

1 SAMUEL - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. Who do you think wrote this book? Why aren't we given the name of the author? Does that lessen its authority? When was it written?
2. What is meant when it says that the Lord closed Hannah's womb? (1 Samuel 1:5) Did Hannah make a wise choice in giving her son to be raised by Eli? After seeing Eli's sons, would you? (1 Samuel 2:12-17) If you had been Eli would you have accepted this "gift?" If you had been Elkanah would you have accepted Hannah's decision?
3. What do you think of the way Eli's sons were treating the worshipers and even their respect for the sacrifices that were being offered? (1 Samuel 2:12-17,22) Why do you think Eli's sons wanted to grab some of the meat before the fat was removed and before it was boiled? Was it really the Lord's will that they be put to death? (1 Samuel 2:25)
4. Who was the "man of God" who came to bear the message to Eli? (1 Samuel 2:27) Are there other unnamed "prophets" in the scripture? Who was the faithful priest predicted in the prophecy spoken to Eli? (1 Samuel 2:35)
5. Why do you think the soldiers, including Hophni and Phineas decided to bring the ark into battle? (1 Samuel 4:3) Are they the only ones who did it? (Compare Numbers 10:33-36; 1 Samuel 14:3,18)
6. What do we learn from the whole story of the "ark vs. dagon?" Try to imagine yourself as a Philistine there observing all this. Could you kneel down and worship a cemented-together "god?" (1 Samuel 5:1-5) What do you think of the Philistine's comments about Pharaoh's hardening of his heart? (1 Samuel 6:6)
7. Why does God appear to give the impression that the ark was some sort of Magical Box with mysterious powers? Why were so many Israelites killed for looking into the ark? (1 Samuel 6:19) How many were there?
8. Notice that the Lord threw the Philistines into a "panic" and caused a "great destruction". (1 Samuel 5:9 (compare Deuteronomy 7:20,22 and Joshua 10:10; 24:12; Judges 4:15; 8:12; 20:41; 1 Samuel 5:9,11; 7:10; 14:15; 2 Chronicles 20:22) How does this relate to the "hornets" in Exodus 23:27,28?
9. What were the people asking for and what choices did they have when they asked for a king? Where did Samuel get his information about what a king would do to them? Considering the story of the Levite and his concubine (Judges 19-21) and what happened subsequently, would you as an Israelite have been happy to appoint a Benjaminite as the first king? (1 Samuel 8; 9:1)
10. Why didn't every adult male in Israel, including Saul, know Samuel when he saw him? (1 Samuel 9:14-19) Hadn't he been attending the ceremonies? (Deuteronomy 16)
11. If God was able to change Saul into a different person, why didn't He make the change a little more permanent? (1 Samuel 10:9) Why would God choose someone like Saul if He knew what he would do? What was the reason or purpose for giving all the apparently miraculous signs at the time of Saul's anointing? (1 Samuel 10:2-16) Why did God communicate so often by the use of "signs" in those days? (Saul-1 Samuel 10:1-13; Jonathan and his armor-bearer-1 Samuel 14:6-15) If we had more faith, would God give us more signs today? Why would God use such unusual methods to defeat the purposes of Saul as those found in 1 Samuel 19:18-24? Would you respect a king who acted in this way?
12. Notice the big difference between Samuel's attitude towards bribes etc. (1 Samuel 12:1-5) and that of his sons earlier? (1 Samuel 8:1-2) What do you think of Samuel's entire speech? (1 Samuel 12) Why didn't Samuel

arrive at Gilgal on time? (1 Samuel 13:8) Was the Lord involved in this?

13. What do you think of Saul's rash demand that they eat no food? (1 Samuel 14:28) What was the ultimate result when they actually got some food? (1 Samuel 14:31-33)
14. If the Lord refused to answer Saul's prayer earlier, why did He apparently guide the casting of lots to choose the one who had eaten? (1 Samuel 14:37-43) Notice the response of the people in saving Jonathan (1 Samuel 14:45; Compare the stories of Jephthah's daughter, [Judges 11:29,-40]; and Salome when she requested the head of John the Baptist [Matthew 14:6-12])
15. Compare Samuel's predictions about what a king would do (1 Samuel 8:11-18) with what Saul actually did (1 Samuel 14:52). Why do you think Saul failed to carry out the specific orders of God? Was it just greed?
16. What do you think of Samuel's and Saul's conversation at Gilgal (1 Samuel 15:10-35) and the rejection of Saul. With His foreknowledge, why did God choose Saul in the first place? What about Samuel's comments about God in the light of all that had been happening?
17. Is it true that God does not change His mind? (1 Samuel 15:29; Numbers 23:19; Malachi 3:6) If so how do you explain 1 Samuel 15:10; 15:35—"The Lord was sorry that he had made Saul king" and "the Lord changed his mind about punishing the people"? (2 Samuel 24:16,25) What should we do with passages in the Old Testament suggesting that God "repents"? Repentance suggests changing one's mind. Could this ever apply to God? (See Genesis 6:6; Exodus 32:14; Judges 2:18; 10:16; 1 Samuel 15:11,35; 2 Samuel 24:16; 1 Chronicles 21:15; Jeremiah 26:13,19; Ezekiel 24:14; Joel 2:13,14; Amos 7:3,6; Jonah 3:9,10; 4:2; Compare Psalms 2:12).
18. What should we conclude from the question that the people of Bethlehem asked Samuel when he came to anoint David? (1 Samuel 16:4) What do you think they were expecting?
19. If the Lord doesn't look at the outward appearance, but only at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7) why did He choose Saul? Why did Samuel anoint David fairly openly, when he had anointed Saul secretly? (1 Samuel 9:24-10:1)
20. What is the meaning of the expression, "an evil spirit from the Lord tormented Saul" (1 Samuel 16:14,15,16,23; 18:10; 19:9; 20:33; contrast 10:9-11; 11:6; 16:14; 19:20-24)
21. What was the army of Israel doing for 40 days listening to Goliath's speech every day? (1 Samuel 17:16) What do you think of David's speech to Goliath? (1 Samuel 17:45) Who do you think inspired the ladies to sing that song which led to such jealousy on the part of Saul? (1 Samuel 18:7; 21:11) It was obviously an exaggeration, David was just a young boy?
22. What do you think of the price that Saul asked for the hand of his daughter? (1 Samuel 18:25-27—the foreskins of 100 dead Philistines) What was Saul hoping would happen?
23. Why were there idols in David's home? (1 Samuel 19:9-17) Why was lying apparently done so frequently and so casually? What about Michal's lying? (1 Samuel 19:17) What about David's lying to the priests? (1 Samuel 21:1-2) What about David's lying to the king of Ziklag on multiple occasions? (1 Samuel 27:8-12)
24. Was it right for David to eat the "consecrated bread"? (1 Samuel 21:1-6; Compare Matthew 12:3,4; Mark 2:25,26; Luke 6:3)
25. Didn't David trust God enough to take care of him? Why did he have to feign madness? (1 Samuel 21:10-15)
26. Why did the Lord refuse to answer Saul and thus drive him to seek the "witch of Endor" to call up "Samuel" for him? (1 Samuel 28:6-16 Compare 1 Chronicles 10:13)

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