

# STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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“In terms of the political scene, Israel at the beginning of 1 Samuel was a loosely organized federation of anemic tribal territories scarcely able to keep the Philistines and other enemies at bay. By the end of 2 Samuel, however, Israel under David had become the most powerful kingdom in the eastern Mediterranean region, strong at home and secure abroad. As far as the religious picture is concerned, the opening chapters of 1 Samuel find Israel worshipping at a nondescript shrine presided over by a corrupt priesthood. The last chapter of 2 Samuel, however, records David’s purchase of a site in Jerusalem upon which the temple of Solomon, one of the most magnificent buildings in the ancient world, would soon be erected. Sweeping change, then, is hallmark of the Samuel narratives—changes guided and energized by the Lord himself through fragile vessels of the likes of Samuel, Saul, and David.”

—Ronald F. Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” in *EBC*, 12 vols., ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 3:560.

## OLD TESTAMENT FLYOVER:

### Samuel

#### I. Titles

- A. **Hebrew Title:** שְׁמוּאֵל, “Samuel”
- B. **Greek Title:** 1 & 2 Kingdoms
- C. **Vulgate Title:** 1 & 2 Kings
- D. The Greek version of the OT and the Latin version after it see these books as the first major portion of the Kings saga. The Hebrew tradition, however, separates Samuel and Kings as two different literary units.
- E. The Greek and Latin versions also divide the book into two books/parts. The Hebrew tradition, however, even from the earliest extant manuscripts dating as far back as the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C., does not seem to recognize any division of the book.<sup>1</sup>
- F. Bergen notes that “the custom of dividing the book into two separate entities apparently was instituted by the Greek-speaking Jewish community, which preferred to divide longer books into units that would fit on standard-sized scroll.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

## II. Date of Events

- A. It opens with the birth of Samuel c. 1110 B.C. (1 Sam 1:1)
- B. It closes with the final words of David c. 970 B.C. (2 Sam 23:1)
- C. Interestingly, as far as time span, the book of Samuel spans a mere 140 years, a relatively short period of time as compared to the 360 year timeframe of the book of Judges.
- D. However, while the book of Judges covers that long period in 24 chapters, Samuel takes *twice* the narrative material to cover its time span.
- E. Thus, in the macro narrative of the Former Prophets, the pace is slowing down and getting more detailed.
- F. In fact, the length of the David/Goliath encounter (1 Sam 17) is longer than the narrative of the first three judges (Judg 3).

## III. Major Themes

### A. The Instruments of Yahweh

#### 1. The Priests

- a. In the Torah, the priesthood was central to Israelite life and theocracy. They are true intermediaries, and the narrative frequently portrays them as instruments in bringing about or inquiring of Yahweh's plans.
- b. In the book of Judges, the priesthood seems to take a backseat. The term "priest" occurs only 13x in the book, and only in chapters 17-18 in reference to the Levitical priest hired by Micah and later by the Danites.
- c. But in Samuel, the role of the priesthood in Israel's life is reintroduced. In fact, the term "priest" appears 41x in the narrative, or over 3x as much as it did in Judges.
- d. Priests are at the very outset of the book, represented by Hophni and Phinehas, the immoral sons of Eli, the aged high priest. In this sense, the overlap from Judges is apparent—even the priesthood of Israel had become corrupt. Yahweh vowed to reform the priesthood by transferring the high priesthood to another family (2:35).<sup>3</sup>
- e. As such, the evaluations of Saul and David throughout the book will concern in part how they related to the priesthood, and especially to the high priest.
- f. Saul took upon himself the priestly duty of sacrifice rather than waiting for Samuel to oversee the daily sacrifice before entering into battle with the Philistines (13:8-14). Saul abruptly called off the priest's duty to bless Israel's army before each battle (Deut 20:4-5) in order to win a greater victory over the Philistines. Saul ordered the execution of 85 priests after learning that Ahimelech, the priest

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<sup>3</sup> This promise was apparently fulfilled with the displacement of Abiathar by the rise of the godly line of Zadok in 1 Kgs 2:35, in fulfillment of the Priestly Covenant.

in Nob, had aided David and his men by providing bread, weaponry, and a blessing.

