



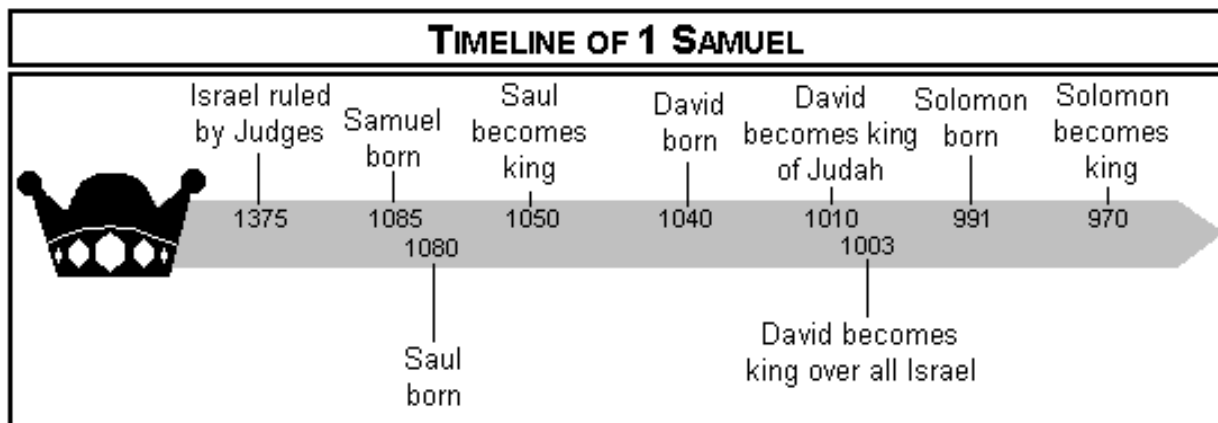
## Overview

### FIRST SAMUEL

BEGINNING	Samuel The Last Judge				Saul The First King		ENDING
	BIRTH	GROWTH AND CALL	MINISTRY	CHANGE	REJECTION BY GOD	REBELLION AGAINST GOD	
Samuel's godliness					Impatient Rash Disobedient "Insane" Jealous Murderous		Saul's apostasy
National hope							Depression
Motivation							Personal despair
Purity							Suicide
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTERS 2-3	CHAPTERS 4-7	CHAPTERS 8-12	CHAPTERS 13-16	DAVID chosen, trained, tested, protected . . . CHAPTERS 17-31	
Attitude of the People	Public trust				Public disillusionment		
Theme	Though leaders and nations change, God's purposes always move forward.						
Key Verses	8:6-9; 13:14						
Christ in 1 Samuel	Typified in Samuel, who was a prophet, priest, and judge; also portrayed in the life of David . . . shepherd, king, and born in Bethlehem						

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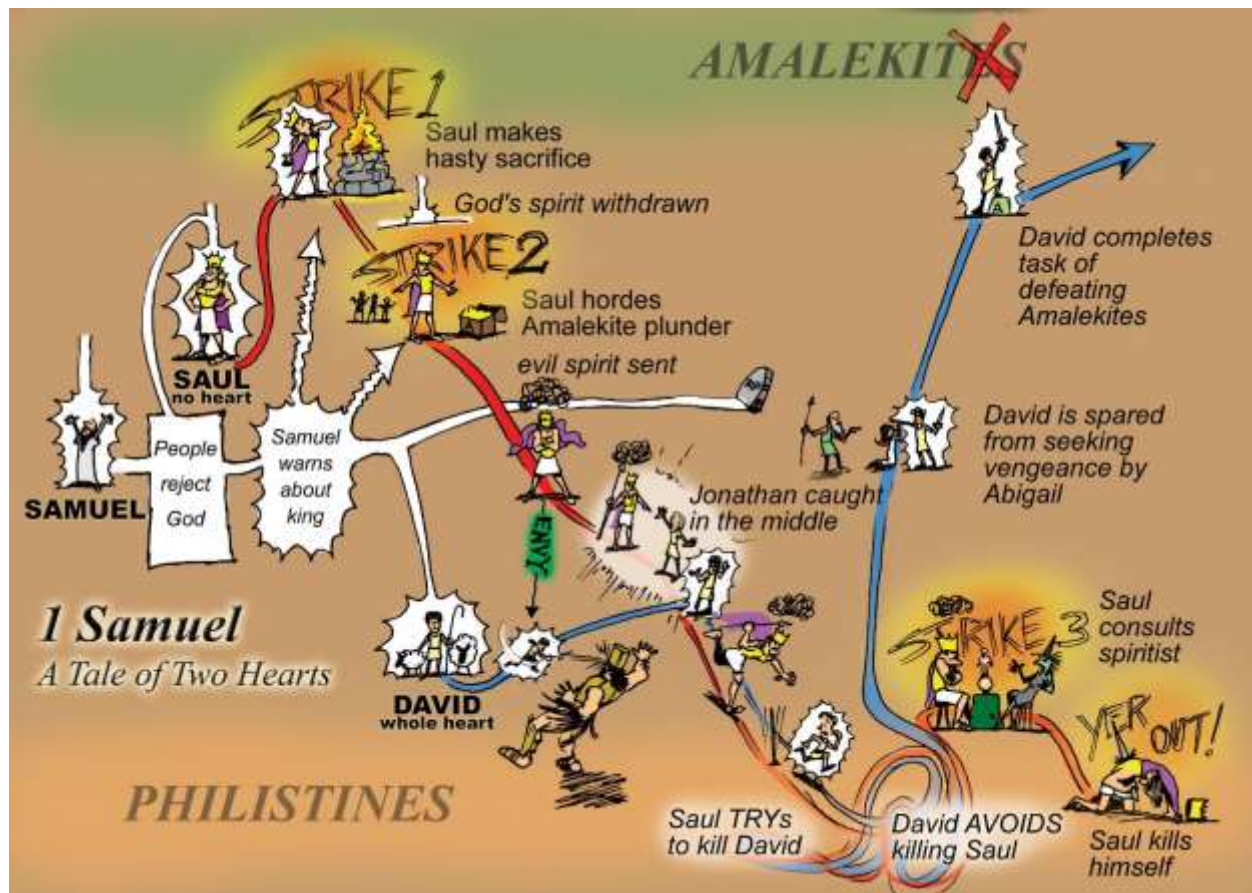
## Timeline



See also: Timelines in [NIV Introduction](#) and [NLTSDN Introduction](#) sections



## 1 Samuel At A Glance: “Batter Up!”



## Interesting Facts About 1 Samuel

# Interesting Facts About 1 Samuel

**MEANING:** Samuel means "The name of God." His name is God, "Heard of God," or "Asked of God."

**AUTHOR:** Jewish Talmudic tradition says it was written by Samuel. He may have written a portion of the book, but his death is recorded in 1 Samuel 25:1, making it clear that he did not write all of 1 & 2 Samuel.

**TIME WRITTEN:** Soon before his death in 1015 B.C.

**POSITION IN THE BIBLE:**

- 9th Book in the Bible
- 9th Book in the Old Testament
- 4th of 12 books of History (Joshua - Esther)
- 57 Books to follow it.

**CHAPTERS:** 31


**VERSES:** 810

**WORDS:** 25,061

**OBSERVATIONS ABOUT 1 SAMUEL:**

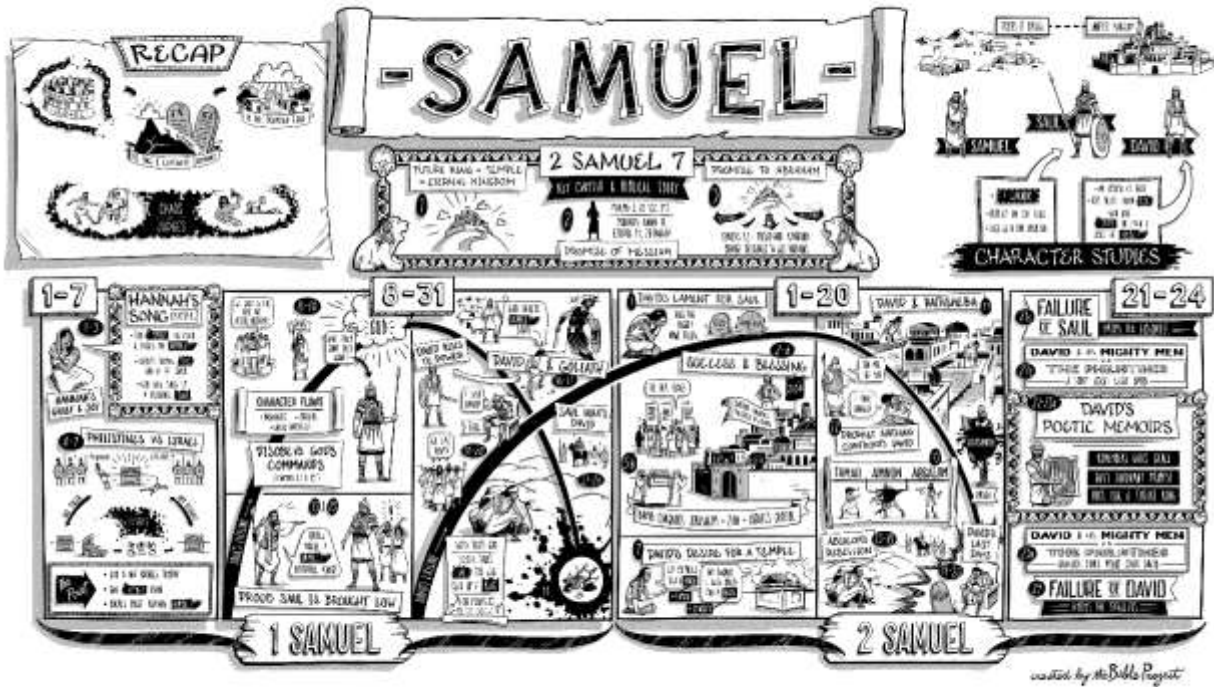
- Samuel was born around 1105 B.C. and died in 1015 B.C.
- During Samuel's 90 years of life, he ministered in Israel between about 1067 B.C. and 1015 B.C.
- Since the books of Samuel end in the last days of David, they must have been compiled after 971 B.C.
- Samuel:
  - Was a man of prayer.
  - Began the school of the prophets.
  - Anointed Israel's first two kings (Saul & David)
- The books of 1 & 2 Samuel were originally one book in the Hebrew Bible. It was known as the "Book of Samuel."
- 1 & 2 Samuel, along with 1 & 2 Kings, form a continuous narrative devoted to recording the early years of the Hebrew monarchy.

- 1 Samuel describes the transition of leadership in Israel from the Judges to the kings. The transition involves three stages:
  - From Eli to Samuel.
  - From Samuel to Saul.
  - From Saul to David.
- Three characters are prominent in 1 Samuel:
  - Samuel, the last Judge.
  - Saul, Israel's first king.
  - David, the king-elect, anointed but not yet recognized as Saul's successor.
- Hannah had prayed for a son and promised him to the Lord. 1:10-11
- Samuel was but a young child when God called him. 1-3
- Samuel becomes:
  - Israel's last judge.
  - Israel's first prophet.
- Samuel's work begins very late in the times of the judges when Eli is the judge-priest.
- Just as Eli's sons were evil, when Samuel was old, his sons proved to be unjust leaders, resulting in the people calling for a king to rule over them.



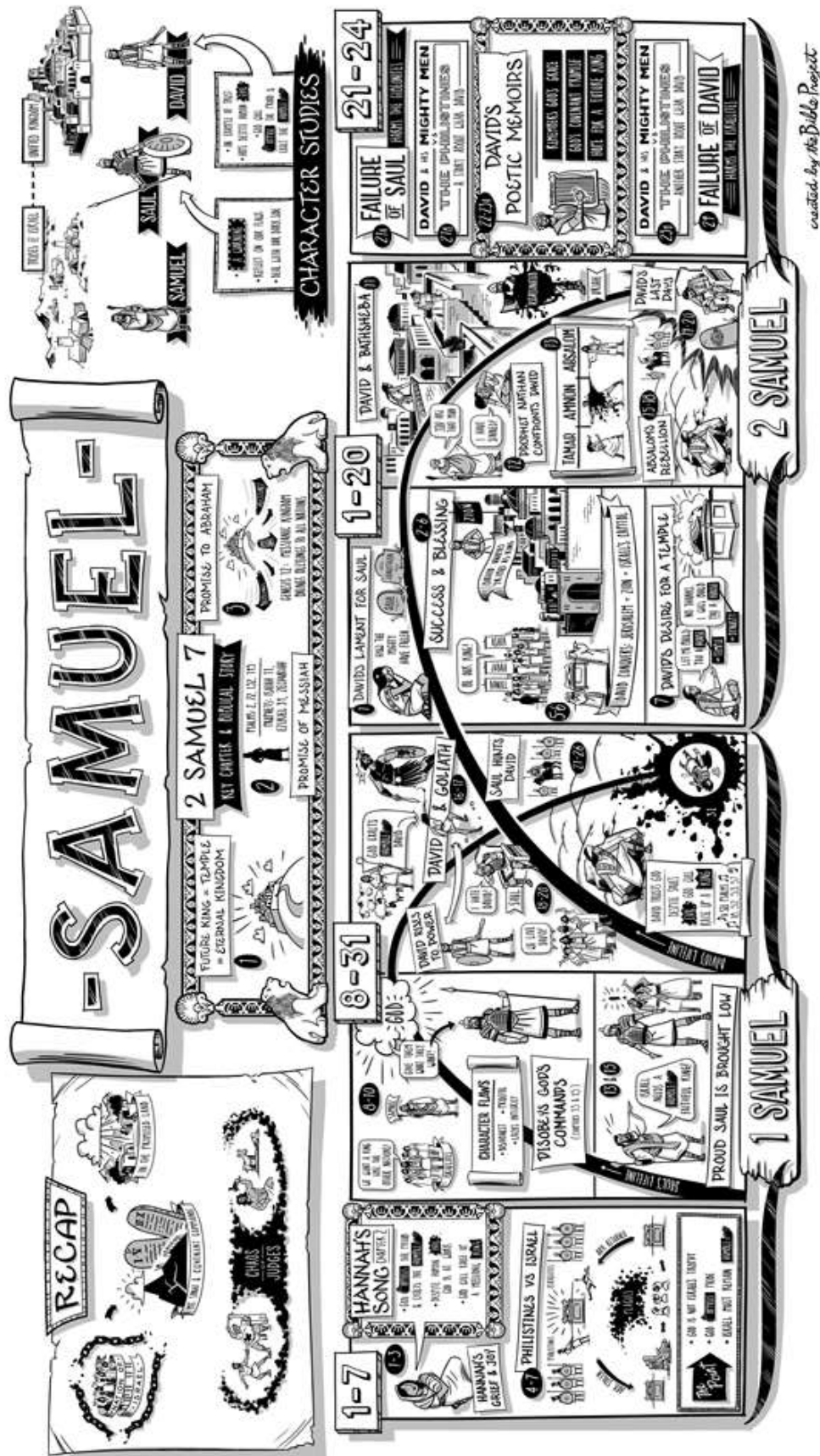
Barnes Bible Charts

## Overview: 1 & 2 Samuel



*See next page for larger view...*





# Introductions to 1 Samuel

[Charles Stanley Introduction](#) (brief)

[NIV Introduction](#) (includes a timeline)

[ESV Introduction](#) (includes map, outline)

[BRC Introduction](#) (includes events, at-a-glance, outlines)

[NLT SBN Introduction](#) (includes map, outline, timeline)

[SYNBB Introduction](#)

*See also:*

[NNBMC - Chapter 7: Life during the United Monarchy \(1-2 Samuel, ...\)](#) (excerpt)

[Zondervan Atlas of the Bible](#) (excerpt)

## **Complete Word Study Bible (CWSB): Introduction: First Samuel** (brief)

The books of First and Second Samuel made up one book originally. They remained so in the Hebrew text until the publishing of the Hebrew Bible in a.d. 1517 where they appeared as the separate books we know today. The Septuagint and other translations of the Old Testament that followed divided the books of Samuel and Kings into First Kings through Fourth Kings.

The Book of First Samuel presents in detail the transitional phase between the period of the judges and the period of the kings. During this time God instituted the offices of prophet and king, the latter replacing the office of the judge as Israel's political leader. It is important to note that the prophetic function did not originate at this time. Moses and Deborah are examples of those who were both political leaders over Israel and prophets (Ex. 3:11-22; Judg. 4:4, 5). These should be distinguished from Samuel and his successors, who were not rulers used in a prophetic capacity, but those who held the office of prophet. It was not until Samuel organized the "company of the prophets" (1 Sam. 19:20) that the office seems to have been formally established in Israel. Samuel bridged the gap between the periods of the judges and kings in that he was the last one to serve as a judge in all Israel and that he anointed the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David.

The book, whose principal characters are Samuel, Saul, and David, is divided into two sections: the first seven chapters outline the life and ministry of Samuel, and the remainder of the book describes the events during the reign of Saul. The climax is reached when God rejects Saul as king for disobeying His command, and instructs Samuel to anoint David, the son of Jesse, as the next king (1 Sam. 15:26).



## Charles F. Stanley: Life Principles Bible Notes: (brief)

### Introduction: 1 Samuel

The Book of 1 Samuel describes the transition of leadership in Israel from judges to kings. Three characters take prominent roles in the book: Samuel, the last judge and first prophet; Saul, the first king; and David, who had been anointed but not yet recognized as Saul's successor.

God had chosen the nation of Israel to greatly bless the world through the coming of the Messiah. His plan was to do this by placing a godly king on Israel's throne. While David faced unbelievable odds during his life, he was God's chosen man for the job. The Lord kept him from permanent harm, allowing him to take an important place in Israel's history and gain a vital place in bringing to pass God's ultimate plan for the salvation of all humankind.

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel—named for the prophet who anointed both Saul and David as king—originally formed one book in the Hebrew Bible, known as the “Book of Samuel.” The name Samuel has been variously translated “Heard of God,” and “Asked of God.” The Septuagint divided Samuel into two books, even though this division artificially breaks up the history of David. The Greek title for Samuel is “Books of the Kingdoms” and refers to the division of Israel into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The Latin Vulgate originally called the books of Samuel and Kings, “Books of the Kings.” Later, it combined the Hebrew and Greek titles for the first of these books, calling it the “First Book of Samuel.”

**Themes:** God is faithful and sovereign in keeping His promises to His people, even in the face of human mistakes, sin, and rebellion. First Samuel demonstrates that God protects and empowers those He has chosen and called for a specific purpose.

**Author:** Unknown, possibly Samuel with the inclusion of writings from Nathan and Gad.

**Time:** First Samuel covers a period of about ninety-four years, beginning at the time of Samuel (c. 1100 b.c.), Israel's final judge; moving through the ascension of Saul to the throne as the first king of Israel (1050 b.c.); continuing through David's anointing as king and the persecution by Saul that followed; and ending with the final years of Saul's reign and his suicide (c. 1015 b.c.).

**Structure:** First Samuel gives a history of Israel, centered around three key characters: Samuel, the last of the judges; Saul, Israel's first king and one who rebelled against God; and David, whom God appointed and who—by God's strength—became Israel's greatest earthly king.

As you read 1 Samuel, watch for the life principles that play an important role in this book:

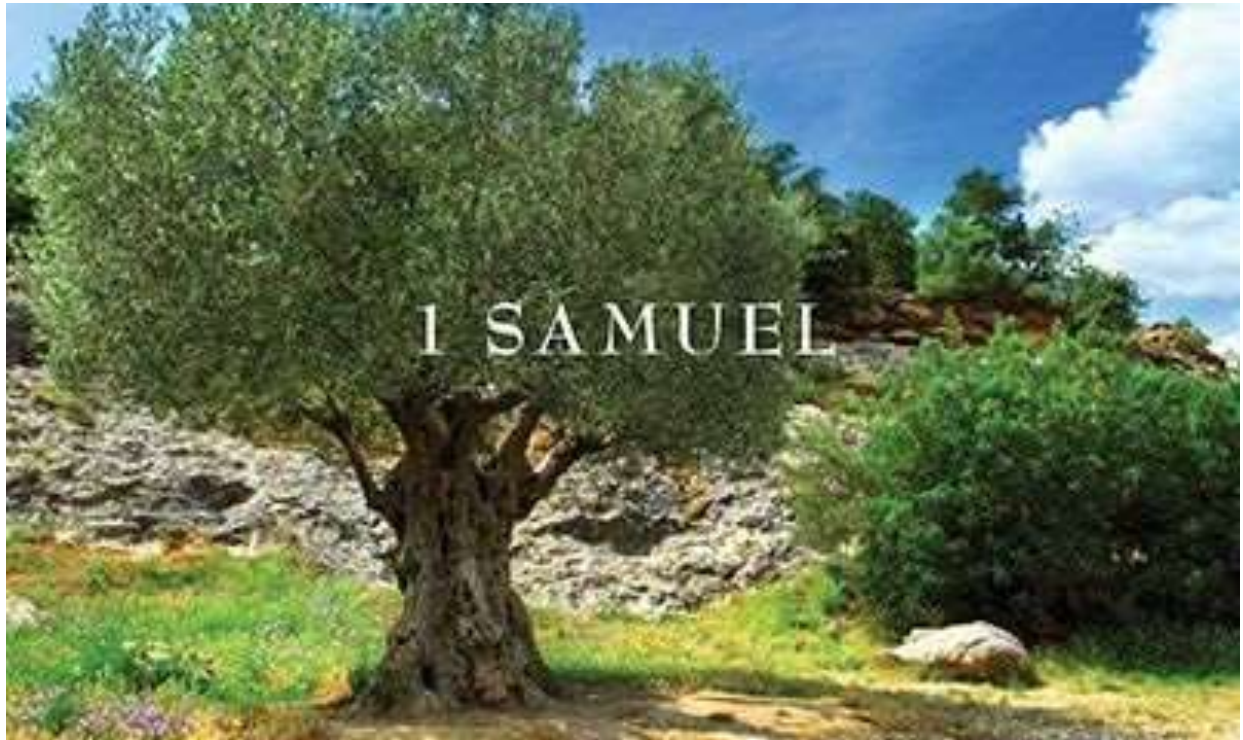
8. Fight all your battles on your knees and you win every time. See 1 Samuel 1:10–27.

1. Our intimacy with God—His highest priority for our lives—determines the impact of our lives. See 1 Samuel 13:14.

10. If necessary, God will move heaven and earth to show us His will. See 1 Samuel 16:3.

7. The dark moments of our life will last only so long as is necessary for God to accomplish His purpose in us. See 1 Samuel 30:1–6.

## NIV First-Century Study Bible: Introduction



[Timeline](#)

### Title

1 and 2 Samuel are named after the person God used to establish monarchy in Israel. Samuel not only anointed both Saul and David, Israel's first two kings, but he also gave definition to the new order of God's rule over Israel.

Samuel's role as God's representative in this period of Israel's history is close to that of Moses (see Ps 99:6; Jer 15:1) since he, more than any other person, provided for covenant continuity in the transition from the rule of the judges to that of the monarchy.

1 and 2 Samuel were originally one book. It was divided into two parts by the translators of the Septuagint (the pre-Christian Greek translation of the Old Testament)—a division subsequently followed by Jerome (in the Latin Vulgate, c. AD 400) and by modern versions. The title of the book has varied from time to time, having been designated "The First and Second Books of Kingdoms" (Septuagint), "First and Second Kings" (Vulgate) and "First and Second Samuel" (Hebrew tradition and most modern versions).

### Literary Features, Authorship and Date

Many questions have arisen pertaining to the literary character, authorship and date of 1, 2 Samuel. Certain features of the book suggest that it was compiled with the use of a

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number of originally independent sources, which the author may have incorporated into his own composition as much as possible. Regardless, the story of David's rise to power and the establishment of the monarchy is one of the most profoundly rich and colorful narratives in the entire Bible.

Who the author was cannot be known since the book itself gives no indication of his identity. Whoever he was, he doubtless had access to records of the life and times of Samuel, Saul and David. Explicit reference in the book itself is made to only one such source (the Book of Jashar, 2Sa 1:18), but the writer of Chronicles refers to four others that pertain to this period (the book of the annals of King David, 1Ch 27:24; the records of Samuel the seer; the records of Nathan the prophet; and the records of Gad the seer, 1Ch 29:29). For the dates of the period, see Chronology.

### **Contents and Theme: Kingship and Covenant**

1 Samuel relates God's establishment of a political system in Israel headed by a human king. Before the author describes this momentous change in the structure of the theocracy (God's kingly rule over his people), he effectively depicts the complexity of its context. The following events provide both historical and theological background for the beginning of the monarchy: 1. The birth, youth and call of Samuel (chs. 1–3). In a book dealing for the most part with the reigns of Israel's first two kings, Saul and David, it is significant that the author chose not to include a birth narrative of either of these men but to describe the birth of their forerunner and anointer, the prophet Samuel.

This in itself accentuates the importance the author attached to Samuel's role in the events that follow. He seems to be saying in a subtle way that flesh and blood are to be subordinated to word and Spirit in the process of the establishment of kingship. For this reason chs. 1–3 should be viewed as integrally related to what follows, not as a more likely component of the book of Judges or as a loosely attached prefix to the rest of 1, 2 Samuel. Kingship is given its birth and then nurtured by the prophetic word and work of the prophet Samuel. Moreover, the events of Samuel's nativity thematically anticipate the story of God's working that is narrated in the rest of the book.

**2. The "ark narratives" (chs. 4–6).** This section describes how the ark of God was captured by the Philistines and then, after God had wreaked havoc on several Philistine cities, returned to Israel. These narratives reveal the folly of Israel's notion that possession of the ark automatically guaranteed victory over her enemies. They also display the awesome power of the Lord (Yahweh, the God of Israel) and his superiority over the Philistine god Dagon. The Philistines were forced to confess openly their helplessness against God's power by their return of the ark to Israel. The entire ark episode performs a vital function in placing Israel's subsequent sinful desire for a human king in proper perspective.





Moses and the ark of the covenant from German manuscript (c. AD 1400).

First Samuel includes the “ark narratives” in chapters 4–6.

Wikimedia Commons

**3. Samuel as a judge and deliverer (ch. 7).** When Samuel called Israel to repentance and renewed dedication to the Lord, the Lord intervened mightily in Israel’s behalf and gave victory over the Philistines. This narrative reaffirms the authority of Samuel as a divinely ordained leader; at the same time it provides evidence of divine protection and blessing for God’s people when they place their confidence in the Lord and live in obedience to their covenant obligations.

All the material in chs. 1–7 serves as a necessary preface for the narratives of chs. 8–12, which describe the rise and establishment of kingship in Israel. The author has masterfully arranged the stories in chs. 8–12 in order to emphasize the serious theological conflict surrounding the historical events. In the study of these chapters, scholars have often noted the presence of a tension or ambivalence in the attitude toward the monarchy: On the one hand, Samuel is commanded by the Lord to give the people a king (8:7, 9, 22; 9:16–17; 10:24; 12:13); on the other hand, their request for a king is considered a sinful rejection of the Lord (8:7; 10:19; 12:12, 17, 19–20). These seemingly conflicting attitudes toward the monarchy must be understood in the context of Israel’s covenant relationship with the Lord.

Moses had anticipated Israel's desire for a human king (see Dt 17:14–20 and note), but Israelite kingship was to be compatible with the continued rule of the Lord over his people as their Great King. Instead, when the elders asked Samuel to give them a king (8:5, 19–20), they rejected the Lord's kingship over them. Their desire was for a king such as the nations around them had—to lead them in battle and give them a sense of national security and unity. The request for a king constituted a denial of their covenant relationship to the Lord, who was their King. Moreover, the Lord not only had promised to be their protector but had also repeatedly demonstrated his power on their behalf, most recently in the ark narratives (chs. 4–6), as well as in the great victory won over the Philistines under the leadership of Samuel (ch. 7).

Nevertheless the Lord instructed Samuel to give the people a king. By divine appointment Saul was brought into contact with Samuel, and Samuel was directed to anoint him privately as king (9:1–10:16). Subsequently, Samuel gathered the people at Mizpah, where, after again admonishing them concerning their sin in desiring a king (10:18–19), he presided over the selection of a king by lot. The lot fell on Saul and publicly designated him as the one whom God had chosen (10:24). Saul did not immediately assume his royal office but returned home to work his fields (11:5, 7). When the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead were threatened by Nahash the Ammonite, Saul rose to the challenge, gathered an army and led Israel to victory in battle. His success placed a final seal of divine approval on Saul's selection to be king (compare 10:24; 11:12–13) and occasioned the inauguration of his reign at Gilgal (11:14–12:25).



Thirteenth-century fresco of Samuel anointing Saul as king

Samuel appointing Saul to lead Jewish people, fresco.  
Crypt of St Mary Cathedral, Anagni, Italy, 13th century/De Agostini  
Picture Library/A. Dagli Orti/The Bridgeman Art Library

The question that still needed resolution, then, was not so much whether Israel should have a king (it was clearly the Lord's will to give them one), but rather how they could maintain their covenant with God (that is, preserve the theocracy) now that they had a human king. The problem was resolved when Samuel called the people to repentance and renewal of their allegiance to the Lord on the very occasion of the inauguration of Saul (10:17–25). By establishing kingship in the context of covenant renewal, Samuel placed the monarchy in Israel on a radically different footing from that in surrounding nations. The king in Israel was not to be autonomous in his authority and power; rather, he was to be subject to the law of the Lord and the word of the prophet (10:25; 12:23). This was to be true not only for Saul but also for all the kings who would occupy the throne in Israel in the future. The king was to be an instrument of the Lord's rule over his people, and the people as well as the king were to continue to recognize the Lord as their ultimate Sovereign (12:14–15).

Saul soon demonstrated that he was unwilling to submit to the requirements of his theocratic office (chs. 13–15). When he disobeyed the instructions of the prophet Samuel in preparation for battle against the Philistines (13:13), and when he refused to totally destroy the Amalekites as he had been commanded to do by the word of the Lord through Samuel (ch. 15), he ceased to be an instrument of the Lord's rule over his people. These abrogations of the requirements of his theocratic office led to his rejection as king (15:22–23).

The remainder of 1 Samuel (chs. 16–31) depicts the Lord's choice of David to be Saul's successor and then describes the long road by which David is prepared for accession to the throne. Although Saul's rule became increasingly antitheocratic in nature, David refused to usurp the throne by forceful means but left his accession to office in the Lord's hands. Eventually Saul was wounded in a battle with the Philistines and, fearing capture, took his own life. Three of Saul's sons, including David's loyal friend Jonathan, were killed in the same battle (ch. 31).

## Chronology

Even though the narratives of 1, 2 Samuel contain some statements of chronological import (see, for example, 1Sa 6:1; 7:2; 8:1, 5; 13:1; 25:1; 2Sa 2:10–11; 5:4–5; 14:28; 15:7), the data are insufficient to establish a precise chronology for the major events of this period of Israel's history. Except for the dates of David's birth and the duration of his reign, which are quite firm (see 2Sa 5:4–5), most other dates can only be approximated. The textual problem with the chronological data on the age of Saul when he became king and the length of his reign (see NIV text notes on 1Sa 13:1) contributes to uncertainty concerning the precise time of his birth and the beginning of his reign. No information is given concerning the time of Samuel's birth (1Sa 1:20) or death (25:1). His lifetime probably overlapped that of Samson and that of Obed, son of Ruth and Boaz and grandfather of David. It is indicated that he was well along in years when the elders of Israel asked him to give them a king (8:1, 5).



One other factor contributing to chronological uncertainty is that the author has not always arranged his material in strict chronological sequence. It seems clear, for example, that 2Sa 7 is to be placed chronologically after David's conquests described in 2Sa 8:1–14. The story of the famine sent by God on Israel during the reign of David because of Saul's violation of a treaty with the Gibeonites is found in 2Sa 21:1–14, though chronologically it occurred prior to the time of Absalom's rebellion recorded in 2Sa 15–18. The following dates, however, provide an approximate chronological framework for the times of Samuel, Saul and David.

**1105 BC**

Birth of Samuel (1Sa 1:20)

**1080**

Birth of Saul

**1050**

Saul anointed to be king (1Sa 10:1)

**1040**

Birth of David

**1025**

David anointed to be Saul's successor (1Sa 16:1–13)

**1010**

Death of Saul and beginning of David's reign over Judah in Hebron (1Sa 31:4–6; 2Sa 2:1, 4, 11)

**1003**

Beginning of David's reign over all Israel and capture of Jerusalem (2Sa 5)

**997–992**

David's wars (2Sa 8:1–14)

**991**

Birth of Solomon (2Sa 12:24)

**980**

David's census (2Sa 24:1–9)

**970**

End of David's reign (2Sa 5:4–5; 1Ki 2:10–11)

[\(Return to Beginning of Intro\)](#)

## ESV Study Bible: Introduction 1-2 Samuel

### Author and Title

The Hebrew title “Samuel” refers to Samuel as the key figure in 1-2 Samuel, the one who established the monarchy in Israel by anointing first Saul and then David; Samuel was the kingmaker in the history of ancient Israel. In the Hebrew Bible, the first and second books of Samuel are counted among the “Former Prophets” (Joshua-2 Kings). The Greek translation, the Septuagint, divides Samuel and Kings into the four “Books of Kingdoms”; thus 1-2 Samuel are 1-2 Kingdoms. In the Latin Vulgate and Douay Bible they are called 1-2 Kings.

The author or authors of 1-2 Samuel are not known. First Chronicles 29:29-30 implies that Samuel (or perhaps his disciples) left written records, but because his death is mentioned in 1 Samuel 25, he could not have written most of Samuel.

### Date

First and Second Samuel seem to have been composed and edited in several stages. The “Story of the Ark of God” ( 1 Sam 4:1-7:1 ) could have originated very early—even from a pre-Davidic period, since 2 Samuel 6 is not foreshadowed in the ark narrative and the name of the town where the ark remained is different in the two narratives.

This “Story of the Ark” was embedded in a larger unit, the “Story of Samuel” ( 1 Sam 1:1-7:17 ). It is possible that this story, and the following transitional chapter on the “Rights of the King” ( 1 Sam 8:11-18 ), came from the earlier time of Samuel's ministry, while the “Story of Saul” ( 1 Samuel 9-15 ) originated during a later time of Samuel's era.

Sections such as the “Story of Saul and David” ( 1 Samuel 16-31 ) and the “Story of King David” ( 2 Samuel 1-20 ) must have been composed later, during King David's time, or within a generation or two after David. First Samuel 27:6 states, “Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day.” The final editing of 1-2 Samuel, except perhaps for some minor adjustments, must have been done during the late tenth century B.C., i.e., the early period of the reign of Rehoboam, king of Judah alone. Before that period the writer would have said “kings of Israel.” Furthermore, the Ziklag area was captured by Egypt during Shishak's campaign in 925 B.C. The period within a generation or two after the death of the founder of a dynasty is certainly a reasonable time for an official historian to write his history. There is no reason to think that many generations must have passed before the history of David was written down.

### Theme

The central theme of the books of Samuel is God's exercising of his cosmic kingship by inaugurating a Davidic dynasty (“house”) in Israel ( 2 Samuel 7 ; Psalm 89 ), not a Saulide one ( 1 Sam 13:13-14 ; 15:28 ), and by electing the holy city Zion (Jerusalem; 2 Samuel 6 ; Psalm 132 ) as the place where David's successor will establish the temple

("house") for the worship of the divine King Yahweh (see 2 Sam 24:18 ). The Davidic "covenant" ( 2 Samuel 7 ; Ps 89:3 ) entitled Matthew to put David at the center of the genealogical history of the divine plan of salvation ( Matt 1:1 ).

### Events of 1-2 Samuel Referenced in the Psalms

<b>1 Samuel</b>	<b>Incident</b>	<b>Psalms</b>
19:11	David's house surrounded	59
21:10-11	David seized by Achish	56
21:12-22:1	David escapes from Achish (called Abimelech in Psalm 34 title)	34
22:1 (possibly also 24:3 )	David in cave	57 ; 142
22:9-19	Doeg the Edomite	52
23:14-15 (possibly)	Desert of Judah	63
23:19	David betrayed by Ziphites	54
<b>2 Samuel</b>	<b>Incident</b>	<b>Psalms</b>
8:1-14	Victory over Transjordan	60
chs. 11-12	Against house of Uriah	51
chs. 15-17	Absalom's revolt	3
chs. 15-17 (possibly)	Desert of Judah	63
ch. 22	Victory over all enemies	18

### Purpose, Occasion, and Background

The purpose of the book of 1 Samuel is to highlight two major events: first, *the establishment of the monarchy in Israel* ( chs. 8-12 ); and second, *the preparation of David to sit on the royal throne after Saul* ( chs. 16-31 ). Saul was rejected by the Lord in favor of David ( chs. 15-16 ) even though, humanly speaking, he stayed on the throne until his death at Mount Gilboa ( ch. 31 ). Later, in 2 Samuel 7 , God promises David and his house an eternal dynasty. In these two central events the role of the prophet Samuel was very important because he had anointed first Saul, then David, as king over the covenant people. The book of 1 Samuel establishes the principle that the king in Israel is to be subject to the word of God as conveyed through his prophets. In other words, obedience to the word of God is the necessary condition for a king to be



acceptable to the God of Israel. This is what Jesus the Messiah-King did in his life of obedience to God the Father, even up to “death on a cross” ( Phil 2:8 ). First and Second Samuel deal with a transitional period in the history of ancient Israel—the transition first from the priest Eli to the judge Samuel, then from the judge Samuel to the king Saul, and then from Saul to David, who founded the dynasty that would last as long as the kingdom of Judah. The prophet Samuel thus functions as the link between the judgeship and the kingship. The kingdom of Saul was transitional in a further sense: it was more than a loose confederation that gathered together when there was a common threat, but it was not a period of strong central rule such as existed later. The story of the rise of David in the second half of 1 Samuel prepares for the full-scale kingship of David in 2 Samuel.

### 1 Samuel Key Themes

The themes of 1 Samuel are the kingship of God, his providential guidance, and his sovereign will and power.

1 . *God's kingship*. God is the King of the universe; no human king can assume kingship except as a deputy of the divine King. God has been enthroned as King from eternity. This view is expressed in the Bible as early as Exodus 15:18 : “The LORD will reign forever and ever.”

The first occurrence of the word “king” in 1-2 Samuel is in the Song of Hannah ( 1 Sam 2:10 ). Though the Lord is not explicitly described as King here, it is implied in the statement that he is the One who judges “the ends of the earth” (cf. Ps 96:10 ). In this verse Hannah expresses her conviction that this King, the Lord, is the One who gives power to his human deputy (the “king”) and lifts up the “power of his anointed.”

According to Genesis, all human beings were created as “royal” figures in the *image of God* . Hence, humans are deputies who rule and control other creatures for the sake of the King of the universe. So when God allowed the people of Israel to have a human king ( 1 Sam 8:6-9 ), he gave them a king only as God's earthly vice-regent or deputy, who is responsible to the Lord for his actions and subject to his commands (see esp. 1 Sam 12:14 ; 2 Sam 12:9 ).

The Lord's holy sovereignty is expressed also in his title “the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim” ( 1 Sam 4:4 ). As in other places in the Bible, he is clearly seen as controlling events not only in Israel, the land of his covenant people, but outside Israel too, especially in Philistia ( 1 Sam 4:1-6:21 ; 23:27 ; 29:4 ; see also Amos 9:7 ).

2 . *God's providential guidance*. Romans 8:28 summarizes well what the author of 1 Samuel meant to convey to his readers: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” God is certainly the One who providentially and individually guided the lives of chosen individuals such as Hannah, Samuel, and David; even the life of Saul was in God's providential care (see 1 Sam 9:16 ). The course of life is different for each individual, but

the same God, not “Fate,” consistently and graciously guides one's life. Though it is often not recognized by his human agents, God's timing is always perfect (see 1 Samuel 9 and the end of 1 Samuel 23 ), for he is the Lord of history.

God's saving plan is fulfilled in the ongoing day-to-day lives of human beings. For example, Hannah's difficult relationship with Peninnah leads to the birth of Samuel ( 1 Samuel 1 ); Saul's donkey-searching journey leads to the encounter with the prophet Samuel ( 1 Samuel 9 ); David's chore of bringing food to his brothers enables him to see Goliath ( 1 Samuel 17 ). Ordinary situations are the most meaningful in human life, and it is in these that God “works for good.”

