

# 1 Samuel

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## Awaiting God's Timing

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MOODY DISTANCE LEARNING

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Chicago, Illinois 60610

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# Description

This course will provide a general exposition of the book of 1 Samuel. Emphasis will be placed on the book's role and purpose in the life of ancient Israel, along with appropriate applications to believers' lives today.

## Objectives

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Articulate views on the book's authorship and date of writing.
- Understand the purpose of the book and the message that was intended for its original readers.
- Follow the narrative sequence of events described in the book and place them within the broader timeline of biblical history.
- Effectively apply the theological principles communicated in the book to their own lives and present-day situations.

## Course Components

Your course consists of two components – this study guide and an envelope containing four color-coded answer sheets.

### The Study Guide

- The study guide contains all of the lessons and exams for this course. There is a self-check quiz after every lesson (true and false questions and/or multiple choice). An exam follows Lesson 3, 6, 9, and 12.

### The Scantron Answer Sheets

- The color-coded Scantron answer sheets come with your course. These correspond to the exams in your study guide. Please use these sheets to mark your answers for each exam. **Use only a #2 lead pencil** to mark your answers. (Because these tests are electronically graded, ink or harder leads are not acceptable.)

# Requirements and Procedures

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## Requirements

In order to receive credit, the four exams must be completed with an overall average grade of 70% or better. A Grade Record Sheet is provided at the beginning of your study guide to help you keep track of your standing in this course.

## Procedures

Please follow the procedures listed for completing the lessons and exams in this course. As you complete each exam, mail the answer sheet to Moody Distance Learning, 820 N. LaSalle Boulevard, Chicago, IL 60610-3284, along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of your graded answer sheet. If you prefer, you may send multiple exams in one envelope. We request that you use the envelopes provided for this purpose.

### The Lessons

- Read the study guide at a time when you can concentrate. Pick a time of the day you are most likely to be alert and relatively uninterrupted.
- Read with a pencil or pen in hand. You will want to underline words or phrases, even sentences, for later reference.

### The Exams

- When you have completed all of the lessons that an exam covers, go back and review the material in the study guide. You may want to prepare by writing out your own outline of the material covered. The outlines will help you focus on the major truths discussed in each lesson.
- All exams are objective in nature and utilize the special answer sheets, or Scantron forms, provided with this course.

When taking the exam, please follow these instructions:

- It is important that you select the proper answer sheet for each exam. The answer sheet are as follows:

Exam 1 is blue

Exam 2 is green

Exam 3 is red

Exam 4 is tan

- Fill in the blanks at the top of your answer sheet. Please write legibly.
- We encourage you not to refer to your textbook or notes of any kind while taking the exam.
- Please use a #2 lead pencil to mark your answers. Fill in the spaces darkly and completely – be sure to erase any mistakes thoroughly.
- Mail your answer sheet to Moody Distance Learning along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of your graded answer sheet. If you prefer, you may send multiple exams of the same course in the same envelope. Please use the envelope provided with the course, for this purpose. Please do not send the pages of the exam from the study guide.
- When you receive your graded answer sheet from Moody Distance Learning, record your grade in the appropriate box on the Grade Record Sheet. Please mail in the Grade Record Card with your last exam(s). Keep your exams for future reference.

## Authorship, Date, and Purpose

The book of 1 Samuel is home to some of the dearest stories of the Christian faith. The story of David and Goliath has inspired many a young believer to take a bold stand for Christ in the face of overwhelming odds. Hannah's desperate plea for a child has strengthened countless faithful couples facing their own difficulties in conceiving. Samuel's long search to anoint the young David has reminded all of us that our internal character is far more valuable and important than any external appearance or credential. Considering how ingrained the stories of 1 Samuel have become in the Christian walk, we might question whether an in-depth study of the book would be the most valuable use of time. Might it be more worthwhile to study a more ambiguous or less familiar book?

For many of us, however, these stories exist in isolation—encouraging and inspiring in their own right, but bearing little real connection to the surrounding circumstances or events. We tend to read 1 Samuel as a storybook rather than as a novel. If we were asked the stories' significance to the nation of Israel or to the overall storyline of Scripture, we would have a hard time coming up with an answer! We might have a good idea of their spiritual significance to our Christian walk, but we do not usually consider their connection to each other or to the other events in the Bible. What is the overall plot of 1 Samuel? What was the book's intended message for the people of Israel to whom it was originally written? How does this impact us today?

