

2 Samuel

Soon after the death of Saul, David the king-elect becomes monarch first over Judah (where he reigns with Hebron as the capital for seven and one-half years) and finally over all Israel (where he makes Jerusalem the capital and reigns for thirty-three years). Thus, Second Samuel chronicles the forty-year reign of the man who lived at the halfway point between Abraham and Christ - about 1000 b.c. David's triumphs bring the nation to the very zenith of its power. But his dual sins of adultery and murder bring personal and national chastening from the Lord. Throughout his life, David seeks God zealously and confesses his sins promptly - actions befitting the one called by God "a man after My own heart" (Acts 13:22).

INTRODUCTION

The Second Book of Samuel records the highlights of David's reign, first over the territory of Judah, and finally over the entire nation of Israel. It traces the ascension of David to the throne, his climactic sins of adultery and murder, and the shattering consequences of those sins upon his family and the nation.

The books of First and Second Samuel were originally one book in the Hebrew Bible, known as the "Book of Samuel" or simply "Samuel." This name has been variously translated "The Name of God," "His Name Is God," "Heard of God," and "Asked of God." Samuel has been divided into two books even though it is one continuous account. This division artificially breaks up the history of David.

AUTHOR

The author of First and Second Samuel is anonymous, but Jewish talmudic tradition says that it was written by Samuel. Samuel may have written the first portion of the book, but his death recorded in First Samuel 25:1 makes it clear that he did not write all of First and Second Samuel. Samuel did write a book (10:25), and written records were available. As the head of a company of prophets (see 10:5; 19:20), Samuel would be a logical candidate for biblical authorship.

Second Samuel was probably compiled by one man who combined the written chronicles of Nathan the prophet and Gad the seer (1 Chr. 29:29). In addition to these written sources, the compiler evidently used another source called "the Book of Jasher" (1:18). (See comments under First Samuel.)

DATE & SETTING

The date of the composition for First and Second Samuel was sometime after the death of Solomon (931 b.c.) but before the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom (722 b.c.). It is likely that Samuel was composed early in the divided kingdom, perhaps around 900 b.c.

The story of David begins in First Samuel 16 and ends in First Kings 2. Second Samuel records the major events of David's forty-year rule. His reign in Hebron begins in 1011 b.c. and ends in 1004 b.c. (5:5). His thirty-three year reign over the united Judah and Israel lasts from 1004 b.c. to 971 b.c.