Later, in 2 Samuel 7 , God uses King David's earnest desire to build a house for the Lord to indwell as an occasion to further his plan of salvation by choosing David's line to be that of the Messiah-King who would sit on the throne of David forever. In 2 Samuel 7:16 God says to David, “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” In other words, Yahweh, King of the universe, promises David that he will establish David's house (i.e., his dynasty) as eternal. Thus, this promise to, or “covenant” with (see Ps 89:3 ), David was a turning point in the outworking of God's saving purposes.

3 . *God's sovereign will and power.* As Hannah phrases it, God is the all-knowing God, “a God of knowledge” ( 1 Sam 2:3b ), and he chooses or rejects people according to his absolute sovereign will and purpose. From a human perspective it sometimes looks as though God has changed his mind, but God “will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret” ( 1 Sam 15:29 ). To be sure, the Lord as the sovereign deity may change his way of dealing with individuals according to his plan and purpose. But his decision is always just and right; at the same time, he is merciful and gracious to sinful human beings.

Therefore, obedience to God's word is of prime importance in human life. First and Second Samuel provide many examples of the importance of listening to the word of God. The boy Samuel listens to the word of God ( 1 Samuel 3 ), but Saul fails here, rejecting God's commandment ( 1 Samuel 13 ; 15 ). David fights bravely with Goliath for the honor of Yahweh's name ( 1 Samuel 17 ) but later fails to keep the commandments, committing adultery and murder ( 2 Samuel 11 ). God gives David a second chance by sending the prophet Nathan ( 2 Samuel 12 ), while Saul is finally refused a chance to repent ( 1 Samuel 15 ). Only God's grace upholds human beings, who are sinful in nature, before the holy God.

“Who is able to stand before the LORD , this holy God?” ( 1 Sam 6:20 )—these words of the men of Beth-shemesh well express human reality, though their understanding of God's “holiness” was not adequate (see Leviticus 19 ). Only the God-given way of approaching him through sacrifice can prepare sinful human beings to come closer to the holy God.

God spontaneously reveals his will in words, and his word through the prophets determines events. But not every detail is revealed to the eyes of human beings (e.g., 1 Sam 3:1-21 ; 9:15-21 ; 16:1-13 ). Believers can only wait on God, who will do his will according to his own purpose.

For fighting God's battle against his enemies, Jonathan ( 1 Sam 14:6 ) and David ( 1 Sam 17:45-47 ) called on God's power. God uses human urges and enthusiasms for his honor—often in a way that seems to defy common sense. God is the One who works wonders and uses even his enemies (Philistine kings, Achish, etc.) to fulfill his plan and purpose. Thus, humanly impossible agendas become divinely possible, encouraging believers to put their faith in the One who is sovereign over the entire creation.

The story of 1-2 Samuel begins with Samuel and ends with David, framing the problematic figure of Saul. These three are certainly central figures in the history of the kingdom of God. Their lives illustrate many biblical themes. In God's dealings with Saul and David, one might see God's justice and his mercy, respectively; according to the NT, both qualities find their ultimate expression in the person of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross.

## 2 Samuel Key Themes

The themes of 1 Samuel (namely, God's kingship, providential guidance, and sovereign will and power) are related to the themes of 2 Samuel (namely, the Davidic covenant and messianic promise): the sovereign God, who has guided David's life, elects David as his deputy to represent his kingship by his eternal covenant. David thus becomes the prototype of the future Messiah, Jesus Christ.

1 . *Davidic covenant*. For the Davidic covenant, see note on 2 Samuel 7:1-29 .

2 . *Messianic promise*. Second Samuel 7 is a turning point in the history of salvation; it clearly advances the messianic hope in the Abrahamic covenant. True, Saul was also anointed by Yahweh. David in fact called Saul “the LORD 's anointed” (e.g., 1 Sam 24:6 ) until the end. Yet God chose David, the youngest and forgotten son of Jesse, to establish a dynasty. David was used for God's eternal plan of salvation, not because he was perfect and ideal from a human viewpoint, but because the Lord was “with him” and David found favor in God's sight.

The idea of the eternal throne and dynasty was not a product of postexilic idealism as is sometimes claimed. Such a concept was already current in the second millennium B.C. in Canaan as *mlk 'ilm* (Ugaritic, “the king of eternity” or “king of the world”) and was prominent among the Assyrians during the eighth century B.C. , as can be seen in the Assyrian records. Thus, the prophecies in Isaiah 7-9 reflect the ideal of preexilic times.

## Text

The Hebrew Masoretic text (MT) of 1-2 Samuel is notorious for its difficulties. Furthermore, Samuel and Jeremiah are the two OT books where the ancient Greek

translations and the Hebrew are notably different in many places. Many scholars and translations too readily reject the MT in favor of the Greek, saying that the Greek text makes more sense and reflects the more original Hebrew text. They hold that the MT must have been corrupted into its present form through a series of scribal errors, and they try to “correct” these “corrupted” texts on the basis of the Greek texts. In fact, the Hebrew texts of Samuel from about 50 to 25 B.C. found among the Dead Sea Scrolls give support for some readings in the Greek text tradition. But the alleged similarity between the Greek texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls has been overemphasized.

One of the reasons for the difficulty of the Hebrew text of Samuel is that Samuel was written in the manner of an oral narrative—written, i.e., to be heard. Some of the repetitions are more typical of poetry than of prose. Also, at places the spelling seems to have followed the actual pronunciation instead of the “standard” Hebrew, as can be clearly seen when one compares 2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 18 in Hebrew. The MT of 1-2 Samuel is not easy. Yet if one carefully examines it with a thorough knowledge of the grammar and style of the language, in most cases the MT as it stands appears to be good, and the ESV translation has therefore followed the MT in most (but not all) places.

### **History of Salvation Summary**

The period of the Judges shows the serious problems Israel had, both in its leadership and among the people as a whole. The books of Samuel show God's continued care for his people, in raising up for them a king whose job was to be their champion, representative, and example. Saul, by his disobedience to God's messenger, proves to be an unsuitable king. David, on the other hand, in spite of his moral failures, is God's choice to be the beginning of an enduring dynasty, from which the ultimate Ruler, who will lead Israel in bringing blessing to all the nations, will arise. (For an explanation of the “History of Salvation,” see the Overview of the Bible . See also History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ .)

### **Literary Features**

The primary genre of 1 Samuel is hero story. The author did not choose the common method of OT historians in giving coverage to a broad span of people and events but instead focused primarily on three heroic leaders whose stories are elaborated at length: Samuel, Saul, and David. Three other characters are sufficiently prominent in the narrative for their stories to be mini-hero stories: Hannah, Eli, and Jonathan. Within the species of hero story, the story of Saul is the only undisputed and fully elaborated literary tragedy in the Bible. The story of David and Goliath is the prototypical battle story in the Bible. The phase of David's life when he is the archetypal man on the run fits the narrative pattern of a fugitive story. Hannah's song of gratitude ( 1 Sam 2:1-10 ) is a lyric poem in the specific form of a praise psalm, and Samuel's last words to the nation ( 1 Samuel 12 ) fit the genre of the farewell discourse.



The first third of 1 Samuel pits the decline of Eli and his sons against the rise of Samuel, so that readers should picture these chapters in the form of an X (Eli's decline occurring simultaneously with Samuel's ascent). The remainder of the book is likewise an extended X in which the decline of Saul is played against the rise of David. In this phase of the story, the stories of Saul and David are intertwined, as readers are kept up to date on the tragic decline of Saul and the life of the king-in-waiting as a fugitive.

First Samuel is a book of personalities, so paying close attention to characterization is important. Similarly, the book is rich in universal, recognizable human experience, with the result that building bridges between the world of the text and one's own experiences is an inviting approach to the book. Even though this book does not cover the vast spans of Israelite history that the other OT historical chronicles cover, it provides in-depth analyses of what makes for good and bad leadership. What is true for leaders, moreover, is true for all individuals in their choices for or against God. A leading literary purpose of the book is to embody universal human experience as the means of teaching moral and spiritual lessons for all people at all times.

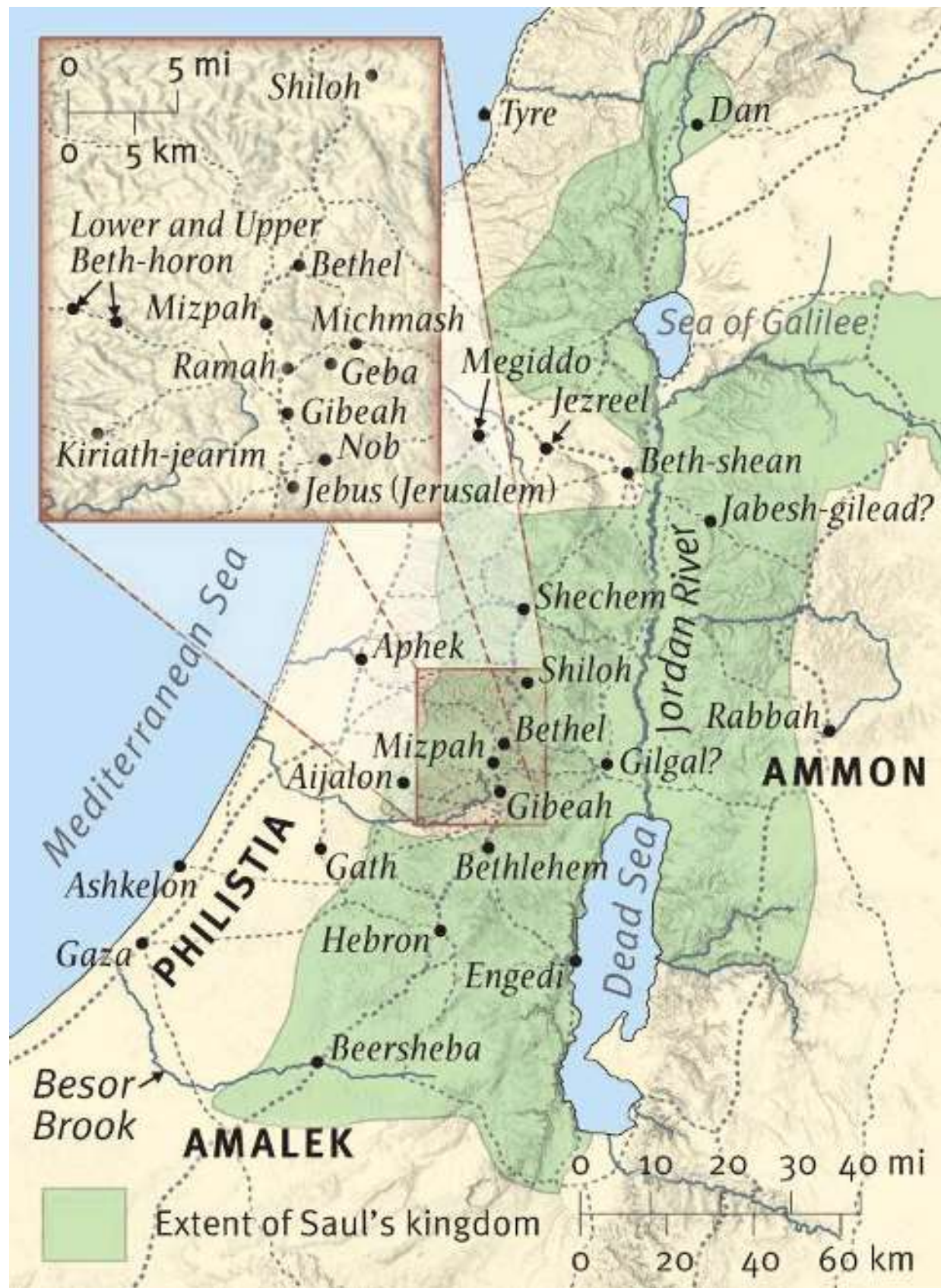
Second Samuel is the prose epic of David, telling the story of a nation led by a heroic leader. It is at the same time a hero story in which the protagonist, while not wholly idealized, is nonetheless a largely exemplary and representative character who embodies the struggles and ideals of his society. While the story does not possess the single linear sequence of literary tragedy, nonetheless at one point it meets the essential tragic criterion of locating the source of the hero's subsequent downfall in a single tragic choice. Readers should picture David's life as portrayed in 2 Samuel as a pyramid in which the trajectory is wholly positive until the Bathsheba/Uriah debacle, after which David's life goes into comparative decline as the tragic consequences work themselves out. Two threads of action make up the story of David's heroic life: the public life of a king and the personal life of a family man.

The literary technique of realism permeates the book as the storyteller refuses to ignore either the good or the bad aspects of the characters. As with 1 Samuel, the story rings true to human experience. The dramatic impulse to present the actual words and dialogues of characters is continuous.

### **The Setting of 1 Samuel**

c. 1050 B.C.

The book of 1 Samuel is set in Israel during the time of transition between the period of the judges and the period of the monarchy. It opens with Samuel's birth and then describes his role as judge over Israel. When the people ask for a king, the Lord instructs Samuel to anoint Saul as Israel's first king.



## 1 Samuel Outline

### I. The Story of Samuel ( 1:1-7:17 )

#### A. Rise of Samuel as prophet ( 1:1-4:1a )

1. Birth and dedication of Samuel ( 1:1-28 )
2. Hannah's song ( 2:1-10 )
3. Samuel, and Eli's two sons ( 2:11-36 )
4. Call of Samuel as a prophet ( 3:1-4:1a )

#### B. Story of the ark of God ( 4:1b-7:1 )

1. Capture of the ark ( 4:1b-22 )
2. The ark in Philistia ( 5:1-12 )
3. Return of the ark ( 6:1-7:1 )

#### C. Judgeship of Samuel ( 7:2-17 )

### II. Transition to the Monarchy ( 8:1-22 )

### III. The Story of Saul ( 9:1-15:35 )

#### A. Saul made king ( 9:1-11:15 )

#### I. Saul's meeting with Samuel ( 9:1-27 )

#### II. Anointing of Saul and his election ( 10:1-27 )

#### III. Making Saul king ( 11:1-15 )

#### B. Samuel's address to Israel ( 12:1-25 )

#### C. Reign of Saul ( 13:1-15:35 )

#### .Saul and the Philistines—first rejection of Saul ( 13:1-23 )

#### I. Saul and Jonathan ( 14:1-52 )

#### II. Saul and the Amalekites—second rejection of Saul ( 15:1-35 )

### IV. The Story of Saul and David ( 16:1-31:13 )

#### A. Introduction of David ( 16:1-23 )

#### .Anointing of David ( 16:1-13 )

#### I. David at Saul's court ( 16:14-23 )

#### B. David and Goliath: battle at the Valley of Elah ( 17:1-54 )

- C. Saul, Jonathan, and David ( 17:55-18:5 )
- D. Saul becomes David's enemy ( 18:6-30 )
- E. Saul's attempts to kill David ( 19:1-20:42 )
- F. David's escapes from Saul ( 21:1-26:25 )

.David's escapes ( 21:1-23:29 )

I.David spares Saul at Engedi ( 24:1-25:1 )

II.David marries Abigail ( 25:2-44 )

III.David spares Saul at the hill of Hachilah ( 26:1-25 )

G. David in Philistia ( 27:1-30:31 )

.David and Achish ( 27:1-12 )

I.The Philistines gather for war ( 28:1-2 )

II.The medium of En-dor ( 28:3-25 )

III.The Philistine rulers reject David ( 29:1-11 )

IV.Amalekite raid on Ziklag and David's victory ( 30:1-31 )

H. Deaths of Saul and Jonathan ( 31:1-13 )



## The Bible Readers Companion: Introduction: 1 Samuel

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The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel trace the most exciting period in Israel's history. God had fulfilled His covenant commitments to Abraham. After breaking the slave bonds of Abraham's descendants, the Lord brought them safely into Canaan, the Promised Land. But there Israel proved faithless, again and again abandoning God for the idols and debased practices of the pagans who shared the land with them. For 400 years, during the time of the Judges, Israelite strength continued to wane. Then, suddenly, under a leader appointed by God, a stunning transformation took place. Over the space of some 50 years Israel was converted from an oppressed minority in Canaan into a powerful nation. First and 2 Samuel record the key events of these critical years, and focus our attention on one of the most beloved of biblical heroes: David, the shepherd boy who became Israel's greatest king.

The story of the birth of the Hebrew monarchy is told through the lives of three men: Samuel, the last judge; Saul, Israel's first and failed king; and David, whose personal gifts and courageous faith in God catapulted him to greatness. Through the stories of these men the author of 1 and 2 Samuel gives us deep insights into the religious, social, and political condition of the times. He also, without preaching, underlines foundational spiritual truths which shape not only the course of history, but also the direction of our individual lives. As we study 1 Samuel we learn from the experiences of one of the Bible's truly great men. And we better understand the way that God works through all who trust, and are eager to respond to Him.

### 1 SAMUEL AT A GLANCE

#### KEY PEOPLE

**Samuel** Israel's last judge, who supervised the founding of the monarchy.

**Saul** Israel's first king, whose flawed character and unwillingness to trust God led to the rejection of his family as hereditary rulers.

**David** The "man after God's heart" whose faith and devotion to God, with many special personal qualities, lifted him from shepherd boy to lead his people to nationhood and greatness.

## KEY EVENTS

**Philistines defeated at Mizpah ( 1Sa 7).** The revival and victory led by Samuel prepares the way for the monarchy.

**The people demand a king ( 1Sa 8).** The people's motive is wrong, but God's timing calls for a national renewal.

**Saul, the first king, fails to trust God ( 1Sa 13; 15).** Despite early successes, Saul's moral and spiritual flaws lead to his rejection.

**Samuel secretly anoints David ( 1Sa 16).** God prepares the man for the task before He asks the man to perform it.

**David kills Goliath ( 1Sa 17).** The stunning victory leads to rapid advancement for David, and earns the jealous hostility of a rapidly deteriorating King Saul.

**David flees Saul ( 1Sa 21).** David becomes a fugitive, but during these years draws together a band of bold followers who later become key military leaders and advisers.

**Saul killed in battle ( 1Sa 31).** The death of Saul marks the end of David's years as a fugitive, and provides the opportunity for his rise to power.

## Where the Action Takes Place

Nearly all the events reported in 1 Samuel take place in the hill country of Palestine. Even during the years covered in this book, the Israelites were more a loose confederation of peoples than a unified nation. Saul (see illustration) was more a chieftain than a king. Ruins that have been identified as his "fortress at Gibeah" show how small his "palace" really was, and remind us that the organization of the Israelite kingdom and the launching of its golden age was the work of the spiritual David, not of the unworthy Saul.

**Illustration, Saul Amid Ruins of Fortress at Gibeah.** *See illustration of Saul, with sketch of the ruins of his "fortress at Gibeah"*

## Date and Authorship

In the Hebrew canon the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel were a single book: the Book of Samuel. First Samuel is organized around the history of three men: Samuel, Israel's last

judge; Saul, who ruled from about 1050-1010 B.C.; and David, whose rule extended from 1010 to 970 B.C. While the dates of the principle characters are relatively fixed, there is no agreement on a date for authorship of the books. A Jewish tradition suggests Samuel was the principle author, and that after his death his work was carried on and completed by the Prophets Nathan and Gad (cf. 1Ch 29:29). The tradition is a late one, however, and there is no certainty about who labored to give us these vital books.

### **A Note on the Organization of 1 Samuel**

The plan of 1Sa 15-2Sa 8 has been clarified by the discovery of parallels with the Hittite "Apology of Hattusilus." This document is a 13th century B.C. defense of a new Hittite dynasty. Similarities suggest that one of our author's primary purposes in recording the history of the era was to firmly establish the legitimacy of David and his line, and defend their continuing right to the throne. The literary parallels include: a detailed description of why the previous ruler was disqualified; an emphasis on events leading up to the ruler taking the throne; an affirmation of the new ruler's piety; and a summary of the king's reign showing that God confirmed His choice by blessing the nation. Such parallels between biblical and secular documents do not challenge our belief in the inspiration of Scripture, but rather help us better understand the cultural setting within which God spoke, and thus the author's intent.

### **Theological Outline of 1 Samuel**

- I. SAMUEL, ISRAEL'S LAST JUDGE 1-7
- II. SAUL, ISRAEL'S FAILED KING 8-15
- III. DAVID, THE EMERGENCE OF ISRAEL'S GREATEST RULER 16-31

### **Content Outline of 1 Samuel**

- I. The Ministry of Samuel ( 1:1-7:17)
  - A. His Birth ( 1:1-2:11)
  - B. A Corrupt Priesthood ( 2:12-36)
  - C. Samuel's Call ( 3:1-21)
  - D. Israel's Defeat and Judgment of the Corrupt Priests ( 4:1-9)
  - E. Capture and Return of God's Ark ( 4:10-7:2)
  - F. Defeat of the Philistines ( 7:3-17)

## II. The Story of Saul ( 8:1-15:35)

- A. Demand for a King ( 8:1-22)
- B. Saul's Call and Vindication ( 9:1-11:15)
- C. Samuel's Farewell ( 12:1-25)
- D. Saul and Jonathan's Victories ( 13:1-14:52)
- E. Saul's Disobedience and Rejection ( 15:1-35)

## III. The Emergence of David ( 16:1-31:13)

- A. David Anointed and Called to Saul's Court ( 16:1-23)
- B. David Kills Goliath and Saves Israel ( 17:1-58)
- C. David's Advancement, Saul's Growing Jealousy ( 18:1-20:42)
- D. David's Years as a Fugitive ( 21:1-30:31)
- E. Saul's Death in Battle ( 31:1-13)



## New Living Translation Study Bible Notes:

### Introduction: The First Book of Samuel

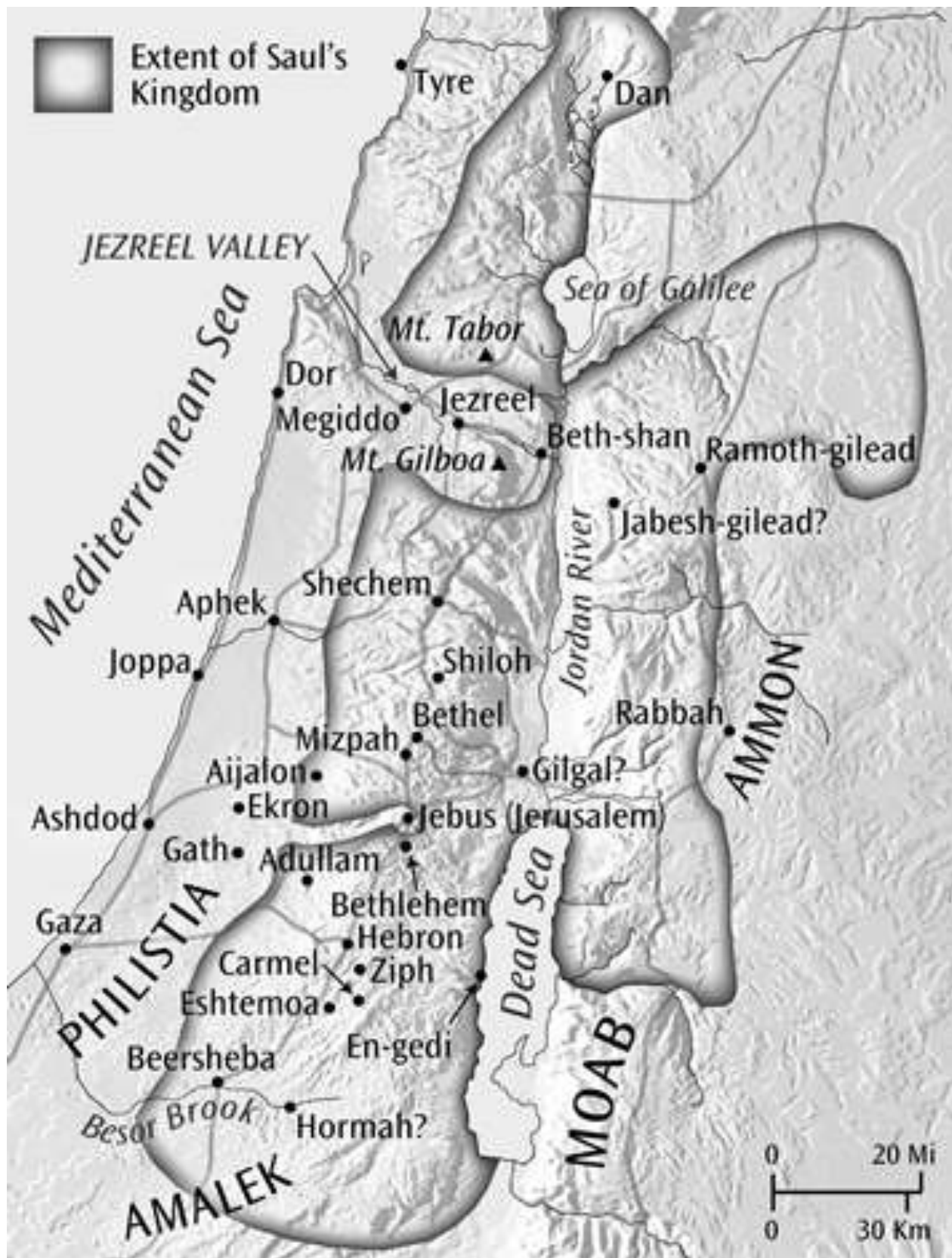
When neighboring nations are hostile, the right leadership can give the people of a country a sense of safety. In Samuel's time, Israel faced external threats and internal discord. The judges did not satisfy the people's desire for leadership and security. Israel wanted a king. The book of 1 Samuel records Israel's movement from a federation of tribes to a centralized kingdom. Israel's first king, Saul, was not faithful to God. However, God's plan to save Israel—and the world—began to unfold in the person of King David.

#### Setting

As early as Moses' final address on the plains of Moab (Dt 17:14-20), God had said that the people of Israel would ask for a king to reign over them. God spelled out the requirements for a king (Dt 17:15) but also warned of the evils commonly associated with human kings. A king would want many horses, numerous wives, and large amounts of gold and silver (Dt 17:16-17). To correct these tendencies, God required that each king of Israel immerse himself in God's law (Dt 17:18-20).

Throughout the days of the judges (tribal leaders who functioned as rescuers and administrators), discontent grew over the lack of unity among Israel's tribes (see Jdg 17-21). By Samuel's time, Israel was looking for a king to unite the nation and protect it from internal and external threats.

Gideon, who judged Israel approximately 100 years before the time of Samuel, had acted a lot like a monarch. While Gideon rejected the invitation to inaugurate a hereditary dynasty (Jdg 8:22-23), he soon began to act like a king. He accumulated gold and used it to build a religious idol (Jdg 8:24-27). He took many wives (Jdg 8:30) and even named one of his sons Abimelech, which means "my father is king" (Jdg 8:31). Gideon acted just like the kind of king God wanted Israel never to have. Establishing a monarchy would give an imperfect human even more control over God's people than the judges exercised. This book records the trouble that surrounded Israel's first king, Saul, as well as God's unfolding plan to establish an eternal kingship through the line of David.



Israel at the Time of Samuel and Saul (1075~1011 BC)

Throughout this period, enemies surrounded Israel and engaged its people in battle. Samuel, Saul, and David were all instrumental in overcoming these enemies and establishing the kingdom of Israel in the region. The map shows the extent of Saul's kingdom along with many of the key places in the lives of Samuel, Saul, and David.

Adullam 22:1-2

Amalek 14:48; 15:1-35; 27:8; 28:18; 30:1-20

Ammon 10:27-11:11; 12:12

Ashdod 5:1-8

Beersheba 3:20; 8:2

Besor Brook 30:9,21

Bethel 7:16; 10:3; 13:2; 30:27

Bethlehem 16:1-13,18; 17:12,15; 20:6,28

Beth-shan 31:10-12

Carmel 15:12; 25:2-40

Ekron 5:10-12; 6:16-17; 17:52

En-gedi 23:29; 24:1

Gath 5:8-9; 17:4,52; 21:10-22:1; 27:2-12

Gilgal 7:16; 10:8; 11:14-15; 13:4-15; 15:12-33

Jabesh-gilead 11:1-11; 31:11-13

Jezreel 25:43; 29:1-11; 30:5; 31:7

Mizpah 7:5-16; 10:17

Moab 12:9; 14:47; 22:3-4

Mount Gilboa 28:4; 31:1-8

Shiloh 1:3-18,24; 2:14; 3:19-4:12

Ziph 23:14-24; 26:1-2

## Summary

In 1Sa 1-7, Samuel emerges as one of God's key servants. Samuel was born to a devout woman who had been barren ( 1:1-23). He became an apprentice in the Tabernacle as a young child under the supervision of Eli the priest ( 1:24-3:18). It is possible that Samuel, a Levite ( 1Ch 6:33-34), was originally being groomed to be a Tabernacle assistant. Instead, he became a prophet with a growing national reputation (

3:19-4:1a). When the Philistines harassed the Israelites and captured the Ark of the Covenant ( 4:1b-7:2), Samuel was completely and conspicuously absent from the narrative. He was not yet prominent in Israel's national life. In ch 7, Samuel reappears strongly. He called Israel to repentance and, as a judge, drove out the Philistine oppressors, something Samson had failed to do.

Samuel's leadership as Levite, prophet, and judge spanned religious, spiritual, and political spheres. However, his sons did not prove worthy of carrying on in his place ( 8:1-3). Israel asked Samuel to appoint a king to lead them and make them like other nations. Samuel was outspoken in his opposition ( 8:10-21), yet the Lord instructed Samuel to anoint Saul as king (chs 9-10). In Samuel's farewell address (ch 12), he reminded Israel of God's power and care for them. He wanted them to realize their sin in asking for a king rather than trusting in the Lord.

Initially, Saul was a good king. He defeated the neighboring Ammonites and saved a city east of the Jordan from doom (ch 11). But by his disobedience to God, Saul soon proved that he was unworthy to be Israel's king (chs 13,15). By contrast, Saul's noble son Jonathan (ch 14) seemed to be an ideal successor to his father. God, however, had different plans (chs 16-31). Jonathan would not succeed Saul. Instead, God instructed Samuel to anoint David secretly as Saul's successor while Saul was still king ( 16:1-13). The events that followed proved David to be a worthy successor.

Saul's relationship with David was good at first, thanks in part to David's musical gifts ( 16:14-23). However, David's success with Goliath (ch 17) made Saul jealous ( 18:6-16), and their relationship turned sour. Though Saul could not eliminate the Philistine threat to Israel, he tried to eliminate the threat David posed to his kingship. For example, Saul brought David into his family through marriage to have him nearby as much as possible so it would be easier to kill him ( 18:17-29). He attacked David directly ( 19:1-10) and executed anybody who harbored David (chs 21-22). All of Saul's attempts to get rid of David proved unsuccessful.

Saul had turned completely away from the Lord. Both Saul and Jonathan died in battle against the Philistines ( 31:1-6). This paved the way for David to begin his reign, though not without further difficulties ( 2Sa 1:1-5:5).

## **Author**

As with many OT books, the author of 1 Samuel is never identified. The title "Samuel" comes from the important role Samuel played in Israel's transition to a monarchy, not from the book's authorship. While the prophet Samuel could have written parts of 1 Samuel, he could not have written any part of 2 Samuel, as his death is recorded in 1Sa 25:1.

## **Composition**

1-2 Samuel were originally one book, the book of Samuel. Probably because of its length, Septuagint (Greek OT) translators divided it into two books, 1-2 Kingdoms. Later



Hebrew tradition also divided the book but retained the name Samuel, as do most English versions.

Some scholars contend that 1-2 Samuel (along with 1-2 Kings, also one book originally) were created from a variety of sources during or after the Babylonian exile (586-538 BC). It is indeed possible that multiple sources were used in 1-2 Samuel. We know from 1Ch 29:29, for example, that Samuel and the prophets Nathan and Gad chronicled events from the life of David. There is no reason to insist that the inspired author of 1-2 Samuel could not have made use of such information. However, there is no compelling reason to conclude that Samuel was written as late as the exile to Babylon. The book could very well have been near its final form during or shortly after the reign of Solomon (970-930 BC).

Shortly after the exile to Babylon, the book of Samuel was incorporated into the larger body of material that includes Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, and 1-2 Kings. This section of Scripture has a clear purpose: It traces Israel's sacred history, beginning with a moment of blessing (conquering the land) and ending with a moment of judgment (losing the land). It explains to an audience in exile how their grave misfortune came about.

### **Text**

The text of 1-2 Samuel found in the Greek OT (the Septuagint, 200s BC) is different in many places from the Hebrew (Masoretic) text (about AD 1000). The Hebrew texts of Samuel in the Dead Sea Scrolls (about 250-50 BC) found at Qumran agree in some places with the Septuagint, in other places with the Masoretic Text. In still other places they have their own readings. In modern Bible translations that have footnotes, readers will encounter notes such as “Hebrew lacks...,” “Hebrew reads...,” or “Compare Greek...” more frequently in 1-2 Samuel than in other OT books. However, few of these textual variants significantly alter the book's meaning.

### **Meaning and Message**

The emphasis on kingship in 1 Samuel first appears in the last line of Hannah's Prayer of Praise ( 2:1-10). Hannah is the first person in Scripture to announce the coming kingship in Israel. However, the idea that Israel would have a king was as old as God's promise that Abraham and Sarah's descendants would be kings ( Ge 17:6,16). In the days of Moses, God neither mandated nor forbade a monarchy but only spelled out the excesses from which Israel's kings must abstain (see Dt 17:14-20).

Four times, the book of Judges states, “In those days Israel had no king” ( Jdg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). During the period of the judges, Israel changed dramatically for the worse—both spiritually and nationally. This steady disintegration reaches a horrible climax in Jdg 17-21. The book of Judges hints that to help correct this decline, Israel needed a king. The need was not simply for a unifying military leader to shore up national defense; the judges had already battled foreign foes with much success.

Israel's greatest threat was not the Philistines or any other predatory neighbor but Israel itself and its breaking of the covenant. Instead, Israel needed a king to guard the covenant, which the pre-monarchical order had put at risk.

If the king's responsibility was to administer the covenant (Dt 17:18-20), the prophet's duty was to interpret its stipulations. For this reason, a prophet such as Samuel protected his divinely authorized claim over kings with a holy zeal. Not only did Samuel anoint Israel's first two kings (10:1; 16:13), but he was compelled to censure the king when he stepped outside of covenantal boundaries (13:8-15; 15:10-33).

Saul did not have the character or integrity needed to lead Israel into a successful, God-honoring monarchy. Saul was not fated to fall, as though he had no control over his decisions. In fact, God wanted him to be a good king and made every provision for that to happen (such as changing his heart and giving him his Spirit). But God does not force righteousness, holiness, or obedience. His grace is persuasive but not coercive.

Despite the deep disappointments of the era of the judges and the early monarchy, God's sovereign control over Israel's history remains evident and is demonstrated in several ways: (1) a once-barren woman gave birth to Samuel, God's prophet for Israel's transition from judgeship to monarchy (ch 1); (2) a devastating Philistine victory became a Philistine defeat without human help (chs 4-6); (3) the king whom the people demanded became God's anointed (chs 8-10); (4) an anointed king was rejected for his unfaithfulness (chs 13,15); and (5) the eighth son of an obscure family, a man after God's own heart, became the future king of Israel (ch 16).

Unlike Saul's rule, David's kingship over Israel lasted, and one of his descendants would later become the sovereign and eternal King of the whole world. Jesus is the final heir to David's throne (Jn 7:42; Rev 5:5; 11:15). This descendant of David, while perpetuating his ancestor's virtues, never exhibits his flaws. David was Israel's fallible and flawed shepherd. Jesus is the world's perfect and eternal Shepherd.

## Outline

1:1-7:17

*Establishment of Samuel's Leadership*

8:1-12:25

*Establishment of Saul's Kingship*

13:1-16:13

*Rejection of Saul's Kingship*

16:14-31:13

*Dissolution of Saul's Reign*

**Timeline**

about 1375-1050 BC

*The era of the judges*

around 1200 BC

*The Philistines arrive in Canaan*

about 1100-950 BC

{>• *The period covered by the books of Samuel*

about 1100-1070 BC

*Eli as priest at Shiloh*

about 1075-1040 BC

*The ministry of Samuel*

1050-1011 BC

*The reign of Saul*

about 1025 BC

*David is anointed as king*

about 1020 BC

*David and Goliath*

about 1011 BC

*The death of Saul and Jonathan*

1011-971 BC

*David as king of Israel*

Epigraphs

Samuel and David...make a frame round the dark, problematical figure of King Saul....All three...are forerunners and heralds of the real king.

Hans W. Hertzberg

*I & II Samuel*

Simply as a source of stories to hold children spellbound [the books of Samuel] are incomparable, and moreover they provide an abundance of raw material from which to study the human condition, for they present real life with all its ambiguities....The

theology in these books is...an offer to those who will respond to the invitation to read and ponder the lives of those depicted here.

Joyce G. Baldwin

*1 & 2 Samuel*

### **Further Reading**

R. Alter

*The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (1999)

Joyce G. Baldwin

*1 & 2 Samuel* (1988)

R.D. Bergen

*1, 2 Samuel* (1996)

Walter Brueggemann

*First and Second Samuel* (1990)

T.W. Cartledge

*1 & 2 Samuel* (2001)

A.R. Millard, J.K. Hoffmeier, and D.W. Baker, eds.

*Faith, Tradition, and History: Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context* (1994)

### **Personality Profiles in 1 Samuel**

- Samuel
- Eli
- Saul
- Jonathan
- David
- Michal
- Abiathar

## Synopsis of the Books of the Bible:

### 1 Samuel – Introduction

We have seen that the Book of Ruth occupies, in its purport, an intermediate place between the end of the period in which Israel was governed by God Himself, who interposed from time to time by means of judges, and the setting up of the king whom He selected for them. This period, alas! came to an end through the people's failure, and their inability to make a right use, by faith, of their privileges.

#### **The contents of the books of Samuel**

The Books of Samuel contain the account of the cessation of Israel's original relationship with God, founded on their obedience to the terms of the old covenant, and the special prescriptions of the Book of Deuteronomy; the sovereign interference of God in prophecy; and the setting up of the king whom God Himself had prepared, with the circumstances which preceded this event. It is not merely that Israel failed under the government of God: they rejected it.

#### **The ark in the enemy's hands and the failure of the priesthood**

Placed under the priesthood, they drew nigh to God in the enjoyment of privileges which were granted them as a people acknowledged by Jehovah. We shall see the ark—which, as it was the nearest and most immediate, so was it the most precious link between Jehovah Elohim and the people—fall into the hands of the enemy. What could a priest do, when that which gave his priesthood all its importance was in the enemy's hands, and when the place where he drew near to Jehovah (the throne of God in the midst of Israel, the place of propitiation by which in mercy Israel's relationship with God, through the sprinkled blood, was maintained) was no more there?

It was no longer mere unfaithfulness in the circumstances in which God had placed them. The circumstances themselves were entirely changed through God's judgment upon Israel. The outward link of God's connection with the people was broken; the ark of the covenant, centre and basis of their relationship with Him, had been given up by the wrath of God into the hands of their enemies. Priesthood was the natural and normal means of maintaining the relationship between God and the people: how could it now be used for this purpose?

#### **God in communication with his people by a prophet**

Nevertheless God, acting in sovereignty, could put Himself in communication with His people, by virtue of His grace and immutable faithfulness, according to which His connection with His people existed still on His side, even when all acknowledged relationship between Him and them was broken off by their unfaithfulness. And this He did by raising up a prophet. By his means God still communicated *in a direct way* with His people, even when they had not maintained their relationship with Him in their normal condition. The office of the priest was connected with the integrity of these



relations; the people needed him in their infirmities. Still under the priesthood the people themselves drew nigh to God through the medium of the priest, according to the relationship which God had established and which He recognised. But the prophet acted on the part of God outside this relationship, or rather above it, when the people were no longer faithful.

### **The establishment of a kingdom**

The setting up of a king went much farther. It was a new order of relationship which involved most important principles. The relationship of God with the people was no longer immediate. An authority was set over Israel. God expected faithfulness from the king. The people's destiny depended upon the conduct of the one who was responsible before Jehovah for the maintenance of this faithfulness.

