

1 & 2 Samuel

1. Name – The two books of Samuel were originally one book but were divided by the translators of the Septuagint (pre-Christ Greek translation of the Old Testament). The books bear the name of Samuel in the Christian Scriptures, not because he was the author but most probably because of his prominence at the beginning of the books and his crucial role in the establishment of the monarchy.
2. Summary – The books of Samuel provide a historical account of the period of transition from the judges to the establishment of a monarchy in Israel through the instrumentality of the prophet/judge Samuel. They detail the selection of Saul as the first king and then his demise. They then focus on God's selection of David as his choice of king through which he promises to establish a dynasty.
3. Author and date – The author of Samuel is not explicitly stated in the book. It is clear that records were kept (2 Sam. 20:24-25), which would suggest that the author was at least in part a compiler of existing contemporary records rather than writing as an eyewitness or under direct revelation. This observation in no way contradicts the supernatural, God-breathed nature of these Scriptures. Some scholars believe that Joshua through Kings represents a single Deuteronomistic History (DH), in which the history of Israel is detailed in light of the ideals, laws, prophecies, blessings, and curses described in Deuteronomy. If this is the case and these books are part of a larger work, the author would have worked late in the period in which Israel had divided into Northern and Southern kingdoms. The events recorded took place in the latter half of the 11th century and the early part of the 10th century B.C.
4. Structure of the book:
 - a. Samuel the judge (1 Sam. 1-7)
 - i. Boyhood and call (1-3)
 - ii. Israel's folly (4-6)
 - iii. Samuel's ministry (7)
 - b. Saul the king (1 Sam. 8 - 2 Sam. 1)
 - i. Institution of monarchy (1 Sam. 7-12)
 - ii. Reign of Saul (13-15)
 - iii. Saul's demise and David's rise (16 - 2 Sam. 1)
 - c. David the king (2 Sam. 2-24)
 - i. Coronation and God's covenant (2-7)
 - ii. David's reign and success (8-9)
 - iii. David's sin and failures (10-21)
 - iv. Summary and celebration of David's reign and God's faithfulness (22-24)
5. Major themes and events:
 - a. Saul's lack of faith and David's great faith – Saul fails to heed Samuel's word and takes the priestly duty upon himself (1 Sam. 13:13-14) out of fear. David repeatedly refuses to take matters into his own hands by killing Saul and claiming the kingdom. Instead, he entrusts justice to the Lord (1 Sam. 26:6-12).
 - b. God's covenant with David (2 Sam. 7) – David is a type of Christ. When David decides to build a house for God, God tells David that He will build *him* a house, referring to a dynasty. God will make his name great, and God will establish Israel in the land securely. David's descendent will build the temple. David would have his throne established perpetually. All these promises point us past David to David's greater son, Jesus Christ. According to the NT, Jesus is sitting on David's throne as a beginning fulfillment of the promise to David. Acts 2:25-36, Acts 15:13-18. He has built an everlasting temple – in himself (Jn. 2:19-21) and his church (1 Cor. 3:16-17).
 - c. David's moral failure with Bathsheba – David's sin leads to murder and the death of his child. David's repentance is deep (Ps. 51), and his sin is truly forgiven. Yet his sin continues to bring evil consequences for the rest of his life (Absalom's rebellion and resulting turmoil). But God overrules even this for his own glory, giving the people (and us!) the wisdom of Solomon and using even the flawed David as a type of Christ.

Reference:

An Introduction to the Old Testament, R. B. Dillard and T. Longman III, Zondervan, 1994.
A Survey of the Old Testament, Hill and Walton, Zondervan, 2000.