

The Half Hour That Changes the World

1 Samuel

Book 9

Basic Questions behind the book:

How does God respond to people's requests, even though they might not be what he expects of them?

Summary of book:

The book of 1 Samuel is about great beginnings and difficult endings. It begins with Eli as high priest during the time of the judges. In his training of Samuel, Eli demonstrated a clear understanding of God's purposes and call. Eli's death marked the decline of the influence of the priesthood and the rise of the prophets in Israel.

Samuel was dedicated to God by his mother Hannah. He became one of Israel's greatest prophets. Yet, at his time, the people rejected the leadership of judges and priests and asked for a king as a leader. Saul was the first king, who started out strong and humble. Later on he disobeyed God and became jealous and paranoid. He in the end committed suicide.

David was the next king; a man who followed God. While we meet up with David here, we must wait till the second book of Samuel to find out how things end up.

Vital Statistics:

Purpose: To record the life of Samuel, Israel's last judge; the reign and decline of King Saul, the first king; and the choice and preparation of David, Israel's greatest King.

Author: Possibly Samuel, but also there are writings from the prophets Nathan and Gad included. (1 Chronicles 29:29)

Recipients: The people of Israel and all people everywhere.

Dating: The date is believed to have been around 1070 – 1000 BC.

Setting: The book begins in the days of the judges and describes Israel's transition from a theocracy (meaning led by God), to a monarchy (meaning led by a King.)

Reflections:

The overall theme here is obedience to God. In this book we meet up with Samuel, Saul and David and see how they respond to God.

"Eli said to Samuel, '...if he calls you, say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."' (3:9)

"And the Lord told him: 'Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king...Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do.'" (8: 7, 9)