### **God's grace and wisdom displayed in our follies and faults**

It was God's purpose to establish this principle for the glory of Christ. I speak of His kingdom over the Jews and over the nations, over the whole world. This kingdom has been prefigured in David and in Solomon. To ask for a king, rejecting God's own immediate government, was folly and rebellion in the people. How often are our follies and our faults the opportunity for the display of the grace and wisdom of God and for the fulfilment of His counsels hidden from the world until then! Our sins and faults alone have conduced to the glorious accomplishment of these counsels in Christ.

These are the important subjects treated of in the Books of Samuel, so far at least as the establishment of the kingdom. Its glorious condition and its fall are related in the two Books of Kings.

It is the fall of Israel which puts an end to their first relationship with God. The ark is taken; the priest dies. Prophecy introduces the king—a king despised and rejected, man having set up another, yet a king whom God establishes according to the might of His power. Such are the great principles unfolded in the Books of Samuel.

History shows us here, as everywhere, that there is but One who has remained faithful—an humbling result for us of the trial to which God has subjected us, but one well adapted to keep us humble.

### **The priesthood and its fall**

If we have spoken of the fall of the priesthood, we must not infer from it that priesthood ceased to exist. It was always necessary to a people full of weakness (as it is to ourselves on earth); it interposed in the things of God to maintain individual relationship to Him in them, but it ceased to form the basis of relationship between the whole people and God. The people were no longer capable of enjoying this relationship through this means alone; and the priesthood itself could suffice no longer, having so deeply failed in its standing. We shall do well to dwell a little on this, which is the turning-point of the truths we are considering.

In Israel's primitive state, and in their constitution generally, as established in the land given to them, priesthood was the basis of their relationship with God; it was that which characterized and maintained it (see Heb 7:11). The high priest was their head and representative before God, as a nation of worshippers; and in this character (I speak here neither of redemption from Egypt nor of conquests, but of a people before God, and in relationship with Him), on the great day of atonement he confessed their sins over the scape-goat. It was not merely intercession. He stood there as head and representative of the people, who were summed up in him before Jehovah. The people were acknowledged, although faulty. They presented themselves in the person of the high priest, that they might be in connection with a God, who, after all veiled Himself from their eyes. The people presented everything to the priest; the high priest stood before God. This relationship did not imply innocence. An innocent man should have stood himself before God. "Adam, where art thou?" This question brings out his fall.

Still the people were not driven away, though the veil was between them and God; the high priest, who sympathised with the infirmities of the people, being one with them, maintained the relationship with God. They were a very imperfect people, it is true; yet by this means they stood themselves in connection with the Holy One. But Israel was not able to maintain this position; not only was there sin (the high priest could remedy that), but they sinned *against* Jehovah, they turned away from Him, and that even in their leaders. The priesthood itself, which should have maintained the relationship, wrought for its destruction by dishonouring God and repelling the people from His worship, instead of attracting them to it.

### **The place and duty of a king**

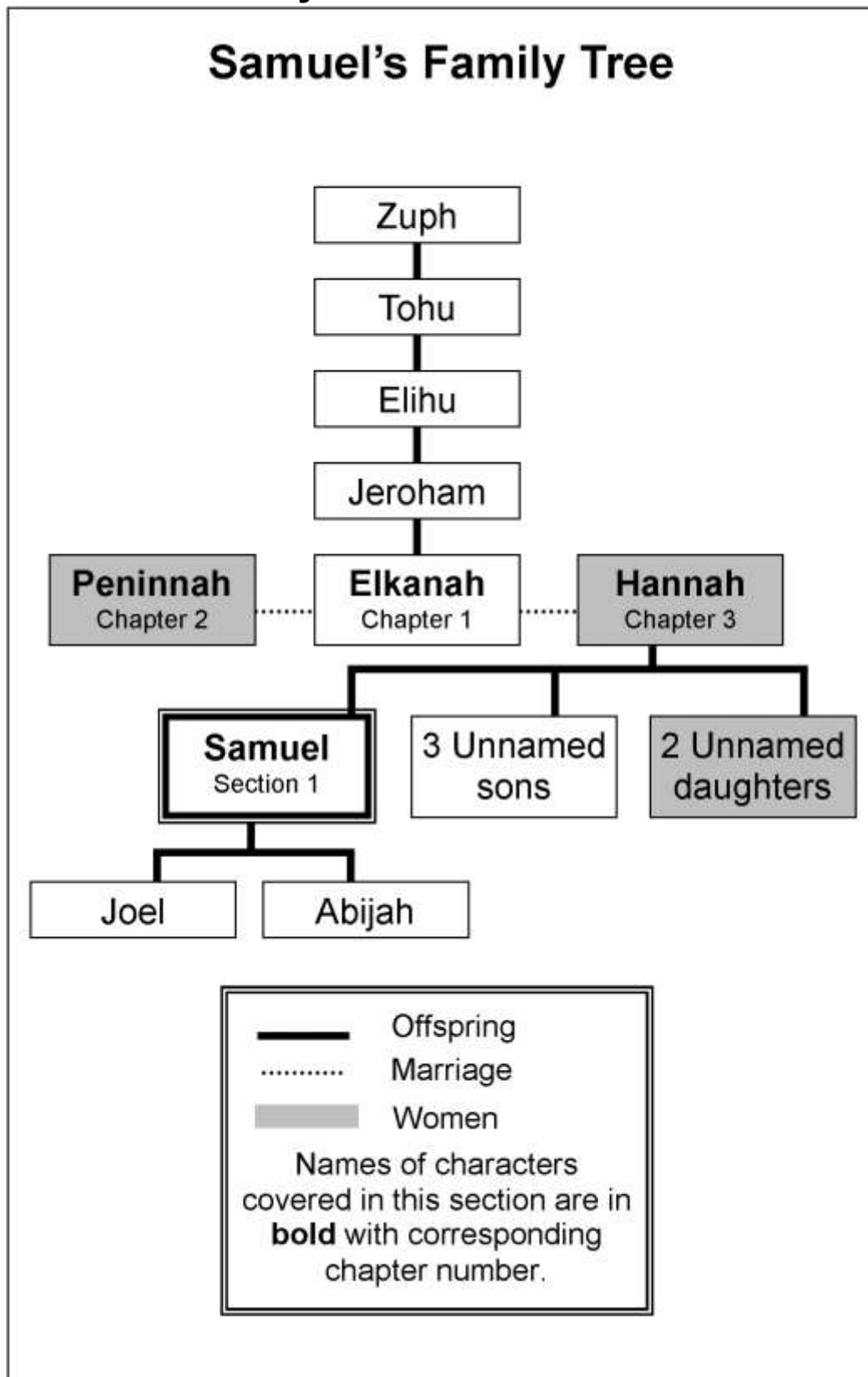
I pass over the preparatory circumstances; they will be considered in detail in their place. God then sets up a king, whose duty it was to preserve order and to secure God's connection with the people by governing them, and by his own faithfulness to God. This is what Christ will accomplish for them in the ages to come; He is the anointed. When the king is established, the priest walks before him ( 1Sa 2:35). It is a new institution, the only one capable of maintaining the relationship of the people with God. Priesthood is no longer here an immediate relationship. It provides indeed, in its own functions, for the wants of the people. The king watches over it, and secures order and blessing.

### **The difference between Israel and the Church as to priesthood**

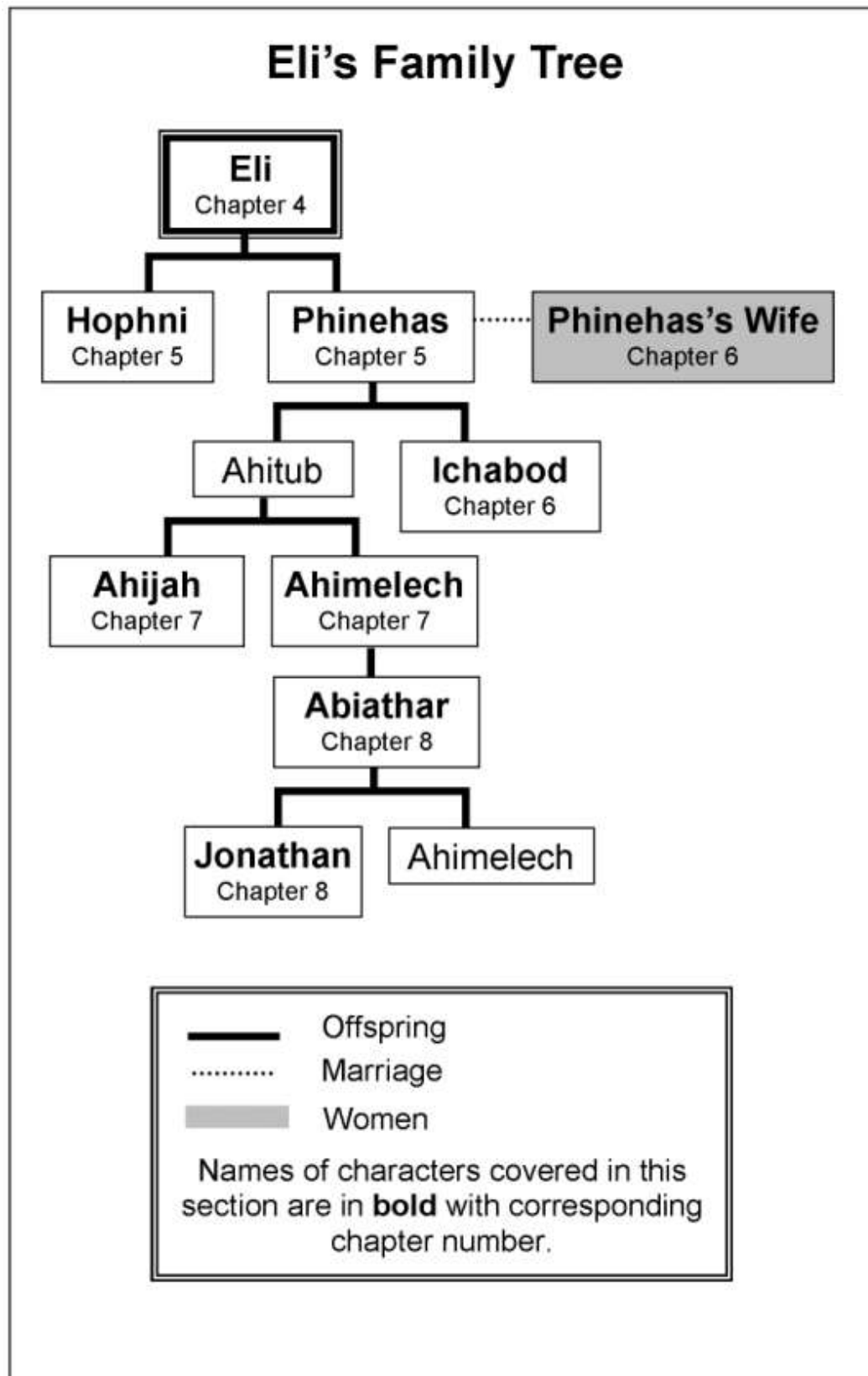
Now the assembly's position is altogether different. The saint now approaches God directly. Together with the priesthood, which is exercised for the saints on earth, to maintain them in their walk here and in the enjoyment of their privileges, it is united to the Anointed; the veil exists no longer. We sit in the heavenly places in Christ, made accepted in the Beloved. The favour of God rests upon us, members of the body of Christ, as upon Christ Himself. That which has unveiled the holiness of God has disclosed all the sin of man, and *has taken it away* \*.

Thus in Christ, members of His body, we are perfect before God, and perfectly accepted. The priest seeks neither to give us this position, nor to maintain relationship with God as to those who are not in this position. The work of Christ has placed us in it. How intercede then for perfection? Can intercession make the Person and the work of Christ more perfect in the sight of God? Certainly not. But we are in Him. In what manner then is this priesthood exercised for us? In maintaining mercy-needing creatures in their walk, and so in the realisation of their relationship with God \*. The Christian indeed enters into a still clearer manifestation of God and more absolute relationship with God, that of being in the light as God is in the light. *We are seated in the heavenly places, made accepted in the Beloved, loved as He is loved, the righteousness of God in Him. He is our life; He has given us the glory that was given Him.* Now the Holy Ghost, who came down from heaven after that Jesus was glorified, has introduced us consciously into the unveiled presence of God. Nevertheless we, though without excuse in doing it, fail and pick up defilement here below. Through the advocacy of Him who is in the presence of God for us our feet are washed by the Spirit and the word, and we are rendered capable of maintaining a communion (of which darkness knows nothing) with God in that light. Hereafter, in the presence of Jesus the King, priesthood will no doubt sustain the connection of the people with God, whilst He will bear the weight of government and of blessing for the people in every sense.

## Samuel's Family Tree

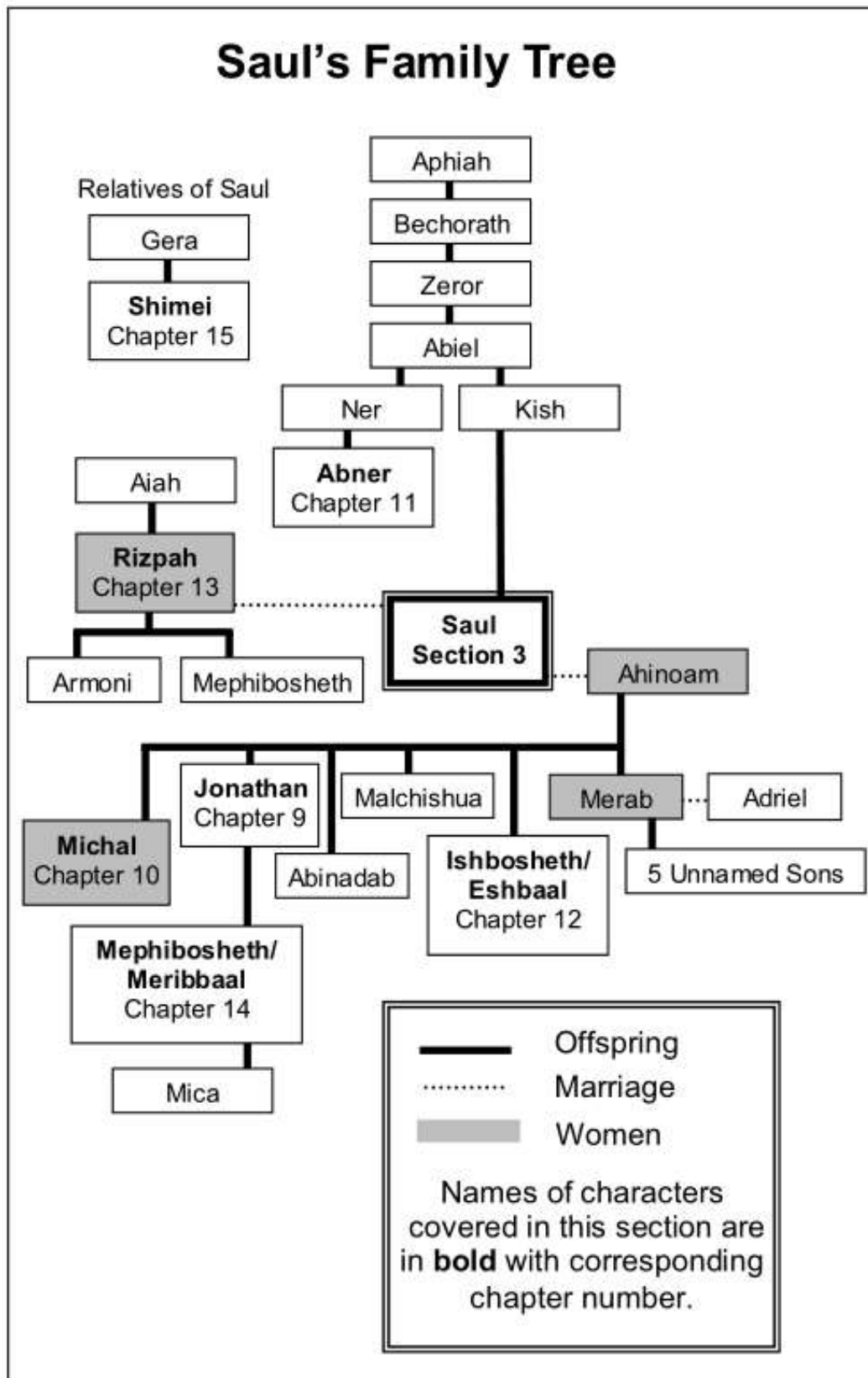


## Eli's Family Tree

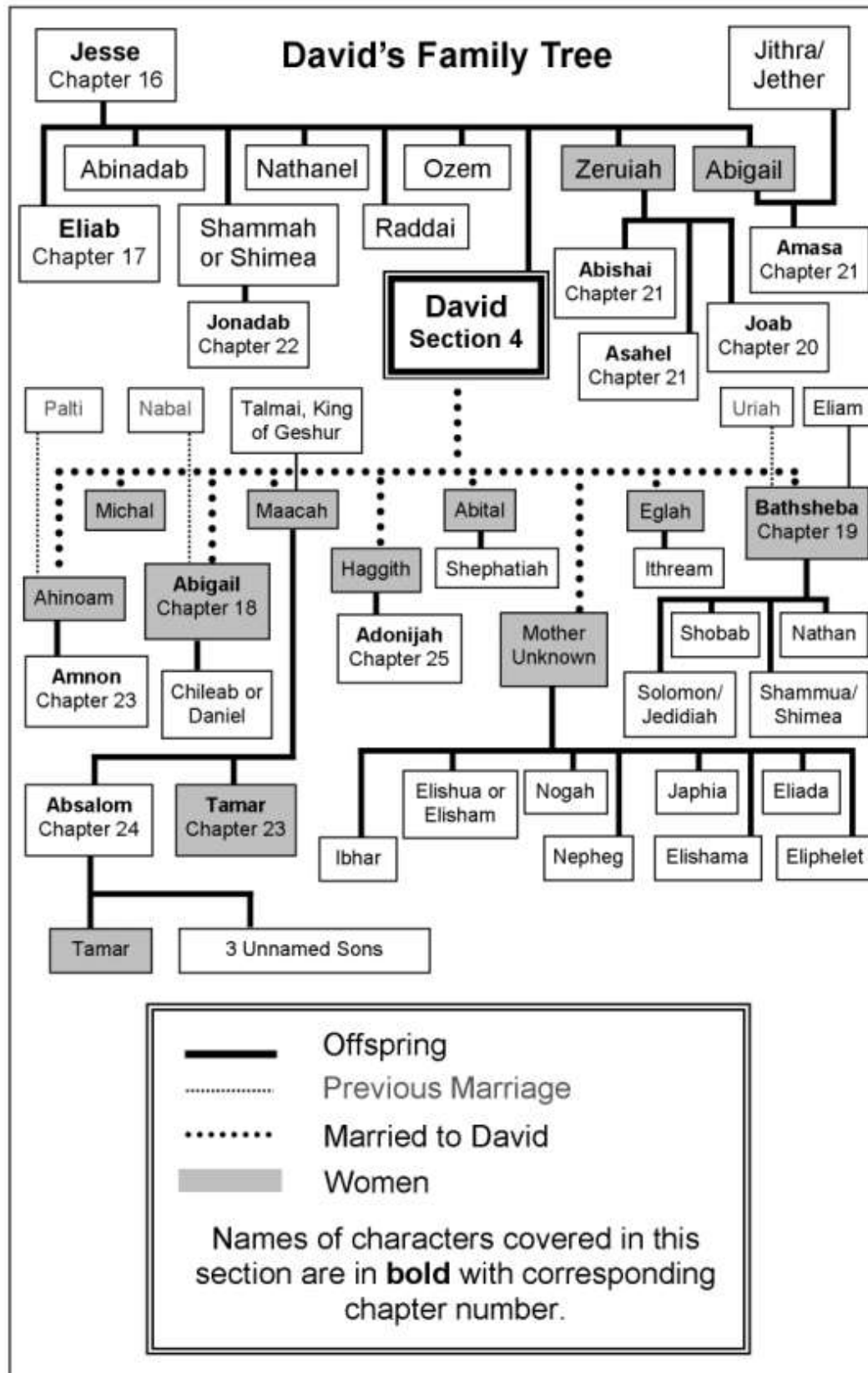




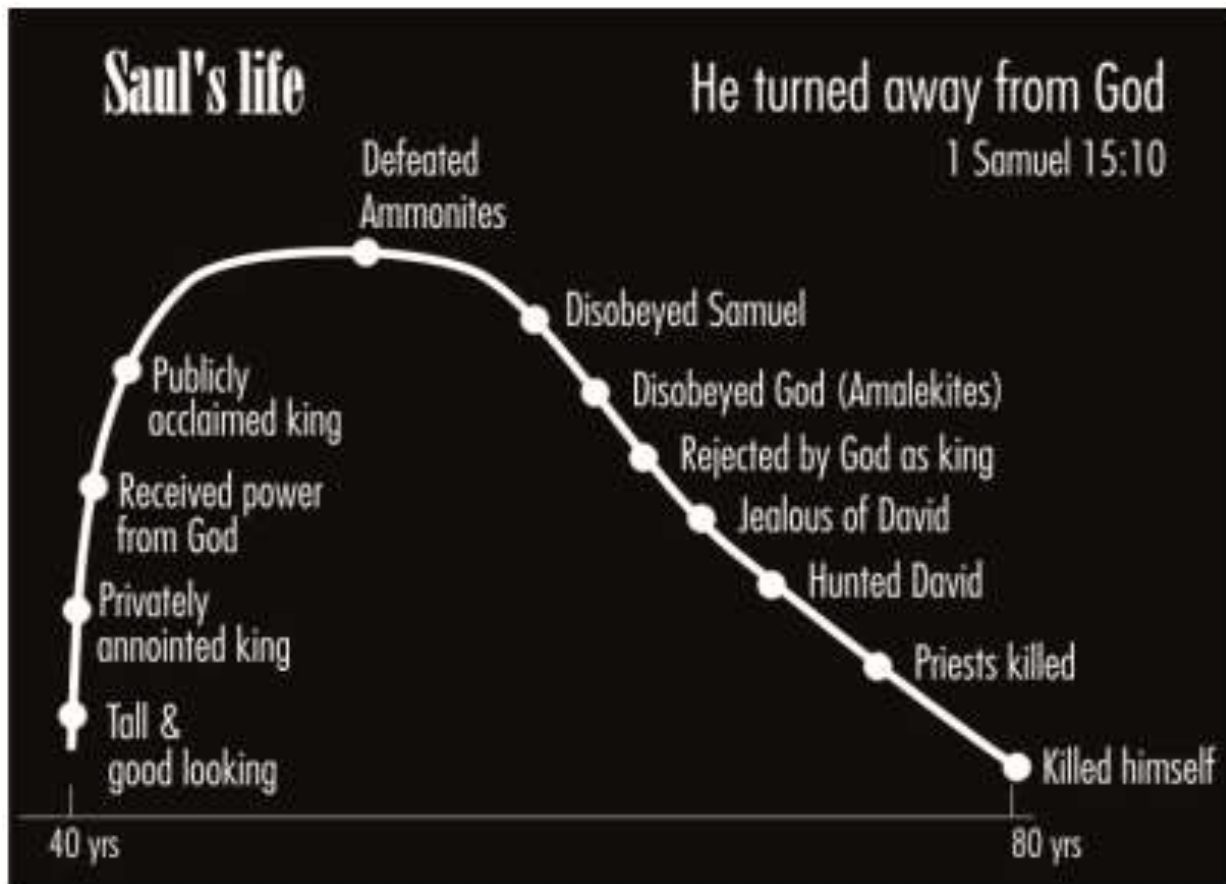
## Saul's Family Tree



## David's Family Tree



## Saul's Life



## David and Moses

### DAVID and MOSES

David represents one strand of the Jewish tradition. Jewish religious history is divided, in some senses, between Moses and David: Moses is the desert, wandering, and Mt Sinai. David is the land, government, and Mt. Zion. For most of Jewish history, Moses was the symbol and David the hope. Things change.

Although David is remembered as the greatest king of Israel, there are hints that in his own time his rule was far less favorably regarded. The first half of the David story, his “ascension” is a battle to become king. Saul, the first king of Israel, and Saul’s son Ish-Bosheth, stand in David’s way. Although the text (in Samuel I and II) declares that Israel was in love with David, it took a long time for that love to manifest itself in rulership. David spends years as a brigand waiting for the downfall of Saul and his own chance.

Once David is king, his respite proves brief. In the second half of David’s story he fights against a rebellion by his own son, Absalom. That the son almost won—only a stroke of wily misdirection spared David—suggests Absalom had a great degree of popular support. King David, like virtually all governments for all time, was mired in opposition, friction and conflict.

Moses had opposition too, of course, according to the biblical account. But Moses is a more mythlike figure, with few anecdotes that really illuminate his personality or internal struggles. David is on full display; his mistakes and frustrations and friendships enliven the story at each turn. Many have claimed his story as the first genuine biography in history. That accords with the ruler of a state. One who runs a government has advisers, documentarians—people who pay close attention to the king himself. Whoever wrote David’s story seemingly knew a great deal about the everyday doings of the ruling elite.

In modern terms we might say that David is an urban figure. He founds a capital city—Jerusalem—and lives among the buildings and bustle that entails, even with the diminished scale of ancient cities. But just as there is a shepherd/farmer tension in ancient societies, so there is a desert/urban tension in the Jewish tradition. Being uneasy in Zion is not only a political stance; religiously too, when there is less power there are fewer ethical conflicts. The wandering tribal leader does not have quite the same burdens as the king, who must contend with everything from the state apparatus to the challenge of hostile tribes in the same territory.

David is a protean figure: king, prodigy, musician, warrior, lover, adulterer, penitent, poet and much more. But he also establishes the moral ambiguities of power that are inevitable with the transition away from statelessness. Those currents are deep within the history of Judaism, and both Moses and David have a voice in the ultimate priorities of the tradition they left behind.





# MAPS

[Topographical Cross Section](#)

[The Activity of Samuel according to First Samuel](#)

[Capture and Return of the Ark](#)

[David the Fugitive](#)

[Exploits of David](#)

[The Kingdom of Saul according to 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel](#)

[Saul, Samuel and David](#)

See also maps in:

[ESV Introduction](#) (includes map, outline)

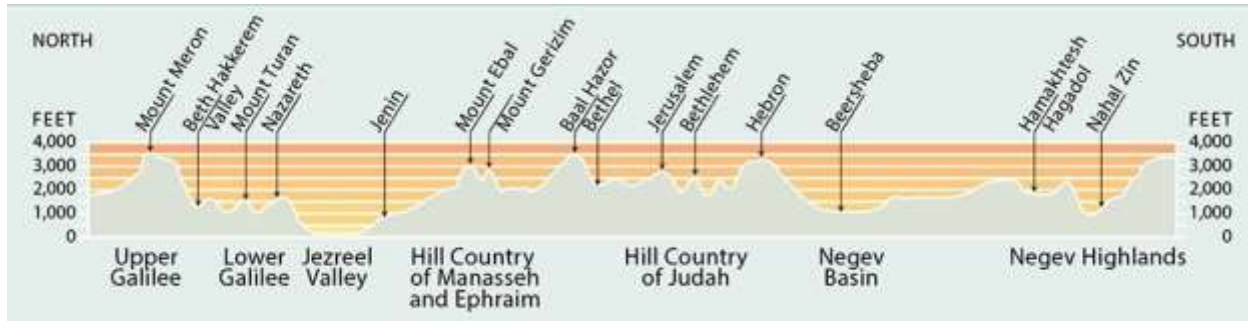
[NLTBN Introduction](#) (includes map, outline, timeline)

[NNBMC - Chapter 7: Life during the United Monarchy \(1-2 Samuel, ...\)](#) (excerpt)

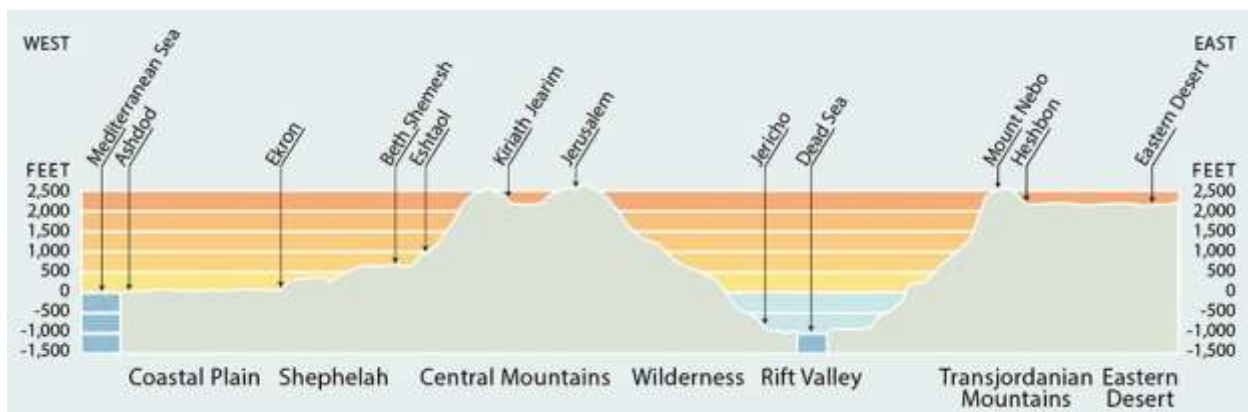
[Zondervan Atlas of the Bible](#) (excerpt relating to 1 Samuel)

## Topographical Cross Section:

### North/South – Looking Toward East

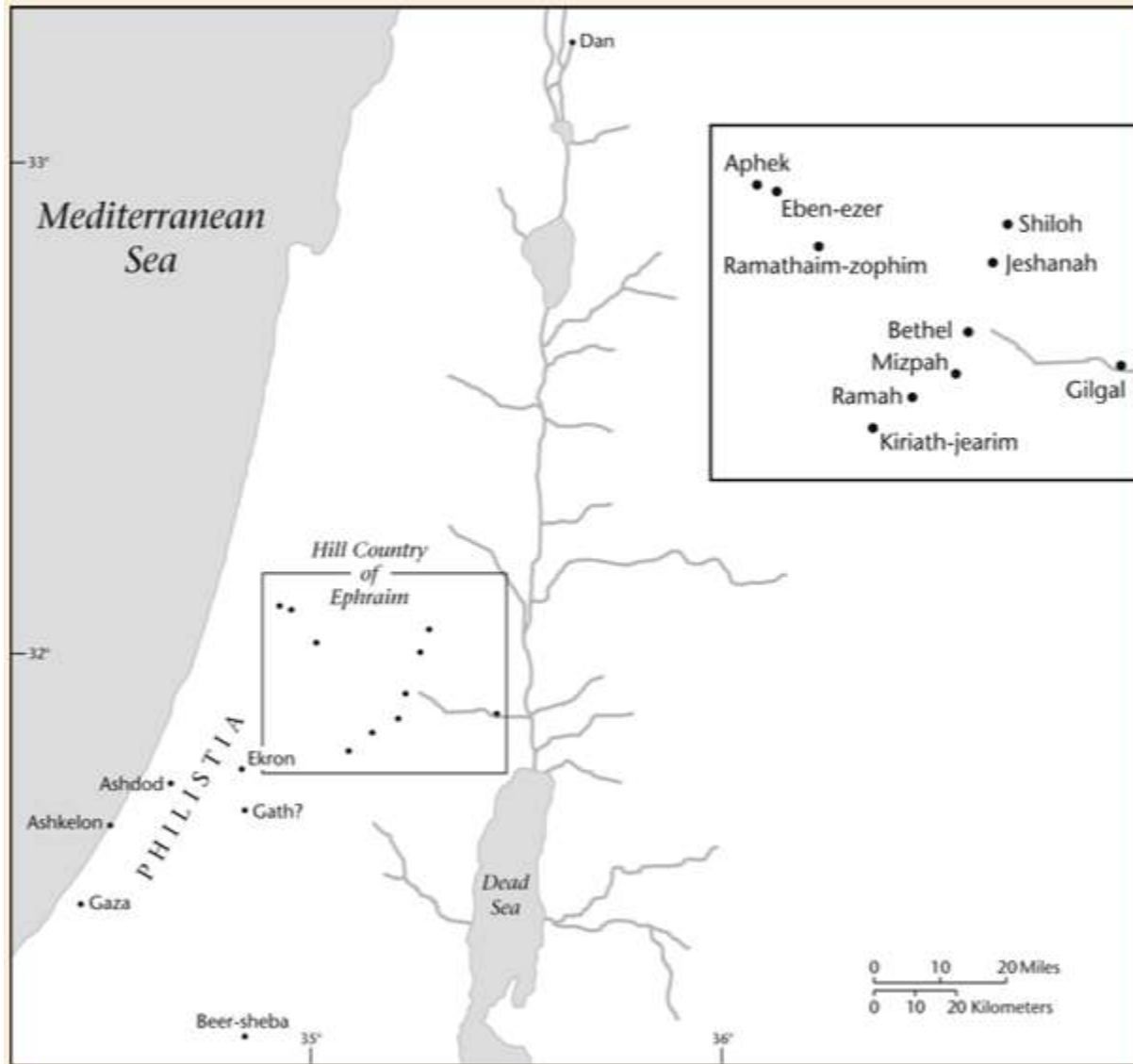


### West/East – Looking Toward North

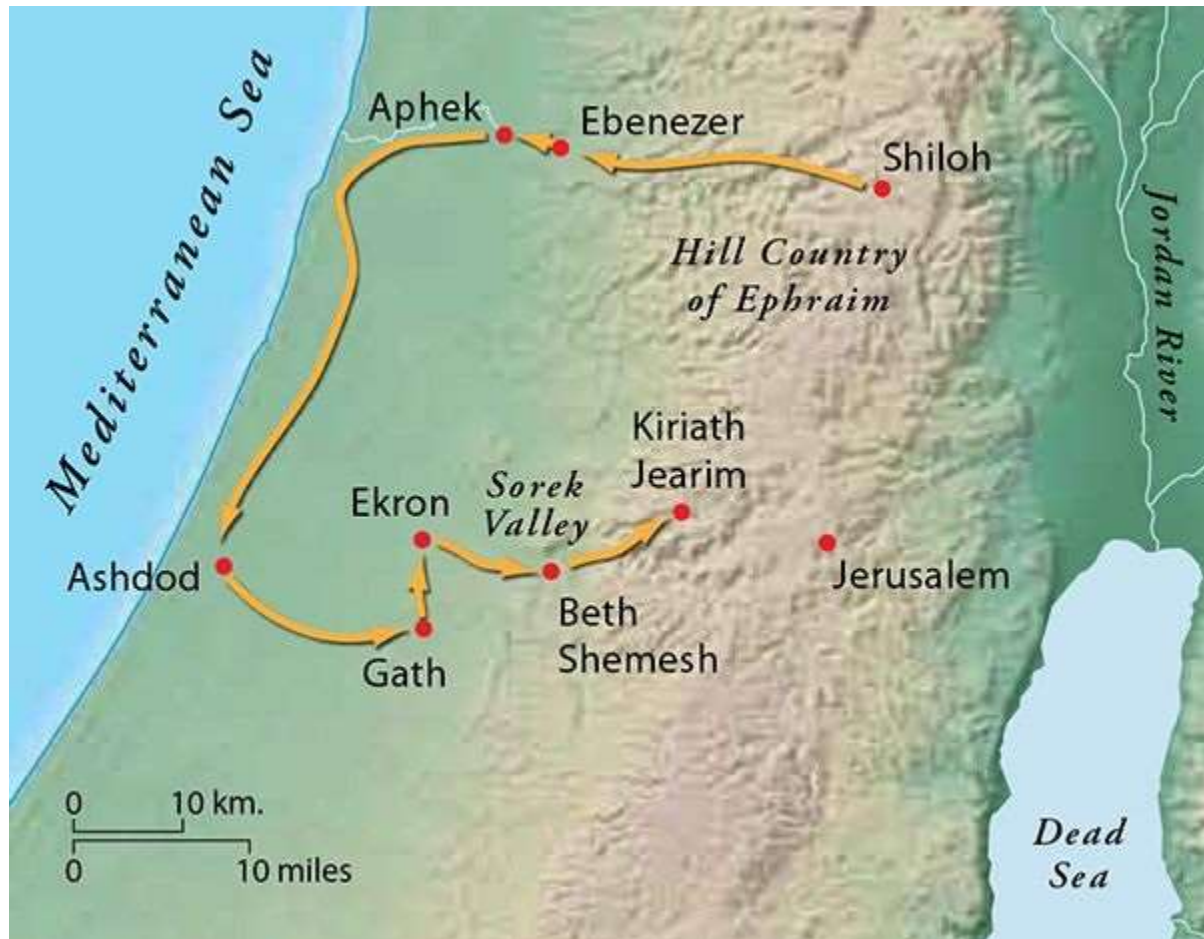


Taken from Zondervan Atlas of the Bible by Carl G. Rasmussen. Copyright © 2010 by Carl G. Rasmussen, pp. 24–25.

