **autonomy of the ark**; it operated only at the initiative of the Lord.
  - There was no other physical object that had the endowment of Yahweh's presence as the ark did.
    - We can therefore see that the successful installation of the ark in Jerusalem at the beginning of David's reign **was not simply a ritual but designated the Lord's approval of the new era and his favor on David.**
  - This theology of the ark is supported in Psalm 78:54-72.
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## Major Themes

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## Kingship

- The function of the king was to maintain justice, both in a domestic sense and in an international sense by means of an effective military force.
  - The people of Samuel's day viewed kingship as a more permanent office that would eliminate the need to wait for the Lord to raise up a deliverer (as compared to judges).
  - **It was this perspective on kingship that caused the Lord to be angry.**
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# Major Themes

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- We should remember that even as early as the Abrahamic covenant it was promised that kings would come from Abraham's family (Genesis 17:6).
  - The crime of the people, then, was not their request for a king, **but their expectation that a human king could succeed where they believe the Lord had failed.**
  - **A proper monarchy still had to function as a theocracy** rather than replace it.
    - The king was to be viewed **as the earthly head of God's theocratic kingdom.**
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## Major Themes

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- Saul has often been viewed as a man tormented by jealousy and paranoia, and one can easily see how such an impression could be formed by reading the narratives of 1 Samuel 18-30.
  - In the earlier section of Samuel, Saul is portrayed as a shy, sincere, and likeable sort.
    - He is presented **as just the kind of individual whom people would naturally choose as king.**
  - Why did Saul fail?
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## **Assessment of Saul**

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- The Spirit came upon Saul (1 Samuel 10:10), empowering him for the task of kingship.
  - Then this Spirit was replaced by an evil spirit from the Lord (1 Samuel 16:14).
  - From that point on, Saul lost the empowering from God that was essential to be a successful king.
  - Saul's failure seemed to be fueled by **his lack of spiritual sensibility.**
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## **Assessment of Saul**

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- He was **sincere but superficial**.
  - An episode near the end of Saul's life – when he decided to use divination to gain information (1 Samuel 28) – suggests that he never quite understood some of the basic tenets of orthodox Israelite theology.
  - Saul neither had nor acquired the theological sophistication to see and perform his role in proper perspective or to function in it successfully.
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## **Assessment of Saul**

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- Just as Saul has tended to be despised by ancient and modern readers of the Bible, so David has frequently been put on the high pedestal of a spiritual giant.
  - In contrast to Saul, there can be no doubt of David's heart for God, spiritual sensitivity, and theological sophistication.
  - Yet David committed a number of serious errors. These came, not from ignorance of what is right, but from being impulsively driven by the need of the moment without reflecting on the consequences.
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## **Assessment of David**

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- God chose David and affirmed that he **walked in accordance with his law.**
  - David **was loyal to the Lord** and **recognized when he had committed sin.**
  - A balanced view of David recognizes his godliness, but realizes that, like any of us, **he was not immune to lapses in judgment.**
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## **Assessment of David**

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## The Davidic Covenant

- As the central focus of the book of Samuel and a significant aspect of Old Testament theology in general, the covenant made with David merits some close examination.
  - At least three points require discussion:
    - **What did the Lord promise David?**
    - **Was the covenant conditional or unconditional?**
    - **What impact did the covenant have on the rest of Israelite history?**
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# Major Themes

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## What did the Lord promise David?

- First, the Lord promised to make David's name great (2 Samuel 7:9).
  - Second, the Lord promised a place in which he would plant Israel (2 Sam 7:10).
  - We conclude, therefore, that the first part of the Davidic covenant merely positions David in the line of Abraham and shows the subordination of that covenant to the Abrahamic covenant.
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# Major Themes

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- The departure from the Abrahamic covenant beings in 2 Samuel 7:12.
  - There it is promised that David's descendant would be established on the throne after him.
  - The Lord would have a parental relationship with him that evokes discipline rather than rejection (2 Samuel 7:14).
  - Furthermore, this successor would also have the opportunity to extend the terms of the covenant to his successor and so on.
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## **Major Themes**

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## Was the covenant unconditional or conditional?

- It has often been noted that there are no conditions set on the covenant in 2 Samuel 7.
    - This only means that the promises made to David were unconditional.
  - However, as we have seen, the covenant was subject to periodic renewal, so we would expect that there must have been criteria by which it was decided whether or not the covenant would be renewed to the next generation.
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## Major Themes

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- Conditions are clearly stated in each of these passages: *“If you walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness, as your father David did, and do all I command and observe all my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever [i.e., indefinitely], as I promised David your father when I said, ‘You shall never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel’”* 1 Kings 9:4-5.

- The Bible states clearly, then, **that David was promised unconditionally** that his son would succeed him and serve a full term, **but the terms beyond that were conditional on the conduct of his son.**

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## Major Themes

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## What impact did the covenant have on the rest of Israelite history?

- The hope that someday a Davidic king would come who would meet the conditions and bring the restoration of the full Davidic covenant was the foundation of the messianic theology as we see it in the prophets.
  - Jeremiah 33:14-22 may be the clearest statement of this, presenting a renewal of the Davidic covenant through an ideal Davidic king.
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# Major Themes

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- Rather than a new David, this individual could be construed as a new Solomon, a shoot growing out of a cut-off stump (Isaiah 11:1).
  - This view of the Davidic covenant helps us to understand the long history from the fall of Jerusalem even to the present, during which time there has been no Davidic king on the throne.
  - The New Testament came to recognize Jesus as the one who would bring the renewal of the Davidic covenant.
  - By meeting the conditions, the way was cleared for a truly eternal kingdom.
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## **Major Themes**