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Discover Your Bible Series

Discover 2 SAMUEL



STUDY GUIDE

STUDY GUIDE

Discover **2 SAMUEL**



by
Steven L. Petroelje



Grand Rapids, Michigan

*“The LORD himself will establish a house for you: . . .
I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own
flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. . . .
Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before
me; your throne will be established forever.”*

2 Samuel 7:11-16

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How to Study

The questions in this study booklet will help you discover for yourself what the Bible says. This is inductive Bible study—in which you will discover the message for yourself.

Questions are the key to inductive Bible study. Through questions you search for the writers' thoughts and ideas. The questions in this booklet are designed to help you in your quest for answers. You can and should ask your own questions too. The Bible comes alive with meaning for many people as they discover the exciting truths it contains. Our hope and prayer is that this booklet will help the Bible come alive for you.

The questions in this study are designed to be used with New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can also be used.

Step 1. Read each Bible passage several times. Allow the ideas to sink in. Think about their meaning. Ask questions about the passage.

Step 2. Answer the questions, drawing your answers from the passage. Remember that the purpose of the study is to discover what the Bible says. Write your answers in your own words. If you use Bible study aids such as commentaries or Bible handbooks, do so only after completing your own personal study.

Step 3. Apply the Bible's message to your own life. Ask,

- What is this passage saying to me?
- How does it challenge me? Comfort me? Encourage me?
- Is there a promise I should claim? A warning I should heed?
- For what can I give thanks?

If you sense God speaking to you in some way, respond to God in a personal prayer.

Step 4. Share your thoughts with someone else if possible. This will be easiest if you are part of a Bible study group that meets regularly to share discoveries and discuss questions.

If you would like to learn of a study group in your area or would like information on training to start a small group Bible study,

- call toll-free 1-888-644-0814, e-mail smallgroups@crcna.org, or visit www.smallgroupministries.org
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Introduction

The book of 2 Samuel continues to chronicle the change of leadership in Israel from the period of the judges into the era of kings. The reign of the first king, Saul, was an example of having a king “such as all the other nations have” (1 Sam. 8:5), who served himself instead of being a leader “after [God’s] own heart” (13:14).

In 2 Samuel, we discover more about David and how he eventually becomes king, having been anointed many years earlier but also having to wait patiently to be crowned, with all Israel supporting him as their ruler chosen by God. Sadly, there is significant conflict and bloodshed before that time arrives.

Then, although David becomes one of Israel’s greatest kings, he also falls prey to lust and power, dishonoring God and his neighbor. Yet through it all, God is faithful. The Lord leans on David, who confesses his sins and seeks forgiveness. David’s lasting legacy is his enduring faith in the Lord. The closing chapters of David’s life include praise and gratitude, honoring the covenant Lord who is the one faithful King over all.

The main message of 2 Samuel reminds us that no earthly king can replace God or serve perfectly. God is and always will be the true King—and through David’s life and lineage, God brought amazing blessings for all nations, preparing the way for the coming of his Son, Jesus Christ, to offer us mercy, forgiveness, and eternal life. (See Gen. 12:2-3; Matt. 1; John 3:16.)

Note: Because of the narrative (storytelling) nature of 2 Samuel, some accounts covered in the lessons of this study are lengthy, spanning two or more chapters of Scripture. This may call for more reading than your group is used to, so you may wish to read ahead in your Bibles at home before doing some of the lessons together.