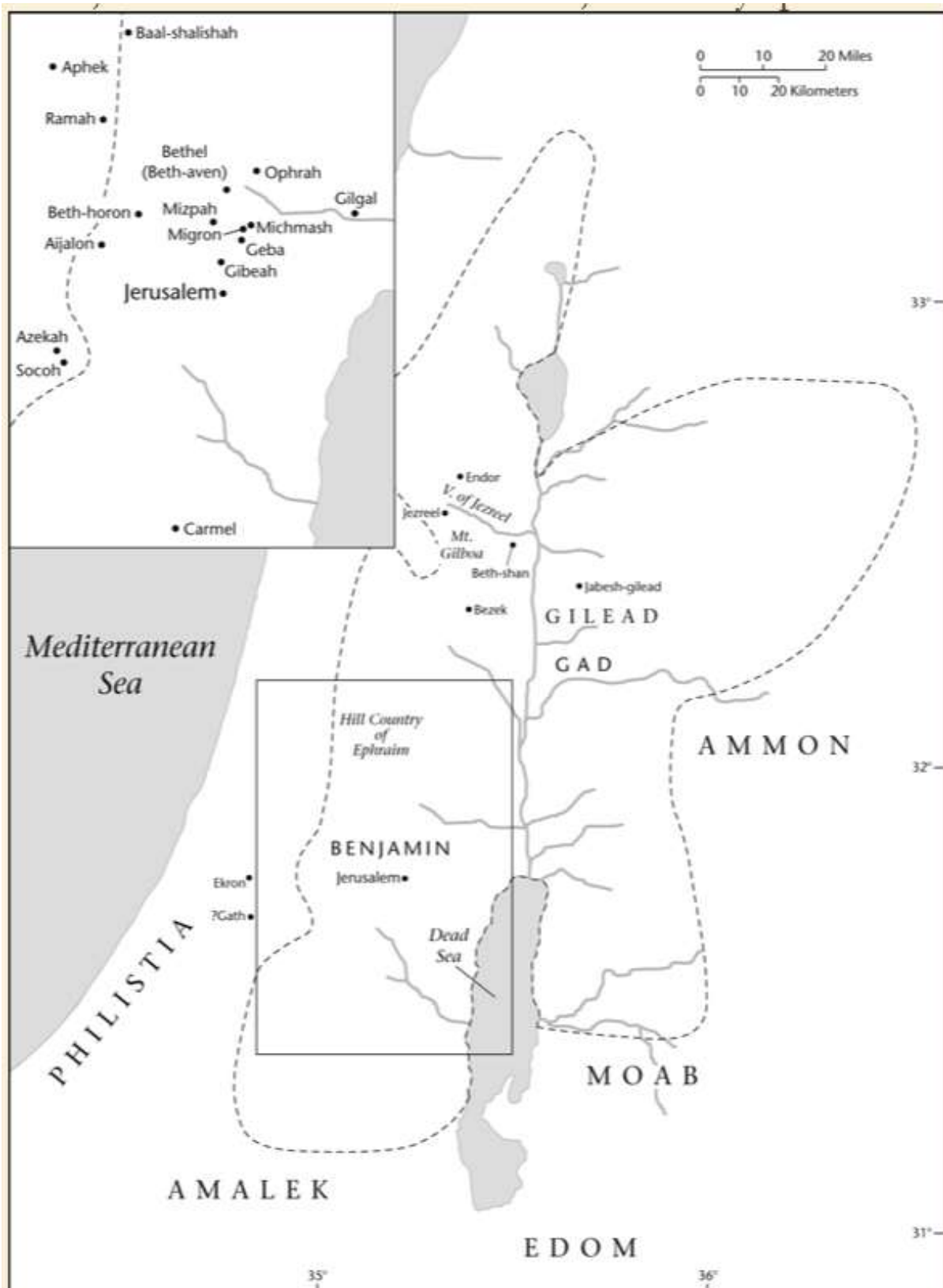
## The activity of Samuel according to 1 Samuel



## Capture and Return of the Ark



## The kingdom of Saul according to 1 Samuel



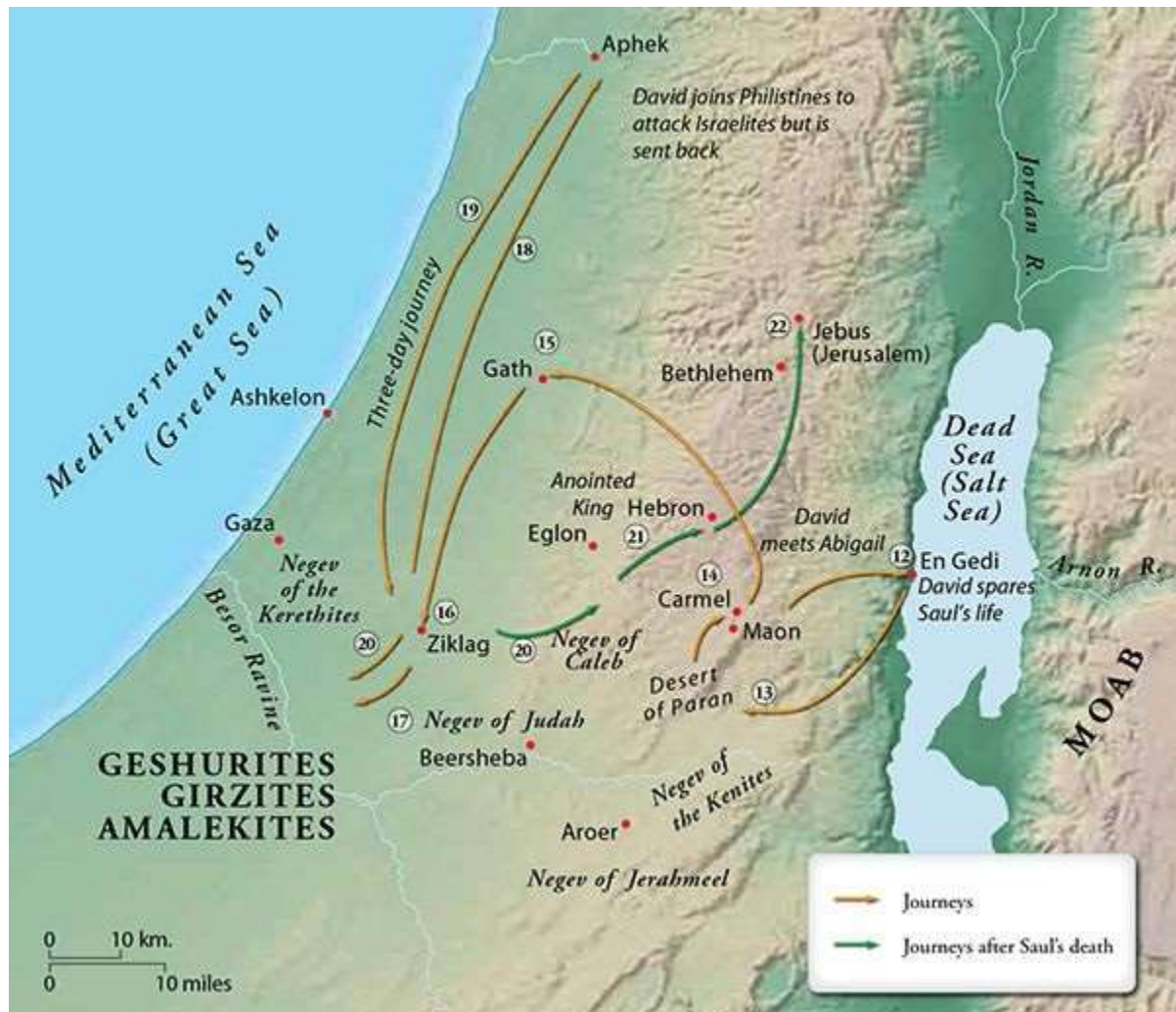


## David the Fugitive



See also: "Exploits of David" (following map)

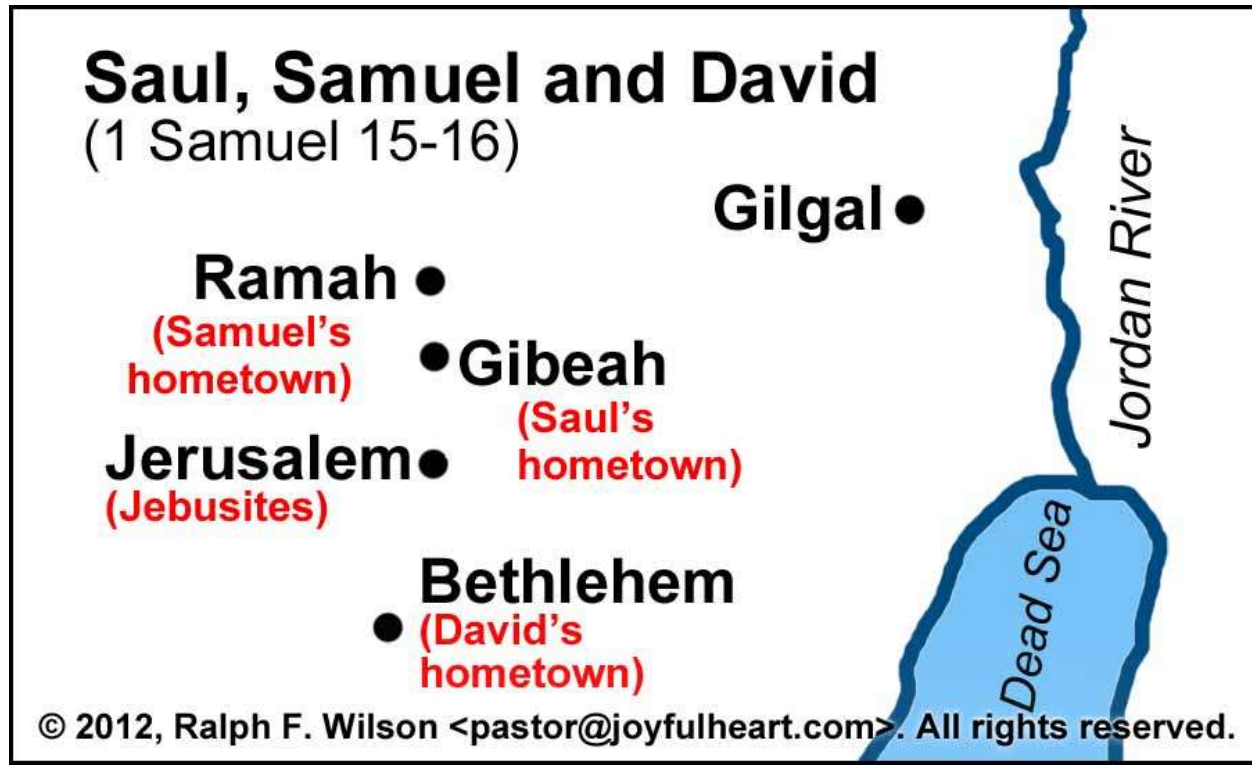
## Exploits of David



Arrows show directions and sequence of journeys but do not attempt to define specific roads, which are largely unknown.

Numerals follow in sequence from the previous map "David the Fugitive".

## Saul, Samuel and David



## **Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah (Matt 1)**

Abraham		David + Uriah's wife	
Isaac		Soloman	
Jacob		Rehoboam	
Judah Tamar + brother		Abijah	
Perez + Zerah		Asaph	
Hezron		Jehoshaphat	
Aram		Joram	
Aminadab		Uzziah	
Nahshon		Jotham	
Salmon + Rahab		Ahaz	
Boaz + Ruth		Hezekiah	
Obed		Manasseh	
Jesse		Amos	
King David	14	Josiah	14 (28)

### **Deportation to Babylon**

Jechoniah	
Salathiel	
Zerubbabel	
Abiud	
Eliakim	
Azor	
Zadok	
Achim	
Eliud	
Eleazar	
Matthan	
Jacob	
Joseph + Mary	
Jesus the Messiah	14 (42)

See also: [Additional Resources](#): Genealogy of Jesus, Date of Birth, etc.

## Additional Resources

[Genealogy of Jesus: Matthew vs Luke](#)

[Genealogy of Jesus: Various perspectives](#)

[Levirate and Non-Noble Impact on Genealogy of David and Jesus](#)

[Joseph's Genealogy](#)

[The Birth of Jesus Christ](#)

[When was Jesus Born?](#)

[How December 25 Became Christmas](#)

[When Exactly Was Jesus Born?](#)

[More Alternative Views](#)

[Zondervan Atlas of the Bible](#) (excerpt relating to 1 Samuel)

[NNIBMC - Chapter 7: Life during the United Monarchy \(1-2 Samuel, ...\)](#) (excerpt)

[The Big Picture: Theology of 1 & 2 Samuel](#) (online) and **key verses**

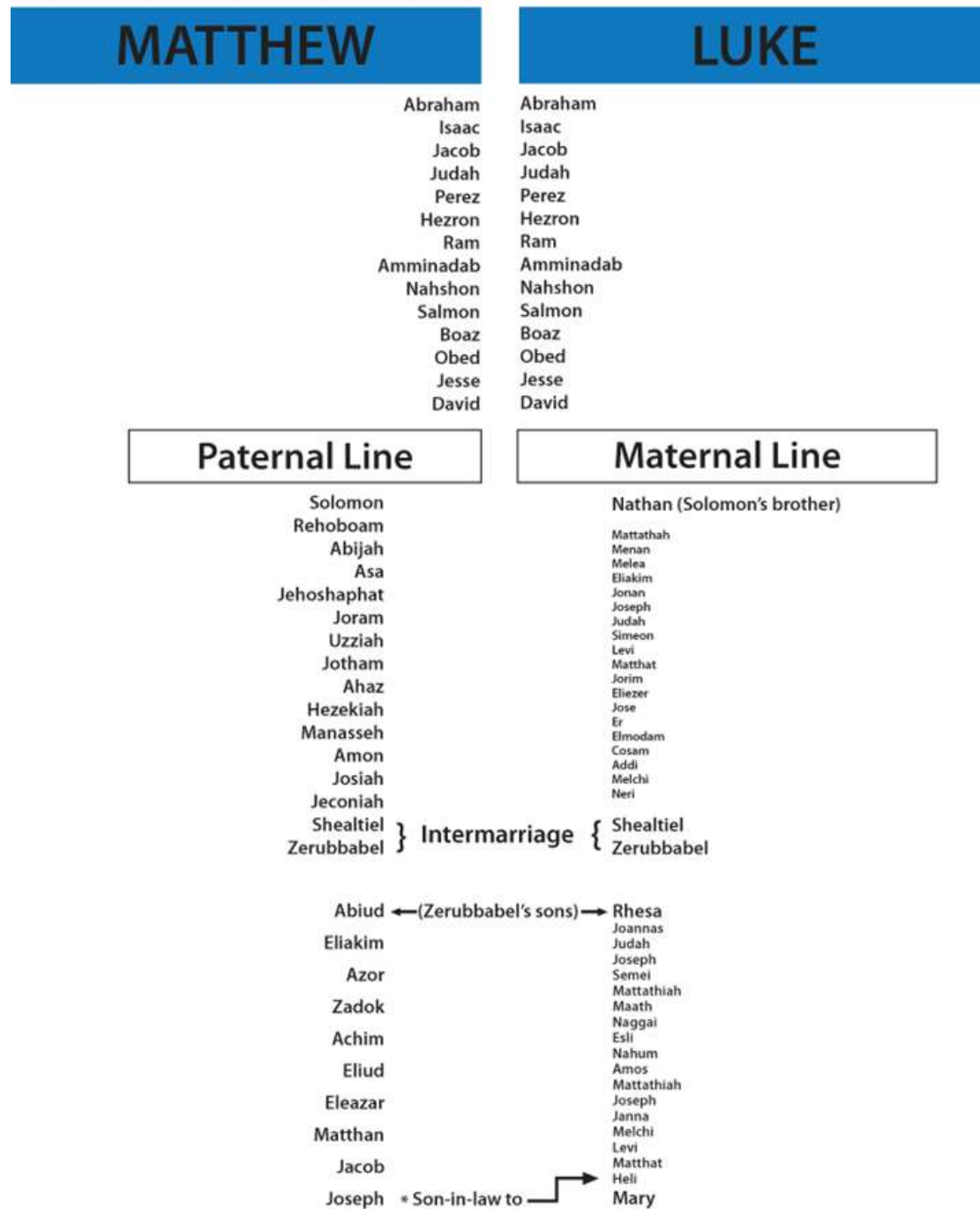
[Memory Verse](#)

See also: [Introductions](#)





## Genealogy of Jesus: Matthew vs Luke



See link for details of above chart:

[Source: <https://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=6&article=932>]

# Genealogy of Jesus

(various perspectives)

CHART #5

GENERATIONS OF FAITH

GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

GENEALOGY OF JESUS FROM THE GOSPEL OF LUKE CHAPTER 3 IS IN BLACK PRINT. THE NAMES ARE LISTED IN REVERSE ORDER, TO SHOW COMPARISON WITH THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS FROM THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW CHAPTER 1 WHICH IS IN RED PRINT. TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE NAMES LISTED ARE DIFFERENT, ONE SHOULD FIND A GOOD BIBLE DICTIONARY, AND SEARCH FOR GENEALOGY, THE EXPLANATION IS TO INVOLVE TO INCLUDE ON THIS CHART. HOWEVER, FOR THE GENERATIONS OF FAITH STUDY, THE NAMES ON THIS CHART WILL HELP US TO GAIN A CLEARER PERSPECTIVE WHEN WE LOOK AT THE INFORMATION ON THE OTHER CHARTS.







## Luke 3:23-31

Jesus  
 Mary  
 Heli  
 Matthat  
 Levi  
 Melchi/Melki  
 Janna/Jannai  
 Joseph  
 Mattathias  
 Amos  
 Naum/Nahum  
 Esli  
 Nagge/Naggai  
 Maath  
 Mattathias  
 Semei/Semein  
 Joseph  
 Juda/Joda  
 Joanna  
 Rhesa  
 Zorobabel/Zerubbabel  
 Salathiel/Shealtiel  
 Neri  
 Melchi/Melki  
 Addi  
 Cosam  
 Elmodam  
 Er  
 Jose/Joshua  
 Eliezer  
 Jorim  
 Matthat  
 Levi  
 Simeon  
 Juda  
 Joseph  
 Jonan/Jonam  
 Eliakim  
 Melea  
 Menan/Menna  
 Mattatha  
 Nathan  
 David

**Something to Think About**

*It is generally accepted that Jesus fulfilled the prophesy by combining the office of High Priest and King. The people of Israel acknowledged Jesus as legal heir to the throne through his fathers genealogy (Joseph). Would it not then be logical to assume Jesus' bloodline to stem from the priestly tribe of Levi? (Since Joseph was not not the birth father, Jesus' blood line came from his mother). This then suggests that his mother (Mary) would have had to be from the tribe of Levi.*

## Matthew 1:6-16

Jesus  
 Joseph  
 Jacob  
 Matthan  
 Eleazar  
 Eliud  
 Achim/Akim  
 Sadoc/Zadoc  
 Azor  
 Eliakim  
 Abiud  
 Zorobabel/Zerubbabel  
 Salathiel/Shealtiel  
 Jechonias/Jeconiah  
 Josias/Josiah  
 Amon  
 Manasses/Manassch  
 Ezekias/Hezekiah  
 Achaz/Ahaz  
 Joatham  
 Ozias/Uzziah  
 Joram/Jehoram  
 Josaphat/Jehoshaphat  
 Asa  
 Abia/Abija  
 Roboam  
 Solomon  
 David

There are a number of differences between the genealogy's given by Matthew and Luke. Matthew starts his lineage with Abraham (traditional Hebrew fashion) while Luke lists his lineage in reverse order ending with Adam. From Abraham to David both genealogies are nearly the same. However, from David forward these lists have little in common.

One theory is that Matthew lists the line for the house of David using only legal heirs to the throne, while Luke traces the complete line. It has even been suggested that Luke received his information from Jesus' father, Joseph. However, this is impossible since both Joseph and Jesus had died well before Luke ever heard the story about our Lord.

Luke may be giving a lineage starting with Mary and is intermixing men, woman and Greek names? This is hinted at in Luke 3:23 where it says "He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph." Since Mary lived long after the crucifixion it is possible that Luke may have received some information from her. (The name Heli that Luke gives is Greek for the Hebrew name Eli).

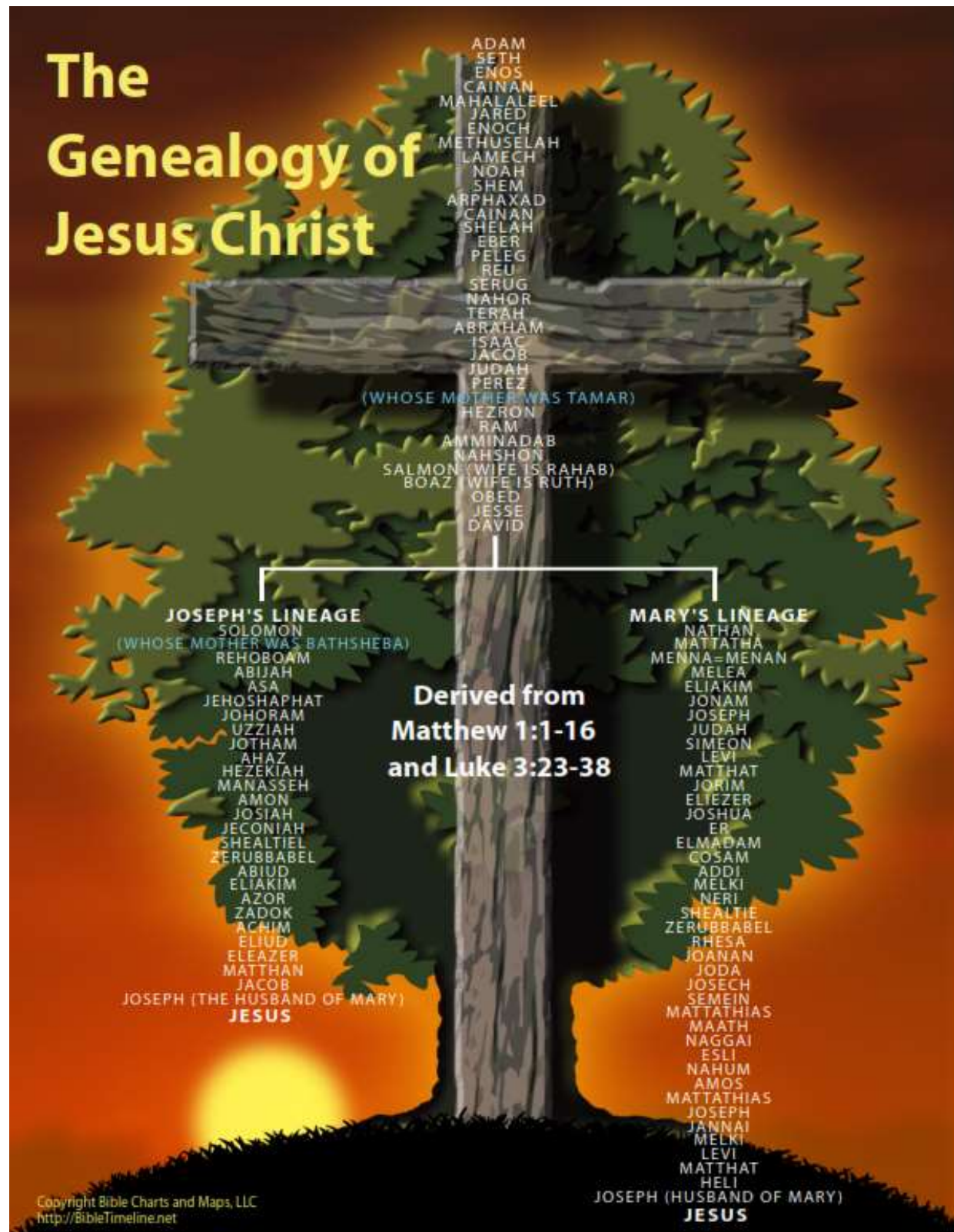
Whatever Luke's source, it is unlikely to have been first hand knowledge as was Matthew's. (Matthew's mother is believed to have been a cousin of Jesus' mother, and Matthew personally knew Jesus' brothers). Only two of the names listed by Luke can be found in any other part of the bible. In contrast, all the names listed by Matthew are mentioned elsewhere.

In his list, Matthew (a Jew) emphasizes fulfillment of the covenant by starting with Abraham. Where Luke (a Greek gentile) continues his list to Adam, indicating the physical relation of Christ to all men.

## Lineage of our Lord, Jesus the Christ

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[Source: [https://amazingbibletimeline.com/images/genealogyofjesuschrist\\_tree.pdf](https://amazingbibletimeline.com/images/genealogyofjesuschrist_tree.pdf)] [PDF]

## Facts About the Genealogy of Christ



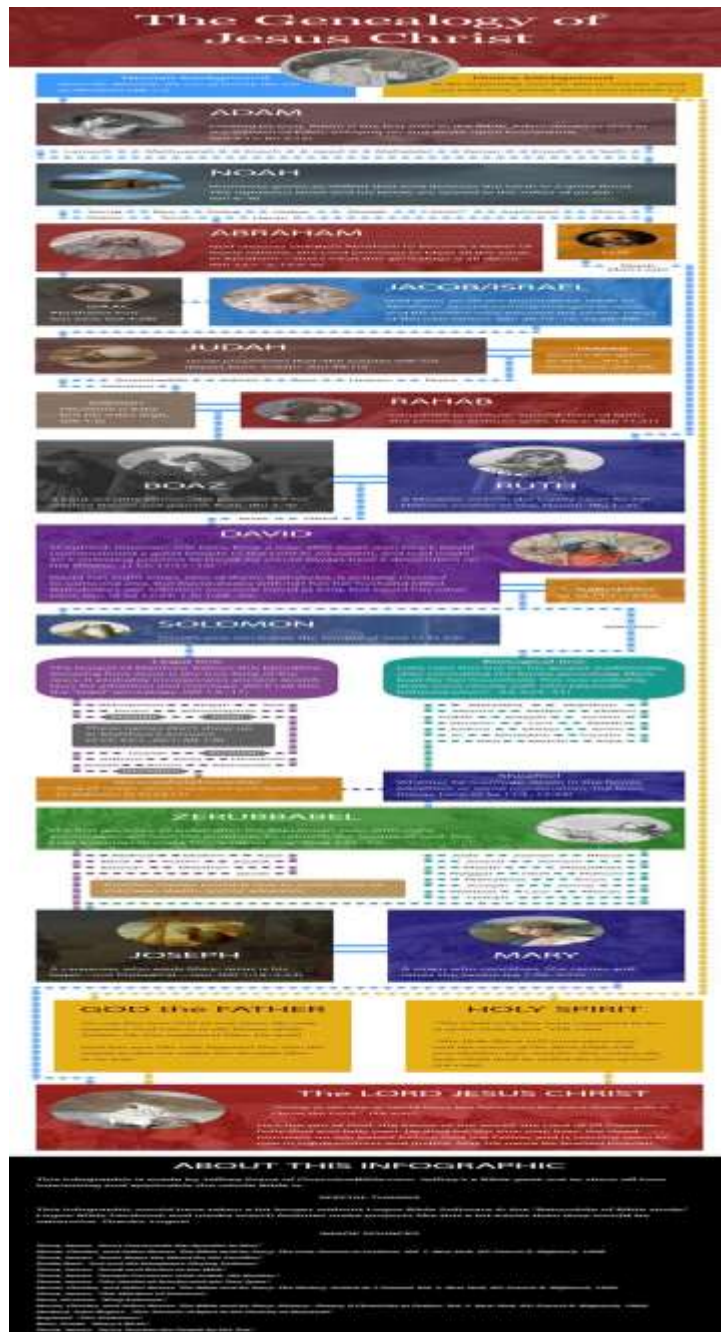
- Matthew 1:1-17 contains Matthew's list
- Luke 3:23-28 contains Luke's list
- 1 Chronicles 109 gives a more complete list.
- The family line was transmitted through some 4,000 years.
- Matthew shows Jesus' legal right to the Davidic throne through line of Solomon.
- The genealogy given in Matthew is abridged. Although some names are omitted, the line of descent is not invalidated.
- Matthew's list contains 42 generations in 3 groups of 14 each, covering 2,000 years. The 3rd group, however, names only 13 generations, the 14th evidently being intended for Mary.
  - 1st group covers 1,000 years
  - 2nd group covers 400 years
  - 3rd group covers 600 years
- Matthew's list is in descending order. ("begat")
- Luke's list is in descending order. ("was the son of")
- Matthew goes back to Abraham
- Luke goes back to Adam
- From David they are separate lines, touching in Shealtiel and Zerubbabel.
- Mary's genealogy, in accord with Jewish usage, was in her husband's name.
  - Joseph was the "son of Heli" (Luke 3:23) meaning "son-in-law." Jacob was Joseph's father (Matthew 1:16).
  - Through Mary, Jesus had no legal right to the throne of David. This had to come through Joseph.
  - If Jesus had been born to Mary without her being legally the wife of Joseph, a son of Solomon, His royal claim could have been rejected from the outset.

Barnes Bible Charts

[Source: <http://www.biblecharts.org/thenewtestament.html>]



## The Genealogy of Jesus Christ - Chart



(Note: This chart – shown as two different “thumbnails” – is long, so there is not enough room on page to display properly. Click on a link below to access the full-size image file.)

[Source: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zach-i-hoag/exclusive-an-amazing-gene\\_b\\_6335080.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zach-i-hoag/exclusive-an-amazing-gene_b_6335080.html)]

Also:

<http://wp.production.patheos.com/blogs/zhoag/files/2014/12/jesus-genealogy-22.jpg>

<http://overviewbible.com/download-jesus-genealogy/>

The genealogy in Matthew (1:1-17) does not directly correspond to the one in Luke (3:23-38) which has 14 generations in the first series, 20 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> series and 22 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> series. Matthew's 3<sup>rd</sup> series of ancestors is only 13, instead of 14 as indicated in the text. They both appear to be tracing Jesus' lineage through Jesus' step-father, Joseph, especially in the Greek. However, if you are open to considering that other versions of Matthew written in Judean Aramaic could have predated the Greek (or even the possibility that Aramaic was the original language or was simultaneously translated from Hebrew into Greek) [and it is widely considered that Matthew is the most likely of the Gospels to have been written in Aramaic]; then the Aramaic versions of the Bible (Peshitta) yield translations that could mean "father", especially in the context of genealogy. This yields the following genealogical record:

<i>First Series</i>	<i>Second Series</i>	<i>Third Series</i>
1. Abraham	1. Solomon	1. Salathiel
2. Isaac	2. Roboam	2. Zerubabel
3. Jacob	3. Abia	3. Abiud
4. Judas	4. Asa	4. Eliachim
5. Phares	5. Josaphat	5. Azor
6. Esron	6. Joram	6. Sadoe
7. Aram	7. Ozias	7. Achim
8. Aminadab	8. Joatham	8. Eliud
9. Naasson	9. Achaz	9. Eleazar
10. Salmon	10. Ezechias	10. Mathan
11. Booz	11. Manasses	11. Jacob
12. Obed	12. Amon	12. <b>Joseph (father of Mary)</b>
13. Jesse	13. Josias	13. <b>Mary</b>
14. David	14. Jechonias	14. <b>Jesus</b>

This then would represent Mary's lineage (who's the daughter of different Joseph) and Luke would represent Joseph's... problem solved! ☺

**See also this link for similar explanation:**

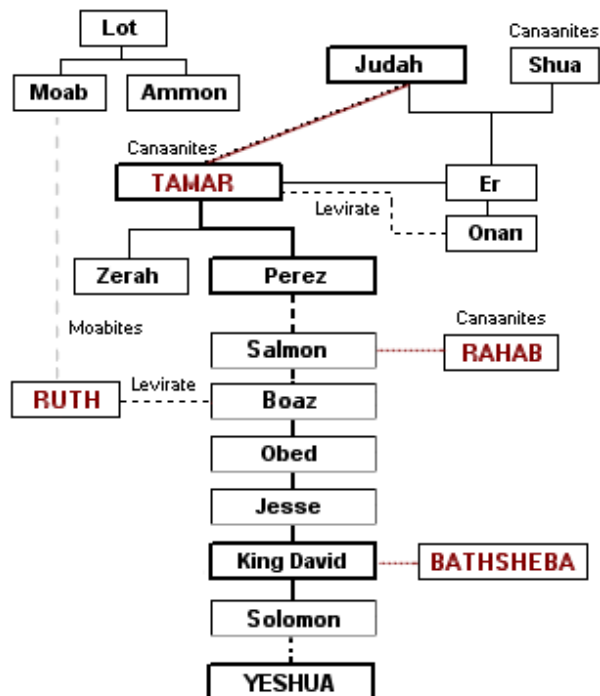
<http://www.biblecenter.de/bibel/widerspruch/e-wds01.php>

Additional perspectives:

<http://christianity.about.com/od/biblefactsandlists/a/jesusgenealogy.htm>

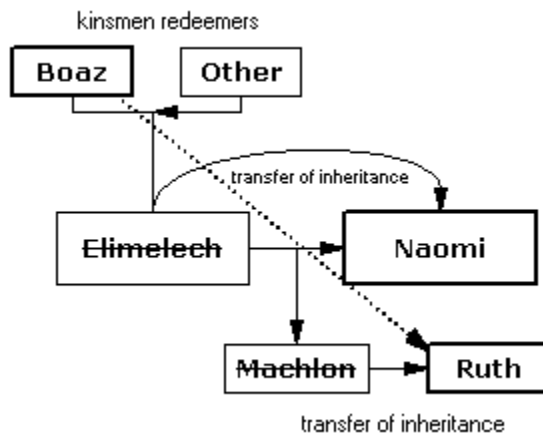
## Levirate and Non-Noble Impact on Genealogy of David and Jesus

It is interesting to see that King David's genealogy not only included the noble line of Abraham/Sarah, Isaac/Rebekah and Jacob/Leah, but it *also* included Judah/Tamar, Boaz/Ruth, and Salmon/Rahab. Moreover, in the genealogy of Yeshua the Messiah given in Matthew (1:1-16), only four women (besides Mary) are explicitly named: Tamar (who seduced her father-in-law), Rahab (a prostitute), Ruth (a Moabitess), and "the wife of Uriah" (i.e., Bathsheba, an adulteress). Each of these women of faith illustrate that God's love and grace overcomes His judgment... Here is a (very simplified) diagram made to indicate some of the relationships:



The Biblical Book of Ruth details the levirate process for Ruth (see Source link below for details):

**Levirate** [/evir, husband's brother] - the brother of a deceased man is obliged to marry his brother's widow, and the widow is obliged to marry her deceased husband's brother.



[Source: [http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Spring\\_Holidays/Shavuot/Ruth/ruth.html](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Spring_Holidays/Shavuot/Ruth/ruth.html)]



(See more Ruth related resources in the following several pages)

**Question:** If Moabites were forbidden entrance into the covenant ([Dt 23:3](#)), how was Ruth (a Moabite) admitted into Israel's covenant with Yahweh? See [Lev 11:44-45](#); [19:2](#); [20:7](#); [Num 15:40](#).

**Answer:** Ruth was not born into the covenant and was the daughter of a people who were forbidden entrance into the covenant, but she demonstrated through righteous acts in living in obedience to God's commands that she merited through her deeds consideration beyond the restriction placed on the Moabites.

The unanswered question is was Ruth restricted from worshiping at Yahweh's Sanctuary because of her Moabite blood, or did the restriction against entrance into the community of Israel apparently not apply to a willing convert like Ruth who demonstrated her loyalty and fidelity to her mother-in-law as well as her good moral character and therefore her value to the community of Israel? The full acceptance of the people of Bethlehem to Boaz's marriage and their blessings associated with the marriage and the birth of Boaz's and Ruth's child suggests that they did see Ruth's demonstration of *hesed* toward her mother-in-law and her demonstration of the use of the Law by applying both the obligation of the blood redeemer and the levirate marriage to her own life as evidence that she deserved to be treated as an exception to the prohibitions against Moabites.

This is the interpretation of Jewish Bible scholars. Never is it mentioned in Scripture that David's hereditary line was impure. Ruth had what Yahweh demanded of His people—a circumcised heart that was undivided in its demonstration of *hesed* to both God and neighbor ([Dt 10:16-20](#); [30:6](#); [Jer 4:4a](#)).

That Ruth was fully admitted into the faith community was also the interpretation of the Church Fathers, including St. Ambrose: *... the law of Moses prohibits marriage to Moabites and excludes them from the church, as it is written: "No Moabite shall enter the church of the Lord even to the third and fourth generation forever." Hence, how did she enter the church unless because she was made holy and immaculate by deeds that go beyond the law? For if the law was given for the irreverent and sinners, then surely Ruth, who exceeded the limits of the law and entered the church and was made an Israelite and deserved to be counted among the honored figures in the Lord's genealogy, chosen for kinship of mind, not of body, is a great example for us, because she prefigures all of us who were gathered from the nations for the purpose of joining the church of the Lord. We should emulate her, therefore, who merited by her deeds this privilege of being admitted to his society, as history teaches, so that we also, by our deeds and accompanying merits, might be chosen for election to the Church of the Lord (Exposition of the Gospel of Luke, 3).*

[Source: [http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/Ruth/Ruth\\_Lesson\\_3.htm](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/Ruth/Ruth_Lesson_3.htm)]

**In the Book of Ruth, “redeem” or “redeemer” occurs 21 times**, in reference to both Naomi’s land and Ruth herself. When Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth return to Judah from Moab, they live in poverty. Through a series of events, the estate of Naomi’s deceased husband is redeemed by Boaz (Ruth 2:20; 4:1–6). As part of the transaction, Boaz also redeems Ruth—literally purchasing her along with his kinsman’s property (2:20; 3:9–13; 4:6–14). However, Boaz goes above and beyond his obligation as redeemer (*go’el*) when he marries Ruth and provides her with an heir (Lev 25:35; Deut 15:7–8; Ruth 4:7–20). As a result, Ruth and Boaz are part of the lineage of King David and eventually Jesus (Ruth 4:13–20; Matt 1:5; Luke 3:32).

**Harvest.** Harvesting grain in ancient Canaan took place in April and May (barley first, wheat a few weeks later). It involved the following steps:

- (1) cutting the ripened standing grain with hand sickles (Dt 16:9; 23:25; Je 50:16; Joe 3:13) — usually done by men;
- (2) binding the grain into sheaves — usually done by women;
- (3) gleaning, i.e., gathering stalks of grain left behind (Ruth 2:7);  
went from early morning (v. 7) to **evening**, i.e., before sundown.
- (4) transporting the sheaves to the threshing floor — often by donkey, sometimes by cart (Am 2:13);

After sundown was the time to beat out or winnow what was gathered on the threshing floor. This was located to the east of the city so that the westerly wind carried away the chaff. (On threshing [or winnowing]),

- (5) threshing, i.e., loosening the grain from the straw — usually done by the treading of cattle (Dt 25:4; Ho 10:11), but sometimes by toothed threshing sledges (Isa 41:15; Am 1:3) or the wheels of carts (Isa 28:28);
- (6) winnowing — done by tossing the grain into the air with winnowing forks (Je 15:7) so that the wind, which usually came up for a few hours in the afternoon, blew away the straw and chaff (Ps 1:4), leaving the grain at the winnower’s feet; The winnowing took place during the breezes that begin after sundown;
- (7) sifting the grain (Am 9:9) to remove any residual foreign matter;
- (8) bagging for transportation and storage (Ge 42-44). Threshing floors, where both threshing and winnowing occurred, were hard, smooth, open places, prepared on either rock or clay and carefully chosen for favorable exposure to the prevailing winds. They were usually on the east side — i.e., downwind — of the village.

**The genealogy in 4:17-22 may actually be the main reason why the book of Ruth was written. It shows that Ruth and Boaz had a son, Obed, whose son was Jesse, whose son was David.**

Boaz was a descendant of Rahab, the prostitute from Jericho (Jos 2:1; Mt 1:5; see on Jos 2). Thus David’s great-grandmother, Ruth, was a Moabitess, and his great-grandfather, Boaz, was part Canaanite. The chosen family within the Chosen Nation thus has Canaanite and Moabite blood in its veins.

It is fitting that from this bloodline would come the Messiah for all nations. Rahab and Ruth became part of God’s promises and His plan, not by birth but by their faith in, and their practical commitment to, God and His people — the same way in which people from all nations still can share in God’s eternal promises.

It was in a field near Bethlehem that Ruth gleaned. Hundreds of years later, also in a field near Bethlehem, angels announced the birth of Ruth’s descendant, Jesus, to startled shepherds.

Source: Halley’s Bible Handbook

TIMELINE OF RUTH	
1406	Israel enters Promised Land
1380-1050	Period of the Judges
1085	Samuel born
1050	Saul becomes king
1010	David becomes king

Ruth provides a glimpse into the lives of ordinary, though godly, people during the turbulent period of the judges. It shows an oasis of faithfulness in an age marked by idolatry and unfaithfulness.

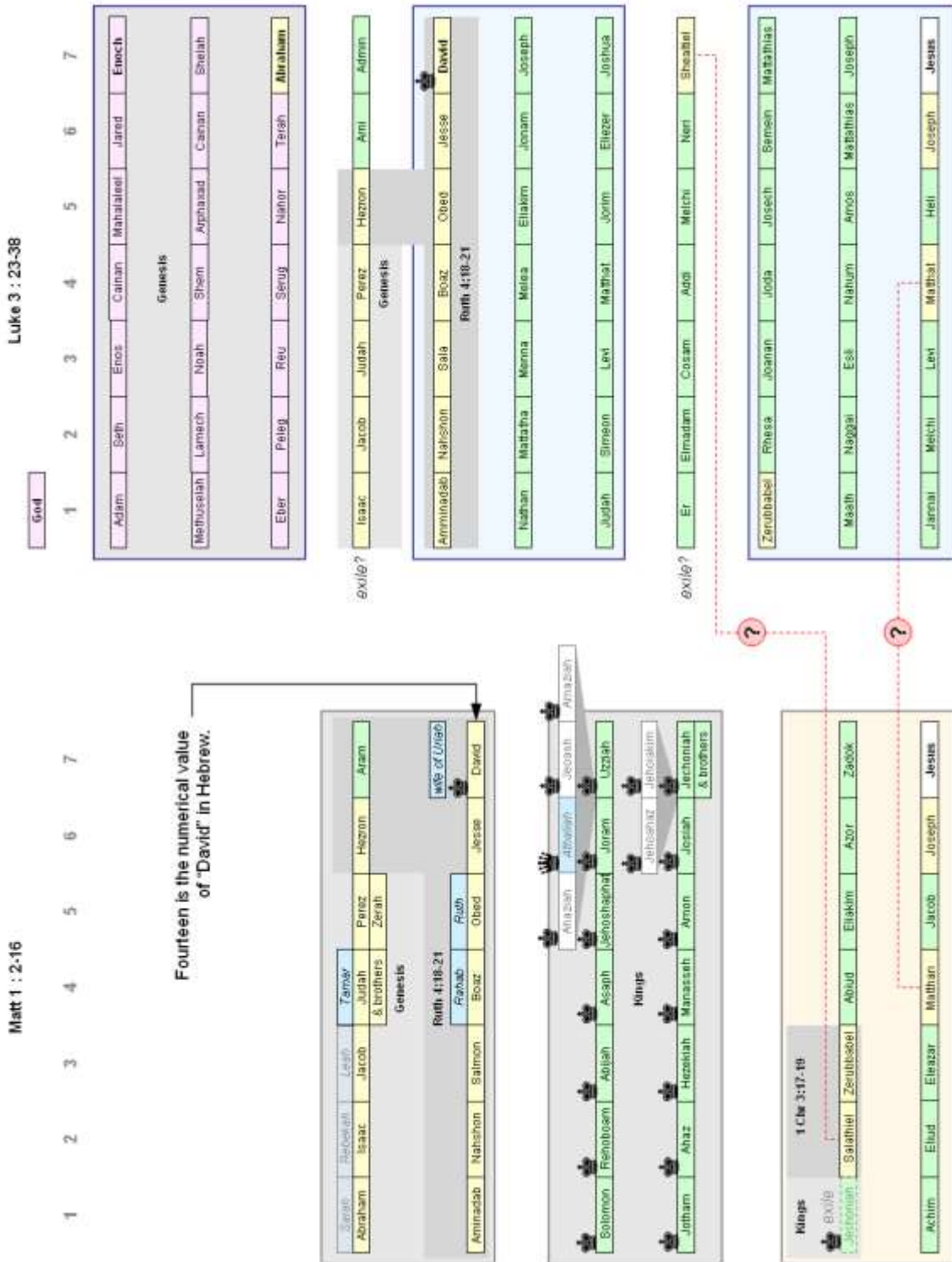
Conclusion: Naomi Blessed with a New Family. The conclusion serves as the reversal of the introduction, showing how the Lord, through Ruth's love (v. 15), restored Naomi's life.