- g. David, on the other hand, shows deep respect for the priesthood and makes frequent inquiries through the priesthood in order to gain divine counsel and direction. He took Abiathar the son of Ahimelech under his protection following Saul's slaughter of the priests at Nob.
2. The Ark of the Covenant
- a. The book of Samuel is, in some way, the saga of the ark of the covenant.
  - b. The book of Judges mentions the ark of the covenant only once in reference to its location at the time of the respective narrative (Judg 20:27).
  - c. Samuel, on the other hand, features the ark of the covenant prominently, referencing it 61x throughout the narrative.
  - d. "The Lord possessed an abiding presence with the ark (cf. Lev 16:2). The Lord's presence with the ark meant that where the ark went, the Lord went (1 Sam 4:4); where the ark went, the Lord's hand of judgment (1 Sam 5:6; 6:19-20; 2 Sam 6:6-7) and blessing (2 Sam 6:11-12) was also present; where the ark was, revelation was to be found (1 Sam 3:3-14)."<sup>4</sup>
  - e. The "Ark Narrative" (1 Sam 4-6) as it is called, makes this point clearly. After foolishly retrieving the ark from Shiloh in hopes that its mere presence would incite victory apart from obedience, the ark is captured by the Philistines, who take it to Ashdod where it is placed in the temple of Dagon to demonstrate Dagon's supremacy over Israel's God. Dagon, however, is twice humiliated, and the Philistines seek to rid themselves of it.
  - f. The ark then returns, seemingly on its own, to Israelite territory where it is cared for by Eleazar son of Abinadab in Kiriath-jearim, but only after Yahweh slaughtered 50,070 men for looking into the ark (1 Sam 7:1-2).
  - g. The ark remained in this small residence for 20 years until David's two victories over the Philistines opened the opportunity (and perhaps the necessity) to move the ark to Jerusalem. But even this endeavor is met with calamity, for Uzzah dies for irreverently touching the ark during a perilous moment. All of the narrative seems to intentionally echo the ark's earlier exodus from Ashdod (2 Sam 6).
  - h. David's concern for the meager dwelling place of the ark leads him to purpose the construction of a permanent dwelling for the ark. Ultimately, Yahweh disallows David from constructing the temple himself, but instead promises that his son will construct it (2 Sam 7). It is David that brings the ark to its final dwelling place in Jerusalem (2 Sam 15).
  - i. "Thus, the invincible power of Yahweh is displayed against the background of Israel's religious defection and military defeat, and the contest with the Philistines

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<sup>4</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 44.

is seen in essentially ideological terms. Moreover, on the ark's return to home territory the Israelites too have to learn that the awesome presence of God is not to be treated familiarly (1 Sam 6:19-20). The importance ideologically of what is recounted in 1 Sam 4-6 is seen in the fact that when decisive victories are won over the Philistines by David and his men—victories that decisively affect the military balance between the two thereafter—these are reported summarily in 2 Sam 5:17-25. It is as if, for theological and ideological reasons, the emphasis was shifted to the earlier narrative because here the issue of Yahweh and the gods is followed through to its theological, if not ultimate military, resolution.”<sup>5</sup>

### 3. The Prophets

- a. While judges are prolific throughout the book of Judges, prophets and prophecy is exceedingly rare.
- b. In fact, Samuel represents the first prophet in Israel's history since Moses, and the two individuals share interesting corollary features.
- c. After Samuel, the other key prophetic individual in the Samuel narrative is Nathan, who appears in only two chapters but nonetheless is the mediator for Yahweh's declaration of one of the most significant theological constructs in the OT—the Davidic Covenant.
- d. In Samuel, the prophet filled a multifaceted role:
  - 1) Prophets mediated the divine word to Israel and its leaders.
  - 2) Prophets often interceded on behalf of others (1 Sam 7:5-9).
  - 3) Prophets instructed the people in the law and righteous living (1 Sam 12:23).
- e. There is no question that with the appearance of prophets in Samuel, there is a re-orientation toward the word of Yahweh, and phrase which itself is repeated numerous times throughout the sage in relation to the prophets.

