



# KINGS OF ISRAEL I: 1 & 2 SAMUEL

## WEEK 1

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# OUTLINE

## COURSE LOGISTICS

## INTRODUCTION, CRITICAL MATTERS

Authorship & Dating

Theology and Themes

Historical Evidence



## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is the first of a three-part series, running from 1 Samuel through 2 Chronicles, exploring the history of the Kings of Israel. This massive stretch of the Old Testament contains shocking family dramas, gruesome violence, court intrigue and interminable struggles for power. Behind it all stands God's sovereignty over Israel and the nations. In part 1, we will examine the first "chapter" of the kingship in 1st and 2nd Samuel, running from the last judge in Samuel through to David's rule of the united kingdom of Israel.



## COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- ▶ **Attendance** You must attend 4 of 5 classes to receive credit.
- ▶ **Readings** You must turn in 3 of 4 of the reading assignments.

# COURSE OUTLINE

| Date | Week | Topic                               | Read         |
|------|------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| 5/8  | 1    | Introduction, Samuel                | –            |
| 5/15 | –    | <b>NO CLASS</b>                     | –            |
| 5/22 | 2    | Saul's Anointing & Foolishness      | I Sam 1-15   |
| 5/29 | 3    | Fall of Saul, Rise of David         | I Sam 16-31  |
| 6/5  | 4    | Consolidation of the House of David | II Sam 1-10  |
| 6/12 | 5    | Chaos in David's Family, Epilogue   | II Sam 11-24 |



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## WHO WROTE I & II SAMUEL?

Nearly a hundred years of (liberal) biblical scholarship attempted to splinter the Old Testament into numerous sources that developed along an “evolutionary” religious pathway. That line of thinking has diminished in influence. More authors are acknowledging a unity of its message.

*The story of David is probably the greatest single narrative representation in antiquity of a human life evolving by slow stages through time, shaped and altered by the pressures of political life, public institutions, family, the impulses of body and spirit, the eventual sad decay of the flesh. It also provides the most unflinching insight into the cruel processes of history and into human behavior warped by the pursuit of power. . . .*

*[T]he architectonic cohesion of the narrative from the birth of Samuel to the death of David has been made increasingly clear by the innovative literary commentary of the past three decades, and much of the richness and complexity of the story is lost by those who imagine this book as a stringing together of virtually independent sources . . . (Alter, 223-4)*



## WHO WROTE I & II SAMUEL?

Unlike the Pentateuch, there is not the same wealth of information both internal and external to the text itself. Relevant information for our books:

1. These books were considered canonical during the time of Christ. (So?)
2. Jewish tradition (Baba Bathra, Babylonian Talmud) has Samuel as the primary author with both Nathan and Gad finishing it out.
3. I Chronicles 29:29,30—Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Samuel the seer, in the chronicles of Nathan the prophet and in the chronicles of Gad the seer, with all his reign, his power, and the circumstances which came on him, on Israel, and on all the kingdoms of the lands.





## WHO WROTE I & II SAMUEL?

I Chronicles 29:29,30 affirms the same trio of authors (Samuel, Gad, Nathan) for the life of David. While I Chron doesn't guarantee that I & II Sam were written by this trio, consider:

1. As prophets, these three would be authoritative enough to write a book such as I & II Sam.
2. The agreement between I Chronicles and the Talmud is noteworthy. (We can't rule out, however, that the Talmud drew upon I Chron, rather than drawing on a distinct tradition.)
3. At the very least, we can expect that whatever is described here provides the substantial basis for I & II Sam given that they were all contemporaries of David.



## DATING CONSIDERATIONS

As indicated above, there are limitations in knowing for sure who wrote this. Unlike the Pentateuch, less hangs on who wrote it or when. Here is a working model:

1. Substantial core of the text comes from SGN—contemporaneous with David (10th-11th C)
2. Given its unity and design, it's unlikely that its current form was any earlier than Solomon since David's "last words" are mentioned (2 Sam 23:1). Likewise, the phrase "to this day" appears quite often.
- 3A. There is some evidence of later editorial work. For example, 1 Sam 27:6b—therefore Ziklag has belonged to the *kings of Judah* to this day.
- 3B. We might jettison any role of a late-editing by simply placing its final authorship/arrangement as later.



## ASIDE ON REDACTION

Biblical Redaction is the arrangement, editing or updating of an earlier source by a (sometimes anonymous) editor, or redactor. Like any tool, much of its impact depends on the one using it. Cf. Chainsaw.

Acceptable forms of redaction include:

- ▶ Arranging a book's contents in some order at the very least for practical purposes. Obvious e.g.s include Psalms and Proverbs.
- ▶ Prophetic editing:  
[W]ithin the canonical process, and subsequent to the initial writing of a biblical book or books, a God-chosen individual under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit could adjust, revise, or update pre-existing biblical material in order to make a given Scripture passage understandable to succeeding generations. Those revisions, which occurred within the compositional history of the OT, are also inspired and inerrant. (Grisanti in Merrill et al., 85)



## ASIDE ON REDACTION

Problematic forms of redaction include: (for each why?)

