



# *Finer Grounds Bible Study*

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## *2 Samuel*

### *Lesson 1: Introduction*

Welcome to our study of 2 Samuel. I am so excited to go through this amazing book with you in the coming weeks. In its pages, we read about David who is one of the greatest kings of God's people, the Israelites. David, who is introduced as a shepherd boy in 1 Samuel, is selected to replace Israel's first king, King Saul. After David's introduction in 1 Samuel, the reader anticipates the day that David will rule over God's people. 2 Samuel describes how God helps David to become king after the death of Saul, how God gives David victory over Israel's enemies, and how God blesses David with the covenantal promise of an everlasting dynasty.

However, 2 Samuel does not end with "and they lived happily ever after." David is introduced as the "man after God's own heart," but he does not always live up to this description. He fails miserably and suffers many consequences for his sins. Even as David fails, God remains faithful and continues to perfectly administer justice, mercy, and grace. Like every book of the Bible, 2 Samuel reveals God's plan to redeem humanity. From our study of 2 Samuel, I hope that you will come to a better understanding of who God is, what He has done, and what He is going to do for His people.

Before we dive into the text, let's start by looking at the book as a whole. 2 Samuel is one of the historical books of the bible as it describes the history of the nation of Israel. At one time, it was combined with 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings in the Hebrew Bible as one book. The books were separated in later translations.

**Read 1 Chronicles 29:29**

The book is named for Samuel, the prophet, priest, and judge who rescued Israel from the Philistines and from their idolatry. However, the book was not written by Samuel, at least entirely. In fact, he dies in 1 Samuel 25:1. 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel were likely compiled after the events in the book using the records of Samuel and two other prophets, Gad and Nathan. As we read through 2 Samuel, you will see that these two prophets are key figures at important points in David's life. No matter who compiled the book, we know that the compiler(s) were inspired by God himself (Timothy 3:16).

2 Samuel describes the events from the death of King Saul, the first king of Israel, to the end of King David's reign. We cannot concretely date the events of this period. The reign of David lasts 40 year and is approximately dated to 1010 BC to 970 BC, but those dates are often adjusted a few decades in either direction.

While the book covers an almost 40-year period, it does not necessarily relate the events of this time chronologically. We know this because events referred to early in the book are discussed in detail later. As you read, do not think of 2 Samuel as a descriptive timeline. The book records historical events, but groups them together by theme so that the reader will understand deeper truths about the nature of God and the nature of men. Keeping in mind that the book is thematically organized will help you better understand the importance of certain details and will help you understand why other details seem to be "left out."

Before we begin reading 2 Samuel, we must understand the book that precedes it.



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**Read 1 Samuel. Pay special attention to the life of David and how he is described.**

Who is worthy to rule God's people? This is the question that 1 and 2 Samuel answers. When the Israelites ask for a king in 1 Samuel, the Bible makes clear that God's people had rejected Him as their divine ruler.

**Read 1 Samuel 8:6-18. List some of God's warnings concerning an earthly king.**

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**Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20. List the laws for the king. What promise was associated with these laws (17:20)?**

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While God desired to be the sole ruler of His chosen people, He allowed them to have a king as requested. He gave them Saul, a man who fit all the qualifications that the Israelites wanted in a king.

**Read 1 Samuel 9-11. What were some of Saul's strengths and weaknesses?**

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**Reread 1 Samuel 10:23-24. What does Samuel point out as Saul's key attributes?**

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Saul would be the king that fulfilled the desires of the people. He looked the part. He was tall, handsome, from a wealthy family—all the things that would usually indicate earthly success.

Saul would go on to do great things for Israel. He united the tribes, organized a standing army, and had considerable military success against Israel's enemies. He led the Israelites successfully into battle, again satisfying the hopes of the Israelites. However, when it came to his devotion to God, Saul fell short.

**Read 1 Samuel 13-15. What did Saul do that displeased God and what did God decree as punishment for Saul's actions?**

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While Saul fulfilled the desires of Israel, he failed to hold fast to God's direct commands. Saul neglected to wipe-out the Amalekites completely and saved their best animals for himself. God condemned Saul's disobedience and decreed that Saul would lose the kingdom to a man who was of better character, a man after God's own heart.