### 4. The Ruler/King

- a. The “Anointed” One
  - 1) Anointing was a common act throughout the ANE for both objects and people.
  - 2) Culturally, oil was used for preparation, for cleaning, for cosmetics, and for soothing in the hot, dry climate of Canaan.
  - 3) Theologically, anointing marked a person, object, or place as distinct from the common. Thus the tabernacle and all the holy items used in tabernacle service were anointed (Exod 29:36; 30:26; 40:9; etc.).

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<sup>5</sup> Robert P. Gordon, “Theology of Samuel,” in *NIDOTTE*, 5 vols., ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 4:1171.

- 4) Anointing was also first associated theologically with the priesthood, and marked out Aaron and his sons as tabernacle servants before Yahweh (Exod 28:41; 29:7; 30:30; 40:13, 15).
- 5) With the entrance of kingship in Samuel, the act of anointing becomes representative of kingship.
- 6) “The act of anointing not only initiated a person or an object into a new form of service, it also set that object or person apart from other forms of service or uses.... By reason of their anointing, these objects or persons are no longer ordinary, but now partake of the holy character of God (see esp. Lev 8:12, 30; 21:12). No longer can they function as ordinary objects or as private persons. Now they must always be used and act with reference to God and his purposes.”<sup>6</sup>
- 7) “Not only did the anointing presuppose special obligations, it also was considered to convey special status; this was the Lord’s anointed (2 Sam 23:1). To touch this person was in some sense to touch the Lord himself.... Because a person was the Lord’s anointed, it was assumed that he was under God’s special favor and protection.... When this was not, in fact, forthcoming, it was a source of special distress.”<sup>7</sup> This explains David’s refusal to kill Saul on the multiple occasions when the opportunity arose.
- 8) Oswalt notes that, although it may be assumed that all kings were anointed upon accession, the times when the term is used always occur during periods when some type of dynastic change is occurring. “This choice seems to underline the element of particular selection and empowerment that the act of anointing represented. The use of oil as a symbol of the Holy Spirit and the explicit connection of the Holy Spirit with anointing in Isa 61:1 reinforce that the act of anointing symbolized this divine empowerment.”<sup>8</sup>
- 9) Because of the inextricable tie between anointing and kingship that begins in Samuel, this book becomes important for understanding Jesus’ messiahship. The concept of “The Anointed One” (i.e., Messiah) flows out of this tie, and “it is apparent that the references to the ideal Davidic King in Isa, Jer, Ezek, and the Minor Prophets assume that such a person would be the Anointed of God.”<sup>9</sup>
- 10) “Once the NT identifies Jesus as the Anointed One, the Messiah, all the unqualified references to the “anointed one” in the OT could be seen to have even more relevance, so that a statement like that of Ps 2:2, “The kings of the

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<sup>6</sup> John N. Oswalt, “מָשִׁיחַ,” in *NIDOTTE*, 5 vols., ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2:1124-5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 2:1125.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 2:1126.

earth take their stand . . . against the LORD and against his Anointed One,” can be seen to have cosmic significance and not merely to be a hyperbolic expression of Israel’s experience with her neighbors at some point. The Lord has indeed selected one who is Prophet, Priest, and King. He has chosen and empowered him to fulfill what all the preceding anointed priests and prophets could never do—bring in the kingdom of God.”<sup>10</sup>

b. The Ruler/Leader

- 1) A second designation of the king and used as an epithet for Saul and David.
- 2) In this case, the term highlights the *function* and *activity* of the individual—he is to *rule* or *lead*.
- 3) “The term is . . . used theologically to present the king-designate as the one chosen and appointed by God to rule his people Israel.”<sup>11</sup>

