

### Message #1

### Various Texts

Let's begin this by a hypothetical illustration. Let's say it is an election year. Our vote will count. Here are the candidate options we will have at the time of the election:

Candidate Option #1 - This candidate will consult faith healers and psychics. He will have two mistresses, chain smokes and drinks 8-10 martinis a day.

Candidate Option #2 - This candidate was previously kicked out of office two times. He sleeps until noon, he used opium in college and drinks a quart of brandy every night.

Candidate Option #3 - This candidate was a decorated war hero. He doesn't smoke and is a disciplined vegetarian. He does drink a beer every now and then, but going into this election, he has not had any immoral affairs.

Now which one would get your vote? Based on those options, who would you select?

Candidate #1 was Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Candidate #2 was Winston Churchill.

Candidate #3 was Adolf Hitler.

Based on our understanding of things, we would probably not put the right person into power because God's choices frankly, most of the time, are not our choices. But God's choices are always right.

There is a book in the Bible that tells a story like that. It is the book of I Samuel. It tells a story of the sovereign choices and work of God in promoting His leader. I guarantee us this, if the pick for Israel's king would have been left to us, we would have never chosen Saul as King and we would have never chosen David as King. Even Samuel, the godliest prophet on earth, thought a better pick was one of the other sons of Jesse other than David.

God's choices at times to us will appear to be odd choices because His ways are not our ways. He will choose some odd ducks and they will become Pastors, Elders, Deacons, Christians. He will take a person that appears to be a loser and turn them into a winner. That is something we see and learn from I Samuel and in the next weeks, we want to travel through the book.

### QUESTION #1 – Why study I Samuel?

We would like to present three reasons for studying this book:

**Reason #1** - Because I Samuel is one of only 66 inspired books that God has put into writing.

There are only 39 God-inspired books in the O.T. and only 66 total books He inspired that are in the world. I Samuel is one of those books. This is all the motivation we need to study it.

The O.T. books of the Bible were written, carefully copied and preserved by the nation Israel. In fact, Paul said we owe a great debt to Israel for this very fact (Romans 9:4). I Samuel has always been one of the O.T. books and several things from I & II Samuel, have been actually discovered, such as Solomon's Temple, which makes it impossible to doubt its historical accuracy as an inspired book of God.

One commentator said, "the canonicity of the book (*I Samuel*) has never been questioned." This is true in the Jewish Scriptures and this is true in the Christian Church. For some reason some portions of the Masoretic Hebrew Text (Hebrew text compiled by Jewish textual Scribes known as Masoretes from 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.) are in a poor state of preservation. Some have speculated that part of the Hebrew text was either worm-eaten or frayed due to overuse. What this has done is forced students to carefully study the text to determine precisely the accurate word.

When the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the Qumran Caves in 1947, it was discovered that the Greek Translation of the Hebrew text (Septuagint) of I Samuel was closer to the original Hebrew in some places than the Hebrew Masoretic text. The Septuagint is extremely important to I Samuel.

Actually, First and Second Samuel were originally one book in the Hebrew Bible called "The book of Samuel." It was the Septuagint (250 B.C.) that divided the book of Samuel into two books. They originally called it I and II Kingdoms. Jerome changed the name of the book in A.D. 400 to I & II Samuel and it has been in the Hebrew text this way ever since.

It is clear that God sovereignly preserved this as one of His rare books. In fact, important fragments of Samuel were found in Qumran Cave #1 and another in Qumran Cave #4, which is thought to be the oldest piece of Biblical Hebrew in existence, dating back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.. When we study I Samuel, we are studying a rare book that God Himself has inspired and put into print.

Ezra exemplifies the kind of attitude we should have when we study any book of the Bible: "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).

**Reason #2** - Because I Samuel is a book filled with interesting stories.

I Samuel is a book that is so interesting and dramatic that Hollywood has made movies about some of the stories in the book. Perhaps the most famous of all is David and Goliath. As near as I can determine there have been over ten Hollywood movies made about just this one story. But there are more stories than just that one.

You will be intrigued and impressed with the story of Hannah. You will be appalled by the story of Eli's sons. You will be angered by the proud audacity of the Philistines, but you will cheer at the victories over the Philistines.

You will be excited by watching God recapture His own Ark of the Covenant. You will be dumbfounded and mystified by the bizarre leadership of Saul.

You will be thrilled when David finally is made King. All of these stories are in I Samuel. But these stories are not just interesting stories to be made into a movie. God did not inspire this book to tell a bunch of interesting historical stories. **These stories are designed to take us deep in our understanding of God. These stories are designed to reveal critical truth about how God works in this world and in our lives. We will learn much about God as we study I Samuel.**

**Reason #3** - Because I Samuel is a critical transitional leadership book of the Old Testament.

I Samuel is a needed transitional book in the Old Testament and in the history of Israel. There is an overlapping connection between Samuel and Joshua and Judges. In fact, I Samuel opens with a conjunction “now” (I Sam. 1:1), which immediately connects us to the book of Judges. One commentator said you are not ready for I Samuel until you have been through Judges.

When the book of Judges ended, it ended with these words, “In those days there was no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” **I Samuel is a transition book for Israel that develops from the rule by judges to the rule by kings (Acts 13:20-22).** God’s choice of Government structure is a Righteous Kingdom ruled by a Righteous King.

In more than three centuries since Joshua, Israel’s spirituality deteriorated. Things in the book of Judges were wild and things spiraled down to the point that by the time the book ends, everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes.

