

# Through the Bible Book by Book

## Old Testament

by Myer Pearlman

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### First Samuel

**Theme:** The book of Samuel is a transition book. It is the record of the passing of the government of Israel by judges to the government by kings and of the passing from the rule of GOD, the invisible king - which made them unlike other nations - to the rule of a visible king which made them like other nations.

"The book of Samuel is a history with the personal attraction of biography added. The contents may be grouped around three persons:

- Samuel, a patriot and judge with lowly consecrated heart, obediently serving GOD;
- Saul, a selfish, wayward, jealous king, faulty and unfaithful in allegiance to his GOD;
- David "a man after GOD's own heart, the sweet singer of Israel, a man of prayer and praise, tested, disciplined, persecuted, and finally crowned monarch of all Israel."

**Author:** Samuel is generally supposed to have written the book as far as chapter 24; and from the fact that the prophets Nathan and Gad are mentioned conjointly with Samuel in I Chronicles 29:29, as writers of the events of David's life, it is considered that they were the authors of the remaining chapters.

**Scope:** From the birth of Samuel to the death of Saul, covering a period of 115 years from about 1171 B. C. to 1056 B. C.

### CONTENTS

The contents of the book of Samuel may be grouped around three persons: Samuel, Saul and David.

- I. Concerning Samuel (1-1).
- II. Concerning Saul (8-15).
- III. Concerning David (16-31).

#### I. Concerning Samuel

1. The birth of Samuel (chapter 1 to 2:11).

2. The call of Samuel (2:12 to chapter 3).
3. The taking of the ark (Chapters 4, 5).
4. The return of the ark (Chapters 6, 7).

Where was the place of worship at this time of Israel's history (1:3)?

When did Jerusalem become the place of worship (II Samuel 5:6-9)?

What place did Hannah hold in her husband's heart (verse 8)?

What was her grief? What did it mean in those days for a Jewish woman to be without children (Genesis 30:23; Luke 1:25)?

What kind of child did Hannah request from the Lord (verse 11)?

What did she promise he should be (verse 11, compare Numbers chapter 6)?

Whom does she resemble in this respect (Luke 1:13-15)?

Why was Samuel so called (verse 20)?

Did Hannah fulfill her vow (1:24-28)?

What did the Lord's kindness to her inspire (2:1-10)?

What Israelitish woman uttered similar words under like circumstances (Luke 1:46-55)?

Is it possible for persons to be in the ministry and yet be sinful (2:12)?

What is said concerning Eli's sons? How did these young men injure the Lord's cause (2:17)?

Was Hannah well repaid for her sacrifice (2:21)?

What warning was given Eli (2:27-36)?

What was the condition of revelation in those days (3:1)?

What must have been the condition of the people in consequence (Proverbs 29:18; Psalm 74:9; Amos 8:11)?

What shows that GOD can reveal His will to a little child? How did the Lord confirm Samuel's call (3:19, 20)?

Samuel was the first of the line of writing prophets (Acts 3:2, 3; I Samuel 3:20). After the priesthood had failed, Samuel became the spiritual leader of the people and the mediator between them and GOD.

Chapters 4, 5 record the taking of the ark. The ark was a symbol of the presence of the glory of the Lord (14:43, 44; Joshua 3:6; I Samuel 14:18, 19; Psalm 132:8. It went before the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings and sometimes before the army in time of war (Joshua 3:6). It was before the ark that the leaders sought the will of the Lord (Exodus 25:22; Joshua 7:6-9; Judges 20:27). Israel, in their backslidden condition, made a superstitious use of this piece of sacred furniture, thinking that the mere formal use of it would bring victory. They trusted in "it" instead of the Lord's power of which it was a symbol (4:3). Their great shout in the camp was the result of mere natural enthusiasm.

While the ark brought blessing to GOD's people, what did it bring to GOD's enemies (chapter 5)?

What light did the wise men of the Philistines have on divine healing (6:3-6)?

With what history were they acquainted (6:6)?

What was the effect on the Israelites of seeing the ark returning (6:13)?

Of what act of profanation were the people guilty (6:19, compare Numbers 4:5, 15)?

Where was the ark then taken? Over what did the Israelites lament (7:2)?

What did Samuel tell them to do (7:3)?

Of what is the act of the Israelites mentioned (7:6) typical Psalm 62:8  
What prominence is given to prayer in this chapter (7:5,8,9)?

Notice that Samuel takes upon himself the office of priest by sacrificing (7:9). Though only the priests were allowed to sacrifice, the Lord made special dispensation in Samuel's favor, because of the failure of the priesthood. What followed Israel's repentance (7:10-14)?

## II. Concerning Saul

1. Israel demands a king. (chapter 8).
2. Saul chosen and anointed (chapter 9,10).
3. Saul's first victory (chapter 11).
4. Samuel's proclamation of the kingdom (chapter 12).
5. Saul's rejection (chapter 13-15).

Chapter 8 records the desire of Israel for a king.

What was the reason for desiring a king (8:5)?

What was GOD's plan for the nation (Deuteronomy 14:2; Numbers 23:9)?

