

The United Kingdom: A Chronological Perspective

The period of Samuel's judgeship forms a transition leading to the establishment of a kingdom in Israel. Three kings, Saul, David and Solomon, were to reign over all the tribes of Israel. The Bible readings for this quarter take us through this period of the united kingdom. At the death of Solomon the kingdom divided. The readings for the next quarter deal with the divided kingdom.

Each of the first three kings—Saul (Acts 13:21), David (1 Kings 2:11) and Solomon (1 Kings 11:42)—is said to have reigned for forty years. The following dates (from the New Bible Dictionary, 217) give at least an approximation close enough for most purposes.

Saul	1051/50 - 1011/10
David	1011/10 - 971/70
Solomon	971/70 - 931/30

A few other figures will help us get our chronological bearings as we start this study. For example, the exodus from Egypt was 480 years before the fourth year of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 6:1) – hence, about 1447 or 1446 B. C. Israel had been in Egypt 430 years (Ex. 12:40-41), putting the entrance into Egypt at about 1877 or 1876 B. C. Finally, the numerical data of the book of Genesis would seem to indicate something over 200 years as the period from Abraham's entrance into Canaan to Jacob's entrance into Egypt.

Lesson One | First Samuel 1-3

Samuel and the Last Days of the Judges First Samuel 1-7

First Samuel 1-7 completes the history of the judges. As indicated above, these chapters deal with a transition period leading up to the kingdom. Both Eli and Samuel are said to have judged Israel (1 Sam. 4:18; 7:6, 15-17). But Eli was primarily a priest (1:3, 9) and Samuel primarily a prophet (3:19-4:1).

Birth of Samuel (Ch. 1)

1. In a civil sense Elkanah was an Ephraimite (v. 1); but of what tribe was he (and his son Samuel) by birth and descent? (1 Chron. 6:26-27, 33-35).

- 2a. Describe Elkanah's family (vv. 1-8).

- 2b. How is this passage a demonstration of the evil consequences of polygamy?

- 2c. Can you think of other cases reflecting such evils?

3. Why did Elkanah's family go to Shiloh each year? (cf. Ex. 34:23; Deut. 16:16).¹

¹ The tabernacle was evidently located at Shiloh since Joshua 18:1. Learn the location of Shiloh on the map. See also Deuteronomy 12:1-14 for background on this eating of sacrificial meals at the tabernacle.

4. Why was Hannah sad?
5. Describe Hannah's prayer (vv. 9-18).
6. What was her vow?²
7. How was Hannah's prayer answered? (vv. 19-20).³
8. How did Hannah fulfill her vow? (vv. 21-28).⁴

Song of Hannah (2:1-10)

1. As Hannah dedicates her son to Jehovah she pours out the feelings of her heart. What emotions does she express?
2. How does this prayer differ from her prayer in Chapter 1?

² Consult Numbers 6 for background on v. 11. What was a Nazirite?

³ Discuss this passage as an illustration of how God answers prayer. Contrast this case with Matthew 1:18-25 which deals with another birth in which God was active but in a different way. Discuss the difference between miracle and natural law. Does God perform a miracle every time he answers prayer? See also James 5:17-18 compared with First Kings 18:41-46 which shows how God answered a prayer for rain.

⁴ Second Maccabees 7:27 gives evidence that a child may be as much as three years old before being weaned.

Judgment on the House of Eli (2:11-36)

- 1a. What were the sins of Eli's sons? (vv. 12-17, 22).⁵

- 1b. Discuss how irreligion may lead to immorality.

- 2a. Describe the progress of Samuel in contrast to the sons of Eli (vv. 18-21, 26).

- 2b. Did his parents "lose touch" with him after leaving him with Eli?

3. Describe the punishment to come upon the family of Eli (vv. 27-36). See First Kings 2:26-27, 35 for fulfillment.

- 4a. Who were Hophni and Phinehas? (v. 34).

- 4b. What would be the significance of their death?

Call of Samuel (3:1-9)

1. What explains why Samuel did not immediately recognize that Jehovah was the one speaking to him?

2. Notwithstanding Deuteronomy 18:15-19, verse 1 says revelation from God was rare "in those days." Explain why.

⁵ For the law on the first of these points see Leviticus 7, especially vv. 28-36.

- 2a. What does Amos 8:11-14 (with 7:12-13) suggest as to what conditions would cause “a famine of hearing the words of Jehovah”?
- 2b. Were such conditions present in the time of Samuel? Give evidence.
3. How does the latter part of verse 2 help explain what follows?
4. Explain what is said about “the lamp of God” (v. 3) in the light of Exodus 27:20-21; 30:7-8 & Leviticus 24:1-4.

Jehovah’s Announcement to Samuel (3:10-14)

1. What is the announcement Jehovah made to Samuel?
2. Why was Eli blamed for the sins of his sons? He had warned them (2:23-25). But what should he have done that he did not do?

Effects of the Announcement (3:15-18)

Samuel’s disclosure of God’s revelation to him did not give Eli any information that he did not already have. But it did have two effects:

1. What did Eli’s reaction show about his character?
2. What did Samuel’s faithful delivery of such a message show about himself?

Transition to the Account of Samuel's Prophetic Ministry (3:19-4:1a)

- 1a. How was Jehovah's presence with Samuel manifested?

- 1b. What is the meaning of "fall to the ground" in verse 19?

2. What reputation did Samuel get?

3. Where did Jehovah reveal himself to Samuel?