

THE BIBLE

in a nutshell

1 & 2 Samuel



—by Peter Hammond

Leaders of Israel

- From 2000 to 1500 B.C. Israel was led by **PATRIARCHS**
- From 1500 to 1000 B.C. they were led by **PROPHETS**
- From 1000 to 500 B.C. they were led by **PRINCES** (or Kings)
- In the 500 years leading up to the time of Christ, they were led by **PRIESTS**.

Main Characters

First Samuel begins with:

- Hannah, the anxious wife, desperate to have a child,
- Eli, the ailing high priest,
- Israel the arrogant army, and
- Saul, the anointed king.

The main characters in the first Book of Samuel are: Samuel: the last judge; Saul: the first king; David: the best king of Israel and Jonathan: the adventurous son of King Saul.

Samuel, the prophet, pronounced God's judgement upon Saul, and anointed David as the future king. David, the steadfast

Samuel was trained under Eli, who was both a judge and a high priest.

Eli had ruled Israel for 40 years. However, he was an indulgent father and a permissive priest, allowing his wicked sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were also his priests, to behave in a most immoral and disgraceful manner.

Young Samuel was given a

From a young age, Samuel was righteous before God and the Lord used him to reveal sin in others and cause them to repent.

shepherd, the skilled musician, the superb warrior, then the suspected courtier, the stalked outlaw, and the soldier in exile.

A Time of transition

Royal history of Israel begins with the Book of Samuel. The long period of the rule of the Judges ends with Samuel. 1 Samuel begins the 500-year period of the Kings.

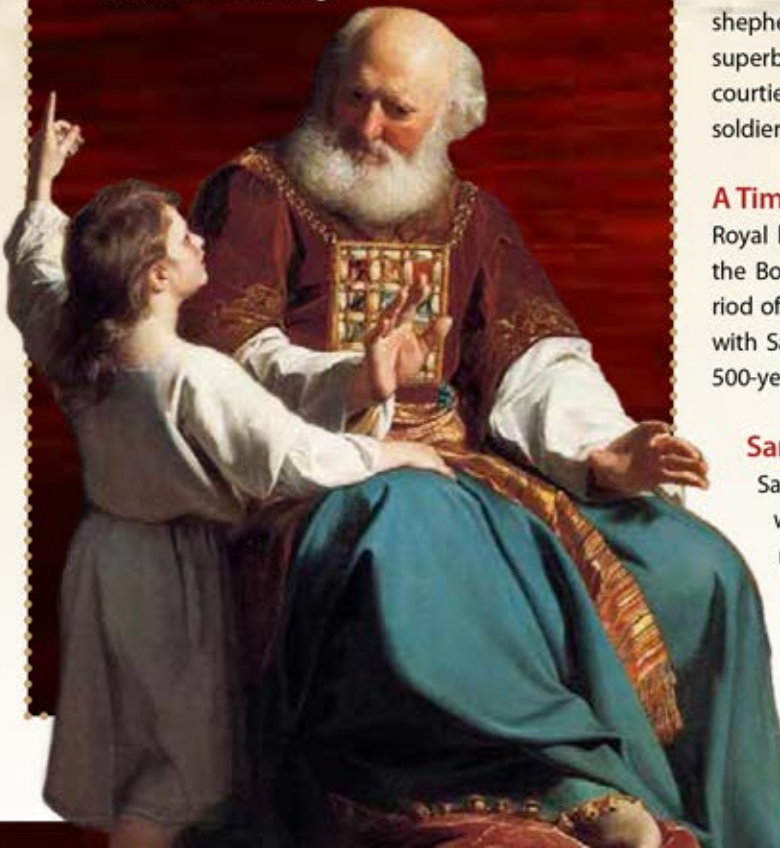
Samuel and Eli

Samuel, the last of the judges, was God's answer to the earnest prayers of his mother, Hannah. Received from the Lord, she consecrated him back to the Lord.

Word from the Lord of judgement upon the house of Eli, because he had failed to deal with his sons and priests who were abusing their positions through immorality, dishonesty and blasphemy.

Disaster

Israel was invaded by the Philistines, their armies defeated, the Ark of the Covenant seized by the idol-worshipping Philistines and placed into the temple of Dagon, and Eli's sons were killed. Eli died of shock when he heard of these calamities.