This 12 lesson course will focus on these questions. We will certainly draw encouragement and application from the individual stories mentioned above. More than that, however, we will attempt to understand the overall message of the book as a whole. At the end of this course, you will understand why these events happened and what they reveal about God and His plan to redeem humanity. Woven throughout all the individual stories of 1 Samuel is a single thread that describes how God took His people, a loosely organized group of tribes settled on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and formed them

into a powerful nation, led by a king as His chosen representative, through which he would bless the entire world.

Before delving into this epic storyline, however, it is important to briefly consider the background behind it. Who wrote the book? When was it written? Perhaps most importantly, what situations in Israel prompted it to be written, and what was the intended message? As we consider these questions, it is important to note that 1 and 2 Samuel were originally a single book. Most Hebrew copies of the Bible before 1516 AD contain only one book of Samuel, which was later split into two separate books (presumably to better accommodate the space constraints of the writing materials being used).<sup>1</sup> When we talk about these questions pertaining to the writing of 1 Samuel, then, we must remember that 2 Samuel was also part of the original book when it was written.

## Author

In popular thought, the book of 1 Samuel is often attributed to the prophet Samuel. In reality, its author is unknown. Its name “Samuel” comes from the primary character of chapters 1-8, who remains a key player until his death in chapter 25. This title does not necessarily mean that Samuel wrote the book, however. In fact, his death in chapter 25 means that Samuel could not have written anything past 1 Samuel 24. This would leave seven chapters in 1 Samuel and all of 2 Samuel unspoken for!

This is not to say, however, that Samuel did not have any part in writing the book. 1 Samuel 10:25 specifically mentions that Samuel wrote down the events surrounding King Saul’s coronation in an unnamed book:

*Then Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book and placed it before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his house. (1 Samuel 10:25, NASB)*

In the same way, other passages are attributed to different contributors. Hannah was the original source of the prayer psalm in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

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1 Robert D. Bergen, vol. 7, 1, 2 Samuel, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1996), 18.

David wrote the funeral dirge sung for King Saul in 2 Samuel 1:19-27, as well as other psalms recorded in 2 Samuel 22-23.

Considering these various contributors specifically identified within the books of 1 and 2 Samuel themselves, it appears that the book began as a collection of documents written by several (perhaps many) different individuals, each of whom wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Some of their works were originally recorded in other books that no longer exist, such as the unnamed book used by Samuel in 1 Samuel 10:25 and the Book of Jashar used by David:

*Then David chanted with this lament over Saul and Jonathan his son, and he told them to teach the sons of Judah the song of the bow; behold, it is written in the book of Jashar. (2 Samuel 1:17-18, NASB)*

After they were written, a final author, also under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, edited all these works into their present form as a cohesive, sweeping narrative. This final author served as the narrator of the story, providing the necessary connections between stories and organizing them to give shape and meaning to the book. His work is especially evident in the various editorial comments found in several places, such as the frequent statements about how things are “to this day”:

*Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor all who enter Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day. (1 Samuel 5:5, NASB)*

## Date

If the books of Samuel were written by a group of contributors, the question of when they were written becomes a bit confusing. Of course, some sections were written down very shortly after they actually happened, such as the songs of Hannah and David. David's reign lasted from approximately 1010 BC to 971 BC, so Hannah's prayer after the birth of Samuel, which is presumably the earliest portion of the book, would have originated one generation prior to this (perhaps around 1080 BC).<sup>2</sup>

Other portions of the book bear signs of being written later. Robert Bergen notes in his commentary that 1 Samuel 27:6 mentions “the kings of Judah,” a phrase which would probably not have been used until after

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2 Ibid., 22.

the kingdom of Israel divided into two separate nations of Samaria and Judah in 931 BC.<sup>3</sup>

Even more telling is the editor's explanation of the archaic term "seer" in 1 Samuel 9:9:

*Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he used to say, "Come, and let us go to the seer"; for he who is called a prophet now was formerly called a seer. (1 Samuel 9:9, NASB)*

During the time period covered in 1 Samuel, prophets were generally called "seers." This was common at least until the northern kingdom of Israel (Samaria) was carried into captivity in 722 BC (see 2 Chronicles 16:7, 10) and was even used by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 30:10). This means that it is likely that the book was not organized into its present form until after the nation had been taken captive.