c. The King

- 1) The most predominant term used throughout Samuel for Israel’s monarchy is the term מֶלֶךְ, “king,” appearing 399x.
- 2) Kingship in Samuel first appears in connection with the failure of Samuel’s sons to properly lead the nation after their father established them as judges. For this reason, the elders approached Samuel demanding a “king to lead us, like all the other nations” (1 Sam 8:5).
- 3) Samuel’s markedly negative response could indicate that he saw this request as a personal attack, since it was Yahweh and not he who clarified the true motivation of their request.
- 4) Nevertheless, the real issue at hand was not the request itself but the desire underlying it. Their desire “amounted to an attempt to accomplish through a political act that which could only be achieved through ongoing spiritual responsibility (cf. Judge 3:4).”<sup>12</sup>
- 5) Their desire unveiled an “antitheocratic spirit” among the people.<sup>13</sup> In other words, “What Israel hopes to achieve by the innovation of the monarchy, God is able to deliver within the more strictly theocratic construct of what we call the period of the judges . . . . The concentration of power in the hands of a monarch was interpreted as a rejection of God’s kingship over his people.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth T. Aitken, “מֶלֶךְ,” in *NIDOTTE*, 5 vols., ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:20.

<sup>12</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 115.

<sup>13</sup> Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 208.

<sup>14</sup> Gordon, “Theology of Samuel,” 4:1173.

- 6) Thus, a dichotomy develops in the book between Israel's king and God's king. Saul is Israel's choice, but God had selected a king for *himself* (1 Sam 16:1).
- 7) The remainder of the book reinforces the permanence of the Davidic dynasty which culminates in 2 Samuel 7 with the Davidic Covenant.

## B. Major Men

### 1. Samuel

- a. Samuel fills multiple roles. He functions both as judge and as prophet.
- b. In his later years, Samuel passed on his judgeship to his sons, who did not lead righteously, leading to Israel's demand for a king. Nevertheless, Samuel still functioned as a prophet and is the bridge between Samuel and David.
- c. As a figure within the literary narrative of Samuel, he serves as a model of faithfulness in direct contrast to the previous judges as well as to the sons of Eli.
- d. In fact, there seems to be unique correlations between Samuel and Moses as prophets:

### MOSES/SAMUEL

CHARACTERISTIC	MOSES	SAMUEL
Remarkable childhood with faithful mother	Exod 2:1-2, 9	1 Sam 1:20, 28
Raised outside of the family home	Exod 2:10	1 Sam 1:24-25
Disavowed sinful practices around him	Exod 2:11-12	1 Sam 2:22-26
Initial revelation from Yahweh in the presence of an object that was burning, but not consumed	Exod 3:4	1 Sam 3:3-14
The revelation began with a double use of the man's name	Exod 3:4	1 Sam 3:10
"Faithful" prophet [only ones in Genesis-Kings]	Num 12:7	1 Sam 3:20
Commanded by Yahweh to pronounce judgment	Exod 7:14-18	2 Sam 3:11-18
Killed an enemy of Israel with his own hand	Exod 2:12-15	2 Sam 15:33
Wrote down regulations deposited before Yahweh	Deut 31:9, 24-26	1 Sam 10:25
Functioned as a "judge"	Exod 18:13	1 Sam 7:6, 15-16
Functioned as a "prophet"	Deut 18:15; 34:10	1 Sam 3:20
Built an altar to Yahweh	Exod 17:15; 24:4	1 Sam 7:17
Not a priest, but performed priestly activities	Lev 8:14-29	1 Sam 7:9
Had two sons	Exod 18:3-4	1 Sam 8:2
Set apart non-family members to lead Israel	Deut 31:7-8	1 Sam 16:13
Functioned as transitional figure in Israel's history	Exod 3:10	1 Sam 8:22

## 2. Saul

- a. When Israel demanded a king to rule over them like all the nations, they received exactly what they requested in Saul.
- b. On the surface, Saul was exactly what Israel wanted. He was an effective warrior and military leader and able to fight their battles for them. In the early period of his kingship, he was very successful and quite influential, as is seen in the fact that even after his death, David still garnered resistance to his kingship from Saul loyalists.
- c. Saul's downfall is clarified by 1 Samuel 15 when it is obvious that what he lacks is faithfulness to Yahweh. When his kingship is removed and given to David, his antagonism toward David results in military failure, for now he no longer fights Israel's enemies, but rather Israel's anointed!
- d. In the end, Saul experiences total defeat as a warrior when he is killed in battle, but the literary turning point occurred in 1 Samuel 17 when David, not Saul, combats the Philistine champion. Israel's king should have fought on Israel's behalf, and when David defeats Goliath, it is now David who has bested Saul as a warrior.