Hebrew Succession of Heirs	
Father	
1.	Sons
2.	Daughters
3.	Brothers
4.	Uncle on Father's Side
5.	Nearest Relative in General

**Levirate marriage.** (Latin *levir* means “brother-in-law”). Ancient custom called for a man to marry the childless widow of his brother. The first son of such a union was considered the child of the dead brother, to carry on the dead man's line and inherit his property. This custom underlies the story of Judah's relationship with Tamar, the childless widow of his firstborn.

 The Book of Ruth Set in the dark and bloody days of the judges, the story of Ruth is silent about the underlying hostility and suspicion the two peoples—Judahites and Moabites—felt for each other. The original onslaught of the invading Israelite tribes against towns that were once Moabite had never been forgotten or forgiven, while the Hebrew prophets denounced Moab's pride and arrogance for trying to bewitch, seduce and oppress Israel from the time of Balaam on. The Mesha Stele (c. 830 B.C.) boasts of the massacre of entire Israelite towns.  Moab encompassed the expansive, grain-filled plateau between the Dead Sea and the eastern desert on both sides of the enormous rift of the Arnon River gorge. Much of eastern Moab was steppeland—semi-arid wastes not profitable for cultivation, but excellent for grazing flocks of sheep and goats. The tribute Moab paid to Israel in the days of Ahab was 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams (see 2Ki 3:4 and note).  Miles 10 5 0 10 20 30 Kms 10 5 0 10 20 30  **Themes**  (1) Ruth herself shows that Gentiles could believe in the true God.  (2) The book gives a partial lineage of David, and thus of Christ, and shows that Gentile blood was in the line of the One who became the Savior for all mankind.  (3) Boaz, as the kinsman-redeemer (see note on 3:9), serves as a beautiful type of Christ, in that (a) he was a blood relative (Ro 1:3; Heb 2:14); (b) he had the price with which to purchase the forfeited inheritance (1Pe 1:18-19); (c) he was willing to redeem (Heb 10:7).  (4) The book is a moving example of the sovereignty of God in caring for His people (Ru 2:12).  **Difference between *chesed* and *agape* (love):**   - agape* is undeserved giving, like giving a banquet to a homeless person - chesed* is a relationship - chesed* is taking them home for the rest of their life - chesed* is committing to care for them to the bitter end — a love that will “never let them go”   **Kinsman-redeemer (2:20).** The Heb. is *go'el* . Like other words from the root *g'l* , it indicates fulfilling one's responsibilities as a kinsman. O.T. family law gave the kinsman the right to redeem a relation from slavery, or buy back his fields (Lev 25). Here another duty of the kinsman is in view: the obligation of the next of kin to marry a childless widow and have a child, which would be considered the offspring of the dead husband. In this way the dead husband's line would be carried on, and his property preserved.  This “family law” with its implied responsibility to aid a near relative, prefigures the ministry of Jesus. In taking on human nature He became our near kinsman, and accepted the obligation to redeem us despite the terrible cost |

## Joseph's genealogy



[Source: <http://www.biblediagrams.com>]

## The Birth of Jesus Christ

### Preface

The following is part of a short series of devotional items related to the birth of Christ. For some, such material is hardly devotional because it primarily focuses on history. But we must keep in mind that the Jesus we worship was truly born in time-space history. And that babe in the manger was truly crucified--and just as surely rose from the dead. The Bible is different from the sacred books of other religions because it *invites* historical investigation. And when it has met the test--as it surely always, inevitably does--it inculcates a greater devotion in the heart of the believer for the one we call the Son of God.

[Source: <http://biblelight.net/sukkoth.htm> (7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist related site)]

### The Year Jesus Was Born

In the western hemisphere, we split time by the birth of Jesus Christ. But did he really even live? If so, *when* was he born?

Sometime ago, I struck up a conversation with a man who claimed that God did not exist. He was an atheist. But not just a run-of-the-mill atheist, you understand. He also *insisted* that Jesus Christ never existed! This fellow was *hard core*.

Now my atheist friend had incredible faith--blind faith, I might add. His religious fervor, in fact, would put many evangelists to shame. But the evidence that Jesus Christ invaded history is not just shut up to the testimony of the New Testament--as irrefutable as that might be! The very *enemies* of Christianity claimed that he lived--and that he performed miracles! Early Jewish documents such as the Mishnah and even Josephus--as well as first-century Gentile historians--such as Thallus, Serapion, and Tacitus--all testify that the one called Christ lived in Palestine and died under [Pontius Pilate](#). As the British scholar, F. F. Bruce put it, "The historicity of Christ is as [certain]. . . as the historicity of Julius Caesar" (*NT Documents*, 119).

Now it logically follows that if Jesus Christ lived (need it be said?), he must have been born. The Gospels tell us that his birth was shortly *before* Herod the Great died. Herod's death can be fixed with certainty.

Josephus records an eclipse of the moon just before Herod passed on. This occurred on March 12th or 13th in 4 B.C. Josephus also tells us that Herod expired just before Passover. This feast took place on April 11th, in the same year, 4 B.C. From other details supplied by Josephus, we can pinpoint Herod the Great's demise as occurring between March 29th and April 4th in 4 B.C.

It might sound strange to suggest that Jesus Christ was born *no later* than 4 B.C. since B.C. means 'before Christ.' But our modern calendar which splits time between B.C. and A.D. was not invented until A.D. 525. At that time, Pope John the First asked a monk named Dionysius to prepare a standardized calendar for the western Church. Unfortunately, poor Dionysius missed the *real* B.C./A.D. division by at least four years!

Now Matthew tells us that Herod killed Bethlehem's babies two years old and under. The earliest Jesus could have been born, therefore, is 6 B.C. Through a variety of other time indicators, we can be relatively confident that the one called Messiah was born in either late 5 or early 4 B.C.

My atheist friend scoffs at such flexibility. He says, "If you don't know *exactly* when Jesus was born, how do you know that he really lived?" That is *hardly* a reasonable question! The other day I called my mother to wish her a happy birthday. "Mom, how many candles on *this* birthday cake?" I inquired. "I don't know, son--I don't keep track any more," she sighed. After a few minutes of pleasant conversation, we hung up.

Now, of course, I can't be certain, but I *do* believe that that *was* my mother on the other end of the phone. She can't remember how old she is (and she's neither senile nor very old), but that doesn't make



her a figment of my imagination, does it? Because if she's just a phantom, then for the last three minutes, you've been reading absolutely nothing!

## The Day Jesus Was Born

This coming December 25th most parents will be lying to their children about old St. Nick. Some of us will be celebrating the birth of our Savior. But was he really born on *this* day?

Was Jesus really born on December 25th? Virtually every month on the calendar has been proposed by biblical scholars. So why do we celebrate his birth in December?

The tradition for December 25th is actually quite ancient. Hippolytus, in the *second* century A.D., argued that this was Christ's birthday. Meanwhile, in the eastern Church, January 6th was the date followed.

But in the fourth century, John Chrysostom argued that December 25th was the correct date and from that day till now, the Church in the *East*, as well as the West, has observed the 25th of December as the official date of Christ's birth.

In modern times, the traditional date has been challenged. Modern scholars point out that when Jesus was born, shepherds were watching their sheep in the hills around Bethlehem. Luke tells us that an angel appeared to "some shepherds staying out in the fields [who were] keeping watch over their flock by night" (2:8).

Some scholars feel that the sheep were usually brought under cover from November to March; as well, they were not normally in the field *at night*. But there is no hard evidence for this. In fact, early Jewish sources suggest that the sheep around *Bethlehem* were outside year-round. So you can see, December 25th fits both tradition and the biblical narrative well. There is no sound objection to it.

Now admittedly, the sheep around Bethlehem were the exception, not the rule. But these were no ordinary sheep. They were *sacrificial* lambs. In the early spring they would be slaughtered at the Passover.

And God *first* revealed the Messiah's birth to *these* shepherds--shepherds who protected harmless lambs which would soon die on behalf of sinful men. When they saw the baby, could they have known? Might they have whispered in their hearts what John the Baptist later thundered, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Now, of course, we can't be absolutely certain of the *day* of Christ's birth. At least, not this side of heaven. But an early winter date seems as reasonable a guess as any. And December 25th has been the frontrunner for *eighteen* centuries. Without more evidence, there seems no good reason to change the celebration date now.

We can blame the ancient church for a large part of our uncertainty. You see, they did not celebrate Christ's birth. At all. To them, it was insignificant. They were far more concerned with his death . . . and resurrection.

But modern man has turned that around. A baby lying in a manger is harmless, non-threatening. But a man dying on a cross--a man who claims to be God--that man is a threat! He *demand*s our allegiance! We cannot ignore him. We must either accept him or reject him. He leaves us no middle ground.

This Christmas season, take a close look at a nativity scene once again. Remove your rose-colored glasses--smell the *foul* air, see the cold, shivering animals. They represent the Old Testament sacrificial system. They are emblems of *death*. But they are mere shadows of the Babe in their midst. He was born to die . . . that all who believe in him might live.

## T he Visit of the Magi

When Jesus Christ was born, men--known as magi--came from the east to worship him. Were they *wise* men . . . or *astrologers*?

Matthew begins his second chapter with these words: "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and have come to worship him.'"

Who were these wise men from the east? Matthew tells us next to nothing about them--he doesn't mention their names, nor how many there were--not even which country they came from. As mysteriously as they come on the scene, they disappear. . .

Though Matthew doesn't tell us much, over-zealous Christians throughout church history have dogmatically filled in the blanks. By the 6th century A.D., these dark strangers were given thrones *and names*: Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar were the alleged names of these alleged kings. But this has nothing to do with the biblical story: we really have no idea what their names were--nor even their number. There could have been 3 or 300 as far as we know! But one thing we do know for sure: they were *not* royalty. The ancient magi were religious and political advisors to eastern kings--but there wasn't a drop of blue blood among them.

But isn't it true that the magi were astrologers? And didn't God prescribe death to astrologers in the Old Testament? 'Not always' and 'yes' are the answers. In Deuteronomy 17, God commands his people to execute all astrologers by stoning. Jean Dixon wouldn't stand a chance in such a theocracy! The fact that she--and others like her--are so *comfortably* tolerated--even *well respected*!--in modern America ought to show us that the U.S.A. is a *post-Christian* country--at best . . .

But what about these ancient magi? Were they astrologers? After all, they followed a *star* to Bethlehem.

We might answer this in three ways: First, not all magi were astrologers, for Daniel the prophet was the *chief* of the magi in Nebuchadnezzar's court. Through his influence, undoubtedly many of the magi carried on their religious and political duties as worshippers of the One true God.

Second, there are some biblical scholars who believe that Isaiah predicted that a star would appear when the Messiah was born. If this interpretation is correct, then the magi who worshipped the newborn king were *clearly* following in Daniel's train, for he almost surely taught them from Isaiah.

Third, although a few believe that the 'star' they saw was a natural phenomenon--such as a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter--this cannot explain how the star stood *right* over Bethlehem. Clearly, the 'star' was completely of supernatural origin. If so, it probably had nothing to do with astrology.

Therefore, the magi most likely did not subscribe to such superstitious folly. If so, they were truly *wise men* . . .

I saw a bumper sticker the other day, which read, "Wise men still seek him." Actually, that's not quite accurate. The Bible tells us that "no one seeks God, not even one." But if he has led us to himself, then we have become wise. For it *is* true that "wise men still *worship* him."

## The Boys from Bethlehem

One of the most heinous atrocities in human history was the murder of Bethlehem's babies by Herod the Great. But did it really happen?

In the second chapter of Matthew's gospel, we read that when Herod the Great heard of the Messiah's birth, "he was troubled--and all Jerusalem with him." Later, when the wise men did not report back to him, he became furious and ordered all the baby boys up to two years old in and around Bethlehem to be slaughtered!

Three questions come to mind as we consider this cruel incident: First, how many babies did Herod actually kill? Second, how old was Jesus when this happened? And finally, why does no other ancient historian record this outrage? In other words, did it really happen?

How many babies did Herod murder? Some scholars have suggested as many as 200! But most reject such a figure. Bethlehem was a small community--almost a suburb of Jerusalem. The village itself--and the surrounding countryside--would hardly have more than 30 male infants under two. Most scholars today place the number between 20 and 30.

But that's if only the *boy* babies were killed. Actually, the Greek text of Matthew 2:16 could mean 'babies'--not just 'boy babies.' And psychologically, Herod's henchmen might not have bothered to check the gender of their victims. The number might be as high as 50 or 60.

Second, how old was Jesus when this occurred? According to the best chronological evidence, he could not have been more than three or four months old. He was more than likely born in the winter of 5 or 4 B.C.--Herod died in the early spring of 4 B.C. So why did Herod slay all children up to *two years old*? The answer to the third question might help to answer this one. . .

Third, why is this event not recorded outside the Bible? Specifically, why did Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, fail to mention it?

Josephus tells us much about Herod. The best word to describe his reign is 'overkill.' He murdered his *favorite* wife's father, drowned her brother--and even killed her! He executed one of his most trusted friends, his barber, and 300 military leaders--all in a day's work! Then he slew three of his sons, allegedly suspecting them of treason. Josephus tells us that "Herod inflicted such outrages upon (the Jews) as not even a beast could have done if it possessed the power to rule over men" (*Antiquities of the Jews* 17:310). Killing babies was not out of character for this cruel king. And killing them up to two years old--to make *sure* he got the baby Jesus lines up with his insane jealousy for power.

Josephus might have omitted the slaying of the babies for one of two reasons: first, he was no friend of Christianity and he left it out intentionally; or second, just before Herod died he locked up 3000 of the nation's leading citizens and gave orders that they were to be executed at the hour of his death. He wanted to make sure that there would be mourning when he died. . . Israel was so preoccupied with this that the clandestine murder of a few babies might have gone unnoticed. . .

Herod thought that he had gained a victory over the king of the Jews. Yet this was a mere *foreshadowing* of the victory Satan thought *he* had when Jesus lay dead on a Roman cross. But the empty tomb proved that that dark Friday was Satan's worst defeat!

## Conclusion

We've been looking at several aspects of the birth of Jesus Christ in this short study. Now, we want to put it all together.

In the winter of 5 or 4 B.C., God invaded history by taking on the form of a man. He was born in a small town just south of Jerusalem. Bethlehem, which means 'the house of bread,' indeed became worthy of its name one lonely winter night. For there, in that town, was born the Bread of Life . . .

His mother placed the infant king in a manger--or feeding trough--because the guest room where they were to stay was occupied. The birth of this king was celebrated that night only by his mother, her husband, and a handful of shepherds. The shepherds had been in the fields around Bethlehem, guarding the lambs which would die at the next Passover. An angel appeared to them and gave them the birth announcement: "today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). In their simple faith, they rushed to see their newborn king.

Shortly after the birth of the Messiah, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem and inquired of king Herod where the *real* king of the Jews was to be born. The theologians of Herod's court knew the Scriptures well--in 'Bethlehem' they recited. Ironically, though they knew the Scriptures, they did not believe them! They did not even bother to travel the five or six miles to Bethlehem to see their Messiah.

But Herod believed the Scriptures! That is why he sent a corps of butchers to Bethlehem to slaughter innocent children, in hopes of destroying this rival to his throne. But he was too late. The magi had come and gone and Jesus was by now safe in Egypt.

And the magi believed the Scriptures. They had traveled several hundred miles to worship this Babe. They were guided to Bethlehem by a supernatural celestial phenomenon--and by the Scriptures. Apparently, their ancestors had been instructed by Daniel the prophet about the coming Messiah. . . When they saw the child, they fell down and worshiped him. This was God in the flesh. They could do no other.

And they gave him gifts--gold, frankincense, and myrrh. This was an unusual present--by any standards. The gold, of course, we all can understand--but the frankincense and myrrh were odd. Perhaps they had read Isaiah's prophecy that "nations will come to your *light*, and kings to your *rising* . . . They will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news. . . " (Isa. 60:3, 6). This explains the frankincense, but not the myrrh.

Now myrrh, like frankincense, was a perfume. But unlike frankincense, myrrh smelled of *death*. In the ancient world, it was used to embalm a corpse. Jesus himself would be embalmed with this very perfume (cf. John 19:39).

If the magi were thinking of Jesus' death when they brought the myrrh, they no doubt knew of it from Daniel's prophecy (9:24-27). In the ninth chapter of Daniel we read that the 'Messiah will be cut off' and this 'will make atonement for iniquity' and ultimately 'bring in everlasting righteousness' (9:26, 24).

Even at the birth of our Savior, the shadow of the cross is already falling over his face. . .

The theologians of Herod's court did not believe the Scriptures. They were fools. Herod believed, but disobeyed. He was a madman. The simple shepherds and the majestic magi believed in this infant Savior--and it was reckoned to them as righteousness. May **we** follow in their train.

by [Daniel B. Wallace](#), Th.M., Ph.D., Associate Professor of New Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary  
<http://bible.org/article/birth-jesus-christ>

## When Was Jesus Born?

– including “*How December 25 Became Christmas*” and other information regarding the incidents in the Bible that surround the account of Jesus’ birth.

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### What year was Jesus Born?

It happens that dates "from the birth of Christ" did not begin to be cast until centuries after Christ's day. The monk said to be then responsible for the calculations made a mistake. The consensus of informed opinion now is that the "birth" of Jesus is to be set back *four* years. Accordingly the boy Jesus was "five years old" in December of what would have been the first year of the *anno Domini* calendar if that calendar had been started on the day of his birth: that is, five years and one week old on New Year's Day, A.D. 2. [Extra Note: some believe he could have been born as early as 7 B.C.]

**See also:**

**“Chronology of Jesus”**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology\\_of\\_Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology_of_Jesus)

**The Birth of Jesus Christ**

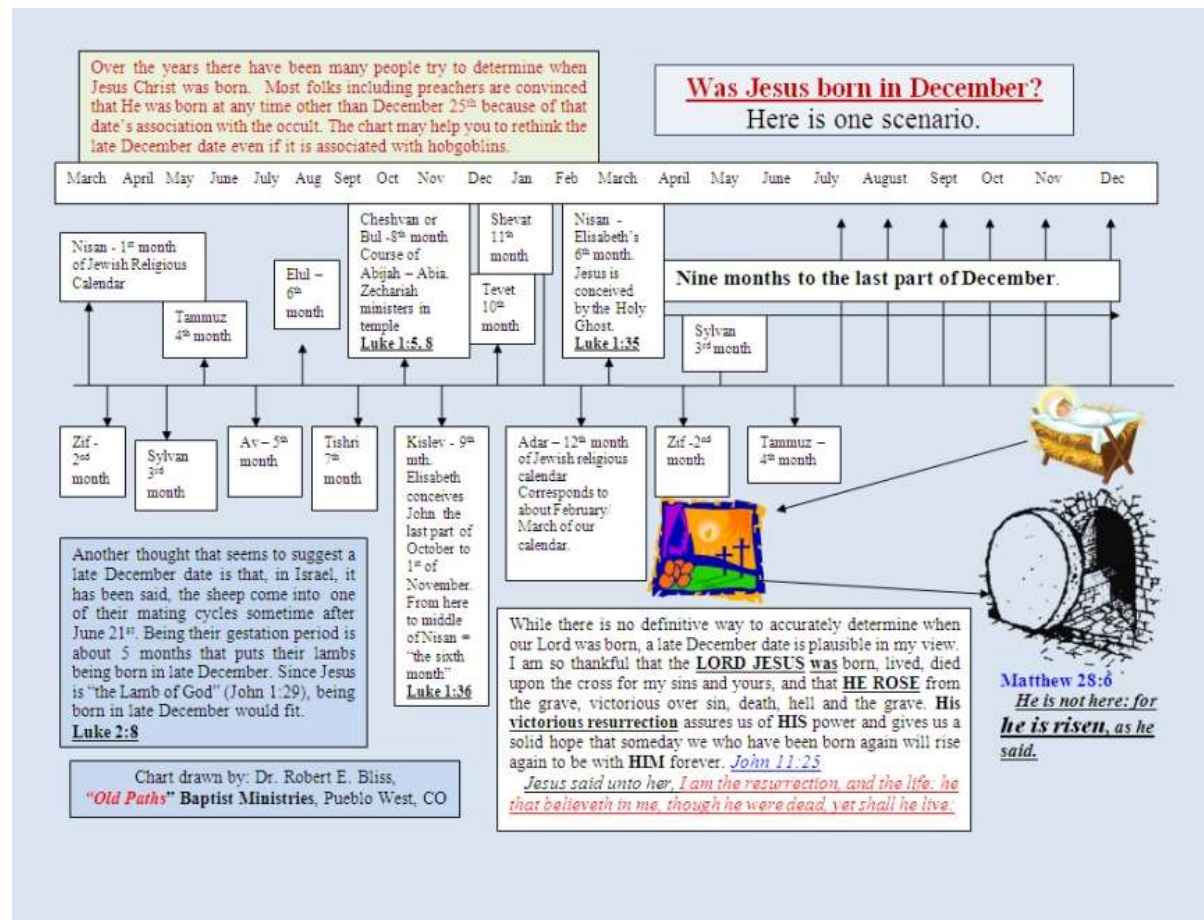
<http://bible.org/article/birth-jesus-christ>

**The Genealogies of Jesus: The *Chrono*-genealogical Record of *His* Story**

[http://www.genesisforumacademy.org/documents/THEGENEALOGIESOFJESUS\\_001.pdf](http://www.genesisforumacademy.org/documents/THEGENEALOGIESOFJESUS_001.pdf) [PDF]



## Was Jesus Born in December?



Source: <http://opbm.org/birthchart.html>

## On What Day Was Jesus Born?

While much of the world celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ on the 25th of December, can the actual day of Jesus' birth be determined from scripture? This question will be explored in some detail, and will yield a result that is quite intriguing. The first passage we will consider begins with the father of John the Baptist, Zacharias [KJV]:

Luke 1:5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

Luke 1:8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, ...

Luke 1:23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

Luke 1:24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, ...

The clue given to us here is that Zacharias was of the "course" of Abia.

**Note:** "Course" (in KJV) - according to Strong's - the original Greek is, *ephēmeria*, (specifically) the quotidian *rotation* or *class* of the Jewish priests' service at the Temple, as distributed by families; a *class* (of priests detailed for service in the temple): — division (used by most other Bible translations).

### The 24 Courses [Divisoins] of the Temple Priesthood.

7. But David, being desirous of ordaining his son king of all the people, called together their rulers to Jerusalem, with the priests and the Levites; and having first numbered the Levites, he found them to be thirty-eight thousand, from thirty years old to fifty; out of which he appointed twenty-three thousand to take care of the building of the temple, and out of the same, six thousand to be judges of the people and scribes, four thousand for porters to the house of God, and as many for singers, to sing to the instruments which David had prepared, as we have said already. He divided them also into courses: and when he had separated the priests from them, he found of these priests twenty-four courses, sixteen of the house of Eleazar, and eight of that of Ithamar; and he ordained that one course should minister to God eight days, from sabbath to sabbath. And thus were the courses distributed by lot, in the presence of David, and Zadok and Abiathar the high priests, and of all the rulers; and that course which came up first was written down as the first, and accordingly the second, and so on to the twenty-fourth; and this partition hath remained to this day. — Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 7, Chapter 14, Paragraph 7.

King David on God's instructions (1 Chr 28:11-13) had divided the sons of Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron, into 24 groups (1 Chr 24:1-4), to setup a schedule by which the Temple of the Lord could be staffed with priests (Kohanim) all year round in an orderly manner. After the 24 groups of priests were established, lots were drawn to determine the sequence in which each group would serve in the Temple. (1 Chr 24: 7-19).

That sequence is as follows:

**The 24 courses of priests**

1 Chr 24:7	1. Jehoiarib	2. Jedaiah
1 Chr 24:8	3. Harim	4. Seorim
1 Chr 24:9	5. Malchijah	6. Mijamin
1 Chr 24:10	7. Hakkoz	8. Abijah
1 Chr 24:11	9. Jeshuah	10. Shecaniah
1 Chr 24:12	11. Eliashib	12. Jakim
1 Chr 24:13	13. Huppah	14. Jeshebeab
1 Chr 24:14	15. Bilgah	16. Immer
1 Chr 24:15	17. Hezir	18. Apses
1 Chr 24:16	19. Pethahiah	20. Jehezekel
1 Chr 24:17	21. Jachim	22. Gamul
1 Chr 24:18	23. Delaiah	24. Maaziah

1 Chr 24:19 These were the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him.

Now each one of the 24 "courses" of priests would begin and end their service in the Temple on the Sabbath, a tour of duty being for one week (2 Chr 23:8, 1 Chr 9:25). On three occasions during the year, all the men of Israel were required to travel to Jerusalem for festivals of the Lord, so on those occasions all the priests would be needed in the Temple to accommodate the many sacrifices offered by the crowds. Those three festivals were Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut 16:16).

**The Yearly Cycle of Service in the Temple.**

The Jewish calendar begins in the spring, during the month of Nisan (Est 3:7), so the first "course" of priests, would be that of the family of Jehoiarib, who would serve for the first week of Nisan, Sabbath to Sabbath. The second week would then be the responsibility of the family of Jedaiah. The third week would be the feast of Unleavened Bread, and all priests would be present for service. Then the schedule would resume with the third course of priests, the family of Harim. By this plan, when the 24th course was completed, the general cycle of courses would repeat. This schedule would cover 51 weeks or 357 days, enough for the lunar Jewish calendar (about 354 days). So, in a period of a year, each group of priests would serve in the Temple twice on their scheduled course, in addition to the 3 major festivals, for a total of about five weeks of duty.

### The Conception of John the Baptist.

Now back to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist.

Luke 1:23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

Luke 1:24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, ...

Beginning with the first month, Nisan, in the spring (March-April), the schedule of the priest's courses would result with Zacharias serving during the 10th week of the year. This is because he was a member of the course of Abia (Abijah), the 8th course, and both the Feast of Unleavened Bread (15-21 Nisan) and Pentecost (6 Sivan) would have occurred before his scheduled duty. This places Zacharias' administration in the Temple as beginning on the second Sabbath of the third month, Sivan (May-June).

	1st Month	2nd Month	3rd Month
	Abib - Nisan (March - April)	Zif - Iyyar (April - May)	Sivan (May - June)
First Week	Jehoiarib (1)	Seorim (4)	All Priests (Pentecost)
Second Week	Jedaiah (2)	Malchijah (5)	<b>Abijah (8)</b>
Third Week	All Priests (Feast of Unleavened Bread)	Mijamin (6)	Jeshuah (9)
Fourth Week	Harim (3)	Hakkoz (7)	Shecaniah (10)

Having completed his Temple service on the third Sabbath of Sivan, Zacharias returned home and soon conceived his son John. So John the Baptist was probably conceived shortly after the third Sabbath of the month of Sivan.

### The Conception of Jesus Christ.

Now the reason that the information about John is important, is because according to Luke, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the sixth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy:

Luke 1:24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,

Luke 1:25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

Luke 1:26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

Luke 1:27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

Note that verse 26 above refers to the sixth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy, not Elul, the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar, and this is made plain by the context of verse 24 and again in verse 36:

Luke 1:36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for the last 3 months of her pregnancy, until the time that John was born.

Luke 1:56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

Luke 1:57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

Now working from the information about John's conception late in the third month, Sivan, and advancing six months, we arrive late in the 9th month of Kislev (Nov-Dec) for the time frame for the *conception* of Jesus. It is notable here that the first day of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, is celebrated on the 25th day of Kislev, and Jesus is called the light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5, 12:46). This does not appear to be a mere coincidence. In the book of John, Hanukkah is called the feast of dedication (John 10:22). Hanukkah is an *eight* day festival of rejoicing, celebrating deliverance from enemies by the relighting of the menorah in the rededicated Temple, which according to the story, stayed lit miraculously for eight days on only one day's supply of oil.

### **The Birth of John the Baptist.**

Based on a conception shortly after the third Sabbath of the month of Sivan, projecting forward an average term of about 10 lunar months (40 weeks), we arrive in the month of Nisan. It would appear that John the Baptist may have been born in the middle of the month, which would coincide with Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is interesting to note, that even today, it is customary for the Jews to set out a special goblet of wine during the Passover Seder meal, in anticipation of the arrival of Elijah that week, which is based on the prophecy of Malachi:

Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

Jesus identified John as the "Elijah" that the Jews had expected:

Mat 17:10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

Mat 17:11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

Mat 17:12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

Mat 17:13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

The angel that appeared to Zacharias in the temple also indicated that John would be the expected "Elias":

Luke 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

So then, the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the 15th day of the 1st month, Nisan, and this is a likely date for the birth of John the Baptist, the expected "Elijah".



### The Birth of Jesus Christ.

Since Jesus was conceived six months after John the Baptist, and we have established a likely date for John's birth, we need only move six months farther down the Jewish calendar to arrive at a likely date for the birth of Jesus. From the 15th day of the 1st month, Nisan, we go to the 15th day of the 7th month, Tishri. And what do we find on that date? It is the festival of Tabernacles! The 15th day of Tishri begins the third and last festival of the year to which all the men of Israel were to gather in Jerusalem for Temple services. (Lev 23:34)

### Immanuel.

Isa 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name *Immanuel*.

Immanuel means "God with us". The Son of God had come to dwell with, or *tabernacle* on earth with His people.

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), occurs five days after the Day of Atonement, and is a festival of rejoicing and celebration of deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Leviticus 23:42-43).

Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke 2:8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

Luke 2:9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

Luke 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Why was there no room at the inn? Bethlehem is only about 5 miles from Jerusalem, and all the men of Israel had come to attend the festival of Tabernacles as required by the law of Moses. Every room for miles around Jerusalem would have been already taken by pilgrims, so all that Mary and Joseph could find for shelter was a stable. During Tabernacles, everyone was to live in temporary booths (Sukkot), as a memorial to Israel's pilgrimage out of Egypt - Lev. 23:42-43. The birth of the Savior, in what amounted to a temporary dwelling rather than a house, signaled the coming deliverance of God's people from slavery to sin, and their departing for the promised land, which is symbolized by Tabernacles.

Also of note is the fact that the Feast of Tabernacles is an *eight* day feast (Lev 23:36, 39). Why eight days? It may be because an infant was dedicated to God by performing circumcision on the *eighth* day after birth:

Luke 2:21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

So the infant Jesus would have been circumcised on the eighth and last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, a Sabbath day. The Jews today consider this a separate festival from Tabernacles, and they call it Shemini Atzeret.

### **The Baptism of Jesus - The Time is Fulfilled**

There is another indication in scripture as to when Jesus was born.

Mark 1:9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

Mark 1:10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

Mark 1:11 And there came a voice from heaven, *saying*, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Mark 1:12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

Mark 1:13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts

Mark 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Jesus said The time is fulfilled just after His baptism, upon emerging from 40 days in the wilderness. He then began His preaching ministry, Luke tells us at about the age of 30.

Luke 3:22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

Luke 3:23 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, ...

The book of Daniel gives us the "time" or prophecy Jesus was speaking about:

### **DANIEL'S 70 WEEKS**

Dan 9:25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem (457 B.C.) unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks (69 weeks / 483 years, 27 A.D.): the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

Dan 9:26 And after threescore and two weeks (69 weeks) shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

Dan 9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week (31 A.D.) he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, (be crucified) ...

It is evident that by understanding this prophecy, and knowing the date of the decree when Daniel's 70 weeks began (Ezra 7, 457 B.C.), the wise men knew *exactly* when to look for the Christ child.

- The [70th week of Daniel](#), a period of 7 literal years, began with "Messiah the Prince". Messiah means anointed, and Jesus was publically anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism, declaring him to be the Messiah, at the end of 69 weeks / 483 prophetic years, which calculates to 27 A.D. as the year of Christ's baptism.
- Knowing the year of Christ's baptism to be 483 years after the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C., the wisemen needed simply to subtract 30 from 483 to know the Messiah would be born 453 years after the decree. Why 30? A man had to be 30 years of age to serve in the Sanctuary / Temple (Num 4:3), and Luke says that at His baptism Jesus

became about thirty. Jesus, when He turned 30, was considered to be old enough to perform the duties of a priest.

- Daniel 9:26-27 also tells us that the Messiah would be "cut off" (crucified) in the "midst of the (70th) week". So 3 1/2 years after His baptism, which was at the end of 69 weeks / 483 prophetic years, on Tabernacles of 27 A.D., Jesus would be crucified, precisely on 14 Nisan, Passover of 31 A.D.

...

### **THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM**

"... in the Old Testament (Daniel 9) the Saviour's advent was more clearly revealed. The magi learned with joy that His coming was near, and that the whole world was to be filled with a knowledge of the glory of the Lord.

The wise men had seen a mysterious light in the heavens upon that night when the glory of God flooded the hills of Bethlehem. As the light faded, a luminous star appeared, and lingered in the sky. It was not a fixed star nor a planet, and the phenomenon excited the keenest interest. That star was a distant company of shining angels, but of this the wise men were ignorant. Yet they were impressed that the star was of special import to them. They consulted priests and philosophers, and searched the scrolls of the ancient records. The prophecy of Balaam had declared, "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel." Num. 24:17. Could this strange star have been sent as a harbinger of the Promised One? The magi had welcomed the light of heaven-sent truth; now it was shed upon them in brighter rays. Through dreams they were instructed to go in search of the newborn Prince." – *The Desire of Ages*, by E. G. White, pg. 60.

...

### **Conclusion**

So, if you have followed the above reasoning, based on the scriptural evidence, a case can apparently be made that Jesus Christ was born on the 15th day of the month of Tishri, on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, which corresponds to the September - October timeframe of our present calendar!

Jewish month	Begins the New moon of	John the Baptist	Jesus
1. Abib / Nisan	March-April	Birth of John 15 Nisan	4
2. Zif / Iyyar	April-May		5
3. Sivan	May-June	Conception of John after 3rd Sabbath	6
4. Tammuz	June-July	1	7
5. Ab / Av	July-August	2	8
6. Elul	August-September	3	9
7. Ethanim / Tishri	September-October	4	Birth of Jesus 15 Tishri
8. Bul / Marheshvan / Heshvan	October-November	5	
9. Chisleu / Chislev / Kislev	November-December	6	Conception of Jesus 25 Kislev ?
10. Tebeth / Tevet	December-January	7	1
11. Shebat / Shevat	January-February	8	2
12. Adar	February-March	9	3

### **Tabernacles Future Fulfillment**

It is also interesting to note that Tabernacles was a feast of ingathering of the Harvest (Exo 23:16 and 34:22). If Jesus' first coming was indeed on 15 Tishri, the first day of Tabernacles, then it is quite reasonable to presume that the harvest of this earth, the ingathering of the second coming of Jesus

Christ, will also occur on precisely the same date. The unknown factor would be the year that this would happen.

[Source: <http://biblelight.net/sukkoth.htm> (7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist related site)]

## How December 25 Became Christmas



*A blanket of snow covers the little town of Bethlehem, in Pieter Bruegel's oil painting from 1566. Although Jesus' birth is celebrated every year on December 25, Luke and the other gospel writers offer no hint about the specific time of year he was born. Scala/Art Resource, NY*

On December 25, Christians around the world will gather to celebrate [Jesus' birth](#). Joyful carols, special liturgies, brightly wrapped gifts, festive foods—these all characterize the feast today, at least in the northern hemisphere. But just how did the Christmas festival originate? How did December 25 come to be associated with [Jesus'](#) birthday?

The Bible offers few clues: [Celebrations of Jesus' Nativity](#) are not mentioned in the Gospels or Acts; the date is not given, not even the time of year. The biblical reference to shepherds tending their flocks at night when they hear the news of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:8) might suggest the spring lambing season; in the cold month of December, on the other hand, sheep might well have been corralled. Yet most scholars would urge caution about extracting such a precise but incidental detail from a narrative whose focus is theological rather than calendrical.

The extrabiblical evidence from the first and second century is equally spare: There is no mention of birth celebrations in the writings of early Christian writers such as Irenaeus (c. 130–200) or Tertullian (c. 160–225). Origen of Alexandria (c. 165–264) goes so far as to mock Roman celebrations of birth anniversaries, dismissing them as “pagan” practices—a strong indication that Jesus' birth was not marked with similar festivities at that place and time.<sup>1</sup> As far as we can tell, Christmas was not celebrated at all at this point.

This stands in sharp contrast to the very early traditions surrounding Jesus' last days. Each of the Four Gospels provides detailed information about the time of Jesus' death. According to John, Jesus is crucified just as the Passover lambs are being sacrificed. This would have occurred on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Nisan, just before the Jewish holiday began at sundown (considered the beginning of the 15th day because in the Hebrew calendar, days begin at sundown). In Matthew, Mark and Luke, however, the Last Supper is held after sundown, on the beginning of the 15th. Jesus is crucified the next morning—still, the 15th.<sup>a</sup>

Easter, a much earlier development than Christmas, was simply the gradual Christian reinterpretation of Passover in terms of Jesus' Passion. Its observance could even be implied in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 5:7–8: “Our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the festival...”); it was certainly a distinctively Christian feast by the mid-second century C.E., when the apocryphal text known as the Epistle to the Apostles has Jesus instruct his disciples to “make commemoration of [his] death, that is, the Passover.”



Jesus' ministry, miracles, Passion and Resurrection were often of most interest to first- and early-second-century C.E. Christian writers. But over time, Jesus' origins would become of increasing concern. We can begin to see this shift already in the New Testament. The earliest writings—Paul and Mark—make no mention of Jesus' birth. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke provide well-known but quite different accounts of the event—although neither specifies a date. In the second century C.E., further details of Jesus' birth and childhood are related in apocryphal writings such as the Infancy Gospel of Thomas and the Proto-Gospel of James.<sup>b</sup> These texts provide everything from the names of Jesus' grandparents to the details of his education—but not the date of his birth.

Finally, in about 200 C.E., a Christian teacher in Egypt makes reference to the date Jesus was born. According to Clement of Alexandria, several different days had been proposed by various Christian groups. Surprising as it may seem, Clement doesn't mention December 25 at all. Clement writes: "There are those who have determined not only the year of our Lord's birth, but also the day; and they say that it took place in the 28th year of Augustus, and in the 25th day of [the Egyptian month] Pachon [May 20 in our calendar] ... And treating of His Passion, with very great accuracy, some say that it took place in the 16th year of Tiberius, on the 25th of Phamenoth [March 21]; and others on the 25th of Pharmuthi [April 21] and others say that on the 19th of Pharmuthi [April 15] the Savior suffered. Further, others say that He was born on the 24th or 25th of Pharmuthi [April 20 or 21]."<sup>2</sup>

Clearly there was great uncertainty, but also a considerable amount of interest, in dating Jesus' birth in the late second century. By the fourth century, however, we find references to two dates that were widely recognized—and now also celebrated—as Jesus' birthday: December 25 in the western Roman Empire and January 6 in the East (especially in Egypt and Asia Minor). The modern Armenian church continues to celebrate Christmas on January 6; for most Christians, however, December 25 would prevail, while January 6 eventually came to be known as the Feast of the Epiphany, commemorating the arrival of the magi in Bethlehem. The period between became the holiday season later known as the 12 days of Christmas.