Land of Israel in David's Day



Glossary of Terms

- Abel Beth Maakah**—a town located in the northern part of the territory of Dan (near Joppa and Aphek). It was apparently known as “peaceful and faithful in Israel” (2 Sam. 20:14, 18-19).
- Adullam**—a town in the western foothills of the territory of Judah (Josh. 15:35). David stayed in a cave near here while Saul was pursuing him to try to kill him (1 Sam. 22:1).
- altar**—a structure made of stones or clay with a flat surface where the offerings of sacrificed animals or grain could be laid.
- Amalekites**—descendants of Esau (Gen. 36:12, 16); they had attacked God’s people when they were weary and newly released from Egypt (Ex. 17:8-15; Deut. 25:7-19; 1 Sam. 15:2-3).
- Ammonites**—descendants of Lot through his younger daughter (Gen. 19:36-38).
- Arameans**—descendants of Aram, a son of Shem (Gen. 10:22).
- ark of God, ark of the covenant**—a wooden chest overlaid with gold that was placed in the innermost chamber (Most Holy Place) of the tabernacle (tent of meeting) or, later, in the temple (1 Kings 8). It symbolized the presence of God among his people (see Ex. 25:10-22). See also **cherubim**.
- Ashkelon**—one of the five chief cities of the Philistines, along with Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza.
- Baalah**—also known as Kiriath Jearim (see map; see 1 Chron. 13:6), where the ark of God was kept after the Philistines returned it (1 Sam. 7:1-2).
- Bahurim**—a town in Benjamin east of Jerusalem near the Mount of Olives (see 2 Sam. 3:16; 16:5; 17:18; 19:16).
- Beersheba**—often referred to as the southernmost town in ancient Israel (see 1 Sam. 3:20).
- Benjamites**—Saul’s native tribe, the people of Benjamin (see 1 Sam. 9:1-2).
- Bethlehem**—the hometown of David (1 Sam. 16:1, 13); also the birthplace of Jesus, which by then was known as “the town of David” (Luke 2:4).
- Book of Jashar**—an early account of Israel’s wars (see Josh. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18) that is lost to history.
- burnt offerings**—sacrifices laid on an altar and completely burned.
- census**—an enrolling or numbering of the population in order to prepare for taxation or war.

cherubim—angel-like creatures usually represented as winged figures. God instructed Moses to make cherubim statues that faced each other on the atonement cover of the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:17-22). Cherubim are most commonly associated with God's throne, as guardians and as throne-bearers (see Ps. 18:10; 80:1; Ezek. 1:4-24; 10:1-22; 28:14). See also **ark of God**.

concubines—secondary wives, acquired by purchase or as war booty, and protected by laws of rightful inheritance.

covenant—a mutually binding agreement between two parties; usually both parties agree to accept certain responsibilities.

Cushite—a native or descendant of people from Cush, a region in northern Africa.

Dan—often referred to as the northernmost town in ancient Israel (see 1 Sam. 3:20; 2 Sam. 3:10); also the name of a tribe whose territory was located west of Benjamin and north of Judah.

David—the second king of Israel, beloved by God as a person “after [God’s] own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14), a military genius, and the ancestor to the kings of Judah who ruled throughout the Old Testament. Jesus of Nazareth, a descendant of David, filled the promised role of Son of David, Messiah, Son of God.

Edom, Edomite—Edom was the region inhabited by the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. Esau was also called Edom, and his descendants were the Edomites (see Gen. 25:21-34; 36:9).

ephod—a priestly garment of linen (2 Sam. 6:14) that resembled the special garment worn by the high priest for inquiring of the Lord (Ex. 28:6-14).

Gath—one of the five chief cities of the Philistines. See **Ashkelon**.

Gibeah—Saul’s hometown in the territory of Benjamin (1 Sam. 10:26). Its location is near Ramah but is not known (see Judg. 19:13-14). There was also a Gibeah in the hill country of Ephraim (Josh. 24:33), and another Gibeah in Judah (Josh. 15:20, 57).

Gilboa—a cluster of mountains near Jezreel where Saul fought his last battle (see 1 Sam. 31:1; 2 Sam. 1:6, 21).

Hebrews—descendants of Abraham. Abraham’s descendants through Jacob (Israel) became known as the Israelites.

Hebron—a city southwest of Jerusalem where David was anointed king (2 Sam. 2:4), where six of his sons were born (3:2-5), and where Absalom inaugurated his rebellion against David (15:10).

house of the Lord—the place of the worship of God in Israel. In the days of Samuel, Saul, and David this “house” consisted of a large tent (the tabernacle) that included chambers and exquisitely

crafted furnishings for use in worship. The ark of God rested in its innermost chamber, the Most Holy Place. David's son Solomon later built the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem to replace the tabernacle (1 Kings 6).

Israelites—the descendants of Israel (Jacob).

Jebusites—people who lived in Jerusalem before David conquered it (2 Sam. 5:6-10). The ancient Canaanite name for the city was Jebus (Judg. 19:10), so its people were the Jebusites.

Jerusalem—David conquered this city of the Jebusites and made it his capital in Israel, calling it “the city of David” (2 Sam. 5:9). David also brought the ark of God to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6), and later Solomon built the temple there (1 Kings 6), making it the center of worship in Israel. Earlier, Jerusalem was also known as Salem, which means “peace.” In Abraham's time this city was ruled by a priest of God Most High whose name was Melchizedek, which means “king of righteousness” (see Gen. 14:18-20; see also Ps. 110:4; Heb. 6:20-7:17). His role, as well as David's, pointed ultimately to Jesus, who became the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6), the ultimate High Priest and King of righteousness, our Savior from sin (Heb. 8-10).