## 3. David

- a. David proves himself an even greater warrior than Saul. This fact, of course, surfaces with his victory over Goliath and increases steadily throughout his life.
- b. By the end of Samuel and the opening chapters of Kings, it becomes clear that David has become the rubric for evaluating every subsequent king.
- c. David becomes the most dominant individual not only in Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and Psalms, but in the whole of the OT. He is mentioned more throughout the OT than even Moses, and in the NT, Jesus will be known among other things as the "son of David."
- d. Why does David become such a prominent figure? As 1 Samuel 13:13-14 makes clear, his predecessor Saul, Israel's choice of a king, was not a man after Yahweh's heart, and so his dynasty was doomed to fail. David, on the other hand, was chosen by Yahweh to be king *because* he was a man after Yahweh's heart, and he was promised a kingdom that would never end.

### C. The Sovereign Action of Yahweh

1. The central "narrative tool" used by the narrator is what could be called the "reversal-of-fortune motif" where "persons who were normally thought of as unimportant became important, and ones who were considered important became unimportant."<sup>15</sup>
2. In every section of Samuel, someone is being humbled while someone is being exalted:

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<sup>15</sup> John A. Martin, "Studies in 1 and 2 Samuel Part 2: The Literary Quality of 1 and 2 Samuel," *BSac* 141, no. 562 (April-June 1984): 133-4.



**REVERSAL OF FORTUNE IN SAMUEL<sup>16</sup>**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Exalted</b>	<b>Humbled</b>
<b>1 Sam 1-3</b>	Samuel	Eli's line
<b>1 Sam 4:1-7:1</b>	Ark	Philistines
<b>1 Sam 7:2-15:35</b>	Saul	Saul
<b>1 Sam 16-2 Sam 1</b>	David	Saul and Jonathan
<b>2 Sam 2-8</b>	David's kingdom/Ark	Saul's kingdom
<b>2 Sam 9-20</b>	Solomon	David/Ammon/Absalom
<b>2 Sam 21-24</b>	David and his men	Enemies of God

3. This theme makes its appearance at the very beginning of Samuel, when Hannah, a woman of low social status and antagonized for her barrenness, is exalted. Her song of thanksgiving (1 Sam 2:1-10) initiates the theme of divine sovereign humbling and exaltation and sets the literary tone for the entire narrative of Samuel:
  - a. "Boast no more so very proudly, do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; for Yahweh is a God of knowledge, and with him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are shattered, but the feeble gird on strength" (2:3-4).
  - b. "Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry cease to hunger. Even the barren gives birth to seven, but she who has many children languishes" (2:5).
  - c. "Yahweh kills and makes alive; he brings down to Sheol and raises up" (2:6).
  - d. "Yahweh makes poor and rich; he brings low, he also exalts" (2:7).
  - e. "He raises the poor from the dust, he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with nobles, and inherit a seat of honor" (2:8).
  - f. "He keeps the feet of his godly ones, but the wicked ones are silenced in darkness; for not by might shall a man prevail" (2:9).
  - g. "Those who contend with Yahweh will be shattered; against them he will thunder in the heavens, Yahweh will judge the ends of the earth; and he will give strength to his king, and will exalt the horn of his anointed" (2:10).
4. This theme also forms the conclusion of Samuel, when many of the verbal statements in Hannah's song return in the concluding song of David (2 Sam 22:2-51). His song recounts Yahweh's favor upon him as king, giving him victory and triumph over his enemies:

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 134.