The earliest mention of December 25 as Jesus' birthday comes from a mid-fourth-century Roman almanac that lists the death dates of various Christian bishops and martyrs. The first date listed, December 25, is marked: *natus Christus in Betleem Judeae*: "Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea."<sup>3</sup> In about 400 C.E., Augustine of Hippo mentions a local dissident Christian group, the Donatists, who apparently kept Christmas festivals on December 25, but refused to celebrate the Epiphany on January 6, regarding it as an innovation. Since the Donatist group only emerged during the persecution under Diocletian in 312 C.E. and then remained stubbornly attached to the practices of that moment in time, they seem to represent an older North African Christian tradition.

In the East, January 6 was at first not associated with the magi alone, but with the Christmas story as a whole.

So, almost 300 years after Jesus was born, we finally find people observing his birth in mid-winter. But how had they settled on the dates December 25 and January 6?

There are two theories today: one extremely popular, the other less often heard outside scholarly circles (though far more ancient).<sup>4</sup>

The most loudly touted theory about the origins of the Christmas date(s) is that it was borrowed from pagan celebrations. The Romans had their mid-winter Saturnalia festival in late December; barbarian peoples of northern and western Europe kept holidays at similar times. To top it off, in 274 C.E., the Roman emperor Aurelian established a feast of the birth of Sol Invictus (the Unconquered Sun), on December 25. Christmas, the argument goes, is really a spin-off from these pagan solar festivals. According to this theory, early Christians deliberately chose these dates to encourage the spread of

Christmas and Christianity throughout the Roman world: If Christmas looked like a pagan holiday, more pagans would be open to both the holiday and the God whose birth it celebrated.

Despite its popularity today, this theory of Christmas's origins has its problems. It is not found in any ancient Christian writings, for one thing. Christian authors of the time do note a connection between the solstice and Jesus' birth: The church father Ambrose (c. 339–397), for example, described Christ as the true sun, who outshone the fallen gods of the old order. But early Christian writers never hint at any recent calendrical engineering; they clearly don't think the date was chosen by the church. Rather they see the coincidence as a providential sign, as natural proof that God had selected Jesus over the false pagan gods.

It's not until the 12th century that we find the first suggestion that Jesus' birth celebration was deliberately set at the time of pagan feasts. A marginal note on a manuscript of the writings of the Syriac biblical commentator Dionysius bar-Salibi states that in ancient times the Christmas holiday was actually shifted from January 6 to December 25 so that it fell on the same date as the pagan Sol Invictus holiday.<sup>5</sup> In the 18th and 19th centuries, Bible scholars spurred on by the new study of comparative religions latched on to this idea.<sup>6</sup> They claimed that because the early Christians didn't know when Jesus was born, they simply assimilated the pagan solstice festival for their own purposes, claiming it as the time of the Messiah's birth and celebrating it accordingly.

More recent studies have shown that many of the holiday's modern trappings do reflect pagan customs borrowed much later, as Christianity expanded into northern and western Europe. The Christmas tree, for example, has been linked with late medieval druidic practices. This has only encouraged modern audiences to assume that the date, too, must be pagan.

There are problems with this popular theory, however, as many scholars recognize. Most significantly, the first mention of a date for Christmas (c. 200) and the earliest celebrations that we know about (c. 250–300) come in a period when Christians were not borrowing heavily from pagan traditions of such an obvious character.

Granted, Christian belief and practice were not formed in isolation. Many early elements of Christian worship—including eucharistic meals, meals honoring martyrs and much early Christian funerary art—would have been quite comprehensible to pagan observers. Yet, in the first few centuries C.E., the persecuted Christian minority was greatly concerned with distancing itself from the larger, public pagan religious observances, such as sacrifices, games and holidays. This was still true as late as the violent persecutions of the Christians conducted by the Roman emperor Diocletian between 303 and 312 C.E.

This would change only after Constantine converted to Christianity. From the mid-fourth century on, we do find Christians deliberately adapting and Christianizing pagan festivals. A famous proponent of this practice was Pope Gregory the Great, who, in a letter written in 601 C.E. to a Christian missionary in Britain, recommended that local pagan temples not be destroyed but be converted into churches, and that pagan festivals be celebrated as feasts of Christian martyrs. At this late point, Christmas may well have acquired some pagan trappings. But we don't have evidence of Christians adopting pagan festivals in the third century, at which point dates for Christmas were established. Thus, it seems unlikely that the date was simply selected to correspond with pagan solar festivals.

The December 25 feast seems to have existed before 312—before Constantine and his conversion, at least. As we have seen, the Donatist Christians in North Africa seem to have known it from before that time. Furthermore, in the mid- to late fourth century, church leaders in the eastern Empire concerned themselves not with introducing a celebration of Jesus' birthday, but with the addition of the December date to their traditional celebration on January 6.<sup>7</sup>

There is another way to account for the origins of Christmas on December 25: Strange as it may seem, the key to dating Jesus' birth may lie in the dating of Jesus' death at Passover. This view was first suggested to the modern world by French scholar Louis Duchesne in the early 20th century and fully developed by American Thomas Talley in more recent years.<sup>8</sup> But they were certainly not the first to note a connection between the traditional date of Jesus' death and his birth.



*The baby Jesus flies down from heaven on the back of a cross, in this detail from Master Bertram's 14th-century Annunciation scene. Jesus' conception carried with it the promise of salvation through his death. It may be no coincidence, then, that the early church celebrated Jesus' conception and death on the same calendar day: March 25, exactly nine months before December 25. Kunsthalle, Hamburg/Bridgeman Art Library, NY*

Around 200 C.E. Tertullian of Carthage reported the calculation that the 14th of Nisan (the day of the crucifixion according to the Gospel of John) in the year Jesus died<sup>c</sup> was equivalent to March 25 in the Roman (solar) calendar.<sup>9</sup> March 25 is, of course, nine months before December 25; it was later recognized as the Feast of the Annunciation—the commemoration of Jesus' conception.<sup>10</sup> Thus,

Jesus was believed to have been conceived and crucified on the same day of the year. Exactly nine months later, Jesus was born, on December 25.<sup>d</sup>

This idea appears in an anonymous Christian treatise titled *On Solstices and Equinoxes*, which appears to come from fourth-century North Africa. The treatise states: "Therefore our Lord was conceived on the eighth of the kalends of April in the month of March [March 25], which is the day of the passion of the Lord and of his conception. For on that day he was conceived on the same he suffered."<sup>11</sup> Based on this, the treatise dates Jesus' birth to the winter solstice.

Augustine, too, was familiar with this association. In *On the Trinity* (c. 399–419) he writes: "For he [Jesus] is believed to have been conceived on the 25th of March, upon which day also he suffered; so the womb of the Virgin, in which he was conceived, where no one of mortals was begotten, corresponds to the new grave in which he was buried, wherein was never man laid, neither before him nor since. But he was born, according to tradition, upon December the 25th."<sup>12</sup>

In the East, too, the dates of Jesus' conception and death were linked. But instead of working from the 14th of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar, the easterners used the 14th of the first spring month (Artemisios) in their local Greek calendar—April 6 to us. April 6 is, of course, exactly nine months before January 6—the eastern date for Christmas. In the East, too, we have evidence that April was associated with Jesus' conception and crucifixion. Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis writes that on April 6, "The lamb was shut up in the spotless womb of the holy virgin, he who took away and takes away in perpetual sacrifice the sins of the world."<sup>13</sup> Even today, the Armenian Church celebrates the Annunciation in early April (on the 7th, not the 6th) and Christmas on January 6.<sup>e</sup>

Thus, we have Christians in two parts of the world calculating Jesus' birth on the basis that his death and conception took place on the same day (March 25 or April 6) and coming up with two close but different results (December 25 and January 6).

Connecting Jesus' conception and death in this way will certainly seem odd to modern readers, but it reflects ancient and medieval understandings of the whole of salvation being bound up together. One of the most poignant expressions of this belief is found in Christian art. In numerous paintings of the angel's Annunciation to Mary—the moment of Jesus' conception—the baby Jesus is shown gliding down from

heaven on or with a small cross (see photo above of detail from Master Bertram's Annunciation scene); a visual reminder that the conception brings the promise of salvation through Jesus' death.

The notion that creation and redemption should occur at the same time of year is also reflected in ancient Jewish tradition, recorded in the Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud preserves a dispute between two early-second-century C.E. rabbis who share this view, but disagree on the date: Rabbi Eliezer states: "In Nisan the world was created; in Nisan the Patriarchs were born; on Passover Isaac was born ... and in Nisan they [our ancestors] will be redeemed in time to come." (The other rabbi, Joshua, dates these same events to the following month, Tishri.)<sup>14</sup> Thus, the dates of Christmas and Epiphany may well have resulted from Christian theological reflection on such chronologies: Jesus would have been conceived on the same date he died, and born nine months later.<sup>15</sup>

In the end we are left with a question: How did December 25 become Christmas? We cannot be entirely sure. Elements of the *festival* that developed from the fourth century until modern times may well derive from pagan traditions. Yet the actual date might really derive more from Judaism—from Jesus' death at Passover, and from the rabbinic notion that great things might be expected, again and again, at the same time of the year—than from paganism. Then again, in this notion of cycles and the return of God's redemption, we may perhaps also be touching upon something that the pagan Romans who celebrated *Sol Invictus*, and many other peoples since, would have understood and claimed for their own, too.<sup>16</sup>

[Source: <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/new-testament/how-december-25-became-christmas/>]

## When Exactly Was Jesus Born?

The world was transfixed by the year 2000--worried about the 'Y2K' bug in computers, millennial madness in cult groups, political union in Europe, and a proposal to make Mary "co-redemptrix" in the Catholic Church. While Rome flirted with blasphemy, few realized that the true 2000th lunar anniversary of the birth of Jesus was August 22, 1998, or on September 11, 1998 by the solar calendar dating we now use.

Many may live to see the consequences of the anniversary, if it foreshadowed a coming fake Christ. Or at the least, there were dozens of lunatics eager to take advantage of the year 2000 hysteria to get the attention of the gullible.

Yet the 2000th anniversary of the Nativity actually came 475 days before year 2000 began. The correct anniversary date was about sundown, Jerusalem time, the end of the Sabbath, Saturday August 22, 1998.

How can we know the exact day--and nearly the hour--of the birth of Jesus?

Simple arithmetic. A child could have done it, if only the basic assumptions had been correct. But they weren't. In the 19th century, critical scholars made a crucial decision to reject a total lunar eclipse in January 1 BC and to accept instead one in March 4 BC, as the chronological cornerstone for dating the death of Herod the Great, and thereby, the possible birth years for Jesus.

By so doing, the critics could argue Jesus had to be born before 4 BC, contradicting Luke, who tied Jesus' 30th year to the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, 27-28 AD. Luke effectively placed the birth in 3 BC, as did many of the early church fathers. Ironically,

even the date used by the Pope during the Christmas Eve midnight mass ritual is itself consistent with the last half of 3 BC.

The dirty little secret is that virtually *all* the available evidence has always pointed at the harvest period of 3 BC as the focal point of the Nativity--including the possibility of a late *summer* birth.

By rejecting Luke, scholars also threw out the date of the birth Luke gives in his Gospel. In his second chapter, Luke tells what happened the day Mary came to the Temple for purification 40 days after the birth of Jesus. All one has to know is what day this was. And Luke plainly *names the day*. In fact, he includes *three* statements identifying the day. So what day was this?

Yom Kippur. The Day of Atonement. The 10th day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar.

In Luke's time, Yom Kippur was called three things: The day of the "Fast," the day of the "Purification," and the day of "Redemption." Luke uses *all three* to identify the day Jesus was brought to the Temple. And he even quotes the Torah rule that mandates the 40-day period for the mother to wait after the child's birth [Lk 2:22-38].

And if there were any doubt that it was Yom Kippur, Luke tells of a woman named Anna who had been in the Temple for a "night and day" *without leaving*. There was **ONLY ONE DAY A YEAR** when a person could pray overnight in the Temple: Yom Kippur. All other days, the Temple was locked at sundown.

This shows the 40th day of Mary's Purification had begun at the *end* of Yom Kippur, the end of the 10th day of the 7th month, because we know the Purification was done at the earliest opportunity--at the *beginning* of the 40th day after birth. And since the 6th month normally had only 29 days, simple arithmetic shows Mary's 39 days of Purification had to have begun around sundown on the 1st day of the 6th month, called Elul.

This was the night of the first sighting of the new moon of Elul. The Magi in Babylon were recording this sunset sliver of the new moon on a clay tablet. The cuneiform tablet the Magi made at that hour 2000 years ago, along with thousands of others from Babylon, resides in the British Museum. It is possible that this clay tablet was inscribed by one of the famous Magi who later brought a strange set of gifts to Bethlehem. So the new moon seen by the Magi in Babylon at the very moment of Jesus being born is recorded on one of the tablets now in London. Cuneiform scholars have identified the date on this tablet as equivalent to September, 11, 3 BC.

The Hebrew lunar calendar dates vary with respect to our solar calendar. So the 1st of Elul was September 11th in 3 BC, but began on August 22 in 1998. The same was true in the days of the early church, of course. In a given year, the 1st of Elul could have fallen on September 8th, for example.

This may solve another ancient mystery. No one seems to know how Rome came to honor September 8th as the birthday of Mary. There is no Biblical, historical, or church tradition to explain it. It just emerges out of nowhere. Rome keeps the 8th of December as the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary [ie. conceived without original sin]. It is a holy day of obligation for all Catholics to attend Mass. This feast is clearly based upon September 8th also, and mortal sin is attached to the failure of a Catholic to observe it, yet



the origins of these dates are unknown.

On the other hand, we can now see that if Jesus were born on September 11th as Luke indicates, then Jesus would have been conceived around December 8th in 4 BC. The now mysterious Mary dates fit Jesus quite well. How might this have happened?

In the late 4th century, in early 380 AD, Pope Damasus I was endeavoring to force all Christians in the Roman Empire to yield to his authority. He got the Emperor to issue an edict requiring them to practice the religion of Rome. We know that it is about this time the Christmas midnight Mass was first celebrated and December 25th first identified as a Catholic holy day. It is said Damasus was seeking to lure the people away from pagan rites honoring the birth of the sun god at midnight by compelling Catholic attendance at a memorial in honor of Christ's death, ie the Mass. The people confused this Mass with the pagan solar birth rituals conducted at that same time. Gradually, the Christ-Mass became associated with the Nativity.

Meanwhile, the true feast around September 8th, which naturally honored Mary in giving birth to Jesus, was converted into a day commemorating her own birth, and an old holyday honoring the conception of Jesus was converted into a day commemorating the conception of Mary on December 8th. Strangely, there is still widespread belief among non-Catholics that this is the day Jesus was conceived--a possible lingering remembrance of the original meaning of this date.

We can also tell from Luke's Gospel that Jesus had been born in early evening, for Luke says the shepherds were keeping watch by night, but still had time to go into town and tell the people what they had seen earlier that evening. People rose early with the sun in those days, and would have been asleep by 9 or 10 pm. Therefore, the birth had taken place no later than 8 pm, and probably before 7 pm. Yet Luke says it happened at night, which means after sunset--surely after 6 pm in September. Hence, it follows that Jesus was born within a few minutes of 6:30-7:30 pm on the evening of September 11th, 3 BC.

A confirmation of this time is in the book of Revelation. Historian Ernest L. Martin consulted NASA lunar-phase tables and found the image of the heavens in Revelation 12 showed where the sun and the moon were, relative to Virgo, at the time Jesus was born, pin-pointing sunset of September 11th of 3 BC. It seems the moon moves so quickly it is "beneath the feet" of Virgo only a few hours every month. Moreover, the moon comes within two lunar diameters of Virgo's feet at the time of a new moon but once in 30 years. The only such occurrence any time near the birth of Jesus was on September 11th, 3 BC.

Most previous attempts at determining the birth time were based upon astrology and dating the Star of Bethlehem. No one considered 3 BC because that year had erroneously been assumed to follow Herod's death. However, Dr. Martin has proven that Herod did not die in 4 BC, but in 1 BC. Scholars are now generally accepting the new chronology for Herod, and this in turn has allowed the confirmation of the New Testament date for the birth of Jesus. Unfortunately, many churches continue to promote the critics' errors and paganized traditions about the Nativity.

[Source: <http://petragrail.tripod.com/page5.html>] <http://petragrail.tripod.com/answers.html>

***For more alternative views:*****This Day in History – History Channel**

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/christ-is-born>

**In What Year What Christ Actually Born? (Roman Catholic)**

<http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/controversy/common-misconceptions/in-what-year-was-christ-actually-born.html>

**What year was Jesus born? The answer may surprise you**

<http://www.ncregister.com/blog/jimmy-akin/what-year-was-jesus-born-the-answer-may-surprise-you/#ixzz3kJfsabDC>

**“Chronology of Jesus”**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology\\_of\\_Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology_of_Jesus)

**What are some of the most common misconceptions about Jesus Christ's birth?**

<http://www.christiananswers.net/christmas/mythsaboutchristmas.html>

**The Date of Jesus' Birth**

<http://www.bethlehem.custodia.org/default.asp?id=452>

**Jesus' Real Birthday**

[http://www.herealittletherealittle.net/index.cfm?page\\_name=Jesus-Birthday](http://www.herealittletherealittle.net/index.cfm?page_name=Jesus-Birthday)

**Star of Bethlehem and Jesus' Birth**

<http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/churchhistory/qt/121507JesusBirt.htm>

**Was Jesus Really Born on December 25<sup>th</sup>?**

<http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Articles/Christmas/christmas.html>

**When Was Jesus REALLY born??**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptlsXtTf6n0> [Video]

Jonathan Cahn on the Jim Bakker Show Nov. 12th, 2012. Cahn uses detective work to figure out that Jesus was born on the first day of the Jewish New Year, known as Nissan 1, in 6 B.C. Compelling correlation of Jewish Feast Days and their foreshadowing of the life and work of Jesus.

## Zondervan Atlas of the Bible

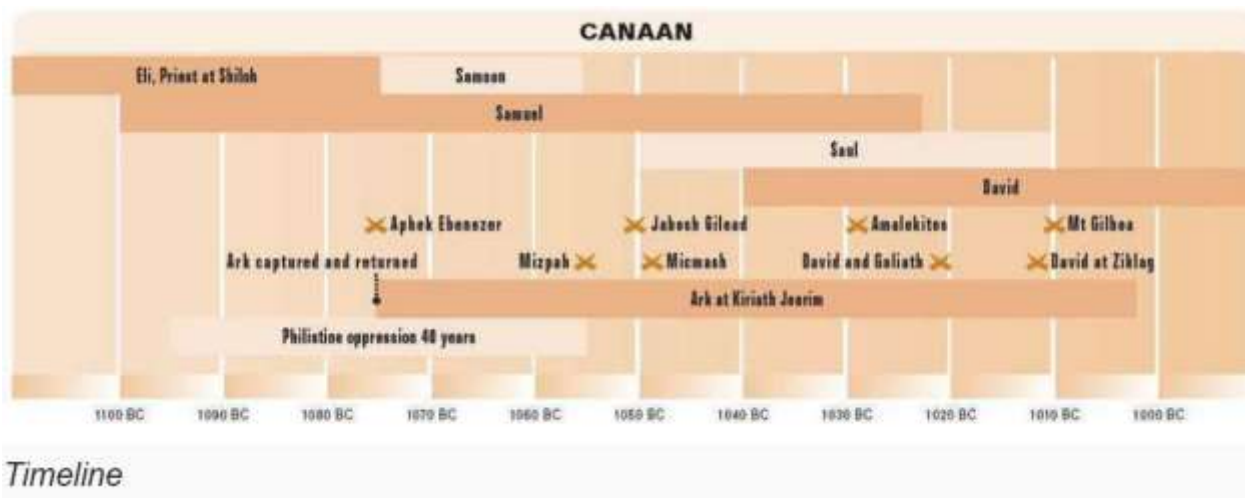
(excerpt relating to 1 Samuel)

With the death of Samson, the last of the heroes of the book of Judges passed from the scene. For 350 years (ca. 1400-1050 BC) the Israelites had been settling the land; yet even at the end of this long period, large pockets of non-Israelite populations still existed in the country. King Saul would provide protection from some of these enemies, especially the Ammonites and Philistines (whom Jephthah and Samson had not silenced completely), but it would be King David who would eventually bring them to submission.



*Samuel, The Philistines, and The Call of Saul*

*Continued on next page...*



## Transition to the Monarchy: Samuel and Saul

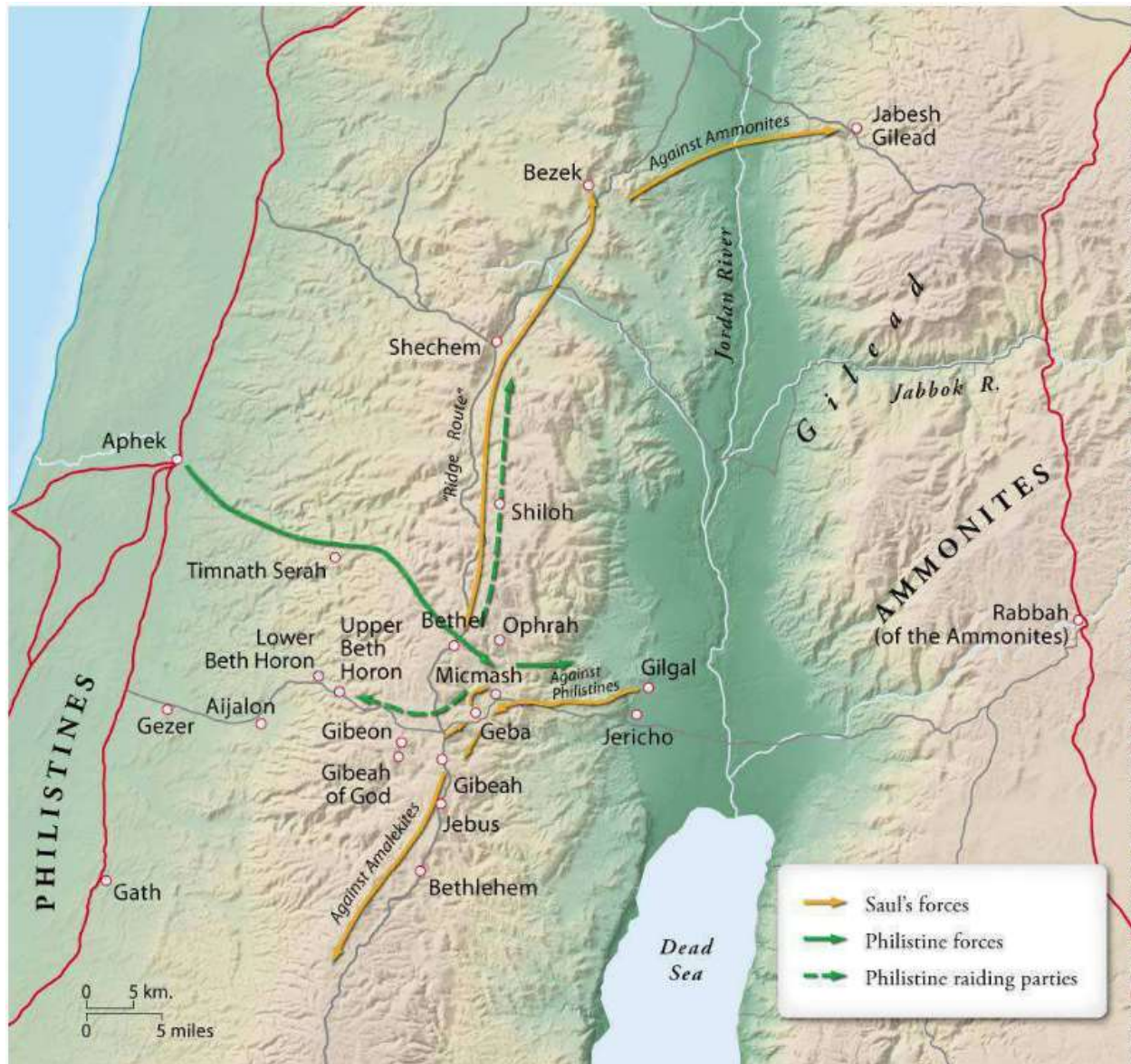
During the whole of the eleventh century BC, Israel was in the process of shifting from the rule of judges to that of a monarch. Also, the Philistines were growing in strength and it was almost inevitable that they would come into conflict with Israel.

At the beginning of the century (ca. 1100 BC), Samuel was born to parents who lived in Ramathaim (1 Sam 1:1), very likely the same place as the Ramah where Samuel later made his home as an adult. During his childhood years he served the high priest Eli at the tabernacle at Shiloh (1 Sam 3). Probably one reason the tabernacle was located there was that the rugged terrain of the Hill Country of Ephraim that surrounded Shiloh provided natural topographical defenses, making it difficult for Israel's enemies to reach it.

When Samuel was approximately twenty-five (ca. 1075 BC, about the same time Samson became active against the Philistines in the Sorek Valley), the Philistines mustered their forces at the city of Aphek, to prepare for an invasion into the hill country (1 Sam 4:1). To meet this threat, the Israelites set up camp near Ebenezer. After an initial defeat, the Israelites believed that if the visual symbol of the presence of God would go with them into battle, they would be victorious. Thus they brought the ark of the covenant from Shiloh to Ebenezer. Yet when the time came for the battle, the Philistines soundly defeated the Israelites and even captured the sacred ark! Upon hearing news of this disaster, particularly of the loss of the ark, Eli the high priest collapsed and died (vv. 12-18). Although the Bible does not mention it, from the archaeological evidence it seems that Shiloh was destroyed at this time, in all probability by the Philistines.



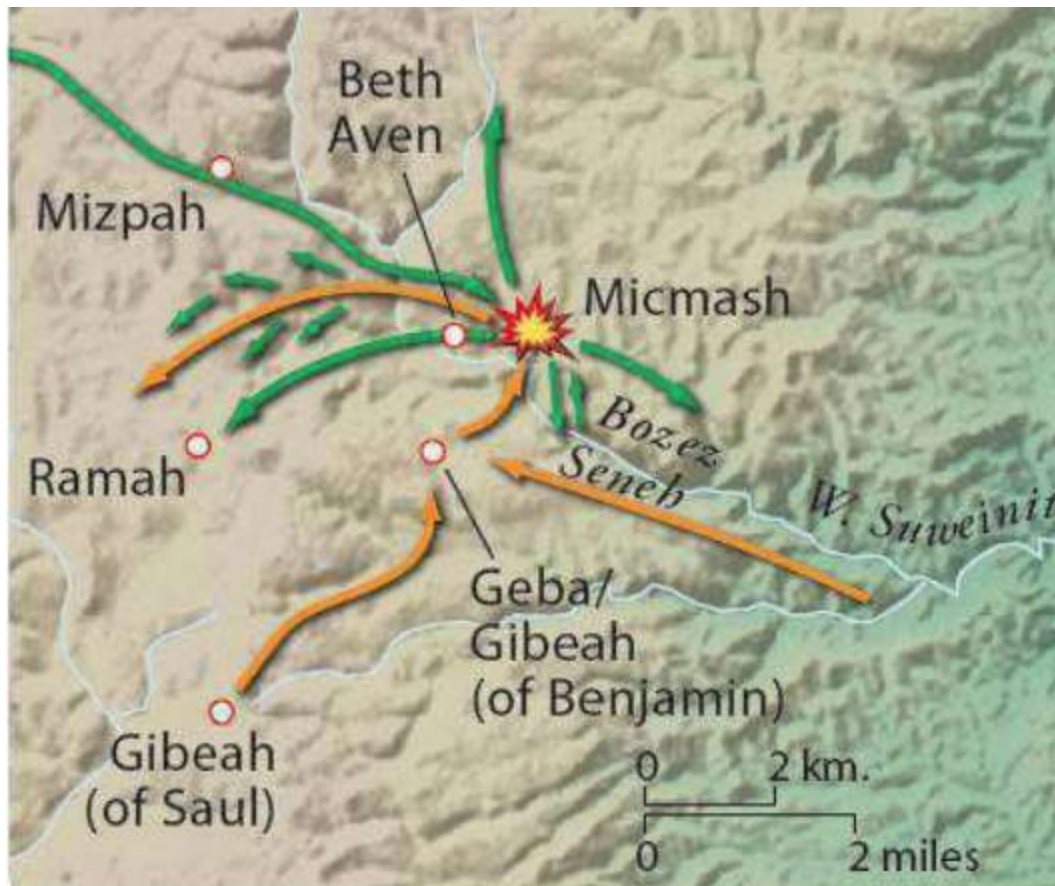
The ark of the covenant was first taken to Ashdod and placed in the temple of Dagon. But the statue of Dagon repeatedly fell over in obeisance to the ark, and a plague broke out in the city, so the ark was sent to Gath (5:1-8). There a similar plague broke out, and the troublesome ark was transferred to Ekron. For a third time a plague broke out in the city where the ark resided.



### *Saul's Battles Against Israel's Enemies*

*Continued on next page...*





### Battle of Micmash

The rulers of the Philistines decided that a test should be made to determine if the ark really was the cause of the plagues: the ark was placed on a cart, which was to be drawn by two cows that had young calves and that had never been yoked. If the cart headed toward the nearby Israelite city of Beth Shemesh, then the Philistines would know that Yahweh had brought this disaster (1 Sam 6:1-9). And indeed, as the five rulers of the Philistines watched from the ridge that overlooks the Sorek Valley, the cows pulling the cart headed eastward up the valley toward Beth Shemesh.

The people of Beth Shemesh, who were harvesting wheat in the valley (which means that it must have been sometime around May), rejoiced to see the ark and offered sacrifices in celebration of its safe return (vv. 10-18). But some of the people of Beth Shemesh looked into the ark — which only the high priest was allowed to do, and then only once a year, on the Day of Atonement — and God struck them down for their sin. Because of this the ark was transferred to Kiriath Jearim, one of the four Gibeonite cities, where it remained until David transported it to Jerusalem (ca. 1003 BC; 2 Sam 6). During his adult life, Samuel made his home in Ramah, which was strategically located at the important junction of the west – east connecting route (Gezer – Beth Horon – Ramah – Jericho) and the north – south Ridge Route. His annual duties, which were

probably judicial and priestly, took him on a circuit that led from Ramah to Bethel, to Gilgal, and to Mizpah (1 Sam 7:16). It is interesting to note that all of these villages were situated on or east of the central watershed, away from areas to the west that were under Philistine control.

Even after the return of the ark, Philistine pressure on Israel continued. About 1055 BC Samuel gathered the Israelite tribes at Mizpah to pray for them and to offer sacrifices (1 Sam 7:5). This assembly may have convened soon after Samson's death at Gaza, and it may have been called to deal with anticipated Philistine retaliation. The ensuing battle between Israel and the Philistines occurred somewhere on the western side of the Benjamin Plateau. God intervened on Israel's behalf, sending a violent thunderstorm that panicked the Philistines. Israel, seizing the opportunity, pursued them westward toward the coastal plain, as far as Beth Car (identification unknown). In order to commemorate God's gracious assistance in Israel's victory over the Philistines, Samuel set up a memorial stone called Ebenezer ("stone of help") between Mizpah and Shen. As a result of this victory, Israel regained territory in the Ekron and Gath areas (vv. 11-14), but the lull in the Philistine threat would last only a few years.

While Samuel was ministering in the Benjamin region, two of his sons were serving as judges at the southern extremity of Israel, in Beersheba (1 Sam 8:1-3). Because of the corruption of these sons, and possibly because of new Philistine inroads into western Benjamin, the elders of Israel approached Samuel, requesting that he appoint a king over them (vv. 4-5). At this point in the narrative (1 Sam 9), Saul of Benjamin is introduced. Looking for lost donkeys in the Hill Country of Ephraim, in the area of Shalisha and in the districts of Shaalim and Zuph, he finally approached Samuel in Ramah for guidance. After Saul was informed that the lost donkeys had been found, Samuel privately anointed him king (10:1). To help confirm in Saul's mind that he was God's choice, Samuel predicted certain events that would occur near Rachel's tomb at Zelzah on the border of Benjamin, at the great tree of Tabor, and at Gibeah of God (vv. 2-8).

These events indeed occurred, and at Gibeah of God (Nebi Samwil) Saul met "a procession of prophets [and] the Spirit of God came upon him in power" (1 Sam 10:10). Since Saul's family was from nearby Gibeon (1 Chron 9:35-40), it is not surprising that as Saul descended from Gibeah of God, his uncle approached him with questions regarding what Samuel had said to him (1 Sam 10:15; Gibeah of God and Gibeon are only 1.5 mi. apart). Soon after Israel assembled at Mizpah and there Saul was chosen by lot to be king (vv. 17-27).

After the selection process Saul returned to his residence in Gibeah (Tell el-Ful). Although this site had lain abandoned since its destruction after the affair of the Levite and his concubine (Judges 20:33-45), Saul evidently built a fortress at this centrally located site and renamed it Gibeah or Gibeah of Saul (to avoid the ban on rebuilding a

wicked city that had been destroyed? Deut 13:13-18); the earlier name Geba/Gibeah of Benjamin had been transferred to the nearby site of Jaba. Here at Tell el-Ful (Gibeah of Saul), archaeologists have uncovered the remains of a fortress dating to the time of Saul.

Saul soon had the opportunity to exhibit his leadership qualities by mustering Israelite and Judean forces for the purpose of delivering the people of Jabesh Gilead from their Ammonite oppressors (1 Sam 11:1-13). Saul may have been eager to do this, for many Benjamites of Saul's day were probably descendants of women whose ancestral homes were in Jabesh Gilead (Judg 21:6-12). Leaving Gibeah of Saul, he proceeded northward to Bezek, where he prepared the forces of Israel and Judah for battle (1 Sam 11:6-8). After crossing the Jordan River, he was able to end the siege of Jabesh and defeat the Ammonites. Convinced of Saul's prowess, Israel confirmed him as king at the old cultic center of Gilgal (vv. 14-15), and from that point on his kingship was not doubted by the populace at large.

Soon after this confirmation ceremony (possibly ca. 1048 BC) Saul and his son Jonathan mustered small numbers of Israelite forces in Micmash, in the Hill Country of Bethel, and in Gibeah of Benjamin (1 Sam 13:2). These localities of Israelite control were again in central and eastern Benjamin, for it is probable that the Philistines controlled western Benjamin by means of garrisons at Gibeah of God (10:5) and Geba (probably = el-Jib [Gibeon] in this instance; Gibeon; 13:3). With these garrisons, the Philistines' line of communication to the coastal plain, via the Beth Horon road, was secure. They were also in a position to make further inroads into the plateau area of Benjamin and to sever Israelite-Judean connections along the north – south Ridge Route. Militarily, the Israelites were at a distinct disadvantage, for they were dependent on the Philistines for the manufacture and repair of their copper (and iron?) agricultural and military implements (vv. 19-22).

Saul's son Jonathan met the Philistine threat head-on by assaulting their garrison at Geba (= Gibeon; 1 Sam 13:3). Since by this defeat the Philistines had lost their toehold in the hill country, and since the Israelites now controlled the Beth Horon approach, the Philistines evidently regrouped, possibly in the Aphek area, and then reentered the hill country via the more northerly route that led through Timnath Serah. This brought them into the northwestern and northeastern sections of the Benjamin plateau. Bringing with them chariots, horsemen, and foot soldiers, the Philistines set up camp at Micmash (v. 5). From there they sent out raiding parties to the north (Ophrah), west (Beth Horon), and east ("the borderland overlooking the Valley of Zeboim," vv. 17-18).

After assembling troops at Gilgal in the Jordan Valley near Jericho (prudently well away from the Philistine menace!), Saul and Jonathan moved into the hill country, establishing bases south of the Philistines at Gibeah/Geba of Benjamin (1 Sam 13:15-16) and at "Gibeah [of Saul]" (14:2). Then Jonathan and his armor-bearer headed north

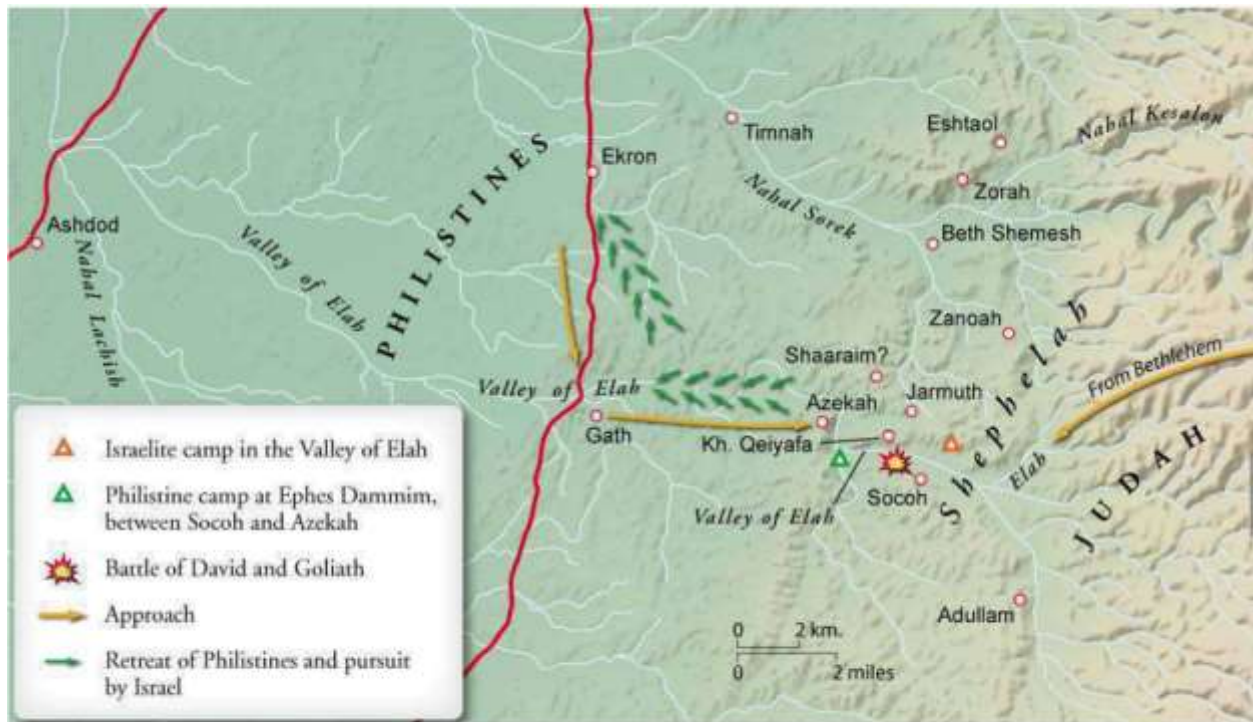
from Geba to Micmash, crossing the wadi between the two villages (the modern Wadi Suweinit), in the process climbing down and up the cliffs (Seneh and Bozez) that lined the chasm (v. 4). At Micmash, Jonathan and his armor-bearer subdued the guards of the Philistine camp (v. 14), and as the earth quaked, the Philistines panicked and ran (v. 15).

Saul's watchmen, who had been observing from Gibeah of Benjamin (v. 16), informed him of the panic, and Saul led the remaining Israelite forces into the fray. Israelites who had been hiding in fear in the Hill Country of Ephraim to the north (v. 22) also joined the battle in the Beth Aven area, and they helped to drive the Philistines from the hill country back to the Aijalon region (v. 31).

Later in his reign (ca. 1025 BC), Saul had to deal with the Amalekites, who were apparently making an incursion into southern Israel. Saul mustered his troops at Telaim (cf. Josh 15:24, but identification unknown). Upon approaching the city of Amalek (possibly Tel Masos), Saul instructed the Kenites — descendants/relatives of Moses' father-in-law, who at times dwelt in Judean territory (Judg 1:16; 1 Sam 27:10), but some of whom were now associated with the Amalekites — to separate themselves from the enemy (1 Sam 15:5-6). This accomplished, Saul attacked the Amalekites and slaughtered them from "Havilah to Shur, to the east of Egypt" (v. 7). To commemorate this victory, Saul set up a monument in "Carmel [of Judah]" (v. 12), which was probably one of the southern Judean cities that had been harassed by the Amalekites.