Jesse—the father of David.

Kidron Valley—located just east of Jerusalem, between the city and the Mount of Olives.

lament—a song, poem, or musical piece expressing grief, regret, or mourning. David composed a lament as he grieved the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:17-27).

lentil—a small plant cultivated for food in all parts of ancient Palestine.

Moabites—descendants of Lot through his older daughter (Gen. 19:36-38). David's great-grandmother Ruth was a Moabite who married Boaz of the tribe of Judah (Ruth 1:3; 4:10, 21-22).

Mount of Olives—a hilly grove east of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 15:30); this is the same place where Jesus poured out his heart to God on the night before his death (Luke 22:39-44).

Philistines—descendants of a grandson of Noah's son Ham (Gen. 10:6, 13-14) who, in the time of the early judges, occupied a strip of land along the Great (Mediterranean) Sea from Gaza to Egypt. By the time of Saul and David, the Philistines had grown powerful in metalworking and warfare (1 Sam. 13:16-22), and they continually attacked and often captured portions of Israel.

priests—officials from the tribe of Levi who served in the Lord's tabernacle and conducted worship for the people of Israel.

prophet—one who speaks God's message to the people.

Rapha, descendants of—imposing warriors who were apparently like giants (2 Sam. 21:15-22), perhaps related to the Anakites mentioned in Numbers 13:33.

Rephaim, Valley of—a valley bordering ancient Jerusalem on the west and southwest.

sacrifice—the act of offering something precious to God. In the Old Testament this was usually an animal (the best of the flock) or the firstfruits of a harvest.

Samuel—a faithful priest and prophet who was also the last major judge in Israel. He anointed the first two kings of Israel, opening a new era in the history of God's people.

Saul—the first king of Israel; he was not fully devoted to the Lord, so God rejected him as king and anointed David to succeed him (1 Sam. 15-16).

shekel—a common unit of weight in ancient times; forty shekels weighed about one pound (0.45 kg).

sheepshearing—a festive time in ancient cultures, similar to a harvest celebration (see 2 Sam. 13:23, 28).

Spirit of the Lord—In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon certain individuals to empower them to accomplish certain tasks or missions for the Lord (see 2 Sam. 23:2).

stronghold—a military location of strength and defense.

Tekoa—a town in Judah a few miles south of Jerusalem.

threshing floor—a flat place where harvested grain was spread out and beaten to separate the grains from the stalks.

yoke—a wooden frame by which a pair of oxen or other draft animals are joined at the neck for working together.

Zeruiah—David's sister (1 Chron. 2:16), whose mother probably married Jesse, David's father, after Zeruiah's father Nahash died; her sister was Abigail, whose son Amasa was appointed commander of Israel's army (2 Sam. 17:25; 19:13) and was later killed by his cousin Joab (20:10). Zeruiah was the mother of Joab, Abishai, and Asahel (2:18).

Zion—This name apparently first referred to a hill within the fortress of Jerusalem and later became a reference to the whole city, which became known as the dwelling place for God's Name (see 2 Sam. 5:7; 7:13; 1 Kings 8:1; Ps. 2:6; 9:11; 50:2; 76:1-2).

A Note About War in the Old Testament

Before engaging in your study of 2 Samuel it will be important to understand the place of war for God's people in the Old Testament.

God's command for his people Israel to take the land by force stands in contrast to the Lord's New Testament teachings about peace and loving our enemies. Without an understanding of Old Testament war, some people conclude they want no part of a religion that condones such violence and bloodshed. Or they can become confused and decide that only the New Testament is worth reading.

In God's plan to send a Redeemer, first mentioned in Genesis 3:15, God made a nation of people through whom the Redeemer would be born, and God designated a place where that nation would live. The promise of land, descendants, and blessing was first given to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:16-20) and was repeated over the years to his son Isaac (26:1-5) and to Isaac's son Jacob (28:13-15), whose descendants became the twelve tribes of Israel. The location God chose for his people was the land of Canaan, and the various peoples who lived there were mired in wickedness and rebellion against their creator. They followed false gods, worshiped idols, devised immoral religions based on fertility and prostitution, and sacrificed their own children in ritual fires (see Lev. 18-19; Deut. 12:31; 18:9-13; see also Rom. 1:18-32). The Canaanites' practices were so vile that God says "even the land was defiled" (Lev. 18:25), so he "punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants."