- a. David's description of Yahweh's response to his perilous condition echoes Hannah's words that Yahweh will "thunder in the heavens" against those who contend with him:
  - 1) "Then the earth shook and quaked, the foundations of heaven were trembling and were shaken, because he was angry. Smoke went up out of his nostrils, fire from his mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down with thick darkness under his feet" (22:8-10).
  - 2) "Yahweh thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered his voice. And he sent out arrows, and scattered them, lightning, and routed them" (22:14-15).
- b. David's explanation of Yahweh's sovereign nature clearly matches Hannah's assertions toward the humble and the proud:
  - 1) "With the kind you show yourself kind, with the blameless you show yourself blameless; with the pure you show yourself pure, and with the perverted you show yourself astute" (22:26-27).
  - 2) And you save an afflicted people; but your eyes are on the haughty whom you abase" (22:28).
5. "David's psalm (2 Sam. 22) was an echo of Hannah's song in 2 Samuel 2:1-10. Evil and arrogant people will perish, but the covenant-keepers, who live righteously, will be raised up by God."<sup>17</sup>
6. David's final song and concluding narrative also form a fitting contrast the Hannah's narrative and song:

#### HANNAH & DAVID

Narrative			Poem			Poems			Narrative		
<i>Barren woman blessed and exalted</i>			<i>New mother responds in thanksgiving and exalts God</i>			<i>Triumphant king gives thanks for victories</i>			<i>Self-exalting king judged and abased</i>		
I/1:1	-	1:28	2:1	-	2:10	II/22:1	-	23:7	24:1	-	24:25
A			B			B'			A'		

#### D. The Davidic Covenant

1. "God's establishment of His covenant with David represents one of the theological high points of the OT Scriptures. This key event builds on the preceding covenants and looks forward to the ultimate establishment of God's reign on the earth."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>18</sup> Michael A. Grisanti, "The Davidic Covenant," *MSJ* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 233.

## 2. *The Type of Covenant*

- a. ANE treaties came in two basic forms: (1) a royal “grant” or “promissory” covenant, and (2) a “suzerain-vassal” treaty.
  - 1) **Suzerain-vassal treaty:** arrangements made between two parties, a sovereign (i.e., suzerain) and a subordinate (i.e., vassal). The master imposed certain obligations on the slave, and the treaty was designed primarily to protect the rights and interests of the master. If the slave obeyed the treaty, the master promised reward. But if the slave disobeyed the treaty obligations, then the master promised punishment.
  - 2) **Royal grant treaty:** commitment made by a sovereign to a vassal. The master obligates himself to the slave, and the treaty primarily protects the rights of the slave. In this way, the slave has no obligations or demands. Rather, the grant was made as a promise of blessing and honor from the suzerain to the vassal.
- b. The Mosaic Covenant is a modified suzerain-vassal treaty. The Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants are all examples of royal grant treaties.

## 3. *The Background of the Covenant*

- a. Following the death of Saul and victory over the Philistines, the nation was finally under David’s control and its borders secure.
- b. David then transported the ark from its 20-year resting place in Keriath-jearim to Jerusalem, effectively making Jerusalem the center of worship and centralizing the Israelite government.
- c. It was at this time that David desired to build a permanent dwelling for the ark of the covenant, a proposition initially supported by Nathan but then halted by Yahweh himself.
- d. It was Yahweh who had raised David from his humble beginnings to his current position of power. Thus, rather than have David build a house for the God of the universe, Yahweh revealed his own plans to build David a house that would last forever.

## 4. *The Promises of the Covenant*

- a. **A Great Name (2 Sam 7:9; cf. 8:13):** Although David’s own accomplishments as king had given him a good reputation throughout the kingdom, it was in fact Yahweh who was orchestrating David’s kingship, rising him to power, sustaining his government, and causing his success. Thus, David’s reputation was ultimately attributable to Yahweh’s gracious blessing and presence.
- b. **A Place for the People (2 Sam 7:10):** God promised to establish Israel firmly and securely in the land under David’s leadership. In fact, during David’s reign,

the borders of Israel “approached the ideal boundaries of the promised land initially mentioned in conjunction with God’s covenant with Abram (Gen 15:18).”<sup>19</sup>