Besides noting Saul's victories over the Philistines and Amalekites, the biblical text mentions his victories over Moab, Edom, and the Ammonites to the east, and over the kings of Zobah to the north (1 Sam 14:47). Although these enemies were evidently kept at bay, it was not until the reign of David that Israel took control of these kingdoms, and then for only a brief period of time.

*Continued on next page...*



*David and Goliath In The Valley of Elah*

*Continued on next page...*





Valley of Elah from Kh. Qeiyafa. Looking west with Azekah on the left (south) side of the image. David fought Goliath near here (1 Sam 17).

It was soon after the battle with the Amalekites that Samuel anointed David (1 Sam 16) and that David began to serve at Saul's court as a musician. The Philistines and Israelites were still vying for power, but now — probably to the relief of the Israelites — their battles were being fought in the Shephelah, the buffer zone between the Philistines on the west and the Israelite settlements in the mountains on the east. It is in this context that the battle of David and Goliath (1 Sam 17) in the Valley of Elah should be placed. The Philistines, moving eastward from Ekron and Gath, camped at Ephes Dammim between Socoh and Azekah (17:1). The Israelites, defending the approaches to the hill country, camped on the north side of the valley (vv. 2-3), probably east of the Philistine camp.

The encounter between David and Goliath took place in the broad valley itself, from which David took five smooth stones for his sling. Emboldened by David's example, Saul's troops successfully attacked the Philistines. The latter at first fled northward, on the Shaaraim road in the valley east of Azekah, and then north of Azekah; they turned west and followed the valley to the security of their cities of Gath and Ekron (v. 52). This

battle was probably one of a number that occurred between the Israelites and the Philistines in the Shephelah. For example, in the Shephelah David defended the inhabitants of Keilah against the Philistines (23:1-13). Thus the account of David and Goliath not only provides geographical details concerning the Valley of Elah region but also illustrates the fact that the Shephelah served as a military buffer zone between the inhabitants of the coastal plain and those of the mountains to the east.

Following this stunning victory, chapters 18 through 21 of 1 Samuel describe David's growing popularity among the people and Saul's growing jealousy. These chapters are punctuated with descriptions of David's narrow escapes from Saul, most of the action occurring in the Benjamin area. For example, after Michal (David's wife) helped him escape from Saul (1 Sam 19:11-17), David fled to nearby Naioth, the Bedouin encampment that was close to Ramah. Saul was overcome with a prophetic spirit as he approached Naioth, thus setting the stage for David's escape (vv. 18-24).

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## David and Saul

After a number of close encounters, David decided it was necessary to leave the Benjamin Plateau in order to avoid Saul's wrath. With this decision, David began his flight from Saul. After receiving meager provisions as well as the sword of Goliath from the priest who served at the tabernacle at Nob (1 Sam 21:1-7), David fled into the hands of his archenemy, Achish, the king of Gath (vv. 8-15) — possibly believing that Achish would welcome any enemy of Saul. However, Achish viewed David's arrival as an



opportunity to rid himself of David, who had to flee for his life. At the cave of Adullam in the Shephelah (Josh 15:35) David gathered a fighting force of four hundred men.



Oasis of En Gedi on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Here David hid from Saul (1 Sam 24).

After he sent his parents to Moab — Davidic connections with Moab via Boaz and his Moabite wife, Ruth, are well attested (Ruth 4:9-22; 1 Chron 2:12-15) — David's movements are described in detail in 1 Samuel 22-27. He was sometimes west of the Judean mountain ridge in the forest of Hereth (22:5), sometimes delivering Keilah from the Philistines (23:1-13). But most of the time he was east of the watershed, either in or near the Judean Desert. In this connection the cities of Ziph, Carmel, and Maon are mentioned, as are the deserts of Ziph, Maon, and En Gedi as well as the Arabah and Jeshimon to the east and south.

Saul pursued David out into these deserts but was continually foiled in his attempts to capture him. It is probable that most of the local inhabitants in some way supported David — a fellow member of the tribe of Judah — and that David in turn “protected” the Judeans from their enemies. Exceptions to this assumed support included the inhabitants of Ziph, who at times attempted to deliver David into Saul's hands (1 Sam

23:19-29; 26:1-2), as did the insolent Nabal (a resident of Maon and Carmel), whose beautiful wife Abigail married David after Nabal's untimely death (1 Sam 25). Since it would be difficult to support a band of six hundred men and their families in the Judean Desert, David's flight to En Gedi and the nearby Crag of the Wild Goats (23:29-24:2) was to be expected, for the freshwater spring at En Gedi is the largest on the western shore of the Salt Sea. Even though Saul's pursuit of David actually led him to the very cave where he was hiding, David still was able to escape (24:3-21).

Eventually David must have realized that he would either have to kill Saul in self-defense or else be killed by him. To avoid this, David again sought asylum with Achish, the king of Gath. A year or so had passed since their previous encounter (1 Sam 21:10-15), and by this time Achish was well aware that David was indeed a true enemy of the Israelite king. Achish, planning to make use of David's troops and military prowess, stationed him at Ziklag. There, on his southern border, David was to protect Achish against raiders from the south.

David, in fact, conducted raids on the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites, all of whom dwelt in northern Sinai between Ziklag and Shur (1 Sam 27:8). Leaving no survivors, David was free to perpetrate a lie by telling Achish, who lived in Gath (24 mi. to the north), that he had made raids on the Negev of Judah, the Negev of Jerahmeel, and the Negev of the Kenites (27:10), all of which are sub-districts of the biblical Negev. In this way David was leading Achish to believe that Judean hostility toward David was growing, when in fact Judean appreciation for David was increasing because he was defending them from these desert bands!

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David worked for the Philistines in this area of the western Negev/Besor Ravine (1 Sam 27; 30). The light brown soil is “loess soil.”

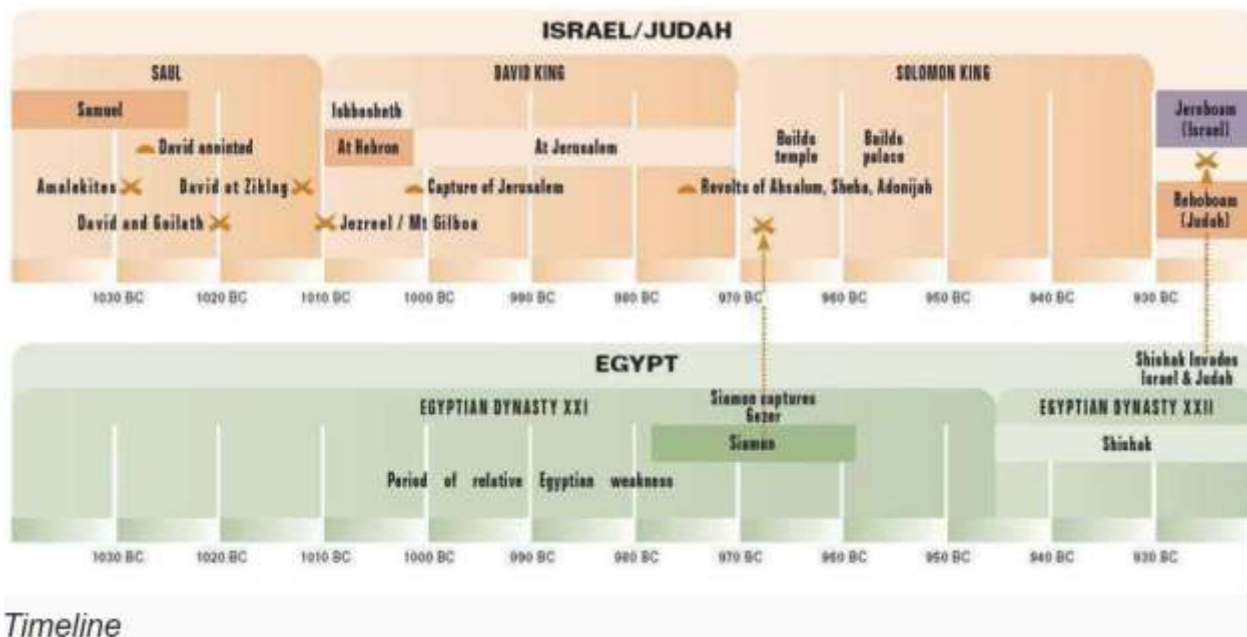
After David had served sixteen months at Ziklag (1 Sam 27:7), the final confrontation between Saul and the Philistines began to unfold. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact cause of the battle. Possibly Israel, by camping at the spring by Jezreel in the north (29:1), was attempting to cut the line of communication between the Philistines and their allies garrisoned at Beth Shan. The Philistines responded to this threat by assembling their forces at Aphek, the point where the Philistine and Sharon plains meet, and from there they marched north and eastward, setting up camp opposite Israel on the southern slope of Mount Moreh at Shunem. By establishing their camp at Shunem they effectively cut the north – south lines of communication between Israelite settlements in Galilee and Manasseh.

As the Philistine and Israelite forces faced each other across the Harod Valley, David, whom the Philistines did not allow to take part in the battle (1 Sam 29), returned to Ziklag, only to find that the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negev of the Kerethites, the Negev of Caleb, Judean territory, and Ziklag, and that they had taken captive the

women and children that had remained behind. David and his six hundred men pursued the retreating Amalekites southwest to the Wadi Besor. After crossing the wadi with a small force he overtook the Amalekites, slaughtering them and rescuing the captive women and children. The spoil captured from the Amalekites was not kept by David and his men but was sent to the elders of Judah and distributed among cities located in the southern Hill Country of Judah and in the Negev (30:26-31).

Meanwhile, back in the Jezreel-Shunem region, the Israelites were engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the Philistines. Some of the fleeing Israelites went up Mount Gilboa, on the south side of the valley, possibly thinking that the mountain would offer protection from the pursuing Philistines, whose chariotry could not operate effectively in the rocky and forested mountainous terrain. It was there on Mount Gilboa that Saul and Jonathan died as a result of the battle (1 Sam 31). As part of the Philistine victory celebration the weapons of Saul and Jonathan were placed in the temple of the Ashtoreths and their headless bodies were fastened to the wall of Beth Shan in public display.

The men of Jabesh Gilead, the town that Saul had delivered from the Ammonites and with which he may have had family ties (see above, p. 133), removed the bodies from the wall, and buried the first king of Israel, along with his son Jonathan, under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh. With the burial of Saul and Jonathan the transition period between the period of the judges and that of the monarchy had come to an end. Within a few years the idea of a dynastic monarchy would be firmly established, at least in the minds of the Judeans.





Gihon Spring: The spring chamber of the chief water source of Jerusalem



The following chapter is excerpted from:

**Nelson's *New Illustrated* Bible Manners & Customs**  
**How the People of the Bible Really Lived**



**Chapter 7: Life during the United Monarchy**  
**(1-2 Samuel, ...)**

*Continued on next page...*



Area conquered by Israel by the end of Joshua's life



A child learns to creep, then to walk, and finally to run—and falls often in the process. Just so the infant Hebrew state crept along during the latter days of the judges, took its first tentative steps during the days of King Saul, and was off and running under the leadership of King David. But there were also plenty of tumbles along the way. When we read about this period of Israel's history, we can see a lot of ourselves in the actions taken—but we also can see the grace of God shining through again and again.

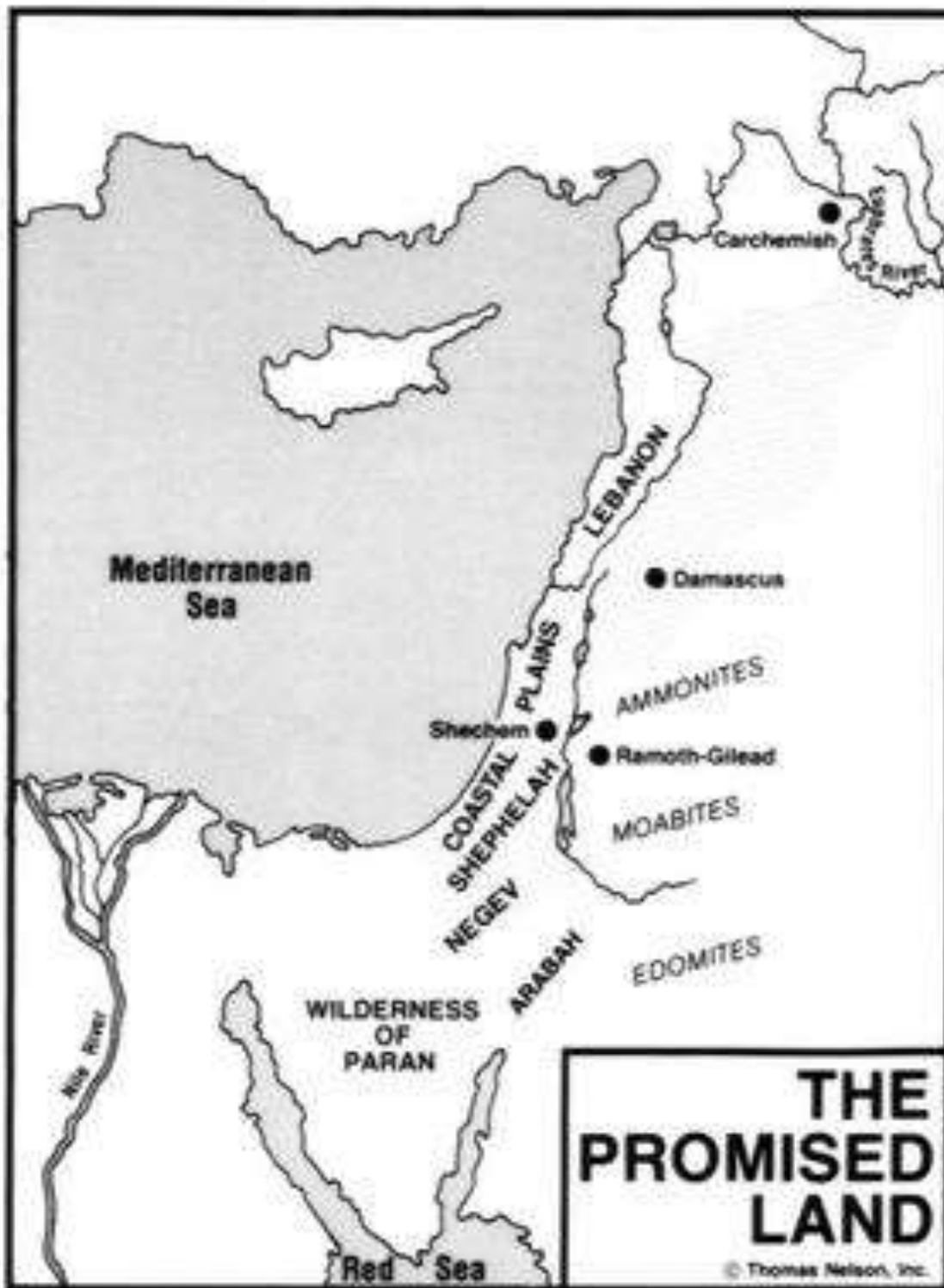
## The Land

### Canaan during the Days of Samuel and the Kings

*“This shall be your land with its boundaries all around.”* ( Nu 37:12 NRSV )

The political geography of Canaan during the latter days of the judges and the kingship reflects the pattern of a child's growth. In the days of Samson and Samuel we see the Hebrews often very much on their knees and creeping along. Samson had his personal victories over the Philistines, and Samuel enjoyed a surprising military success over them that brought about temporary relief from Philistine oppression. The tribal groups of Israelites had a certain amount of independence and control over the highlands of Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Gilead east of the Jordan. But Philistines continued to hold the southern coastal plain and the Canaanites the northern coastal plain, the Valley of Jezreel, Jerusalem, and other enclaves.

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The Promised Land, as given to Abraham and his descendants, ultimately stretched from the eastern branch of the Nile River in the south to the Euphrates River in the north.

In their areas the Hebrews did not enjoy political unity, however. Saul took care of that, unifying the lands held earlier by tribal groups. He gained some significant victories over the enemies of Israel, and Israel was now starting to walk. But Israel stumbled badly in Saul's latter days, and the Philistines once more advanced into Israelite territory and threatened their very existence.

Then came David, successful against everyone of Israel's enemies. The child was now maturing and running. "He [David] had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphseh [on the Euphrates] to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates..." ( 1Ki 4:24 NRSV ). This meant that David, and Solomon who followed him, had established an empire that included the core territory of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and Gilead; the coastal plain; Edom, Moab, and Ammon in Transjordan; and Damascus and the rest of Syria all the way to the Euphrates. He had also taken Jerusalem from the Jebusites and established it as his capital. The story of his conquests appears later in the chapter. The concern here is to lay out the political geography.

### **The Promised Land**

Casual observers sometimes say that David managed to control the whole of the Promised Land. But the Promised Land as spelled out to Abraham extended "from the river of Egypt unto... the river Euphrates" ( Ge 15:18). The "river of Egypt" must not be identified as the Wadi el-Arish, the traditional border of Egypt. The Hebrew word translated "river" in Ge 15:18 refers to an ever-flowing river and apparently must be applied to the Nile; other streams of southern Palestine and the Sinai flow only during the rainy season. The easternmost branch of the Nile, the Pelusiac, flows out near modern Port Said and hence near the ancient line of fortifications which protected Egypt from marauding Asiatics. Thus the Pelusiac branch could properly be thought of as the border of Egypt.

The distance from Port Said (including the Sinai) to the Euphrates may be variously measured—in a straight line or in an arc. The former would be some 650 to 700 miles. Of course the Hebrews have never enjoyed possession of all this land; fulfillment of the prophecy must be reserved for a future day.

### **Possibility of a Large Hebrew Kingdom**

People with a vague awareness of ancient history have a jumble in their heads of the empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and more. And they wonder how the Hebrews could have built a considerable empire at the eastern end of the Mediterranean when those great powers were on the scene. In fact, even some critics of a former era belittled the biblical claims.

The answer to our question is simple. The empire of David and Solomon was at its greatest extent between about 1000 and 930 B.C. The other peoples of the Mediterranean world were not powerful at that time. By 1100 B.C. the Egyptian, Hittite

and Mycenaean Greek empires had come to an end. Assyrian power was quiescent; the Babylonian empire of Hammurabi was long gone (by 1500 B.C. ), and the Neo-Babylonian power of Nebuchadnezzar (c. 660 B.C. ) had not yet been heard of. Nor had the Medo-Persian Empire of Cyrus the Great (c. 550 B.C. ). The Athenian Empire and Alexander the Great came later yet. There was a political vacuum in the area between 1100 and 900 B.C. So there is really no difficulty in finding a niche for David and Solomon and their empire.

## **Government**

### **The Transitional Leadership of Samuel--the Kingmaker**

*"Give us a king to judge us." ( 1Sa 8:6 NKJV )*

What was it like to live at the end of some three centuries when people did according to what was right in their own eyes? A time when there was only an occasional touch of God's mercy through judges whom He used to remind the people what life could be like if they truly worshiped and served God? How was it possible to get them to think seriously about God again?

God prepared Samuel, a boy who grew up at Israel's religious center at a time when Eli, a weak priest, led worship. He lived during dark days politically, militarily, and religiously. While he was still young, the ark had been taken to battle, captured by the Philistines, returned to the Hebrews and finally brought to Kiriath Jearim, about ten miles west of Jerusalem. There it remained for twenty years ( 1Sa 7:2). Apparently it was not returned to Shiloh because the Philistines had destroyed the town.

Somehow the religious foundation his mother, and possibly father, had laid helped Samuel to doggedly persevere during all those years, trying to get his people to turn to God. Finally his efforts began to pay off. After twenty years of treating God as irrelevant to life, "There was a movement throughout Israel to follow the Lord" ( 1Sa 7:2 REB ). Samuel called on the people to turn their backs on their idols and commit themselves unreservedly to God. His exhortation was accompanied by a promise that after personal and national reformation God "will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines" ( 1Sa 7:3).

Next Samuel called "all Israel," at least their official representatives, to gather at Mizpah, probably Tell en-Nasbeh, eight miles north of Jerusalem. There he promised to pray for them, to intercede for them. There he also "judged" them. That is, through his intercession for Israel he attained forgiveness and the renewal of God's favor. With His people in a right relationship to Him once more, God was free to vindicate their rights (another meaning of the verb "judge") or deliver them. Samuel won that vindication and deliverance for his people by his leadership role.

Apparently the Philistines sought to take advantage of Israel's preoccupation with a religious observance. Or they resolved to launch a preemptive strike because they interpreted the Hebrew gathering as preparation for war. So they gathered to attack the

Hebrews. Fear gripped the Hebrews as reports of a Philistine advance reached the holy convocation. Unprepared for war, they begged Samuel not to stop crying out to God on their behalf. Though not a priest, Samuel offered a lamb as a whole burnt offering, thus representing the total consecration of the people to their God.

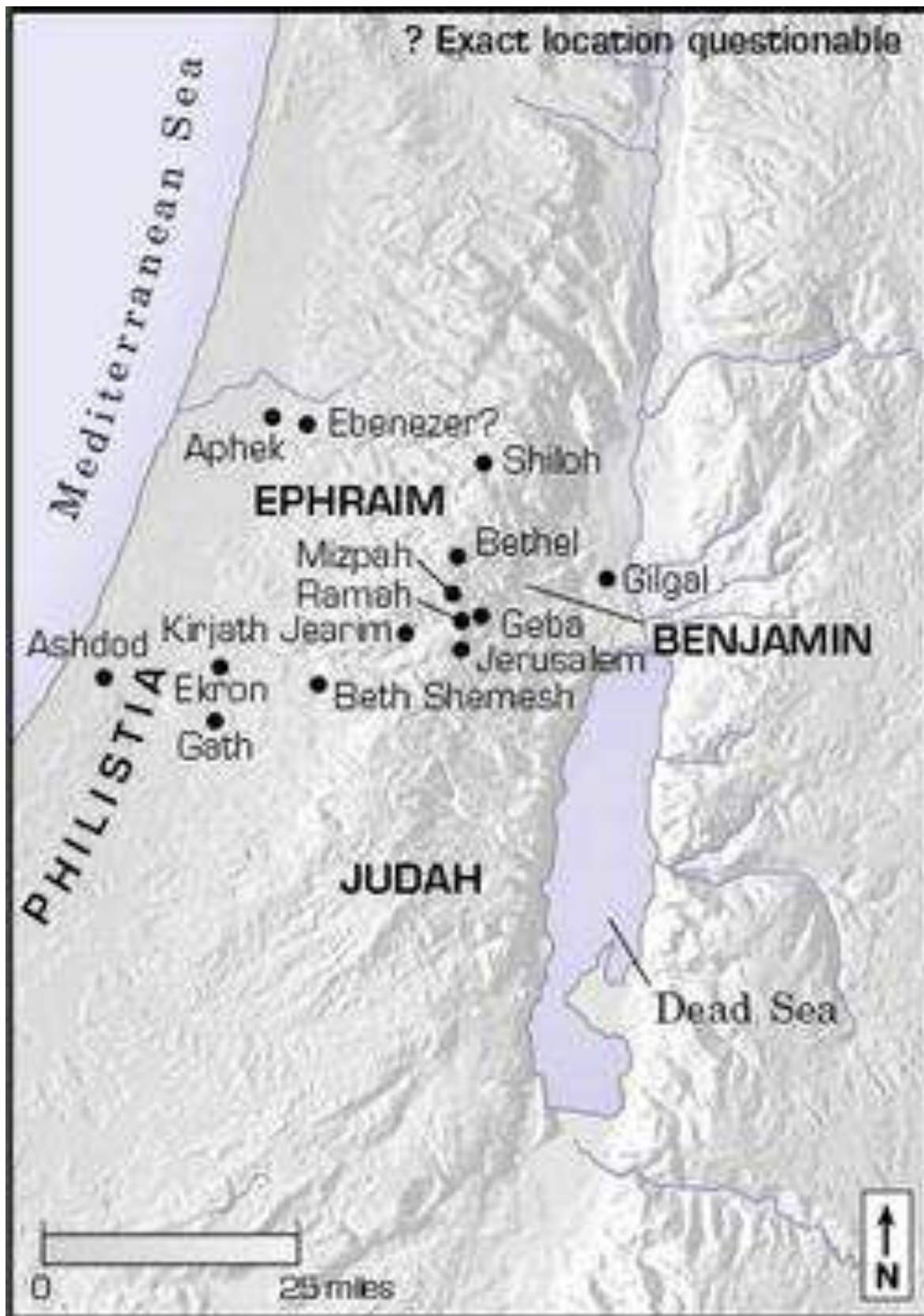
While Samuel offered the sacrifice and as the Philistines advanced against the Hebrews, Yahweh split the heavens with a terrorizing thunderstorm that threw the Philistine army into complete panic. Perhaps He struck down many of them with bolts of lightning. God defeated the Philistines before the Hebrews had a chance to strike a blow. All the Hebrews had to do was launch a mopping-up exercise.



Mizpah of Benjamin was important in the ministry of Samuel. Among other things, here he first presented Saul to Israel ( 1Sa 7:16-17).

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Towns important in the ministry of Samuel

Emboldened by the turn of events, they rushed to attack the confused and fleeing foe. They were so successful that the Philistines “no longer encroached on the territory of Israel” ( 7:13 REB ). Evidently this does not mean the Philistines made no effort to recover lost territory or supremacy. The following clause indicates that such attacks did take place, but they were doomed to failure because of divine intervention.

The event at Mizpah, together with God's intervention against the Philistine army, so dramatically vindicated Samuel's ministry that the Hebrews accepted him as leader, permitting him to serve as the judge and exercise rule over the nation. He continued this leadership function for the rest of his life, alongside his prophetic office. To make it possible for more of the people to have direct access to his ministry, he established a judicial circuit, including Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, and Ramah. They were only a few miles apart in the hills of Ephraim in central Palestine. So, even though Samuel may have been respected at a greater distance, his itinerant ministry did not take him to Galilee, Trans-Jordan, or farther afield than the northern edge of Judah. That his authority was accepted widely is clear from the next chapter, in which his sons acted as his deputies at Beersheba in the south and “all the elders of Israel” ( 8:4) came to him with the request for a king.

So it is clear that Samuel became recognized as the government of Israel for some decades. This included a certain amount of executive activity; religious leadership in prayer, proclamation, and sacrifice; a military role in bringing about defeat of the Philistines; and a judicial function in holding court. Moreover, he served as kingmaker—as the one who introduced the monarchy. In all of this a theocratic form of government continued. God called the shots.

Samuel's sons' behavior reveals that he possibly fell into the trap of many leaders—he was so busy leading others he did not provide adequate leadership at home. He delegated responsibilities in the judicial branch of government to his sons as he grew older. But they did not have the moral fiber of their father and were guilty of perversion of justice ( 1Sa 8:3). The people realized that when Samuel was gone they could not count on a continuation of his responsible ways and therefore on God's ongoing blessing. Furthermore, they looked over their shoulders at the Philistines and other enemies and wanted a vigorous commander to lead them into battle.

So “all the elders of Israel” went to Samuel and begged “make for us a king to judge us like all the nations” ( 1Sa 8:5). Samuel took this as a vote of no confidence in his leadership and a lack of appreciation for his many years of dedicated service. When he brought his heartache to God, He told Samuel that they were not really rejecting his leadership but divine control over them. And God told Samuel to grant their wish. As a kind of parting shot, Samuel warned the people that a king would draft their sons into his army, put the people to forced labor (corvée) on personal and government projects, and exact heavy taxes.

But they would not listen; they wanted a king “like all the nations” ( 1Sa 8:20). As a matter of fact, long before the Israelites had conquered Canaan, God had foreseen the day when Israel would have a king. But He did not want their king to be like those of all the other nations. Rather, God wanted His man to be “a man of the book,” who read God's Word and lived by its principles, one who did not seek to hoard wealth for himself, or gather a harem, or build an excessive military establishment ( Dt 17:14-20, see sidebar on p. 151).

The concept of theocracy was not dead. When Samuel told the people God had honored their request and sent them home to await fulfillment of the promise, they dutifully obeyed. How long the Hebrews had to wait for the choice of a king is not clear. There was no emergency that required haste. The elders of Israel had the commitment of God's prophet, and thus of God Himself, that the monarchy would be established. Therefore they were content to allow events to unfold in due course. The patience of the Orient does not require immediate or rapid implementation of promises made.

But the sacred historian proceeds immediately to introduce the person who was to become Israel's first king. The rather elaborate genealogy indicates he was from a prominent family ( 1Sa 9:1). Saul was also from a family of “substance” or “property” ( 9:1). The KJV description of his father, Kish, as “a mighty man of power” ( 9:1) is misleading. It implies that he had great physical prowess, but the Hebrew original means that he had the power in his community that comes with extensive possessions.

As to his personal qualifications, Saul was a young man “in the prime of life” ( 9:2), but it is impossible to be more definite than that about his age. If one follows some later manuscripts of the Septuagint translation of 1Sa 13:1, he was thirty when he began to reign. And as to appearance, there was no one more handsome than he and he was a head taller than anyone else.

### **The Kingmaker in Action --Anointing of Saul**

*“And Samuel said to all the people, ‘Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen... ?’ So all the people shouted and said, ‘Long live the king!’” ( 1Sa 10:24 NKJV )*

The sacred historian also tells how God brought Samuel and Saul together as Saul was out looking for his father's donkeys ( 1Sa 9:3-27). Samuel privately anointed Saul ( 1Sa 10:1) and in a public ceremony at Mizpah Samuel presented him to the people ( 1Sa 10:17-27). The anointing served as an investiture of office and a symbol of the endowment of the Spirit of God. Now the monarchy had taken its place alongside the priesthood as a divine institution. Through it would come the blessings of the sovereign God-king for civil government, as through the priesthood came the blessings of God for spiritual and ethical government.

### **The Law of the King ( Dt 17:14-20)**

1. 1.He shall be a native Israelite.

2. 2.He shall not multiply horses for himself.
3. 3.He shall not multiply wives for himself.
4. 4.He shall not multiply silver and gold for himself.
5. 5.He shall provide for himself a copy of the book of God.
6. 6.He shall read it all the days of his life.
7. 7.He shall observe the principles and statutes of God's Law.
8. 8.He shall not be haughty.

### **The Government of Saul**

*“So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal.” ( 1Sa 11:15)*

After Samuel presented Saul to the people at Mizpah, he sent the people home. And Saul had nowhere to go either but home. What an incredible situation. The king had no capital! No government buildings! No treasury! No army! But as Saul walked the five miles back to Gibeah, God put it on the hearts of some to accompany him. Regarding allegiance to be their conscientious duty, they became a sort of bodyguard and the nucleus of a standing army and government. And no doubt the many gifts of fealty and good wishes helped to finance Saul's operations in the early days of the kingdom (v. 27).

In fact, when Saul returned home he went back to farming ( 1Sa 11:6-7). And it was from the farm that he sallied forth to battle against the Ammonites a short time later. Subsequently most of his administrative acts had to do with military affairs, as he sought to establish the power and viability of the Hebrew state. The story of those battles is told later.

Saul chose 3,000 stalwarts as a sort of “palace guard” or a nucleus of the standing army. Of these, one thousand were stationed with Saul at Micmash, about nine miles northeast of Jerusalem, and another thousand under his jurisdiction around Bethel, about ten miles north of Jerusalem. A third thousand served under the command of Jonathan at Gibeah, about three miles north of Jerusalem ( 1Sa 13:2). His cousin Abner served as the commander of his forces ( 1Sa 14:50).

### **Saul as King**

As we look at Saul's administration we ask, “What sort of king was he?” From his earliest acts we might guess that he was basically wise and big-hearted. When some rebellious people had opposed his elevation to the kingship, he ignored them. That was not a time to insist on unanimity. He would prove himself ( 1Sa 10:27). Then after his early victory over the Ammonites, some of his supporters wanted to execute those



rebellious individuals who had opposed his kingship. But he wisely refrained from a sour note of executions in the midst of a victory celebration ( 1Sa 11:12-15).

Possibly he would have continued on that high road if he had not run afoul of the specific dictates of God. Saul had two great failures that led to his rejection at God's hands and colored everything else he did. The first came near the beginning of his reign when he faced the overwhelming superiority of Philistine forces. Samuel told him to wait for him at Gilgal. And he did. But when his military situation rapidly deteriorated and Samuel did not come, Saul determined to offer sacrifices himself and prepare for battle. Thus he intruded on the office of priest, and he prepared to go into battle without divine directions.

No sooner had he completed the offering, however, than Samuel arrived and rebuked him for disobedience and lack of faith. For his lack of faith in an hour of crisis, Saul came under the condemnation of God and heard the sentence from Samuel that his dynasty would not endure—not beyond his own administration. God would choose a king “after his own heart” ( 13:14), and that man proved to be David. As subsequent events would demonstrate, however, that judgment did not mean God would fail to give Saul some great victories.



The mound of Gibeah, home of Saul and his “capital”

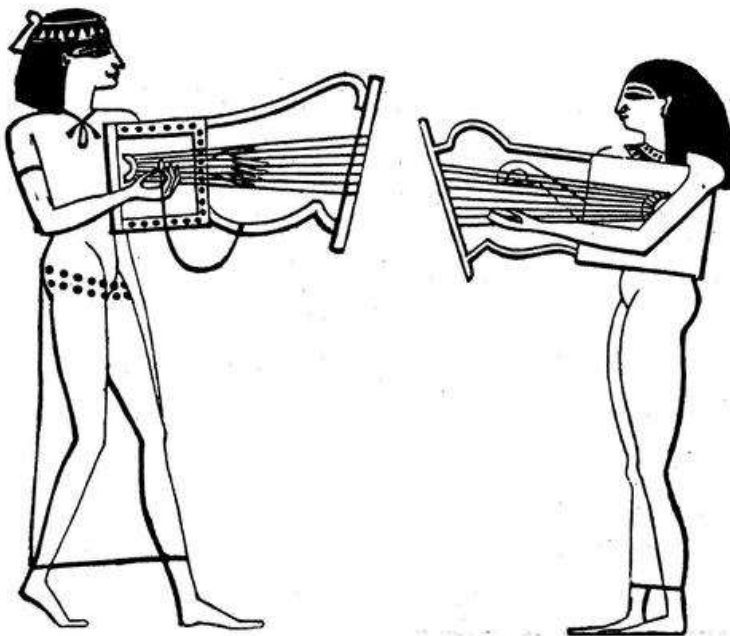
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David's lyre probably did not look much different from the lyre played by a Semitic visitor to Egypt about the time of Joseph.

(From the tomb of Khnum-hotep at Beni Hassan in Egypt)



Egyptian lyres from the Empire period are somewhat more sophisticated. They could be played with or without the plectrum.

(From a tomb painting at Thebes)

Saul's second test and failure occurred during his struggle with the Amalekites. God commanded total destruction of these people and all of their possessions. Saul waged war against them and destroyed them and part of their belongings, saving the best livestock and the king. For his partial obedience, God rejected Saul's kingship ( 1Sa 15). Thereafter he lost his grip on his kingdom and even on his sanity.

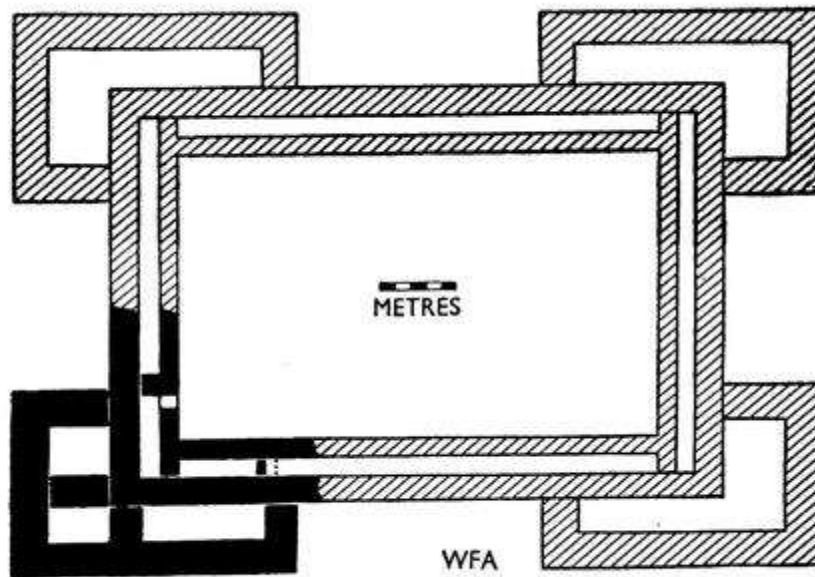
As the power of the Holy Spirit left Saul, the power that had enabled him to lead during the years of his kingship ( 1Sa 16:14), Saul no longer had the resources to enable him to run the kingdom—or even to maintain his mental health. In fact, as a punishment God sent on him a form of severe depression. As time went on his depression became more severe and perhaps was not far removed from a psychotic condition.

The only treatment Saul's attendants knew for such a malady was the soothing music of a harp. Or perhaps it is better to call it a lyre, for it was a small stringed instrument in the form of a flat sounding-box with two wooden arms joined by a crosspiece. The strings stretched from the box to the crosspiece. Saul listened to his advisers and instructed them to find an accomplished musician. David, next king of Israel, proved to be that musician.

It is not hard to imagine how Saul's depression developed. He lived under the judgment of God. He was deprived of the support and counsel of Samuel, who left him to his own devices after the divine rejection ( 1Sa 15:10-35). And David increasingly won the accolades of the masses while Saul's reputation slipped: “Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands” ( 1Sa 18:7).



The mound of Ziklag, a base of operation for David's army during the early years of fugitive life ( 1Sa 27:6)  
(Levant Photo Service)



The floor plan of Saul's palace at Gibeah

During subsequent years, as Saul fought his mental depression and had the services of David the musician, he established his house or palace at Gibeah. William F. Albright of Johns Hopkins University excavated Saul's administrative center there in 1922–23. Dating the structure to about 1020–1000 B.C. , he believed that Saul probably built it and David possibly repaired it. Later archaeologists have suggested that the Philistines built it to control the trade routes and that Saul later occupied it. In any case, it would have been Saul's palace. The structure measured some 169 feet long by 114 feet wide with towers extending from each of the four corners (see Albright's reconstructed floor plan accompanying). \*

On the basis of Ac 13:21 and Josephus we conclude that Saul's reign lasted forty years. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus states that Saul reigned eighteen years before Samuel's death and twenty-two years afterward. \*

Whatever Saul's failures, amassing a harem was not among them. His wife's name was Ahinoam, and she bore him four sons that we know of (Jonathan, Abinadab, Malchishua, and Ish-botheth) and two daughters (Merab and Michal). See 1Sa 14:49-50; 2Sa 2:8; 1Ch 8:33.

Apparently, too, Saul did not fall to the temptation of hoarding great wealth. But there is no indication that he gave much thought to the Word of God or that he had any real fellowship with God. His fear over losing the opportunity of depending on Samuel showed that without Samuel he was nothing spiritually. (For specifics on the way a king should behave, see sidebar on “The Law of the King.”)

Many people overlook Saul's military successes because so much emphasis is placed on Saul's personal failures in Scripture and in the minds of Bible students. His list of victories is almost as extensive as those of David, though his conquests were not so permanent as those of his successor. East of the Jordan he defeated the Edomites on the south, and then the Moabites and Ammonites, conquering all the way up to Zobah, north of Damascus ( 1Sa 14:47). But though he fought "bitter warfare" ( 14:52) with the Philistines on the west all during the rest of his reign, he never subdued them and finally met his end at their hands. God had told the Hebrews what kind of king their sovereign was to be and Saul did not meet the test. Now God would choose another.

### **The Government of David**

*"And the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." ( 1Sa 16:13NKJV )*

This special empowerment for leadership and for life came upon David when Samuel anointed him. That anointing came soon after Saul's second great failure: his disobedience in exterminating the Amalekites ( 1Sa 15). What that anointing meant was not clear to David or his family at the time. And he had to wait many years for it to have any evident or official effect in his life. First he enjoyed the victory over Goliath ( 1Sa 17). Then came the years of sparring with Saul and flight in the wilderness ( 1Sa 18-30).

