

# The King-Priest in Samuel

*A Messianic Motif*

NICHOLAS MAJORS

*Foreword by Jason S. DeRouchie*

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THE KING-PRIEST IN SAMUEL  
A Messianic Motif

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## Foreword

PSALM 110, THE NEW Testament's most quoted psalm, celebrates that King David's "Lord" is both *king* and *priest*. The New Testament identifies this figure with Jesus Christ, who functions as king in that Yahweh calls him to sit at his right hand with a royal "scepter" and to "rule in the midst of your enemies" (Ps 110:1–2; cf. Luke 20:42–43; Acts 2:34–35; Heb 1:13). Yet this very one also serves as a "priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps 110:4; cf. Heb 7:17, 21), who was "king of Salem" and "priest of God Most High" (Gen 14:18) and to whom the patriarch Abram paid tribute (14:20). Christians have long recognized that the New Testament portrays Jesus as prophet, priest, and king by supplying the antitype to the typological roles played by figures like Moses, Aaron, and David, respectively. However, Melchizedek served as *both* king and priest, and this moves one to consider whether figures like King David also bore this role.

*The King-Priest in Samuel* maintains convincingly that this is indeed the case. Nicholas Majors notes that scholars have long recognized that Israel's neighboring monarchs bore priestly duties, and he shows that from Genesis forward Scripture itself expects kings to be priests of some sort. While their priestly role related more to overseeing communal worship than to administering it at specific holy sites, their priestly function gave them certain sacral privileges and responsibilities unenjoyed by the common person. Thus, the narrator portrays Saul sacrificing the burnt offering (1 Sam 13:9) and David eating the holy bread of the Presence at Nob (1 Sam 21:6), using and wearing the priestly ephod (1 Sam 23:9; 30:7; 2 Sam 6:14), and bringing Yahweh's ark to Jerusalem and offering sacrifices (2 Sam 6:17). Indeed, the text even designates David's royal sons as "priests" (2 Sam 8:17). These elements and many more disclose that the narrator believed Israel's kings functioned as priests.

Yet Majors goes further. He argues persuasively that 1 Sam 2:10, 35 build on the Pentateuch's predictions of a single anointed king-priest who would deliver and mediate God's blessing to the world. Majors then shows

that 1–2 Sam portrays Saul and David as failed king-priests and David as one whose life and hope anticipate one greater—one that the rest of Christian Scripture indicates is the king-priest Jesus.

After noting that “all the prophets” foretold Christ’s sufferings (Acts 3:18), Peter affirms that, along with Moses, “all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days” of Christ and his church (3:24; cf. 1 Pet 1:10–11). This exegetical and theological study in Old Testament is refreshing not only in the way it carefully interprets the text’s details but also in the way it assesses 1–2 Sam from its close, continuing, and complete biblical context. Majors shows solid awareness of both diachronic and synchronic studies on 1–2 Sam, yet he rightly focuses on the latter for determining the narrator’s overarching intent. This study approaches Scripture as a unified whole and properly sees the Old Testament providing a foundation for the New.

Jesus pointed to himself as David’s royal-priestly “Lord.” This book shows how spiritual people who observe carefully, understand rightly, and evaluate fairly what the Old Testament itself declares (Rom 16:25–26; 1 Cor 2:13–14; 2 Cor 3:14) can correctly see what Jesus and the New Testament authors saw—the Old Testament includes both direct and indirect foreshadows concerning Christ (Luke 24:27; John 1:45; 5:46; Acts 10:43) and predicts his triumph through tribulation and global salvation (Luke 24:46–47; Acts 26:22–23). Majors convincingly proves that Israel’s monarchs were all to be king-priests, and he provides a solid foundation for future research both of Israel’s monarchy elsewhere in the Old Testament and of Christ’s role as king-priest who fulfills all earlier shadows. *The King-Priest in Samuel: A Messianic Motif* provides a model of thematic biblical theology within a single book, and it will help skeptical readers recognize the early roots of messianic hope. Major’s work should enhance studies of 1–2 Samuel, kingship, and the Messiah, and it is certain to serve both the academy and the church.

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