- ▶ Seeing large portions of the Bible (e.g., Pentateuch) as quilt-work of sources, clumsily arranged for political purposes.
- ▶ “Deuteronomist” updating old historical sources to better fit his religious or political convictions.
- ▶ Linking pseudepigraphal writing with genuine writing (Cf. “Deutero-Isaiah”).

The problematic forms are not only “unorthodox” but lack stable methodological controls: no physical evidence, very little consensus except philosophical commitment to naturalism and/or Enlightenment rationalism.



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# THEOLOGY

1. The whole saga of kings highlights the doctrine of **total depravity**. We read explicit statements of this doctrine in Genesis 8:2; Ps 53:2-3, 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9 (cf. Romans 3:23 and more). Yet there is nothing that so vividly displays this as the endless cycles of foolishness from the very people God rescued from slavery, nor as tragically as in David's family.
2. Likewise, the kings of Israel exhibits **God's sovereignty** with an uncommon depth (cf. Psalm 103:19). This is both *because of* (in the form of judgment) and *in spite of* the wild deviations from his law from those called to guard it (cf. Deut 17:18ff). God's plan and word are tested and approved by centuries of chaos and opposing plans of the narrow-minded arrogant.
3. Right at the intersection point of these concepts, we also learn that the **Messiah** will come from David and his family. This notion is loudly echoed throughout the prophets.



# THEMES

1. *Heart*—Eli and Saul's houses are given over to those with good hearts. The exact language isn't used but later kings were evaluated as to whether they "did right in the sight of the LORD".
2. *House*—Throughout I & II Samuel, there is a curious play on words with the concept of a house, viz. between God's dwelling place and the dynasties of David and Saul. The most notable is that God offers David a house (dynasty) while balking at David's offer for a house (temple).
3. *Anoint*—Given the ceremonial role of oil in ancient "coronation," it is no surprise that a book about kings would highlight anointing and being anointed. David's abiding respect for God's leaders is worthy of deep meditation.  
[Special note: "Messiah" means anointed one.]



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# INTRODUCTION

The historical evidence from this time in Israel is very scant. Why might that be?

1. Jerusalem and the temple were badly destroyed several times. The fact that we have even the biblical witness is virtually miraculous.
2. Unlike other ancient sites, the city of Jerusalem has been almost continuously occupied. This implies:
  - 2.1 That it is difficult to excavate *right now*.
  - 2.2 The relevant strata are not exactly near the surface, as might be the case in long abandoned ancient sites.
3. (Discussed more below) Major regional powers were weak during this time. Such a fact would limit how much is recorded outside of Israel's own record. The latter survives almost exclusively in Scripture.



# ARTIFACTS

Here are some archaeological discoveries relevant to this period:

- ▶ Tell-Dan stele—Aramean king describes his conquests, and a fragment mentions a vanquished king of the “House of David.”
- ▶ Mesha stele—Also (most likely) refers to the house of David, partly due to its parallel with the house of Omri (Ahab’s father).
- ▶ Pim weights—Small pebbles with ‘*pym*’ engraved on them with a precise weight. The word in brackets below, *pim*, was just guessed at for years. It’s now universally accepted to be a weight measure.

| 1 Sam 13:21                                   |   |
|---|---|
| KJV   | NASB  |
| Yet they had a (file)<br>for the mattocks ... | The charge was (2/3 shekel)<br>for the plowshares ... |



## LOCAL AND GLOBAL POWERS

The Biblical record indicates near constant war between the Israelite kings and locals, but little confrontation with major ANE powers until much later. This is supported by extrabiblical evidence:

- ▶ Egyptian (south) and Hittite (north) rule over the ANE waned in the 12th C.
- ▶ Neo-Assyrian Empire grew more powerful in the 9th C, which is not long before they start to create trouble for Israel.
- ▶ In the interim, small local groups occupied portions but not all of the ANE, one of which was the united Kingdom of Israel.



## OTHER HISTORICAL REMARKS

Here are a few remarks from otherwise secular authors:

*The modest archaeological data from the time of David, although not conforming with the image of an empire founder, is consistent with the biblical accounts, which do not attribute to him any building operations. (Mazar, 375)*

*Were David an invention of much later national tradition, he would be the most peculiar of founding kings: a figure who early on is shown as a collaborator with the archenemies of Israel, the Philistines; who compounds adultery with murder; who more than once exposes himself to humiliation, is repeatedly seen in his weakness, and oscillates from nobility of sentiment and act to harsh vindictiveness on his very deathbed. (Alter, 230-1)*

Neither of them is fully endorsing the Scriptures, but they signal that the biblical text is more reliable than is often assumed in scholarly circles.



## REFERENCES

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