The Power of God

The people of Israel learned that they could not manipulate God. The Ark of God was a poor substitute for the God of the Ark. It was not that God had deserted them, but they had deserted God. The Philistines soon learned that their idols were no match for the God of Israel. The huge idol of Dagon was found smashed face down in front of the Ark of the Covenant, in their own temple. As God afflicted the Philistines with a terrible plague, they surrendered the Ark back to Israel.



Idols for destruction

Samuel the prophet called on the Israelites to repent and destroy their idols. Then he led them in battle against the Philistines. This time they were victorious. Whenever the Israelites disobeyed God, an enemy was sent to defeat them. Whenever they repented and destroyed their idols, God enabled them to defeat their enemies.

As the Israelites demanded a king that

sumptuous. Saul violated the separation between the role of a king and that of a priest. He presumed to offer the sacrifice at God's altar. Saul was disobedient when commanded to destroy King Agag and the Amalakites.

Deteriorating discernment

Saul's relationships deteriorated, first with his adventurous son, Jonathan, whom he

better than sacrifice...for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the Word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king." 1 Sam 15:22-23. Ritual is no substitute for righteousness. Obedience is better than any religious sentiment.

Disgraceful defeat

King Saul's relationship towards the young shepherd, David, who had boldly »

Samuel appointed Saul as King when the Israelites demanded new authority. Saul became proud and rejected the Word of the Lord.

they may be like the nations around them, God told Samuel to warn the people of the consequences: a king would want a palace and an army, so taxation and conscription would follow. When the Israelites persisted in demanding a king, Samuel gave them the kind of king they wanted: tall, handsome, strong and powerful in battle.

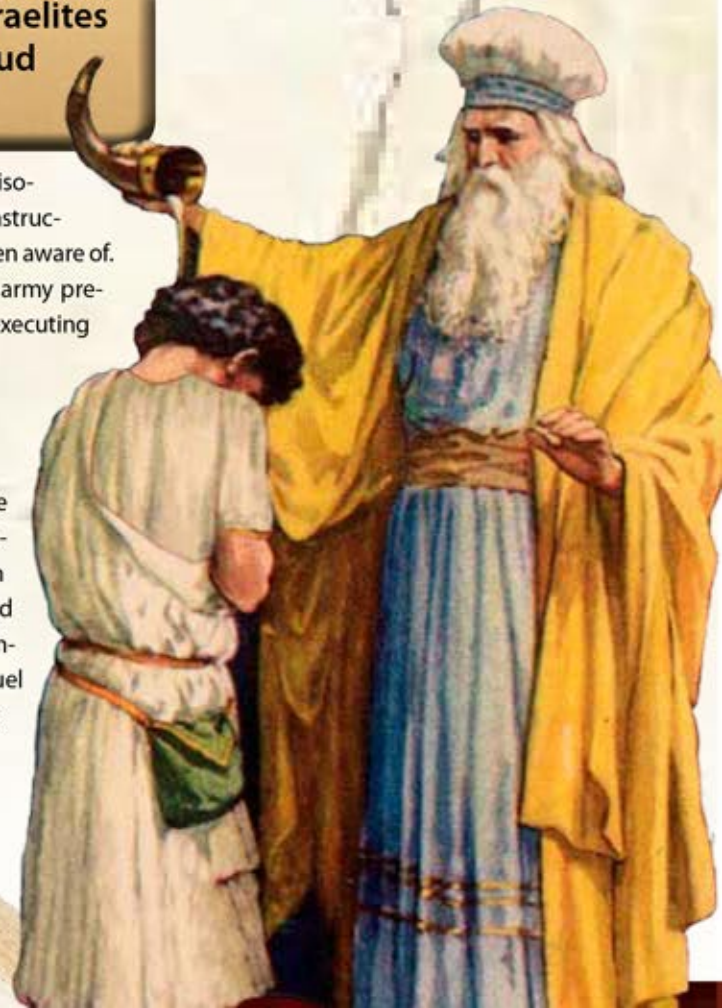
Saul

Saul proved a successful leader in battle, defeating the Philistines, the Amalakites and Ammonites. However, although he began well, he grew proud and pre-

sentenced to death for disobeying some ridiculous instruction that his son was not even aware of. Only the firm action of his army prevented Saul from unjustly executing his own son.