In Deuteronomy 9:5 God said to his people, "On account of the wickedness of these nations . . . the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." About 700 years earlier God had promised Abraham that his descendants would live in this land after the sin of the peoples who lived there had "reached its full measure" (Gen. 15:16).

That time had come, and God brought his people into the land of Canaan through the leadership of Joshua. With the Lord going before them, the people fought many battles and overtook many cities, and this resulted in much bloodshed and death as God directed the Israelites to destroy everything (see Deut. 7).

Was this "holy war"? There is nothing holy about war. Through the ages people who have declared themselves to be involved in holy war have turned out to be driven by greed for power. No, this was God's war—a one-time event during this period in history for a purpose mandated by God.

Because God is holy, evil cannot stand in his presence (Isa. 6:1-5; Mal. 3:2; Rev. 6:12-17), so God also warned the Israelites that if they behaved like the Canaanites, they too would be "vomited out of the land." And,

sadly, many years later, after a long time of disobeying God, the people of Israel were exiled from the land God had given them (2 Kings 17; 25).

In any discussion of this topic, it's important to point out that war is not God's first choice. God does not want anyone to perish (2 Pet. 3:9), so he waited long for the sin of the Canaanites to reach "its full measure" (Gen. 15:16), at which point God would allow it no longer. Many years later, after the Lord's own people had rebelled for many generations, God said to them, "As surely as I live . . . I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die . . . ?" (Ezek. 33:11).

Today we know that the Redeemer whom God sent into the world, who was born from the nation of Israel, died in our place so that we could have new life with God (John 3:16; Eph. 2:4-5). The books of history in the Old Testament show how God preserved that nation, again and again, so that eventually the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, could come.

—adapted from *Discover Judges* by Marilyn A. McGinnis
(Faith Alive, 2009)

Lesson 1

2 Samuel 1:1-2:7

David Becomes Ruler over Judah

Introductory Notes

The book of 2 Samuel picks up where 1 Samuel ends. Saul and Jonathan have died, the people of Jabesh Gilead have buried the remains of Saul and his sons, and the Philistines are celebrating their victory (1 Sam. 31). David is now back in Ziklag, a city given to him by the Philistines while he needed refuge from Saul (see 1 Sam. 27; 29-30). David has not yet heard of Saul's death.

Though David has already been anointed as the next king (1 Sam. 16:1-13), it will take some time before he is actually made king over Israel. First he must deal with resistance from Saul's supporters, and he must build up support among all the tribes of Israel. As 2 Samuel opens, we find much to think about as David maintains respect and honor for the Lord and his anointed.

1. *2 Samuel 1:1-16*

- a. As the story opens in 2 Samuel 1, who comes to David, and why?

- b. Compare the Amalekite's report in 2 Samuel 1:1-10 to the account in 1 Samuel 31:1-6. How do these differ?

- c. How do David and his men respond to the news that Saul and Jonathan are dead?

d. What does David finally do with the Amalekite? Why?

2. *2 Samuel 1:17-27*

a. In the process of grieving for Saul and Jonathan, what does David do to honor these leaders of Israel, and how does he involve his people?

b. What does David say in this song?

c. How should we understand the relationship between David and Jonathan according to the words in verse 26?

3. *2 Samuel 2:1-7*

a. How would you describe the political situation at this point in Israel's history?

- b. How does David lead through trust in God and by making use of God-given opportunities?

Questions for Reflection

In this lesson, what have you learned about the importance of respect for the Lord? Patience with God's timing for fulfilling his promises?

What can this passage and other scriptural references of lament teach us about healthy grieving and the grief process?

Discover Your Bible Series

Bible Studies for Small Groups

The book of 2 Samuel continues the story of David in the era of kings in Israel. Despite David's anointing many years earlier, his life is complicated by power plays and spiritual struggles (murder, political intrigue, rape, incest, betrayal, rebellion) that dog Israel as God strives to build a nation that can bring his blessing to all others. In this part of the story we find more of God's promises fulfilled, and we see again how God remains faithful even though his people are often unfaithful: through the line of David, the Savior of the world will come.

Discover 2 Samuel features 12 lessons on the Old Testament book of 2 Samuel. This material is intended for small group Bible study, but it can also be used profitably for personal study. Guides for leaders and students are available.

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