

BIG WORD: 1 Samuel

Introduction – 11 January 2012

And then there was ...

The book of Judges spanned approximately 350 years of history for ancient Israel. The Bible records 11 judges during that time. These people (10 men and 1 woman) served as military leaders and catalysts for revival among God's people. Unfortunately, upon the death of each judge (and even during the lives of some), a downward spiral continued of cultural and moral decay.

Throughout all of this we witness God's persistence in pursuing those He loves. Regardless of how many times the Israelites turned to false gods and engaged in hedonistic lifestyles, God never stopped trying to redeem them. He was incredibly forgiving and ceaselessly faithful. Even in the face of their brazen unfaithfulness.

So what happened next?

Samuel

Samuel, whom we will soon meet, was the last of the judges. He was not only a judge, but also a prophet and a priest. Some call him "The Kingmaker", but that sounds too much like a make-up clad wrestling star to me. Samuel was the last judge because God used him to select and anoint the first two kings of Israel: Saul and David.

About the Book:

The two books of Samuel were originally one. Like the books of Kings and Chronicles, the texts proved too cumbersome and were eventually divided into two. This happened when the Hebrew scrolls were translated into Greek Old Testament, also known as the Septuagint. English translations followed the division and, around the 15th century A.D., the Hebrew texts followed suit.

This division, however, does not alter the continuity of the books as a joint unit. It merely makes carrying and studying them slightly more manageable.

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 life thereafter. Based on 1 Chronicles 29:29, many attribute authorship also to Nathan and Gad.

Date: The history covered in 1 Samuel spans approximately 90 years, maybe 95. The only thing known for sure about when it was written is that it was after the division of the 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.

Key Characters:

- Samuel: Judge, Prophet and Priest
- Saul: Israel's First King
- David: Israel's Greatest King

Key Themes: In Judges we learned that God can use anyone to accomplish His will and that He will tirelessly pursue those whom He seeks to save.

In Samuel those truths continue, but we will also learn that there are consequences for failing to follow God. Likewise, there are rewards for obeying God.

Consider this outline:

- God prospers faithful Hannah/ Hinders Unfaithful Eli (1 Sam. 1-3)
- God hinders unfaithful Israel (1 Sam. 4-6)
- God prospers faithful Saul (1 Sam. 7-15)
- God hinders unfaithful Saul (1 Sam. 16-2 Sam. 1)
- God prospers faithful David (2 Sam. 2-9)
- God hinders unfaithful David (2 Sam. 10-20)

It is essential that, while we recognize a clear cause-and-effect relationship here, we not assume all negative circumstances are our responsibility or even a direct consequence of our choices. Consider the life of Job. Or John the Baptist. Or the Apostle Paul. Or even Jesus Christ. God's blessing does not always translate to earthly blessings. Nor does His disapproval translate to earthly suffering. He is a gracious, loving God, but grace is rarely material.

But before that there was ...

Chronologically, the books of Samuel (1 and 2) come immediately after the book of Judges. In our Bibles, however, another text is nestled between: Ruth.

The Book of Ruth is only four chapters long, and, while not critical to our study of Samuel, I'd love for you to read them. There are a couple principles from that book that we should know.

1. God is not done with you until He's done with you. Naomi (the mother-in-law of Ruth) was bereft of her home, her husband, her sons, her future, her security ... anything she had of value was lost. Any hope she had for redemption was gone. Ruth, likewise, after enduring ten years of infertility, lost her husband and all her family save one bitter old mother-in-law. She, too, had little hope to claim.

But God wasn't done with them. He returned them to Bethlehem ("the house of bread") and filled their baskets to overflowing. Not only did Ruth get a new husband (through a little work and some interesting wiles), but Naomi received her inheritance, a renewed security and even a continuing line in the form of grandchildren.

2. God has provided a kinsman-redeemer for us.

The Levirate Law: Deuteronomy 25:5-10

Levir = Latin for ____ *“a husband’s brother”* _____

Acquiescent brother was called a ____ *“kinsman-redeemer”* _____.

This law provided:

1. _____ *preservation for the widow* _____
2. _____ *a legacy for the deceased* _____

Remember the Levirate Law, the kinsman-redeemer.

Goel is the Hebrew word translated “kinsman-redeemer.” This man was the official guardian of the family’s honor. His duties could include:

- Avenging the blood of a murdered relative (Joshua 20:2—9)
- Buying back family lands sold in times of hardship (Leviticus 25:23—28)
- Pay the redemption price for relatives sold into slavery (Leviticus 25:47—49)
- Revive family lineage through a levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5—10)