- c. **Rest (2 Sam 7:11a):** In addition to security in the land, Yahweh also promised to give David rest from his enemies. Although he had certainly experienced a temporal rest after his victory over the Philistines, the actual realization of this rest remained in the future even after David’s death.
  - d. **A House (2 Sam 7:11b-16):** While David purposed to build a house for the ark, Yahweh purposed to build a house for David, “i.e., the dynasty of David and, consequently, the perpetuation of his line.... Yahweh had to first establish a ‘house’ of David before He would permit the building of a ‘house’ of worship by David’s son, Solomon.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, David will not build Yahweh’s house, but his son will, for his son represents the beginning of Yahweh’s promise to build David’s house.
  - e. **A Seed (2 Sam 7:12):** God promised that he would provide a “seed,” i.e., descendants, for David, guaranteeing that there would always be a descendant to sit on David’s throne. This promise, of course, refers in the short term to Solomon, but it also refers to all of David’s royal descendants, and ultimately anticipates the final son of David, the Messiah.
  - f. **A Kingdom (2 Sam 7:13):** Yahweh affirms that the seed he promised to raise up will be the one to build the temple in Jerusalem. But his throne and his kingdom will be permanently established. Based on this promise, whatever Solomon accomplished in the building of the first temple and lost at its destruction cannot constitute the beginning and conclusion of the promise. Rather, it describes a perpetual kingdom and a perpetual dynasty that endures eternally.
5. *The Nature of the Covenant*
- a. **Unilateral:** as a royal grant covenant, God did not impose any obligations on David in order for these promises to be realized. Rather, Yahweh took upon himself full responsibility for fulfilling the obligations. In this sense, there is nothing that David or his descendants could do to cancel the covenant or nullify its promises.
  - b. **Conditionality:** There is, nevertheless, a hint of conditionality in the language of the covenant. These conditions don’t relate to the fulfillment of the promises as much as they relate to the question of “which king or kings will enjoy certain provisions laid out by the covenant.”<sup>21</sup> In filial language, Yahweh clarifies that disobedience on the part of David’s descendants will result in discipline and chastisement (2 Sam 7:14-16), but not covenant cancellation. They are legally adopted sons, and as such no amount of disobedience will end Yahweh’s loyal love toward his children. “Loyal sons, i.e., those who lived in accordance with the stipulations

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 238-9.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 241.

of the Mosaic Covenant, would fully enjoy the provisions offered them. However, disloyal sons, i.e., Davidic descendants who practice covenant treachery, will forfeit the promised divine protection and will eventually lose their enjoyment of rulership and land.”<sup>22</sup>

#### IV. Purpose

- A. *Yahweh established a human monarchy over his theocratic nation Israel and guaranteed its future in his covenant with David.*
- B. Samuel is about more than the establishment of a human kingship. Rather, it is about a line that has been established through which the Messiah will come.
- C. Israel was a theocratic nation—*Yahweh* was their king. The civil matters of Israel were handled by the judges and the religious matters were led by the priests.
- D. But when Israel demanded a king, they effectively rejected God’s leadership over them in exchange for human leadership. The priests still led the religious life of Israel, but now a human king had taken over the leadership of the nation’s civil life.
- E. Thus, Samuel chronicles God’s purpose for Israel in the provision of *his* king, and the confirmation of that king in a covenant that established the monarchy permanently and paved the way for the promise of Genesis 49—that God would send a king who will be Israel’s hope.

#### V. The Literary Structure

- A. The book of Samuel can best be outlined around the three most prominent individuals in the book: Samuel, Saul, and David:

SAMUEL		SAUL		DAVID		
<i>The Prophet</i>	<i>The Judge</i>	<i>His Appointment</i>	<i>His Failure</i>	<i>His Rise</i>	<i>His Reign</i>	<i>The Review</i>
I/1:1 - 4:1a	4:1b - 7:17	8:1 - 12:25	13:1 - 15:35	16:1 - 31:13	II/1:1-20:26	21:1 - 24:25
<b>60 YEARS</b>		<b>40 YEARS</b>			<b>40 YEARS</b>	
1110 B.C.	1050 B.C.				1010 B.C.	970 B.C.

