

In archaeological concerns we see the loss of Shiloh (1 Sam. 6:21-7:1) because, according to excavations there, the Philistines apparently destroyed the city after their victory at Aphek (1 Sm. 4:10). Although some Israelites continued to live there, it ceased to function as the center for Israel's worship. 1 Samule 11:11--12:25 has long puzzled interpreters--what kingdom was to be renewed (11:14)? It has been proven that chapter 12 describes a covenant renewal ceremony (see the notes on Deuteronomy and Joshua). The reference in 11:14 therefore, is to the kingdom of the Lord and his rule over Israel. And, while there has been a great deal of digging around Jerusalem, no remains from David's time have been identified with certainty. This testifies to the severity of the destruction of the city throughout its history.

Some archaeological material is of a general corroborational sort without specifics. The passage of 1 Sam. 8:11-17 which was once thought to have been necessarily a late passage in denouncing the failures of the monarchies is now seen to be similar to Ugarit texts speaking of contemporary kings...hence there is no need to give it a later date.

Some interesting keys in the study of these books are the important passages such as the beginning of the monarchy (1 Sam. 8:6-9); the renewal of the covenant under Samuel (1 Sam. 11:12--12:25); the rejection of Saul (1 Sam. 15:1-29 and the anointing of David (16:1-13); the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:5-16) and David's sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11)

Our advice for better study is that you read through the books at one sitting, having a Bible atlas nearby to follow the action and a Bible dictionary to identify the places and people. Try to see the sections as one book which tells a complete story. Some special studies in Samuel that will help in the study are: Compare the major characters' lives (Eli and Samuel, Saul and David, etc.); look through the Psalms to find which psalms were written at what times of David's life (such as Psalms 30, 34, 51); learn who the people are (Abner, Ussah, Hushai, etc.); compare Hannah's Song (1 Sam. 2:1-10) with Mary's Magnificat (Luke 2:46-55); compare the lives of David and Jesus (for example, both were born in Bethlehem).

In classical literature and art Samuel has inspired a wealth of work. The paintings of "David Playing the Harp before Saul" and "The Reconciliation of David and Absalom" are by Rembrandt (1606-1669), "Samuel and Eli" is by John Singleton Copley (1738-1815); George Peele (1558? -197?) wrote the play "The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe"; "Absalom and Achitophel" is a poetic satire of contemporary politics by John Dryden (1631-1700); and one of the best known sculptures in the world is Michelangelo's "David." Sir Arthur Sullivan gave us the hymn "Hushed was the Evening Hymn" out of the early life of Samuel.

For further study there are almost no commentaries on the books of Samuel which fall in the middle range between scholarly, Hebrew-oriented works and Bible study guides. Ellison, H.L. JOSHUA-II SAMUEL (Eerdmans) is a good but brief commentary with helpful study questions. Davis, John J. and John C. Whitcomb. A HISTORY OF ISRAEL FROM CONQUEST TO EXILE (Baker) is a study with explanatory notes and illustrations for the study of these books.

And in just filling out this page, I will tell you that Samuel is an extremely interesting book to read...the flow of narrative will hardly let you stop until the work is completed.