When God’s people reach this level of rebellion, there will be consequences. God wants His people being governed by His Word and there are consequences for His people if they refuse this. I Samuel is a book that critically develops that theme.

**QUESTION #2** – Who wrote I Samuel?

It is not known for certain who actually wrote I Samuel because the text does not say. The Babylonian Talmud (A.D. 500) claims that Samuel himself wrote the first 24 chapters and Nathan and Gad wrote the rest of I Samuel and all of II Samuel (I Chron. 29:29). This is a very reasonable conclusion.

**QUESTION #3** – Who are the main characters of the book of I Samuel?

**There are three main characters that show up in I Samuel: I Samuel 1-7 the main character is Samuel. I Samuel 8-15 the main character is Saul. I Samuel 16-31 the main character is David.** Every one of these men is used by God for His purposes in His time and His program.

**QUESTION #4 – When was Samuel written?**

To help us determine the date of writing, we need to observe some key things:

- 1) King Saul reigned for 40 years somewhere near 1050-1010 B.C. (Acts 12:21).
- 2) King David reigned for 40 years somewhere near 1010-970 B.C. (II Sam. 5:4).
- 3) King Solomon reigned for 40 years near 970-931 B.C. (Kings 11:42).

We know from I Samuel 25:1 that much of the book was written after the death of Samuel. We also may observe from I Samuel 27:6 that much of the book was written after there had been a division of the Kingdom in Israel–Israel and Judah. Ziklag, who is mentioned in this verse, was one of the Kings of Judah, which would make the date of compilation after 931 B.C., because the kingdom split after Solomon’s death (I Kings 11:43-12:23).

We also may observe now from several texts in I Samuel that some time had elapsed between the actual events and compilation of the book. The phrase “to this day” indicates that–I Sam. 5:5; 6:18; 27:6; 30:25.

**Taking all of these things into consideration, we cannot be far from the date of complete compilation of I Samuel if we suggest 925-900 B.C..**

I Samuel was a needed book. Solomon was dead (931 B.C.) and the Kingdom was split. I Samuel says there needs to be godly leadership that can lead into the blessings of God.

**QUESTION #5 – What is the actual title of the book of I Samuel?**

This question, which is so basic, has been the cause of mass confusion in Biblical study.

The two books of Samuel (I & II Samuel) were originally one book, which was called by the Masoretes (5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) “The book of Samuel.” In fact, a copy of I & II Samuel was found in Qumran Cave 4 and the book was treated as simply one book of Samuel.

At the end of II Samuel, the Masoretic notes say there are a total of 1,506 verses in Samuel and that I Samuel 28:24 is the middle verse of the “book” (not books).

The translators of the Greek Septuagint (250-300 B.C.) brought the two books of Samuel and the two books of Kings together and divided it into four sections called “Books of the Kingdoms.” In this classification, Kings I is I Samuel; King 2 is II Samuel; King 3 is I Kings and King 4 is II Kings.

When the Latin Vulgate was translated by Jerome (A.D. 383-405), it made a division between Samuel and Kings and the Vulgate called the two books of Samuel–I & II Samuel and the two books of the Kings–I & II Kings.

The division, as we have it in our Bibles, was first introduced into the Hebrew Text by Daniel Bomberg, who was a printer in Venice, who published a Hebrew Bible in A.D. 1516.

Ever since A.D. 1516, the books have been called I & II Samuel. **The actual title I Samuel does not denote the specific author, but a specific character that is key to the narrative.**

It is like Joshua, Ruth and Esther. They do not denote who wrote the book; they denote a prominent person of the book.

#### **QUESTION #6 – What is the theme of I Samuel?**

This is not a simple question to answer and to try to form an answer there are some Biblical and historical facts to take into consideration:

- 1) When the book of Joshua ended, Israel was in the land and was right with God (Josh. 24:31).
- 2) One generation after Joshua's death, Israel did not know the LORD (Judges 2:8-10).
- 3) Israel was spread out all throughout the Promised Land and throughout the book of Judges kept falling into deep sin. God would bring an oppressor against Israel who would raid Israel in punishment, then Israel would repent so God would raise up a judge and supernaturally empower him to deliver Israel. By the time the book ends, everyone is doing that which is right in his own eyes. **I Samuel will open with the birth of one who will begin to bring some law and order to a chaotic Israel.**
- 4) When I Samuel opens, Israel is at a real low—both spiritually and militarily.
  - A. The priesthood is so corrupt that Eli's sons were worthless men who were committing idolatry and immorality at the place of worship (I Sam. 2:12, 22).
  - B. Two major military threats were intimidating Israel:
    1. The Philistines who lived west of the Jordan and controlled all making of military weapons (I Sam. 13:19-22).
    2. The Amorites who were fierce desert warriors east of the Jordan (I Sam. 11:1-11).
- 5) God had predicted that He would sovereignly produce and appoint kings for Israel (Gen. 17:5-7; Deut. 17:14-20).

What was needed to get the nation back on track was godly leadership, who could and would point the nation back in the right direction. Right leadership is critical to the blessings of God. **Right leadership is what I Samuel is all about.**

This all sets the stage for the theme of the book which we think is this:

**No matter how dark or depressing the time or situation, God will always deliver His elect in His sovereign time in accordance with His sovereign power and plan. God will raise up the right people at the right time to lead His flock in the right direction.**

God is a sovereign God. He uses all kinds of people and situations to accomplish His sovereign will. But He greatly uses those who are faithful to Him.

I Samuel will cause each of us to ask: Am I like Samuel or Eli's sons? Am I like Saul or David? There are great stories to see in this book, but this book will cause each of us to look at ourselves.