- B. Of particular note is the final three chapters which form a kind of theological review of David. Bergen describes these chapters as “six accounts and lists that are chronologically detached from the previous narratives.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>23</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 441.

- C. These six accounts are arranged chiastically, and all focus on David's relationship with Yahweh.

- A *David as royal judge*: settling difficult disputes (21:1-14)
- B *David as military leader*: the actions of his valiant men on behalf of David (21:15-22)
- C *David as faithful poet*: David's faithfulness matched by divine protection (22:1-51)
- C' *David as faithful poet*: David's faithfulness matched by divine blessing (23:1-7)
- B' *David as military leader*: the actions of David on behalf of his valiant men (23:8-39)
- A' *David as royal priest*: interceding on behalf of Israel (24:1-25)

- D. What we see in these accounts is a theological portrayal of the multifaceted role of David demonstrated in "the public roles and private reflections of Israel's consummate citizen."<sup>24</sup>

## VI. EXCURSUS: The Bethlehem Trilogy

- A. Related to the monarchy of Israel and bridging the book of Samuel with the period of the judges is what OT theologians refer to as a "the Bethlehem Trilogy," which refers to three narratives set in the period of the judges:
- B. Many elements tie these three narratives thematically together, but the feature that unites them all is the prominent featuring of the town of Bethlehem.
- C. Merrill writes, "They concern individuals in more or less private settings whose identifies and activities are nevertheless inseparable from, and crucial to, a full understanding of the Davidic monarchy, which followed them."
1. **Micah and the Levite:** this is the first of two episodes that form the epilogue to the book of Judges. It concerns a wealthy *Ephraimite* named Micah who employs a Levite *from Bethlehem* to serve in his home as priest in his pagan shrine. The Levite eventually leaves Micah to serve the tribe of Dan who was seeking to take over the town of Laish and establish a shrine there. The Levite was none other than the grandson of Moses.
  2. **The Levite and His Concubine:** this is the second episode forming the epilogue to the book of Judges and portrays a Levite from *Ephraim* who had taken a girl *from Bethlehem* as his concubine. When he retrieved her from Bethlehem, he sought shelter in Gibeah of Benjamin, quartering in the home of an elderly man. During the night, his concubine was brutalized by the men of the city and he found her dead the next day. Since the concubine was from Bethlehem, the Judahites attacked the Benjamites, nearly annihilating them. In order to keep the tribe from extinction, the 600 remaining men of Benjamin took maidens from Shiloh and Jabesh Gilead as

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 442.

wives. It was undoubtedly from this group of women that King Saul was descended. Historically and ideologically, the entire story reflects poorly on Benjamin, on Saul, and on the Saulide dynasty.

3. **The Story of Ruth:** This third story features yet another man—Elimelech—who travels with his family from their home *in Bethlehem* to Moab, where he dies along with his sons, leaving his wife Naomi and two daughters-in-law. One daughter-in-law, Ruth, returns with Naomi to Bethlehem where the narrative concludes by revealing that she is a forbearer of King David.
- D. All three stories emphasize an Ephraim-Bethlehem connection, and all three feature individuals from Bethlehem.
  - E. Yet, in the first two narratives, these Bethlehemite individuals dishonor the reputation of Bethlehem, while in the third story, the town is exalted as the birthplace of David.
  - F. In the second story, Benjamin, Saul, and the Saulide dynasty is denigrated while the reputation of Judah, David, and the Davidic dynasty is enhanced.
  - G. Thus, these three narratives seem to tie together theologically and historically to elevate the Davidic dynasty over and against his antagonist, Saul the Benjamite.
  - H. “They are included in the sacred record for the purpose of tracing the roots of the Davidic dynasty and justifying its existence in opposition to Saul.”<sup>25</sup>

## VII. Suggested Resources

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Merrill, Eugene H. *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

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<sup>25</sup> Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 198.