

Key to I SAMUEL

1. STATISTICS:

Writers, Samuel (10:25), possibly Nathan and Gad (I Chronicles 29:29).

Time involved, about 120 years; key thought, "kingdom"; key verse, 12:13; type of book, history; principal character, Saul.

2. THEME:

This is mainly the story of the rise and fall of King Saul, introduced by the prophet Samuel, and followed on the throne by David.

3. OUTLINE:

Samuel as judge (1-7) David persecuted (16-30)
Saul begins to reign (8-15) Saul's defeat, death (28, 31)

4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

This book begins the line of writing prophets. From this time the prophet rather than the priest is conspicuous in Israel.

Samuel was a child of faith and prayer. His father was a Levite (I Chronicles 6:27, 28), and before his birth he was dedicated to the LORD.

Hannah's lovely prayer of thanksgiving seems somewhat similar to the great Magnificat of Mary (Luke 1:46-55).

Moses had foreseen and predicted the coming of the kingship (Deuteronomy 17:14, 15).

Samuel was a "circuit rider" as a judge (7:15-17).

The "schools of the prophets" were evidently introduced under Samuel (10:5, 10; 19:20; II Kings 2:3-5).

Samuel's ministry included that of being a "kingmaker."

5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

Eli and Samuel were both men of godly integrity. However, evidently being busy in the service of GOD, they neglected their own sons with tragic results (2:12-17; 8:3-5).

The ark of the covenant was a blessing to GOD's people, but a curse to the enemies of the LORD (chapter 5).

Saul was the people's choice for king. In the natural, he possessed many qualifications. He started well, and had he continued, his story would have been entirely different. His great deficiency was a lack of spiritual appreciation.

Saul's errors were those common to rulers:

- (1) impatience as he waited for Samuel (13:8-14);
- (2) impetuosity in the flush of victory where he made a rash vow (chapter 14);
- (3) disobedience to the clear command of GOD and acting in his own self-will (chapter 15).

Along with these was a resultant insane jealousy he had for David. All of these human frailties might have been counterbalanced by simple and sincere dependence upon GOD, who gives to rulers their special abilities.

David is introduced here. Undoubtedly he is the most colorful figure in the whole Bible. He was a rich combination of soldier, statesman, shepherd, musician, singer, poet. His magnificent victory over Goliath was a demonstration of the courage that may accompany simple faith in GOD.

Two of David's inner qualities stand out boldly. His deep and sincere love for his friend, Jonathan, and his patience in waiting GOD's time to ascend the throne for which he had already been anointed.

Apparently the appearance of Samuel in the home of the witch of Endor was genuine for it greatly frightened even the witch. Witchcraft, of course, had been strictly forbidden by the Law and this was a sad commentary on the spiritual status of Saul's heart (Leviticus 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

First and Second Samuel were originally one book.

Goliath's armor weighed more than 150 pounds; his spearhead alone was 20 pounds. It is questionable if David at this time weighed 150 pounds.

Many of the psalms of David were written at this time.

7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

As in all the Book of GOD, the divine Author selects only material which is for our edification. The key is the contrast of the inner qualities of Saul and David, and the resultant accomplishments. Apply this to your own heart.

~ end of I Samuel ~

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