



1–2 SAMUEL

A 12-WEEK STUDY

Ryan Kelly



J. I. Packer

THEOLOGICAL EDITOR

Dane C. Ortlund

SERIES EDITOR

“This series is a tremendous resource for those wanting to study and teach the Bible with an understanding of how the gospel is woven throughout Scripture. Here are gospel-minded pastors and scholars doing gospel business from all the Scriptures. This is a biblical and theological feast preparing God’s people to apply the entire Bible to all of life with heart and mind wholly committed to Christ’s priorities.”

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Numbers	Song of Solomon	Mark	1–2 Thessalonians
Deuteronomy	Isaiah	Luke	1–2 Timothy and Titus
Joshua	Jeremiah	John	Hebrews
Judges	Lamentations, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah	Acts	James
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1–2 Kings	Hosea	2 Corinthians	Revelation
1–2 Chronicles	Joel, Amos, and Obadiah	Galatians	
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Job			

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Ryan Kelly

Knowing the Bible: 1–2 Samuel, A 12-Week Study

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S E R I E S P R E F A C E

KNOWING THE BIBLE, as the series title indicates, was created to help readers know and understand the meaning, the message, and the God of the Bible. Each volume in the series consists of 12 units that progressively take the reader through a clear, concise study of one or more books of the Bible. In this way, any given volume can fruitfully be used in a 12-week format either in group study, such as in a church-based context, or in individual study. Of course, these 12 studies could be completed in fewer or more than 12 weeks, as convenient, depending on the context in which they are used.

Each study unit gives an overview of the text at hand before digging into it with a series of questions for reflection or discussion. The unit then concludes by highlighting the gospel of grace in each passage (“Gospel Glimpses”), identifying whole-Bible themes that occur in the passage (“Whole-Bible Connections”), and pinpointing Christian doctrines that are affirmed in the passage (“Theological Soundings”).

The final component to each unit is a section for reflecting on personal and practical implications from the passage at hand. The layout provides space for recording responses to the questions proposed, and we think readers need to do this to get the full benefit of the exercise. The series also includes definitions of key words. These definitions are indicated by a note number in the text and are found at the end of each chapter.

Lastly, to help understand the Bible in this deeper way, we urge readers to use the ESV Bible and the *ESV Study Bible*, which are available in various print and digital formats, including online editions at esv.org. The *Knowing the Bible* series is also available online.

May the Lord greatly bless your study as you seek to know him through knowing his Word.

J. I. Packer
Lane T. Dennis

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW



Getting Acquainted

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel were originally compiled as a single book. Modern Hebrew Bibles, in fact, still treat this material as simply “Samuel.” These 55 chapters tell the story of an important transitional period of God’s plan, centering on the judge/prophet Samuel and the two kings he anointed,¹ Saul and David. In fact, 1–2 Samuel narrates three overlapping but distinct transitions in the leadership of Israel:

- a transition from failing priests to *Samuel*—a righteous judge/prophet and kingmaker;
- a transition from no king to *Saul*—a king of the people’s initiative (1 Sam. 8:5);
- and a rather slow transition from Saul to *David*—a king of God’s own choosing (1 Sam. 13:14).

Throughout these varied transitions we should certainly observe the negative and positive examples that these leaders provide (see 1 Cor. 10:6, 11). However, a more important matter is *what each transition teaches us about God*. As we shall see in 1–2 Samuel, God is showing not only his power, control, patience, salvation, and righteous judgment but also the fact that he often brings about his purposes in surprising, ironic, and seemingly upside-down ways.

(For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 485–490; available online at www.esv.org.)

Placing 1–2 Samuel in the Larger Story

The books of Samuel concern themselves with God’s coming king, a theme with a long history in the Bible. Adam, as God’s son and image-bearer, was called to have dominion over creation (Gen. 1:28). He and his offspring were to function as God’s vice-regents. When Adam and Eve rebelled, God mercifully promised that through the seed of the woman would come a serpent-crushing offspring (Gen. 3:15). Later, God promised to Abraham not merely the prospect of offspring but also the fact that kings would come from him (Gen. 17:6). His grandson Jacob repeated and specified the kingly promise to his own son Judah: from his line would come a lion-like ruler who would receive the tribute and obedience of the peoples (Gen. 49:8–10). Still later, Moses gave specific directions for the kind of king Israel was to have (Deut. 17:14–20). In short, Israel’s king was to be quite different from the kings of the nations around them; he was to be humble and righteous, one “whom the LORD your God will choose” (Deut. 17:15). A king for Israel was always in God’s plan; the question was whether Israel would wait on *God’s timing* and seek *God’s kind of king*.

While 1 Samuel begins at a time in which there is no king in Israel, we soon hear a godly new mother, Hannah, giving thanks to God for far more than simply answering her prayer for a son (1 Sam. 2:1–10). She speaks of the Lord’s rescuing the needy and judging the wicked (vv. 3–9), doing so through a future *king*, God’s *anointed* (v. 10). Israel’s first king, Saul, is not that king. But soon God will prove faithful to his kingly promises through another, David. God later enlarges his royal promises for an *eternal* throne occupied by David’s descendants (2 Sam. 7:4–17). Remarkably, David interprets these eternal promises as (literally in Hebrew) a “charter for mankind” (2 Sam. 7:19). Though David is far from perfect, he serves as a true foreshadow of the final and eternal King, Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God and the perfect Son of David (Matt. 1:1; Luke 1:32).