**Read 1 Samuel 16. Who was anointed king in Saul's place?**

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**Review 1 Samuel 16-31. What kind of man was David?**

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**Make a list of his strengths and weakness. Describe David's relationship with God.**

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**How does David's relationship with God compare to Saul's relationship?**

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It is clear from David's introduction in 1 Samuel 16 that he was "the man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). God chose him not because of his appearances or position, but because of what He saw in the boy's heart. As David's story unfolds, we come to know him as a man who trusted in God through successes and through failures. In contrast, Saul looked to the strength and approval of his people for approval and legitimacy. Realizing that David was gaining favor with the people, Saul decided to ignore godly counsel and attempted to kill David. Despite opposition from a jealous King Saul, David pursued God's way with God's promise of kingship in mind. While David faltered along the way (1 Samuel 27), he sought repentance and accepted correction (1 Samuel 30). By the end of 1 Samuel, the reader is convinced that David was the right man to rule Israel.

While 1 Samuel clearly shows David to be a man who seeks God's favor, it also clearly proves that King Saul was a man who sought the approval of his people over the approval of God. Several instances of disobedience caused God to withdraw His favor from Saul.

**Read 1 Samuel 28 and Chronicles 10:13-14. Considering what you already read in 1 Samuel 13-15 and Deuteronomy 17:14-20, why did Saul lose his kingdom, and his life?**

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2 Samuel begins with the death of King Saul and his three eldest sons. Once the throne is cleared for David to reign, the reader anticipates the result of Israel being ruled by a righteous king.

If this were a fairytale, the image of David assuming the throne would be the last page of the book. All would be right in the kingdom as the hero becomes the leader of his loyal subjects. David's story turns out to be not so idyllic.

**Read 2 Samuel from beginning to end. There are a lot of moving parts to this book. As you read, make a list of major characters (including enemy peoples like the Philistines) and major events. Try to connect the characters to the events.**

After reading through the books, you may have noticed that there are several intertwining story lines that continue from 1 Samuel.

The main story is that of David and how he became king, how he ruled, and how he prepared for his son to reign after him. There are two pivotal points in David's story. The first is in 2 Samuel 7. In this chapter, God made a covenant with David. He promised to put David's son on the throne after David's death and to establish David's dynasty forever. This unconditional promise defined the rest of David's life, and effects the course of the rest of the Bible. The fulfillment of God's covenant with David becomes a blessing for the whole world when a descendent of David, Jesus, comes to Earth as the King of Kings.

The other pivotal moment is in 2 Samuel 11. Just as God's generous covenant changed the course of David's life, David's sin with Bathsheba changed everything for the king. His disobedience caused misery for himself, for his family, and for the people of Israel.

While David is the focus of 2 Samuel, the book also spends some time on the fate of Saul's family. Saul's three eldest sons died with him on Mount Gilboa, but other sons and grandsons remain. As you read throughout 2 Samuel, the



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fate of these descendants of Saul becomes the focus of several short episodes in the book.

The final story line that almost finds completion in 2 Samuel is that of the Ark of the Covenant and the restoration of proper worship in Israel. In the beginning of 1 Samuel, we discover that Israel's worship at the tabernacle was mismanaged by the unfaithful priests Hophni and Phineas (1 Samuel 2:12-36). These same priests took the Ark into battle against the Philistines. God allowed the Philistines to defeat the Israelites and the Ark was captured by the Philistines and the tabernacle likely destroyed (1 Samuel 4). After the Ark wreaks havoc in Philistia, it was returned to Israel, but the priests forgot how to handle God's symbol of His presence correctly (1 Samuel 5-6). So, it was kept in the house of Abinidab in Kireath-Jearim, and the Israelites remain unable to worship God as He prescribed (1 Samuel 7:1).

In 2 Samuel, David set out to restore the Ark to a prominent place in both the figurative and physical heart of Israel. This mission was not without mishaps, but eventually, David found the way to obediently bring the Ark back to a place of prominence in the lives of God's people.

Now that you have an idea of the main story lines of 2 Samuel, let's turn to the main theological theme of the book. In 1 Samuel, we focused on how a king chosen based on the people's preferences (Saul) compared to the king chosen by God's preferences (David). We saw through the contrast between Saul and David the superiority of God's requirements for a king over the people's desires.

In 2 Samuel, we will see how even God's chosen human king is not sufficient to reign his people in perfect justice and righteousness. While David does a lot of things well, we see through his sin with Bathsheba that a greater king is

required. That king is our king: Jesus. We need a king who rules us justly and mercifully. We need a king who can take care of our sin problem. We need Jesus. Through our study, we will compare King David to King Jesus. We will see their great similarities and their glaring differences. By the end of our study, I hope that you will have a greater appreciation for what Jesus did, and does, for us.

**Read through 2 Samuel again. Try to become familiar with all the names and events. Write down any questions you have that are not readily answered by the text.**

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