



1 Samuel

Transcript

Introduction

00:00-01:47

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel. They're two separate books in our modern Bibles, but that division is due simply to scroll length; it was originally written as one coherent story. We're just going to cover the book of 1 Samuel in this video.

So after Israel was rescued from slavery in Egypt, they made a covenant with God at Mount Sinai and eventually came into the promised land. And there, Israel was supposed to be faithful to God and obey the covenant commands. Before the book of Samuel, Judges showed how Israel failed at that task—big time. It was a period of moral chaos, and it showed Israel's need for wise, faithful leaders. The book of Samuel provides an answer to that need.

The book of Samuel's story focuses on three main characters: the prophet Samuel, where the book gets its name, and then King Saul and, after that, King David. And all three of them transitioned Israel from a group of tribes ruled by judges into a unified kingdom ruled by King David in Jerusalem. And the book of Samuel has a fascinating design that weaves the story of these three characters together in four main parts.

Samuel, he's the key leader and prophet in the first section of the book. But then he also plays a key role in the next section, which is Saul's story. And it's told in two movements: Saul's rise to power and then his failures, and the second part is about his downfall and his tragic death.

And then the drama of Saul's demise is matched by David's exciting rise to power. And then David's story is told in two movements. First, he rides the wave of his success, followed by his own tragic failure and the slow self-destruction of his family and then his kingdom. The book concludes with an epilogue that reflects back over the whole story. So let's dive in and see how this all unfolds.

Chapters 1-7

01:47-03:40

Part one picks up from the chaos of the book of Judges, and we're introduced to a touching story about a woman named Hannah. And she's grieved because she has never been able to have children. And, by God's grace, she finally has a son named Samuel. And in joy, she sings this amazing poem in chapter 2. And the poem is all about how God opposes the proud and exalts the humble; about how, despite tragedies and human evil, God is working out his purposes in history. And also it's about how God will one day raise up an anointed king for his people. Now, Hannah's poem has been placed here at the beginning of the book to introduce these key themes that we're going to see throughout the whole story, like the next one.

Samuel grows up and becomes a great prophet and leader for the people of Israel, at the same time that the Philistines rise to power as Israel's archnemesis. And in this crucial battle, the Israelites get arrogant, and instead of praying and asking God for help, they trot out the ark of the covenant as this kind of magic trophy that will automatically grant them victory in battle. And so, because of their arrogant presumption, God allows Israel to lose the battle, and the ark is stolen.

So the Philistines, they take the ark, and they place it in the temple of their god Dagon. And then the God of Israel defeats the Philistines and the god Dagon without an army by sending plagues on the people. And then the Philistines don't want the ark anymore, obviously, and they send it back to Israel. And the point of this little story seems to be this: God is not Israel's trophy, and he opposes pride among the Philistines but also among his own people. And so Israel needs to remain humble and obedient if they want to experience God's covenant blessing, which opens up into the next large section.

Chapters 8-15

03:41-04:46

The Israelites come to Samuel, and they say, "Hey, we want a king like all the other nations have. Go find one for us." And so Samuel, he's kind of ticked off, and he goes to consult with God. And God says, "Yes, their motives are all wrong, but if a king is what they want, give them one."

And so we're introduced to the figure of Saul. Now Saul is a tragic figure because he begins full of promise. He's tall, he's good looking, he's a perfect candidate for a king, but he has deep character flaws. He's dishonest, he lacks integrity, and he seems incapable of acknowledging his own mistakes. And so these flaws become his downfall. He wins some battles at the beginning, but his flaws run so deep, he eventually disqualifies himself by blatantly disobeying God's commands.

And so the aging Samuel confronts Saul and Israel. He had warned the people that they would only benefit from a king who's humble and faithful to God, otherwise the kings of Israel will bring ruin. So he informs Saul that God is going to raise up a new king to replace him.

Chapters 16-31

04:46-06:14

And so Saul's downfall begins as God, at the same time, is working behind the scenes to raise up that new king. It's an insignificant shepherd boy named David. He's the least likely candidate to be king, but the famous story of David and Goliath shows that God's choice of David is not based on his family status but simply on his radical and humble trust in the God of Israel. And so this story embodies all of the themes of Hannah's poem. Proud Saul and Goliath are brought low, while humble David is exalted.

From here, we watch Saul slowly descend into madness while David rises to power. So David starts working for Saul as a general, and he's winning all of the battles—and he's also winning all of the fame. And so Saul gets jealous, and he starts chasing David around, hunting him, trying to kill him. David's done nothing wrong. And so David simply runs and waits in the wilderness. And here, we see David's true character. He has multiple opportunities to kill Saul, but he doesn't. He simply trusts that, despite Saul's evil, God will raise up a king for his people.

What's interesting, too, is that many of the poems of David that you find in the book of Psalms are linked to this very period of his life, and they all express that same attitude of trust. And so this section of the book ends with Saul coming to a grisly death after losing a battle with the Philistines.

Conclusion

06:14-07:16

1 Samuel tells some of the most intricate, well-told stories you find anywhere in the Bible, and the characters, Saul and David, they're portrayed very realistically. And the author's putting them forward as character studies, so that you can find yourself in them.

So in Saul's story, we see a warning. It's crucial that we reflect on our own character flaws and how they harm us and other people. And with God's help, we need to humble ourselves and deal with our dark side, so that Saul's story doesn't become ours.

David, on the other hand, is presented as an example of patience and trust in God's timing in our lives. And so he's running in the wilderness, being chased by Saul—David had every reason to think that God had abandoned him. But that's not what

he thinks. And so David's story encourages us to trust that, despite human evil, God is working out his purposes to oppose the proud and to exalt the humble. And that's what 1 Samuel is all about.