

Some sources were used, however, as both explicit reference (IISam. 1:18) and stylistic data show (for example, the "Court History" of David in II Sam. 11-20 has a distinct firsthand style). These sources may be the ones mentioned in 1 Chronicles 29:29 --the lives of Nathan, Gad, and Samuel were contemporaneous with the events of these books --whatever the sources were, they were skillfully blended into our present book. Samuel, then, must have been written after the death of David (II Sam. 23:1), and shortly after the division of the Kingdom (1 Sam. 27:6). The firsthand knowledge implied by the style of some parts of the book place its composition and writing about 920-900 BC.

Samuel is most prose narrative with poetic sections interspersed throughout the book (such as 1 Sam. 2:1-10; 2 Sam. 1:19-27), one parable (2 Sam. 12:1-4) and apparent court records (2 Sam. 23:8-39). Originally these books were one book in the Hebrew Bible and we will generally refer to them that way in our discussions. The Hebrew text of Samuel is one of the more troubled texts of the Old Testament but there is substantial agreement on the vast majority of the work.

In Outline form Samuel goes like this:

I. Samuel as Judge	1 Sam 1-7
II. Samuel and Saul	1 Sam 8-15
III. Samuel and David	1 Sam 16--2 Sam 1
IV. David's victories	2 Sam 2-10
V. David's Troubles	2 Sam 11-20
VI. Appendices	2 Sam 21-24

Regarding the redemptive history the books of Samuel describe a major transition in Israel's history -- from a group of related tribes in a common land to a nation united under a king. This kingship, foretold in Deuteronomy 17:14-20, was to have been that of a human vassal under the divine Suzerain (Great King). The people, however, rejected the Lord (1 Sam. 8:7) when they asked for a king because they wanted to be like "the other nations." They thus broke their covenant with the Lord which then had to be renewed (11:14--12:25). Samuel became the covenant mediator (as Moses and Joshua before him had been).

This theme of kingship and covenant is further emphasized in 2 Samuel 7, the Davidic covenant, wherein God promised an eternal dynasty to David. This was only possible by either an unending line of descendants upon the throne or by a descendent who would live forever. This promise, therefore, looked beyond Solomon to Jesus Christ, David's greater Son, for whose sake God forgave David's sins and remained faithful to His word. Several lesser themes occur with this: the importance of inner obedience rather than outward show (1 Sam 15:-2-23); the Lord's omniscience (2 Sam. 11:27), wrath against sin (12:1-2) and forgiveness (12:13); the results of sin in the lives of the children (1 Sam. 31:2, 2 Sam 13-20); and the centralization of worship at Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6).

Some very interesting questions arise including these:

Did the witch really summon Samuel from the dead (1 Sam 28)? What was the length of Saul's reign (1 Sam. 13:1)? How are the "duplicate accounts" to be explained (for example, 1 Sam. 2:31-36 and 3:11-14; 13:14 with 15:23)? Was David's name also elhanan (compare 1 Sam. 17:51 with 2 Sam. 21:19)? Why was it so serious a sin to have a census taken (2 Sam 24)? There are also a number of areas where the Samuel account must be harmonized with Chronicles.