Key Passage

“Not by might shall a man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.” (1 Sam. 2:9b–10; see also 1 Sam. 17:46–47)

Date and Historical Background

The date of composition (or compilation) of 1–2 Samuel is unknown, as is its authorship. The prophet Samuel could not be the author or editor of all of 1–2 Samuel, since his death is recorded in 1 Samuel 25, though he certainly may have been responsible for much of the material occurring prior to 1 Samuel 25.

Authorship and date aside, the timing of the subject matter of 1–2 Samuel clearly records events during the lives of Samuel, Saul, and David (c. 1050–970 BC).

This historical context of 1–2 Samuel illuminates further its place in the history of salvation.² While the book of Ruth immediately precedes 1 Samuel in our Bibles, it is Judges that chronologically precedes 1 Samuel. The repeated chorus of Judges is dark, yet it clearly foreshadows what is needed and is soon coming for God’s people: “In those days *there was no king in Israel*. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6; 21:25; compare 18:1; 19:1). That said, Ruth also ends with an unmistakable foreshadow of the focal point of the subsequent books, as it concludes with a mention of David (see Ruth 4:17–22).

Outline

- I. The Transition to Samuel (1 Samuel 1–7)
 - A. Samuel’s birth (1 Samuel 1)
 - B. Hannah’s prayer (1 Sam. 2:1–11)
 - C. Eli’s worthless sons (1 Sam. 2:12–36)
 - D. God speaks through Samuel (1 Samuel 3)
 - E. The ark on the move (1 Samuel 4–7)
- II. The Transition to Saul (1 Samuel 8–15)
 - A. Demand for a king (1 Samuel 8)
 - B. Saul’s anointing, Samuel’s farewell (1 Samuel 9–12)
 - C. Saul’s sins and rejection as king (2 Samuel 13–15)
- III. The Transition to David (1 Samuel 16–2 Samuel 5)
 - A. David’s anointing (1 Samuel 16)
 - B. David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17)
 - C. Saul’s resentment, Jonathan’s commitment (1 Samuel 18–20)
 - D. David on the run from Saul (1 Samuel 21–30)
 - E. The deaths of Saul and Jonathan (1 Samuel 31–2 Samuel 1)
 - F. Conflicts over David’s anointing (2 Samuel 2–4)
 - G. David fully recognized as king (2 Samuel 5)
- IV. David’s Kingdom Further Established and Ensured (2 Samuel 6–20)
 - A. . . . for God’s worship (2 Samuel 6)
 - B. . . . by grand promises (2 Samuel 7)
 - C. . . . in victory over enemies (2 Samuel 8; 10)
 - D. . . . with covenant kindness (2 Samuel 9)
 - E. . . . despite great sin (2 Samuel 11–12)
 - F. . . . through divine discipline and protection (2 Samuel 12–20)
- V. Summary Snapshots of the Davidic Kingdom (2 Samuel 21–24)
 - A. Famine and Philistines (2 Samuel 21)
 - B. Two final poem-songs (2 Sam. 22:1–23:7)
 - C. Mighty men and a costly census (2 Sam. 23:8–24:25)

As You Get Started

Do you have a sense at the outset of this study of the specific emphasis or primary emphases of 1–2 Samuel? Without using your Bible, do any particular passages from 1–2 Samuel come to mind?

Do you know of ways in which the stories of 1–2 Samuel are fulfilled later in the Bible? Based on your current understanding, how might 1–2 Samuel illuminate our understanding of God, Jesus, sin, salvation, or other doctrines?

What aspects of 1–2 Samuel have confused you before? Are there any specific questions you hope to have answered through this study?

As You Finish This Unit . . .

Take a few minutes to ask God to bless you with increased understanding and a transformed heart and life as you begin this study of 1–2 Samuel.

Definitions

¹ **Anoint** – In Scripture, to pour oil (usually olive oil) on someone or something to set the person or thing apart for a special purpose. Anointing was performed for the high priest, for tabernacle vessels, for kings, and for prophets. The Hebrew word *Messiah* and its Greek equivalent *Christ* both mean “anointed one.”

² **History of salvation** – God’s unified plan for all of history to accomplish the salvation of his people. He accomplished this salvation in the work of Jesus Christ on earth by his life, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection (Eph. 1:3–23). The consummation of God’s plan will take place when Jesus Christ comes again to establish the “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13).



THE BOOKS OF 1–2 SAMUEL show God's continued care for his people in providing them with a king and establishing a center of worship for Israel. Through the transfer of power from Samuel to Saul to David, God reveals his providential guidance.

Walking readers through these important books chronicling the history of ancient Israel, this study guide points to God's power, control, patience, salvation, and righteous judgment as he brings about his purposes in surprising and seemingly upside-down ways.

ABOUT THE *KNOWING THE BIBLE* SERIES

Over the course of 12 weeks, these studies explore books of the Bible and:

- Ask thoughtful questions to spur discussion
- Show how each passage unveils the gospel
- Tie the text in with the whole story of Scripture
- Illuminate the doctrines taught in each passage
- Invite you to discover practical implications
- Help you better understand and apply God's Word

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GRAEME L. GOLDSWORTHY

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BIBLE STUDY

