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**BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK**

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***STUDIES IN  
SAMUEL***

by

Willard W. Winter

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# DEDICATION

To Puella



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## PREFACE

The work being presented is the outgrowth of a number of years of teaching the books of Samuel as a part of a course embracing the twelve books of history in the Old Testament. The method followed is one of providing both questions and answers on the verses where problems most often arise. The questions are much after the style used by J. W. McGarvey in his *Class Notes on Sacred History*, but move beyond the number he raised on each chapter.

With each question the verse number is also given, thus enabling the student to turn to the Bible to read the text and see the verse in its context. The wording of the King James Version is followed inasmuch as, in the opinion of the author, it is still the most frequently quoted version among Bible-believing students.

A general introduction to the books of Samuel precedes the actual text of the present work providing the student with general information about Samuel with regard to such questions as the name of the books, the author, the date of contents, the date of writing, the purpose, the plan, and the general outline.

In addition to the general outline of the books found in the Introduction, a fuller outline is given at the beginning of the text for each of the two books of Samuel. This broader outline is a recapitulation of the sections in the chapter digests found throughout the book.

A special feature of this work is the digest of each chapter which precedes the actual text. This digest is followed by another special feature entitled "Lessons for Learning." These "Lessons for Learning" are truths gleaned from the events described in the chapters.

In order that the real message in the Scriptures be embedded in the minds of the readers, it is suggested that the actual Scripture text be read first. This should be followed by a quick reading of the digest of the chapter. The "Lessons for Learning" should next be considered and

finally specific questions on finer points should be read along with the answers to the questions.

In order to give the student a quick review of the chapter, ten questions are appended to each chapter. These questions are not answered for the student but provide a means for him to check up on his impressions from his study. At times these questions are repetitions for emphasis of the questions in the text for which answers have been provided. At other times they are general questions which should stimulate the student to new thoughts which will embed the truths of the Bible indelibly in his mind.

It is hoped that the end result will be that the reader may say with the Psalmist, who is really the main person of the books of Samuel, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105) and with the purpose in mind of being able to say, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).

## INTRODUCTION

### *The Name of the Book*

The two books of Samuel of our contemporary English Bibles were originally considered as one book by the Jewish people. This is evidenced by the fact that Josephus (*Against Apion*, I, 8) says, "For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us disagreeing from and contradicting one another (as the Greeks have), but only twenty-two books. . . ." No doubt he is referring to the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament which would be reduced to twenty-two by combining such double books as Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, by considering the Minor Prophets as one volume, and by combining such books as Lamentations with Jeremiah, as well as Ruth with Judges.

The Jewish people have always referred to these books as the books of Samuel. When the Greek translation was made, the translators called it First and Second Kings (*Basileion Alpha* and *Beta*). The Latin titles give the books the names of *Liber I Samuelis* and *Liber II Samuelis*.

### *The Date of the Book*

The writings which we call the books of Samuel cover a period extending from the birth of Samuel through the reign of David. The period begins immediately after the end of the book of Judges. It is quite possible that Eli was High Priest in Shiloh while Samson was active among the Philistines.

Chronological notes in the book of Judges total over four hundred years, but if we take the periods of judgeship alone along with the periods when the land had rest, the total is 299 years. Jephthah indicated that the people of Israel had come into Palestine three hundred years before his own date (Judges 11:26). If we consider the length of judgeships of those who followed Jephthah and the time from Moses to Judges, the period of Judges still is around three hundred years.

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We therefore conclude that Samuel must have been born around 1100 B.C. or three hundred years after the time of Joshua which is dated around 1400 B.C. If Samson was still active while Eli was high priest at Shiloh, it is quite possible that Samuel was a bit earlier than this date.

We do know that the division of the kingdom between Rehoboam and Jeroboam occurred around 931 B.C. The time of the reign of Solomon is set at 40 years (I Kings 11:42). This would mean that Solomon came to the throne around 970 B.C. This would be the end of the reign of David and would mark the extent of time to which the books of Samuel ranged. We are also informed that David reigned for forty years (I Kings 2:11), and we are thus able to establish the end of the reign of Saul at around 1010 B.C.

