

BIG WORD: 2 Samuel

Introduction – 12 September 2012

The Old Testament books of Samuel were originally one text. Being large and cumbersome, translators broke it into two parts for early manuscripts of the Septuagint (*early Greek translations of Scripture*). Around the 15th century, however, it was officially broken into two books. This does not affect the continuity of the books, only their manageability. As such, we cannot study the second half without a general understanding of the first. So, let's look at them together.

Author: The author is anonymous, though it is reasonable to presume that much of 1 Samuel was written by Samuel himself. That is until the part that describes his death (Ch. 25) and events thereafter. Many scholars also attribute authorship to Gad and Nathan, based on 1 Chronicles 29:29.

Date: The generally accepted dates of events are these:

- Saul became king in 1050 BC.
- David was born in 1040 BC.
- David became king of Judah in 1010 BC.
- Solomon became king in 970 BC.

The books of Samuel were written sometime after the division of kingdoms (into Israel and Judah) and before the fall of Samaria. The kingdom was divided after Solomon's death in 931 B.C.; Samaria fell in 722 B.C. Most scholars, therefore, put the completion of this text around 900 B.C.

Historical Significance: Samuel presents a critical time in Israel's history. Throughout its timeline, the nation's government transitioned from priestly rule to judicial to a monarchy. It was not an easy time for God's people. Not only did their leadership change hands and form, but their borders grew and shrunk and then expanded again. The Israelites went from being a nomadic people to a respected nation.

Themes: A consistent theme throughout many parts of the Old Testament is this:

If God can use tragically flawed people like these, He can use you and me, too!

This is extremely evident in Judges, but we see it throughout Samuel, too, including this second half with the life of David. It has been said that *"God doesn't call the equipped; He equips the called."* His expectations are not perfection, but submission. How can we live humble lives fully submitted to Him?

In 1 Samuel another theme emerges:

God's thoughts rarely match man's thoughts.

Israel's best ideas for governance were far inferior to God's plan. They had some successes, but, more often than not, they learned the hard way that God's ways – plan, timing, standards – far exceed anything man can concoct. First Samuel teaches about true faith in God, a faith that requires trust in Him and not in ourselves or the people surrounding us. It's an excellent study in patience, rightly placed confidence and choosing what is best over what is simply good enough.

Second Samuel continues both of the aforementioned themes and adds another:

God delights in restoration. Nothing can thwart Him from bringing it to fruition.

In 2 Samuel we see God restore the nation of Israel after a civil war. We see Him restore the monarchy to His chosen king (David). God restores His promise of a Savior. He restores David after his great sins with Bathsheba and Uriah. He even restores the kingdom into David's hands after his sons' rebellions. By the beginning of the book of Kings, we see He even restores Bathsheba's reputation! God delights in restoration, in bringing all things back to Him and to the way He intends.

Both parts of Samuel (1 and 2) exhibit a cause-and-effect relationship. When we make poor choices, we suffer consequences. God delights in restoration, but He doesn't remove the consequences of our sin.

As we dive into this study consider these questions:

- Are you fully available to God? If not, what hinders you?
- How does life exhibit a heart that seeks after Him and abides in His truths?
- What might God desire to restore in your life?
- What great plans might God have for you next?

You may also be interested in our Introduction to 1 Samuel, used in our Spring 2012 season of Big Word. You can find it online here: <http://tanyadennisbooks.com/2012/01/12/introduction-to-first-samuel/>