## Purpose

This leads us to the question, why were the books of 1 and 2 Samuel written in the first place? Of course, there was certainly a historical element to their writing. Having been carried into captivity, the people of Israel would have wanted to preserve their history for access by future generations. However, this in itself is not a complete answer. Every historical account is written from a certain point of view and is shaped for a specific purpose. For example, in 2009 a historian might write an account of the Vietnam War in order to draw parallels and provide commentary on the present day conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the same way, the final author of 1 Samuel chose the stories he did and edited under a divinely-inspired agenda. God inspired the compilation of 1 Samuel for a reason.

1 and 2 Samuel read not as mere history, but as an intentional defense of the Davidic monarchy. Under captivity, the Israelites would have naturally faced questions not only about their future, but also about the real significance of things they had held dear in the past. The importance of the national hero David, and more crucially the covenant that God established with him (2 Samuel 7) would have easily been cast into doubt. God had promised that David's kingdom would be everlasting,

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3 Ibid., 23.

and that one of his descendents would reign forever. This promise of God to David was central to Israel's hope for a future Messiah.

It is quite likely that 1 and 2 Samuel were written to defend David's right to the throne and to remind the nation of its Messianic hope centered in the dynasty of David. The people in captivity needed encouragement and focus. God inspired the final author of 1 Samuel to gather together all the previously inspired writings about David and to assemble them into a complete and convincing narrative that would remind the people of their reasons for hope and faith in Him. His actions in ages gone by indicated He still had a plan for the present and the future. He would not forget His people. His promise was secure.

## Content and Structure

Having answered some of the preliminary questions surrounding the origin of 1 Samuel, we are now ready to start considering the actual content of the book! Before closing today's lesson, we will briefly consider a broad overview of the book to orient ourselves before we begin to study the content in depth in the next lesson.

1 Samuel can be organized into three major sections. Theatrically speaking, these might be considered three different "Acts." Each act centers on one of the three main characters of the book. Each lesson will expand this outline with more detail as we get deeper into the book:

- I. Samuel: Israel's Final Judge (1 Samuel 1-7)
- II. Saul: The King Israel Requested (1 Samuel 8-15)
- III. David: The King After God's Own Heart (1 Samuel 16-31)

The key verse of the book is 1 Samuel 13:14. This verse, spoken by Samuel to King Saul, indicates God's rejection of Saul's family and brings to light the book's central message about the Davidic kingship.

*"But now your kingdom shall not endure. The Lord has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." (1 Samuel 13:14, NASB)*

## Self-Check Quiz 1

This self-check test will help you evaluate what you have learned in the preceding lesson and will also help you prepare for upcoming exam. Indicate your answer to each of the following questions.

1. Each of the following individuals is specifically mentioned as a contributor to the book of 1 Samuel **except**:
  - a. David
  - b. Hannah
  - c. Samuel
  - d. Saul
2. True or False: Samuel was most likely the primary author of 1 & 2 Samuel.
3. True or False: 1 Samuel was probably written to convince a faction of Israelite's loyal to King Saul to follow King David instead.
4. True or False: 1 and 2 Samuel originally comprised a single book in the Hebrew Bible.
5. Which of the following individuals is NOT identified as a primary character central to the structure of 1 Samuel?
  - a. David
  - b. Hannah
  - c. Samuel
  - d. Saul
6. What is the key verse of 1 Samuel? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Each of the following reasons were given for the writing of 1 Samuel **except**:
  - a. To recount Israel's history
  - b. To explain the division of Israel into separate northern and southern kingdoms
  - c. To encourage the Israelites during their captivity.
  - d. To defend the Davidic dynasty and God's covenant with David
8. True or False: Some of the content now found in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel was originally written down in other books.

9. True or False: Through the individual writers of the various stories that make up 1 Samuel were inspired by the Holy Spirit, the final process of editing and redacting the content into its present-day form did not require divine inspiration.
10. True or False: The various stories in 1 Samuel are meant to be read individualistically and do not have any significant connection to each other.

Refer to the answer key at the end of this study guide. Please do not send your answers to Moody Distance Learning.