Such dates as these make it possible for us to state with a reasonable amount of accuracy that the books of Samuel cover a period of over a hundred years; and since the books close with David still active and say nothing about the way in which he died, we are also reasonably sure that the books were written during the lifetime of David, during the close of his reign. This would indicate that the books were written around 970 B.C.

### *Authorship of the Book*

The Talmud says that "Samuel wrote the book which bears his name and the book of Judges and Ruth" (*Baba Bathra*, 14b). In the later section of the Talmud, however, it is recorded that "Samuel wrote his book (*Sifro*) but is it not written in it 'Now Samuel was dead?'" (*Baba Bathra*, 15a). Jewish tradition maintained that Samuel wrote the book, but naturally objections to holding the position that he wrote all of the book were raised even at that time.

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Samuel's death is recorded in I Samuel 25:1 and mention is made again of his death in I Samuel 28:3. Events which took place long after Samuel's death are also recorded in the two books. God temporarily raised him from the dead, according to the record in I Samuel 28:11-19.

Some critics hold the position that the books were not completed in their present form until sometime after the kingdom was divided under Rehoboam and Jeroboam (Edward J. Young, "The Books of Samuel," *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 188-189).

It hardly seems plausible that the books were written at such a late date. The second book of Samuel ends with David still active, and the first book of Kings takes up with David still old and serving as king. It appears more likely that the death of David would have been recorded in Samuel if the books were not written until a long time after the event took place.

The more logical position is that the books of Samuel were written while David was still alive. *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* has this note: "Samuel is the historian of his own lifetime. Nathan and Gad together give the history of David's reign" ("Introduction," page 11).

Quite likely Samuel did write the history from the beginning of the books until the account of his death. Probably Nathan wrote the rest of the history, making some additions and insertions in the earlier part as he brought the books to their present form. The books should still be called the books of Samuel, because they not only tell the story of Samuel's life but also the story of the lives of the two kings he anointed—Saul and David.

### *The Purpose of the Book*

The general purpose of the book and main theme of the book are to trace the advance of the people of Israel

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under the Divine guidance to a state of settled prosperity and union in the Promised Land. Also to give prominence to the rule of God which was the essential condition of Israel's life as the people of God under all the changing forms of early government. The books are a record of the changes, national and constitutional, which accompanied the growth and development of the national life. At the close of this period the Israelites found themselves united under the rule of the king to whom all gave allegiance. They were controlled and guided by the definitely established institutions and laws.

Samuel himself is sometimes described as a "king-maker." He was called of God to anoint both Saul and David, the first kings of Israel. The books of Samuel naturally trace out not only the career of Samuel, himself, but also the career of those with whom he was associated.

Without the books of Samuel our knowledge of the history of Israel would be incomplete. We would be left to wonder how they progressed from the state in which they found themselves under the leadership of Judges to the place where they had men like Solomon and Hezekiah to be their kings. The simple purpose of the books may be described as that of carrying forward the history of the people of Israel.

### *The Plan of the Books*

The books are in the form of historical records of events. They are easy to read. One chapter seems to follow another in natural order, and people who like to read history are sure to enjoy reading these books. Critics of the Bible and of the progress of mankind admit that these books are genuine history.

A definite plan is hard to trace out in the two books if they are to be compared with the book of Genesis, which is quite evidently planned around the ten generations

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enumerated in Genesis. The writers of the books of Samuel, however, have quite evidently followed the natural plan of writing history. They give the narrative of facts and events in a chronological order together with the causes and effects of those facts and events.

Some background is laid for the appearance of Samuel himself. Eli was high priest when Samuel was born. His life is certainly not exemplary nor is the life of his sons. He was a part of the early experiences of Samuel.

Once the background for Samuel's life has been presented, the author proceeds then to tell of the career of Samuel. Samuel's associations with Saul are traced out, and the second king whom Samuel anointed is introduced.

David is quite evidently more important to the entire story of God's dealings with mankind than any of the others. He is introduced in the sixteenth chapter of First Samuel, and the rest of the book is largely a record of David's activities.

Not only does the plan of God demand that sixteen chapters of First Samuel be given to David, but it is also expedient that all twenty-four chapters of Second Samuel be devoted to the story of David. David ruled no longer than his son Solomon, but it was not in God's plan to tell as much about Solomon. Solomon was not as important to the entire account of God's dealings with his people, and so the story of Solomon is told in only eleven chapters of First Kings. The forty chapters devoted to David and the eleven chapters to Solomon show the comparative importance of the two men.