Disastrous disobedience

Saul's relationship with the prophet Samuel also deteriorated drastically. In response to Saul's repeated disobedience of the Commands of the Lord, Samuel declared: "To obey is



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Defeating Goliath

David was the youngest of the eight sons of Jesse. The story of David and Goliath must be one of the best known in the Bible. Goliath of Gath was 2.8 metres tall. The head of his spear was 10kg. King Saul and all his soldiers were dismayed and terrified. Only young David, the shepherd boy, was willing to go down into the valley of the shadow of death and confront this giant. With no breastplate, but his shepherd's coat, no spear, but his staff, no sword or bow, but a sling, no quiver, but 5 smooth stones, David came in the Name of the Lord. David relied on the Lord, as Goliath relied on his sword and spear. David's victory over Goliath is a type of Christ's victory over satan.

David epitomises our calling to be "more than conquerors" through Christ Jesus our Lord.

challenged the giant Goliath and defeated him in combat, poisoned the last years of Saul as king. Saul deteriorated morally and mentally. His jealousy and hatred of David twisted his final years as king and distracted him.

Finally, King Saul descended to seeking out and enquiring of a witch at Endor. Ultimately King Saul died in disgrace and defeat, committing suicide on the field of battle, where three of his sons also died.

David

David is the most versatile character in the Bible: a shepherd, a musician, a soldier, a writer of Psalms, a fugitive and outlaw, and the greatest King of Israel. David is one of

in the Old Testament. He is described as "a man after God's own heart." 1 Sam 13:14. He was athletic, a gifted musician, and his poetical skill was of the highest order.

The Psalms, the treasury of David, are the largest Book of the Bible, the middle Book of the Bible, the Prayer book and Hymn book of the Bible. Our Lord Jesus Christ quoted more from the Psalms than from any other Book in the Bible.

Contrasting Kings

Both Saul and David ruled as kings of Israel, both for forty years. Yet Saul was a failure and David was a success. It was not that David was perfect, but he wholeheartedly confessed and repented of his sins and

**1 Samuel focuses on man's choice of king - Saul.
Saul left his nation in defeat, divided and in disgrace.
2 Samuel focuses on God's choice of king - David.**

the most prominent figures in the history of the world. There is more space given to the character of David than any other person

transgressions against the Lord. David displayed humility, faithfulness, patience, and courage. He repeatedly spared the life of his tormentor, Saul, refusing to assassinate God's anointed king.

David refused to take the law into his own hands. He trusted in God's timing. David, a repentant sinner, achieved glorious victories over his enemies. He left us some of the greatest songs of worship ever composed in history. After the death of Saul, David was made king of Judea,





and seven years later, king over all the twelve tribes of Israel. He conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusites and made it the new capital of the nation of Israel.

When David sought to bring the Ark of God into Jerusalem, it indicated a desire to put God at the centre of the political and cultural life of the nation. However, sincerity is not enough. Neither David, nor the priests, followed God's specific directions for how the Ark was to be transported. As a result, Uzzah was struck dead for reaching out and touching the Ark. Here we learn that it is not what we think, but what God says, that is important. The Ark was not to be transported on an oxcart, but carried on poles by priests.

The Danger of inactivity

David also fell into sin by remaining in Jerusalem at a time when kings went out to war. Some temptations come to the industrious, but all temptations come to the idle. Al-

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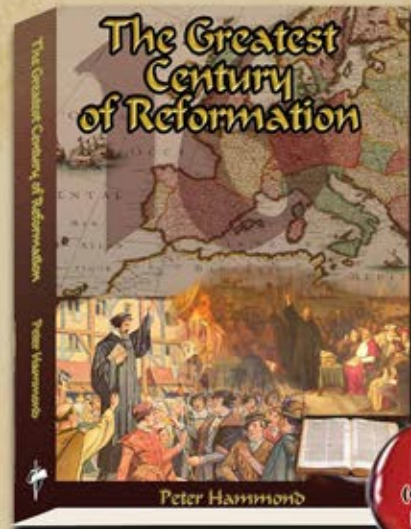
though David's repentance was wholehearted and sincere (Psalm 51), the terrible episode of David and Bathsheba confirm the truth of Numbers 32:23, "be sure your sin will find you out". The baby died, David's son, Absalom treacherously sowed division and led the nation into civil war, and much death and destruction resulted.

Parenthood and personal responsibility

The books of Samuel also show us the importance of parenthood. Both Eli and Samuel failed to adequately discipline their children, and severe consequences resulted. Yet, one also learns the responsibility of individual choices. Although Jonathan was the son of a bad king (Saul), he was an exemplary soldier and a friend who stuck closer than a brother. Although Absalom was the son of a good king (David), he became selfish and treacherous. ■

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