### **David's Rule at Ziklag**

Finally, totally demoralized, David defected to Achish, Philistine king of Gath, who permitted him to settle in the village of Ziklag. This is now thought to have been at Tell esh-Shariah, about fifteen miles northwest of Beersheba and twenty-five miles south of Gath. During the year and four months there he was involved in raids against the Geshurites to the southwest (cf. Jos 13:12); the Girzites, otherwise unknown; and the Amalekites, marauders along the southern border, after Saul's victories over them ( 1Sa 27:6-9). In the process he supported his own men (now 600 strong in addition to their families) and bought favor with the Israelites as he defended their southern border against marauders. Thus he built a base of acceptance in preparation for the day when he would be hailed king of Judah.

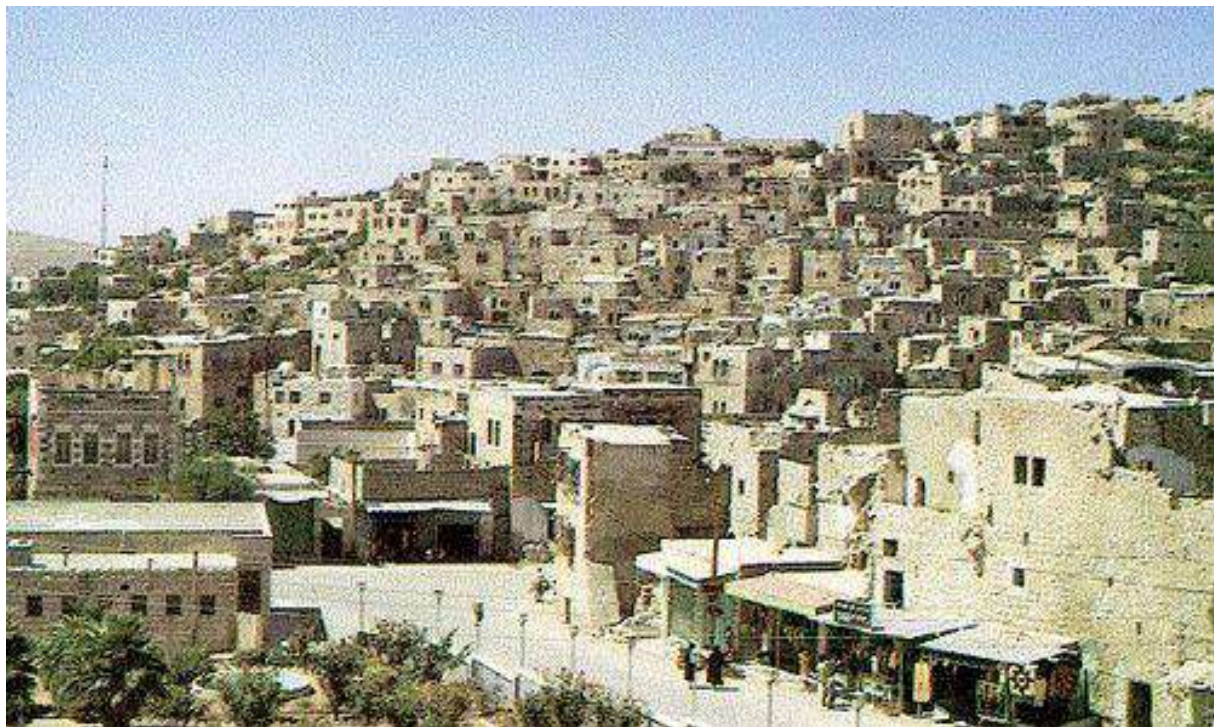
In the final Philistine battle against Saul's forces, the Philistines released David and his men from service in the Philistine army because of Philistine fear that he would defect at a strategic moment ( 1Sa 29:1-11). What happened next is important to the administration of David. While he and his men had gone to the front to join the Philistine forces, Amalekite raiders took Ziklag, burned it to the ground and carried off Hebrew goods and families, probably intending to sell them into the Egyptian slave market.

David and his men caught up with the Amalekites and destroyed most of them, recovering their families and goods and taking much additional spoil. Administratively the action became important for two reasons. First, David established the policy that in warfare those who fought and took spoil would share equally with those who stayed behind and guarded the baggage and equipment ( 1Sa 30:24-25). Second, from his part



of the spoil David sent gifts to several towns in Judah. These gifts paid off in helping to bring recognition to David as king in Judah soon afterward when news of the death of Saul came ringing through the land.

A further administrative principle according to which David operated was to avoid taking vengeance against royal opponents, either against Saul (who had tried to kill him on numerous occasions) or against his house. After the death of Saul, an Amalekite came to David with the king's crown and gold armband and reported that he had killed the king. Presumably he hoped for an immediate reward and possibly for a position in the kingdom. Regicide certainly was a capital offense, and David himself did not want to let anyone think he had had a part, however indirect, in the death of Saul. David took the man's statement at face value and declared, "Your blood be on your own head" (v. 16). This meant the man's guilt rested on himself and he deserved to die; otherwise, it would rest on David and could be avenged. Then he ordered his execution.



Modern Hebron, successor to the ancient city of the same name where David ruled for seven years over the tribe of Judah

About seven years later, when the continuing monarchy of Saul's son Ish-Bosheth came to an end with his assassination, his two assassins came to David with the head of the king to claim a reward from him. Contrary to their expectation, he ordered their execution. And as was common in the case of criminals guilty of treason, their hands and feet were cut off. Then David had their mutilated corpses hanged in a public place as a warning and deterrent to others. Finally, David accorded proper respect to the head of Ish-Bosheth by burying it in the tomb of Abner, his kinsman. Thus David not



only showed his abhorrence for such a crime, but also demonstrated that he had had no part in this murder.

### **David's Elevation to the Kingship at Hebron**

After the death of Saul, David knew he could safely return to Israelite territory and that the road to kingship had opened for him. He logically entertained thoughts of going into Judah, both because he and his wives had come from that area and because he had been careful to maintain good relations with various towns in Judah. But David wanted to be sure that he was in the will of God, so he sought God's direction for his life. God responded positively, encouraging him to go to Judah and more specifically to the “cities of Hebron” ( 2Sa 2:3), referring no doubt, to the villages near Hebron and belonging to it. David's six hundred men and their families (probably at least fifteen hundred people) and livestock would have inundated the town of Hebron itself.

Then the “men of Judah” ( 2:4), representative elders, invited David to be king over their tribe, and he accepted. The actual anointing ( 2:4) probably would have been done by Abiathar the priest. We could consider this public ceremony natural because Samuel's earlier anointing had been private, and it was not clear how many had any knowledge or understanding of its significance.

Meanwhile, Abner, commander of Saul's forces, gradually pulled together the northern tribes of Israel and pushed back the Philistines. After five and one-half years of interregnum, Abner felt strong enough to install Saul's remaining son on the throne. He established the capital at Mahanaim, located east of the Jordan and south of the Jabbok River.

### **Negotiations with the Other Tribes**

Eventually a rift occurred between Abner and Ish-Bosheth, and Abner decided to turn over the kingdom to David. He proposed an “agreement” ( 3:12) which undoubtedly would be mutually beneficial, bringing to David kingship over the north and to Abner personal advantages and immunities.

### **Anointing of Kings and Priests**

Anointing with olive oil in Old Testament times invested individuals with power or consecrated them to service. The anointing set them apart for a holy purpose.

The kings of Israel were supposed to be God's servants, ruling His people in God-appointed ways. In the United Kingdom Saul ( 1Sa 10:1), David ( 1Sa 16:3), and Solomon ( 1Ki 1:39) were all anointed. Presumably the kings of Judah were too, but we have only the mention of the anointing of Joash ( 2Ki 11:12). The apostasy of the Northern Kingdom probably resulted in discontinuation of the ceremony there. We have mention only of Elisha's anointing of Jehu—to exterminate the house of Ahab ( 2Ki 9:6-12).

Priests, especially the high priests, were anointed and consecrated for service as mediators between God and His people. This practice began with Aaron ( Ex 29:7).

Evidently prophets were also anointed for office ( 1Ki 19:16), but we have only this single reference to Elijah's anointing Elisha.

Objects, too, could be anointed with oil and consecrated for the worship and service of God. The tabernacle and all its furniture was to be anointed ( Ex 40:9). Jacob anointed a pillar at Bethel, calling the place a house of God ( Ge 28:18).

But before David was willing to receive Abner in person to negotiate with him, he demanded the return of Saul's daughter Michal, who had been given to Paltiel ( 3:13; cf. 1Sa 25:44). It may be argued that David's love for her had prompted the request, but far more was at stake. On political grounds she was important to him (1) to show that he harbored no ill will toward the fallen king, (2) to demonstrate that as son-in-law he was Saul's legitimate successor, (3) to win to himself by this means whatever lingering affection there was for Saul (a child born to the union would join the two rival lines), and (4) to enlist the support of the Benjamites.

Then before he even met David, Abner carried out negotiations with the elders of the various tribes of Israel in an effort to persuade them to declare for David. In addition, he had private conversations with the leaders of the tribe of Benjamin, which would lose some of its special advantages when the royal family no longer came from its midst.

After Abner had won over to David all the leaders of the tribes of Israel, he went to Hebron with twenty representatives of all Israel to confirm Abner's announcement of the intentions of all the tribes. David then hosted a banquet for his guests, after which Abner declared his resolve to call a solemn assembly of representatives of all the tribes. These were to enter into negotiations and a covenant with David to the end that he might "rule over all that [his] heart desires" ( 3:21), i.e., all Israel. Then Abner "went in peace"; he was no longer treated as an enemy, for he had ceased all animosity to David.

With the assassination of Ish-Bosheth, already referred to, the way was open for David's acceptance by all the tribes. Evidently in response to the efforts of Abner, representatives of all the tribes gathered at Hebron to make David king. They gave three reasons for offering him their allegiance: (1) They were his blood relatives; all were descendants of Jacob. Though for a while they may have had some fears of his being a naturalized Philistine because he was for a while subordinate to them, his years of rule in Hebron had erased their apprehensions. (2) They recognized his prowess as a victorious military leader (cf. 1Sa 18:5-7). (3) God had called him to be their shepherd and prince.

Probably after considerable negotiations between David and the elders, they made an "agreement" ( 5:3), or "compact" ( NIV ). This certainly involved a recognition of the general rights and duties of kingship (see 1Sa 10:25). But in addition it must have

included an understanding that the other tribes would enjoy equal rights with the tribe of Judah in the new national monarchy. The conclave lasted three days ( 1Ch 12:39) and involved the presence of numerous military personnel along with the clan leaders.

Despite the hard bargaining behind the scenes, a gala atmosphere prevailed, with much feasting and joy in the camp ( 1Ch 12:39-40). A new day was dawning for Israel. Hopes ran high with the installation of a new divinely approved leader who had proven his prowess on the battlefield. Gone were ineffective leadership and division. The “compact” guaranteed a form of constitutional monarchy. The fact that David found it necessary to “consult” with every captain of a thousand or a hundred in the army (cf. 1Ch 13:1) demonstrated the necessity of ruling by persuasion and personal prowess.

### **David as King over All Israel**

Then “they anointed David king” ( 5:3). Abiathar probably administered the sacred rites. This was the third anointing of David, the first having been privately performed by Samuel and the second having occurred when he began to rule at Hebron. The chronological note is added that David was thirty when he began to reign and that he reigned a total of forty years: seven and one-half in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem.

Hardly had David been elevated to the kingship over all the Hebrews when the Philistines realized the threat he was to them. They attacked before he could consolidate his power, but he defeated them (see later discussion under warfare).

### **Making Jerusalem the Capital**

Soon after David's accession as king he began the consolidation of the kingdom. The strategically located citadel of Jerusalem remained as one of the important Canaanite strongholds in the south central part of the land. Much of the town had fallen to the Israelites during the period of the judges ( Jdg 1:8), but the stronghold remained in alien hands. The residents considered themselves especially impregnable because deep ravines surrounded it on three sides. In fact, it appeared so impregnable that the Jebusite defenders believed even the “blind and lame” could ward off attackers ( 2Sa 5:6). But David determined to take it (see discussion under warfare), and he did, making it his capital.

This was a stroke of brilliance because Hebron in the south would not have been an acceptable capital to the northern tribes. On the other hand, a northern capital would have been unacceptable to Judah. Moreover, Jerusalem was located between the two political units and was within the territory of none of the tribes. So it was an excellent compromise. Belonging to none of the tribes, it became known as the “city of David.” The new capital tended to elevate the government above tribal jealousy.

*Continued on next page...*

## **Bringing in the Ark**

Not long after he made Jerusalem his capital, David sought to bring the ark there. David's lifelong spiritual emphasis by itself would have led him to take such a step. But certainly his aim to make Jerusalem the religious as well as the political capital of the kingdom fueled that desire. The state now became the patron and protector of the sacred institutions. His actions must have done much to bind the feelings of the tribes to Jerusalem, and those feelings continue to the present. In fact, the city holds a special place in the hearts of Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. The discussion of David's efforts to transport the ark appears in the section on religion following.

## **Building a Palace**

Of course David had to have some kind of administrative center. Rulers of that part of the world used the palace as a government building. David was no exception. What his palace looked like or how large it was we do not know, but apparently it was built of cut stone with interior cedar paneling ( 2Sa 7:2). Phoenician craftsmen provided the construction skills ( 2Sa 5:11).

## **Seeking to Build the Temple**

As David settled himself comfortably he became conscience smitten that he had not provided a house for God. But when he set out to do so, God stopped him through Nathan the prophet, telling David that his son would build the temple and that He (God) would honor David's desires by building a permanent house for him. That is, God made a covenant with David in which He promised: (1) David would have a son to succeed him and establish his kingdom ( 2Sa 7:12); (2) that this son (Solomon) would build the temple (v. 13a); (3) the throne of Solomon's kingdom would be established forever (v. 13b); (4) David's house, kingdom, and throne would be established forever (v. 16); (5) Israel would be planted in her own land forever—"not disturbed again" (v. 10 NASB ).

## **Phoenicians and Hebrews Together**

In the days of the great Hiram of Tyre, Hebrews and Tyrians worked closely together in several ventures. Hiram's thirty-four-year reign overlapped that of David and Solomon. Hiram sent cedar trees, carpenters, and masons to Jerusalem to build David's palace ( 2Sa 5:11; 7:2). Later David obtained cedar wood from Tyre for building the temple.

After David's death Hiram and Solomon continued the close relationship. Hiram provided cedar and cypress wood and skilled artisans for construction of the temple, Solomon's palace, and a palace for the daughter of Pharaoh. In return Solomon sent large quantities of agricultural goods which the limited lands of the Phoenicians could not provide for an industrial and commercial society. It is generally believed that all this Hebrew construction bore similarities to Phoenician architecture.

After Solomon conquered Edom, he had access to the Gulf of Aqaba, an arm of the Red Sea. After that Hiram worked with Solomon to develop a Hebrew merchant marine. And

the two had a profitable commercial relationship. 1Ki 10:22 refers to a fleet of ships of Tarshish which Solomon had at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years ships of Tarshish sailed off to bring back gold, silver, ivory, and rare animals. Obviously the commerce was good for Solomon. And Hiram, without a Suez Canal, was looking for a way to tap the markets of East Africa, Arabia, and the Persian Gulf. There is considerable debate over identification of “ships of Tarshish,” but they were probably a type of strong ship capable of long distance travel.

These are unconditional, eternal, and literal promises that follow and enlarge on the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant ( Ge 12:1-3; Ge 13:14-17; Ge 15:1-21; cf. Ga 3:8, 16). To be sure, the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants did not promise uninterrupted occupation of the land or enjoyment of the kingship, but they did pledge that the right to rule would always remain with David's dynasty and that his kingship ultimately would enter an eternal phase. Jesus Christ, in the line of David, was destined to fulfill these everlasting features of the covenants (cf. Lk 1:31-33). One day He will rule on the throne of David on Mount Zion in the messianic kingdom ( Ps 2).

### **David's Administrative Arrangements ( 2Sa 8:15-9:13)**

During all of David's foreign wars, which receive attention in the section on warfare, he maintained an excellent system of government at home. In saying David ruled over “all Israel” ( 8:15), the historian puts emphasis on the united kingdom. As an ideal king David maintained “law and justice” (v. 15). In connection with what follows, with the naming of heads of departments of government, the conclusion must be reached that David himself acted as chief justice of the court system and was relatively accessible to the people. Joab served as commander of the army, having gained his position by heroism in the conquest of Jerusalem ( 5:8). He maintained this role throughout David's reign until he supported Solomon's rival for the throne ( 1Ki 1-2).

### **Keeping a Promise to a Friend**

A very human and tender aspect of David's administration concerned fulfillment of his covenant with Jonathan. Appropriately the sacred historian inserted this account in the midst of his description of David's government since Jonathan had said something about David's caring for his family when the earth should be rid of David's enemies ( 1Sa 20:15). David learned that Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth, born during David's wanderings. Mephibosheth had been dropped by his nurse and crippled at age five during the flight after the disastrous battle of Mount Gilboa ( 2Sa 4:4). David had no knowledge of him, since Mephibosheth had been living in seclusion ever since. Now David summoned Mephibosheth to come to Jerusalem, gave him his personal assurances of kindness, and backed them up in a tangible way with the grant to him of all his grandfather's royal estates. Moreover, he welcomed him to the king's table to dine with his sons as a member of the family and provided him with an adequate servant staff to manage his estates.



Jehoshaphat acted as “remembrancer” ( 8:16). As recorder or historian, Jehoshaphat would have kept the annals or registered the current events. Zadok and Ahimelech, the son of Abiathar, are listed as priests ( 8:17). In the latter case the names of father and son seem to have been reversed as the result of a copyist's error. Zadok had been priest under Saul and Abiathar under David; now both retained their dignity. Seraiah as scribe or secretary of state kept the records and carried out instructions. Benaiah commanded the royal bodyguard of Cherethites and Pelethites, mercenaries from Philistia. David followed the practice of many rulers to secure a bodyguard of mercenaries rather than home guards because they were more dependent on the ruler alone. There was less chance of a rival buying them off and penetrating the palace with murder in mind.

The bureaucracy also included David's sons, who in the Hebrew are called “priests” ( 8:18). But evidently they did not perform a priestly function. In the parallel passage in 1Ch 18:17 they are called “the first at the hand of the king,” which the NIV translates as “chief officials at the king's side.” And in 1Ki 4:5 the priest is called “the king's friend,” or adviser. Justifiably the NIV translates 2Sa 8:18, “David's sons were royal advisers.”

After Absalom's rebellion and defeat, David had to reestablish his government. As he did so, the sacred historian listed the members of David's cabinet once more ( 2Sa 20:23-26). Most names are the same in both lists. Sheva succeeded Seraiah as scribe. Ira the Jairite replaced the sons of the king as a confidential adviser. With a couple of sons now gone and shaken by a filial rebellion, David might be expected to choose a personal adviser. “Adoram” ( 20:24; Hebrew text) was put in charge of the corvée, or forced labor battalion. He is probably the same person as Adoniram of 1Ki 4:6 (cf. 1Ki 12:18). The practice of exacting forced labor on public works as a form of taxation evidently developed late in David's reign and continued throughout that of Solomon's. God had warned the Israelites, when they demanded a king in the days of Samuel, that the king would establish the corvée ( 1Sa 8:16). Now reality matched the prediction.

### **David's Harem**

As with other Oriental monarchs, David assembled a harem in violation of God's express command in Dt 17:17, and numerous progeny followed. Six different wives bore David six sons in Hebron. The first two wives, Abigail and Michal, came to Hebron with David. He married the other four while there. The third was the daughter of the king of Geshur, a region of Syria northeast of Bashan. Evidently David entered this marriage for political reasons; it was designed to strengthen David's hand in the north against the kingdom of Ish-Bosheth. Absalom, born of that union, led the rebellion against his father that almost proved successful. Solomon expanded the practice of making marriage alliances with pagan rulers, resulting in considerable dilution of Yahweh worship at court and eventually among the populace. Of the last three of David's wives nothing is known.

A similar list of David's sons appears in 1Ch 3:1-4. There his second son is called Daniel and here Kileab; so he probably had two names.

### **Why David Stayed Home**

Critics sometimes charge that David's remaining in Jerusalem during the Ammonite war constituted a dereliction of duty. And he got into trouble with Bathsheba for shirking that duty. But that is not necessarily true.

Kings did not always lead their forces into war. And, in fact, the time came when the people at large insisted that David stay home from the front for his personal safety and for their good. "You are more help to us in the city," they said ( 2Sa 18:3 NKJV ). Moreover, the autocratic kings of the ancient Near East had so much administrative detail to attend to at home that they could not always handle both military and domestic affairs adequately.

When David moved to Jerusalem, he married additional wives, perhaps some for political reasons. These unnamed women bore him sons and daughters, of whom eleven sons are named. Solomon is the only one of the group who appears again in Scripture, except in parallel passages ( 2Sa 5:13-14).

### **David's Hoarding of Treasure**

David collected tremendous amounts of booty from the various peoples he conquered. From Zobah he brought the shields of gold carried on ceremonial occasions by courtiers of Hadadezer, as well as a large quantity of bronze. From Hamath came silver, gold, and bronze. And from the other nations he collected silver and gold and other wealth. Down through the ages sovereigns of the East have hoarded quantities of treasure. David did, too, but with a difference. After meeting his expenses, he dedicated vast quantities of precious metals to God for construction of the temple ( 2Sa 8:11). The shields of gold taken from Hadadezer ( 8:7) found their way into the Temple treasuries and stayed there until carried off by Shishak I of Egypt during the days of King Rehoboam in 926 B.C. ( 1Ki 14:26). So David obeyed God's command that the king shall not multiply silver and gold "for himself" ( Dt 17:17).

### **David's Failures and Punishment**

Coloring all of David's political administration and even the course of Hebrew history were David's failures and the resultant punishment. A remarkable feature of Scripture, and certainly one of the indications of its inspiration, is the fact that it does not overlook the faults of the great leaders of biblical times. No doubt this reporting is intended as a warning to others ( 1Co 10:11-12).

One day during a war against the Ammonites, David walked about on the roof of his flat-topped house after his siesta. Looking down into a nearby open courtyard he saw a beautiful woman taking a bath. One cannot exactly accuse Bathsheba of inviting

trouble, but she was not as modest as she might have been. She must have known that she could be seen from the rooftops of nearby houses. Her conduct gave rise to lustful desire in David, so he immediately inquired about her. Shortly he “took her” ( 2Sa 11:4) and had sexual relations with her. Oriental potentates reserved the right to add to their harems, but a man of God was supposed to conduct himself differently.

The Bible does not indicate that Bathsheba resisted David, and in fact she seems to have been a very ambitious woman. She came to dominate him to a degree and soon secured from him the promise that her son Solomon would take precedence over the other children in the harem and would become the next king (cf. 1Ki 1:13, 15, 17, 28). As soon as Bathsheba knew she was pregnant, she informed David so he could take steps to protect himself and her.

### **David's Accomplishments and Failures**

David's humility before the Lord ( 2Sa 7:18-22) recalled the Lord's initial assessment of him: David was a “man after [God's] own heart” ( 1Sa 13:14). David could be counted on to trust God and try to walk in His ways. But it did not mean that David would do that perfectly.

### **David as a Spiritual Leader**

Incident	Results
Trusted God to help him kill Goliath ( 1Sa 17:37).	Killed Goliath and led Israel's army in victory ( 1Sa 17:48-54).
Twice spared Saul's life ( 1Sa 24:1-7; 1Sa 26:7-12).	Showed himself to be more righteous than Saul ( 1Sa 24:16-21; 26:21).
Listened to Abigail and spared Nabal's life ( 1Sa 25:23-35).	Showed himself to be more compassionate and just than Saul (compare 1Sa 22:16-19).
Consulted the Lord before assuming the throne ( 2Sa 2:1).	Became king over Judah at Hebron ( 2Sa 2:2-4).
Relocated the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem ( 2Sa 6).	Consolidated worship at Jerusalem and established his kingdom there.
Desired to build a temple for the Lord ( 2Sa 7:1-2).	Learned that God would establish his kingdom forever ( 2Sa 7:12-16).
Honored his covenant with Jonathan by showing kindness to Mephibosheth ( 2Sa 9).	Increased the loyalty of his subjects.

## David's Spiritual Failures

Incident	Results
Took many wives for himself ( 2Sa 3:2-5; 2Sa 5:13-16; compare Dt 17:17).	Complicated his domestic life. Set a bad precedent for Solomon (compare 1Ki 11:1-4).
Allowed Joab to exterminate 18,000 Edomites ( 2Sa 8:13-14; 1Ki 11:15-16).	Raised up a permanent adversary against Solomon ( 1Ki 11:14, 1Ki 19-22).
Committed adultery with Bathsheba and had Bathsheba's husband Uriah murdered ( 2Sa 11).	Fighting among his descendants ( 2Sa 12:10; 2Sa 13:1-33). Rebellion from within his own family ( 2Sa 12:11; 2Sa 15:1-12; 1Ki 1:5-10). Public violation of his wives ( 2Sa 12:11-12; 2Sa 16:21-22). Death of Bathsheba's child ( 2Sa 12:14-19).
Took a census that God had not ordered ( 2Sa 24:1-9).	Caused the death of 70,000 Israelites. ( 2Sa 24:15-17)

David took his first step to cover himself by bringing Uriah back from the front to spend time with his wife. The pregnancy could then be passed off as a normal one within the family. But Uriah did not do what David expected. Instead, he slept at the door of the king's house with the servants.

David decided he had to dispose of Uriah. In this case it was fairly simple; he could have him killed in battle. So the king sent Uriah's death warrant to Joab by his own hand! The instruction was simple: put Uriah in a dangerous spot on the battle line and retreat from him so he would be killed. Joab loyally followed orders without question, and this privileged information henceforth would give him an advantage in dealing with David.

God left David in his unrepentant state for almost a year. In the meantime Bathsheba's son had been born. He finally sent the prophet Nathan to pronounce a twofold judgment on the wayward king: (1) The sword would never depart from his house, and insurrection would rise against him in his own household. This prophecy was fulfilled in the murder of Amnon ( 2Sa 13:28), Absalom's revolt and death ( 2Sa 18:14), and Adonijah's execution ( 1Ki 2:25). His sin certainly weakened his authority and respect with his own family. In addition, because his sins had done great injury to the cause of the true faith, Bathsheba's child would be struck down. (2) While his sin was committed in secret, his wives would be taken from him and another would violate them in broad daylight and in public. This was fulfilled by the action of Absalom ( 2Sa 16:22).

Nathan's words of judgment pierced the heart of David like an arrow. To his credit, he did not rationalize or offer excuses but bowed before God in true contrition. God graciously forgave his sin and spared his life; the record of David's spiritual experience during this crisis period appears most clearly in Ps 32 and Ps 51. But though David was pardoned and restored to divine favor, his reputation had been forever besmirched. The effects of his sin continued to plague his life and the history of his dynasty for a very long time to come. Soon after David's encounter with Nathan, Bathsheba's child fell ill and died.

A postscript to this judgment scene is a note about the second pregnancy of Bathsheba and her being comforted by a replacement for the son she had lost. The child was named Solomon, meaning "peaceable," or "a man of peace." David most likely had in mind a renewal of peace with God.

Near the end of David's reign he committed another sin. He took a complete census of his people ( 2Sa 24:1-25; cf. 1Ch 21). Since a census was not wrong in itself, the sin that was judged in the present case must have been the attitude of the king's heart. And punishment for David's sin became an occasion for the chastisement of the nation for its waywardness.

In what sense David's taking of a census was sinful has to be deduced from the context in 1 Chronicles and 2 Samuel and especially from Joab's response. That David's attitude was sinful certainly is to be seen in his pride, or self-exaltation, as he sought to glory in the number of his fighting men and the strength of his military establishment. And perhaps, worse, he fell to the temptation of measuring his real strength in terms of human and material resources instead of the "Rock" and "Shield" of chapter 2Sa 22. Joab responded, in effect, that if David had such great delight in numbers, he wished that God would greatly multiply the troops and that the king would live to see it.

Joab remonstrated with the king, evidently because he felt the king was on an "ego trip" (v. 3). He probably believed that any effort to take a census would unsettle the populace. It could raise fears of new taxes and military conscription. No amount of remonstrance on the part of Joab and the military council was of any avail, however; and the king had his way.

Evidently, soon after the census was completed, David realized he had done a very foolish thing. Conscience-smitten, he prayed to God for forgiveness. During the night God responded by delivering a message to the prophet Gad who was directed to communicate it to David. God gave the king a choice of seven years of famine, three months of pursuit before his enemies, or three days of pestilence. All would humble the pride and diminish the resources of the king. Knowing that God was merciful, David chose the last of the three alternatives.



## The Temple Mount

Mount Moriah is the rocky hilltop of Jerusalem north of the old Jebusite city of Jerusalem where Solomon built the temple. Actually the place earlier had been called the “threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” David bought it so he could offer a substitutionary sacrifice for himself and his house after he met the angel of death there during the great plague ( 2Sa 24:17).

The writer of 2Ch 3:1 calls the site Mount Moriah. Ge 22:2 speaks of the “land of Moriah,” where Abraham offered Isaac and where he received the divine visitor. Again a substitutionary sacrifice was offered. Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, linked the site of the offering of Isaac with the site of the temple ( *Antiquities* I, xiii. 2). Rabbinic literature follows this identification, and so does Muslim folklore concerning the Dome of the Rock, which stands there now. Substitutionary sacrifices of Abraham and David at the site and the whole sacrificial system of the temple point forward to the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross.

So the virulent plague descended. “From the morning until the time designated” ( 24:15), commonly taken to mean until the time of evening sacrifice (about 3:00 p.m.), seventy thousand “men” (presumably of combat age) died. At that point, on the first day instead of the third, God “relented” 2Sa 24:16 NASB ). The plague must have been terrible to kill so many in such a short time; that very fact helped to establish it as a supernatural act.

As David saw the terrifying specter of the angel of death, he offered a substitutionary sacrifice: himself and his house “Let your hand fall upon me and my family” ( 2Sa 24:17 NIV ). God responded with a command through the prophet Gad to build an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah, a descendant of one of the original Jebusite inhabitants of the city. David acted promptly and sought to buy the floor. 2Ch 3:1 makes it clear that the threshing floor of Araunah was on the northeast hill of Jerusalem, which was also Mount Moriah, the place where Abraham offered Isaac ( Ge 22:2). So this sin and its results were important in bringing under royal control the area where the Temple was later to be built.

## David, a Man after God's Own Heart

With the rehearsal of David's sins and the terrible punishment of them, we wonder how Scripture could be so positive about him and could describe him as a man after God's own heart ( Ac 13:22; cf. 1Sa 13:13-14). In fact, many sneer at the description and ask how that can be can be applied to David when he was guilty of adultery and murder. The answer must lie first in the evaluation of Saul's actions. He had been disobedient in carrying out God's direct commands. In his public policies he had failed God and later had even sought to kill God's anointed (David). Therefore, God had rejected him. And God sought out a man after His own heart to lead His people ( 1Sa 13:14).

David, on the other hand, remained faithful to God in his public pronouncements and actions. He respected the anointed of God (Saul) and refused to kill him even under the greatest duress. In his early warfare, which is all that is described in any detail, he sought God's instruction about going into battle. He made the sanctuary of God prominent in Jerusalem at the center of the affairs of state and sought to build a house for God. When denied the privilege, he amassed quantities of precious metals for the purpose instead of collecting them for himself as other Oriental potentates did. He organized the worship of Israel and honored God in prayer in the presence of the whole assembly ( 1Ch 29:10-13). Moreover, he wrote many psalms, some of which were adapted for the ritual of public worship.

Second, David was a man after God's own heart even in his private or inner life. He meditated on the Word of God and generally had a beautiful devotional life, as the psalms he wrote indicate. To be sure he sinned and sinned grievously, and he paid dearly for his failures. But what matters especially is what he did about his sins. He had a heart tender toward God. When he realized his sins or was confronted with them, he demonstrated a broken and a contrite heart and sought God's forgiveness. It must be remembered that he lived before the cross, before there was a canon of Scripture, and before the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer. His was the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul to know God. Even though he suffered shipwreck as he sailed the seas of life, by the grace of God he never went down for the third time. Modern believers may identify with him as they struggle against heavy seas, and by grace they may experience the same rescuing and sustaining hand of God.

## **The Government of Solomon**

### **Contested Accession to the Throne**

*Adonijah announced, "I will be king." ( 1Ki 1:5)*

King David was "old, advanced in years" ( 1Ki 1:1) and obviously no longer capable of governing effectively. When an absolute monarch ceases to function, there is virtually no government at all and ambitious persons grow impatient to take power.

Adonijah clearly represents such an ambitious person. Evidently he was David's eldest living son now that Amnon, Absalom, and probably Chileab had died. Though primogeniture had not been established for succession to the throne in Israel, it was common elsewhere in the Near East and in other aspects of Israelite society. Moreover, he is described as "very handsome" (v. 6) and presumably that made him somewhat popular. To bolster his image he procured chariots (state chariots, not war chariots) and horsemen and fifty runners (as a guard of honor), as Absalom had done before him ( 2Sa 15:1). Absalom also won the support of two of David's inner circle: Joab, who had served as his commander of the armed forces, and Abiathar, the high priest.

Adonijah began his usurpation, as Absalom had ( 2Sa 15:12), with a sacrifice and a common meal at which he was proclaimed king. Such a meal had the effect of uniting

his followers in a joint venture. The feast took place at En-Rogel, the southern spring of the city, located where the valleys of the Kidron and Hinnom join, near the modern village of Silwan. Invited to the feast were all the king's sons except Solomon, the Judeans who were in the king's service, and Joab and Abiathar (v. 19). Specifically excluded was the Solomonic faction, including Nathan (the court prophet), Benaiah (captain of the king's bodyguard, 2Sa 8:18; 2Sa 23:20-23), Zadok (the priest), and David's "mighty men." Either they were not invited or refused to participate in Adonijah's coronation.

Jerusalem was a small city of less than fifteen acres in David's day, and Adonijah's plans could not have been kept from the Solomonic faction for very long. Nathan swung into action and staged a carefully orchestrated drama involving the entrance of Bathsheba, his own precisely timed entrance, the manipulated response of David, and the coronation of Solomon ( 1Ki 1:11-31).

Deeply stirred by these audiences and goaded by the urgency of a coronation ceremony in progress, David acted promptly. First he called Bathsheba and assured her that Solomon would succeed him on the throne. Then he laid careful plans to defuse the impact of Adonijah's actions. He called in Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah, the ranking priest, prophet, and soldier loyal to him, and issued a series of commands.

(1) "Take the servants of your lord," the total party loyal to him, including the Cherethites and Pelethites, the palace guards. (2) "Cause Solomon... to mount my own mule," evidence that David was turning authority over to Solomon. (3) "Take him to Gihon" (just outside the east wall of the city in the Kidron Valley) and let Zadok and Nathan anoint him there (Adonijah was not officially anointed). As there was no prophet in Adonijah's camp, Nathan's presence indicated divine choice of Solomon as king. (4) "Blow the ram's horn and cry, 'Long live king Solomon,'" as a solemn proclamation after the anointing. (5) Accompany Solomon back into the city and place him on my throne where he is to be king over Israel and Judah.

### **"Oriental Cruelty" or Administrative Justice?**

Was David's advice to Solomon that he deal with Joab and Shimei just a "piece of oriental cruelty," as the critics often claim? Not necessarily. After all, both Joab and Shimei had committed acts worthy of the death penalty. Moreover, as both of them had been a problem or threat to David, they could also be a threat to Solomon. Then, too, modern Americans need to remember that ancient Semitic governance prescribed the death penalty for many crimes that would not warrant the same treatment today. In today's business world, people who were an irritant have sometimes been tolerated until a new executive or supervisor takes over—and then they are gone.

If David, in fact, erred in his judgment here, it should be noted that inspiration of Scripture does not necessarily involve approval of the conduct of an individual; it only guarantees accurate reporting of what the person thought or did.

Immediately the three stalwart supporters of the king, the Cherethites and Pelethites, and others hurried to do exactly as David had ordered. Zadok “took the horn of oil” (evidently the animal's horn that held holy anointing oil used for anointing priests and vessels of the sanctuary) “from the tent” (the tent David had set up for the ark of the covenant on Mount Zion, 2Sa 6:17) “and anointed Solomon.” “All the people,” both the official group and the spontaneous gathering, made a tremendous racket as they celebrated. “Piping with pipes” is a better rendering than “playing on flutes.” This was no gentle sweetness of orchestral flutes, but pipes used as noisemakers. The din was so great that the earth seemed almost “to burst in pieces” (v. 40).

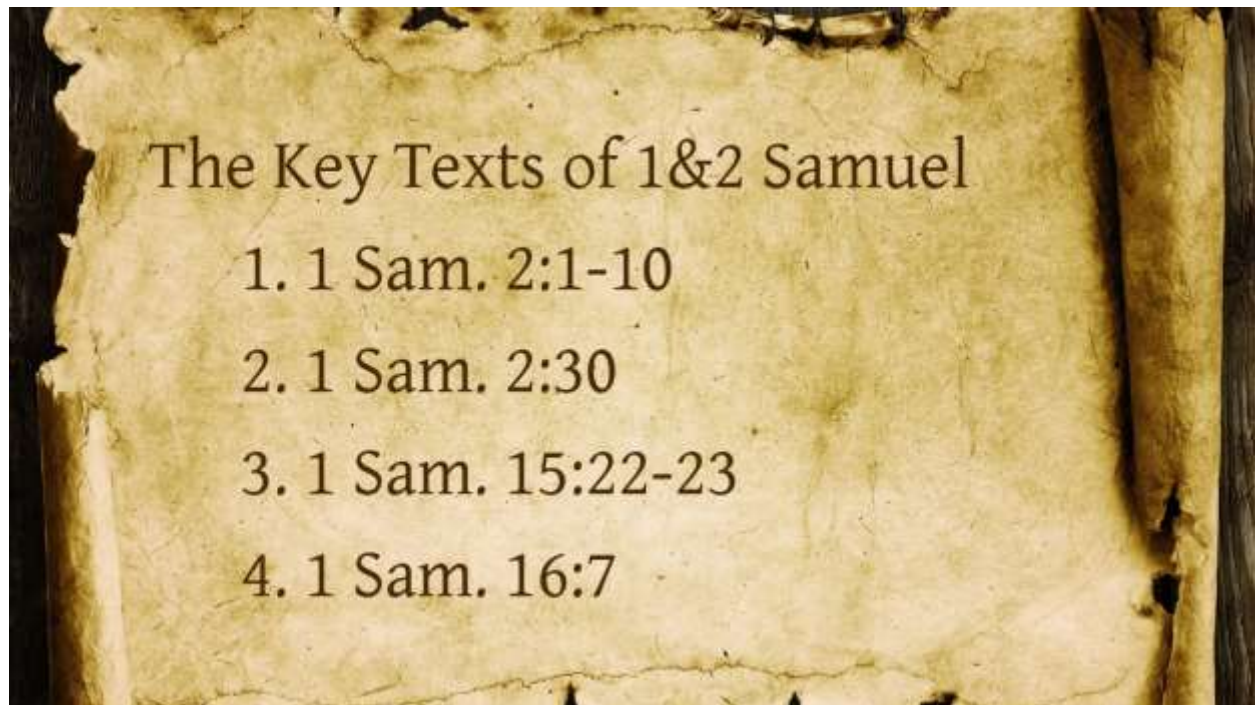
The noise of Solomon's inaugural celebration reached the ears of Adonijah and his company just as their feast was coming to an end. They could hear but not see the inauguration for although less than seven hundred yards separated the two companies, there was a slight rise in the ground and a curve in the valley between. As the group stood there looking at each other and asking questions, Abiathar's son Jonathan came on the scene and reported exactly what had happened.

The news of the day's events spread terror among Adonijah's guests. They all fled, seeking to distance themselves from the traitor as fast as they could. Adonijah fled to the tabernacle and claimed refuge by grasping the horns of the bronze altar in the tabernacle courtyard. Someone brought a report of Adonijah's action to Solomon with the plea that Adonijah not be executed. Solomon agreed on the condition that Adonijah behave himself in the future. Then Adonijah came and did homage to the newly enthroned king and Solomon sent him home in peace, with the expectation that he retire to private life.

## The Big Picture

### The Theology of 1 & 2 Samuel – Randy McCracken

<https://www.biblestudywithrandy.com/2019/08/the-theology-of-12-samuel/> (online)



See also: [Memory Verse](#)