This inequality of length of treatment is sometimes called "literary disproportion." It would be better to call it an evidence of the plan of God, the ultimate author of the books. David was a man after God's own heart, and Solomon in all his glory was not more important. Neither was Saul, but the high place occupied by Samuel is indicated by the fact that the two books are called the

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books of Samuel. Such is the plan of God in giving us these two books.

### *The Outline of the Book*

Since the books of Samuel are divided into two sections in the English Bible, we may well outline the contents of the books of Samuel in two parts. Under this arrangement we have the following outline:

I. The influence of Samuel in the life of Saul—

I Samuel 1-31

II. The influences of Samuel in the life of David—

II Samuel 1-24

This kind of outline of the book, however, does not really give us much information about the contents of the two books.

A better outline of the books of Samuel would be to indicate the life of Samuel as a separate part. The outline would go as follows:

I. The life and work of Samuel—I Samuel 1-15

II. The life and reign of Saul—I Samuel 16-31

III. The reign of David—II Samuel 1-24

Still a third outline is suggested by the material in the books which outlines these points:

I. The lives of Samuel and Saul—I Samuel 1-15

II. The lives of David and Saul—I Samuel 16-II Samuel 1

III. The sole reign of David—II Samuel 2-24

From these various suggestions it is easy to see that the task of outlining the books is rather difficult, but any outline of the book must give prominence to Samuel. The only reason we know about Eli is that he was high priest when Samuel is born. The primary reason that we know Saul is the fact that he was anointed by Samuel. The outstanding thing about the beginning of the reign of David at least is that he was chosen by God through his prophet Samuel. The books are very properly called the

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Books of Samuel. They trace out the life of Samuel and the lives of those men upon whom he had primary influence.

### *The Contents of the Book*

Some of the most thrilling incidents of all Bible history are recorded in the books of Samuel. It is here that we read about the Godly character of Hannah. Hannah's song is the most important part of chapter two. Samuel's vision of the God who called him to be a prophet is in the third chapter. The Philistines come into focus as the reader continues through the next four chapters. Samuel is rejected by the people as king as prophet and judge in chapter eight, and then we are introduced to Saul. Saul's anointing and his first victories are recorded in chapters ten and eleven. Chapter twelve is given over to Samuel's address to the people of Israel in regard to the nature of the king and the kingdom. Final events in the association of Samuel and Saul are found in the next three chapters, and David is introduced in chapter sixteen.

The great encounter of David and Goliath is found in the seventeenth chapter, and then David's various associations with Saul and Jonathan are the subject matter of the next seven chapters. Samuel's death is recorded in chapter twenty-five, and David's continued flight from the presence of Saul occupies the final chapters of the book. Chapter thirty-one records Saul's death on Mount Gilboa, and the first chapter of the second book records the evidently spurious account of the man who said he had killed Saul. It is also in the first chapter of Second Samuel that we read the Song of the Bow, David's lamentation over Saul and Jonathan.

David's reign in Hebron is recorded in II Samuel chapter two through five. This period of seven and one-half years was very important to the life of David. It was during this time that he married and fathered his first children.

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Perhaps these were the happiest years of his reign.

The reign of David from Jerusalem over all Israel is recorded in the rest of Second Samuel. The final chapters of the book contain David's last words and the account of his ill-fated numbering of the people of Israel.

David was a man after God's own heart. The records of his successes and failures are written in large letters so that they who read may understand. His life is exemplary and one that should be studied diligently by every Christian. It is perhaps this reason that makes most of us interested in the books of Samuel.

In addition to all the dramatic interest which is aroused by the records in First and Second Samuel is the fact that David is the ancestor of Jesus Christ. Jesus was of the house and family of David. He has been known as the Son of David. As the Christ was a Prophet after the order of Moses and a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, He was a king after the order of David. One can hardly understand the impact of the ministry of Jesus Christ without understanding the reign of David.

All these reasons go together to make studies in Samuel an imperative part of every Christian's background. Not only is the material to be covered a part of the Holy Writ, but it is also a part that looms large among the essential parts of the Bible. To know Samuel and David is ultimately to know God, the Father, and His Son, the true Son of David.