What gave the people an excuse for demanding a king (8:3-5)?

How closely is GOD identified with His servants (8:7)?

Did GOD let the people have their own way? What kind of king did the Lord say they would have (8:11-17)?

Who had foreseen that Israel would desire a king (Deuteronomy 17:14-20)?

Did the Lord's description of their future king discourage the people (8:19, 20)?

What did the Lord then do (Psalm 106:15)?

What was Samuel's reputation among the people (9:6)?

What was a prophet originally called (9:9)?

How close to GOD did Samuel live (9:15)?

What signs were given to confirm Saul's faith (10:1-8)?

Notice here the existence of a school of prophets of which Samuel was probably the head (10:5,10).

Chapter 10:6-9 does not teach that Saul was regenerated. It does indeed state that the Lord gave Saul a new heart, but that simply means that He imparted unto him the necessary qualifications for his office. He gave him the heart of a king. Saul's action in hiding himself among the stuff has been interpreted as indicating modesty on his part. But it was modesty displayed at the wrong time. "It is as great a sin to urge modesty and keep in the background when GOD calls to the foreground as it is to go to the front when GOD's appointment is in the rear."

Were all the people in favor of Saul (10:27)?

How did he show his wisdom (10:27)?

What established Saul's popularity (11:11-13)?

Though Israel had rejected the Lord, did He utterly forsake them (12:14, 22)?

As what did Samuel consider neglect of intercessory prayer (12:23)?

Chapter 13 records Saul's sin-intruding into the priest's office. This was in flagrant violation of Numbers 3:10,38.

What excuse did he offer (verse 12)?

What did he lose through his disobedience (13:13)?

What was made known to Saul (13:14)?

What act of disobedience sealed Saul's fate (15:1-9)?

What excuse did Saul offer (verses 20,21)?

What principle did Samuel lay down in 15:22?

Was Saul's repentance really sincere (Compare v. 25 and 30)?

What were Samuel's feelings on Saul's rejection (15:35)? The Lord's feelings?

### **III. Concerning David**

1. David anointed king (chapter 16).

2. David's victory over Goliath (17).

3. David's persecutions and wanderings (Chapters 18-30).

4. The death of Saul (31).

By what was Samuel judging the fitness of a person to become king (16:6)?

How does the Lord judge (16:7)?

What happened after David's anointing (16:13)?

Of what event was this typical (Matthew 3:16, 17)?

Chapter 16:14 seems to present a difficulty. We read that the SPIRIT of the Lord departed from Saul and that an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. It has been asked, Does GOD send evil spirits to men? In explanation of this we quote from Dr. Torrey:

"What is meant by 'evil spirit'? The context clearly shows. It was a spirit of discontent, unrest, depression.

"The circumstances were these: Saul had proved untrue to GOD. He had deliberately disobeyed GOD, and consequently GOD had withdrawn His SPIRIT from him, and a spirit of worry and discontent came upon him.

"This was not an unkind act on GOD's part. There was nothing kinder that GOD could have done. It is one of the most merciful provisions of our heavenly FATHER that when we disobey Him and wander from Him He makes us unhappy and discontented in our sin. If GOD should leave us to continue to be happy in our sin, it would be the unkindest thing He could do, but GOD in His great mercy will win every sinner possible back to Himself, and if we sin, GOD, for our highest good sends us unrest and deep depression in our sin. If we make right use of this spirit of depression that GOD sends us it brings us back to GOD and to the joy of the HOLY GHOST. Saul made the wrong use of it. Instead of allowing the unrest of his heart to bring him to repentance he allowed it to embitter his soul against the one whom GOD had favored. The sending of the spirit was an act of mercy on GOD's part. The misuse of this act of mercy resulted in Saul's undoing."

Students have been puzzled that Saul should not have recognized David after his victory over Goliath when he had just sent him forth (17:55-58). Mr. Parrot, a missionary to Madagascar, explains this difficulty by describing a custom of that country. In Madagascar when "a man has performed some exploit, the cry is not 'Who is this?' but, 'Whose son is he?' the glory passing to the one who fathered him. Further, the Malagasy custom is to feign ignorance of the parentage the better to express surprise."

Who befriended David at this time (18:1)?

What caused Saul's jealousy (18:6, 7)?

Why did Saul fear him (18:12)?

How popular was David with Israel (18:16)?

How did Saul attempt to take David's life (18:20-30; 19:1-17)?

How did the Lord protect David (19:18-24)?

Where did David flee (19:18)?

What was at the root of Saul's enmity toward David (20:31)?

Let the student make a list of the places where David went during his wanderings, noting what occurred at each place.

We have been reading the account of the wanderings and persecutions of him who had been anointed king over Israel. What were his feelings during that time? His religious experiences? The reading of the following psalms, referring to this period of his life, will answer those questions.

Let the student read them:

- Psalm 59, compare I Samuel 19:11;
- Psalm 56, compare I Samuel 21:10, 11;
- Psalm 34, compare I Samuel 21:13;
- Psalm 57, compare I Samuel 22:1;
- Psalm 52, compare I Samuel 22:9;
- Psalm 54, compare I Samuel 23:19.

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