

David's Final Days and the Rise of Solomon

1 Kings 1-2

Key Verse: 1 Kings 2:2-3

“I am about to go the way of all the earth,” he said, “So be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go.”

Welcome to our last study in our 1 and 2 Samuel series, we will be studying the first two chapters of 1 Kings today to complete our study to the end of David's life. 2 weeks ago, we studied David's last words which reflected a life of faith, hope and love for God and the Messiah. Last week we studied the last chapter of 2 Samuel, where we were reminded of God's mercy and David's heart for his people, which led to the selection of the site of the Lord's temple. In 1 Kings, David receives the honor of seeing his son whom God has chosen ascend to the throne.

One of the greatest joys a parent has is to see their children succeed. They buy bumper stickers that say, “Proud parent of an honor roll student.” We want to succeed, and we want to see our children succeed. The key verse (1 Kings 2:2-3) states, if we observe what the Lord requires – to walk in God's ways, we will prosper in all we do and wherever we go. This is a principle that we must apply to our lives, and teach our children. The passage has been divided into 3 parts: The Rebellion of Adonijah, the Requirements of God, and finally, the Rise of Solomon.

Part I: The Rebellion of Adonijah

The beginning of 1 Kings takes place when David was old and well advanced in years. He was considered to be one of the mightiest warriors to ever live, but now in his old age his health is failing him and he is forced to stay in bed. He is unable to keep himself warm, and in those days there were no electric space heaters or heated blankets, The only effective way to stay warm was with body heat. His servants searched all throughout Israel and found a beautiful virgin, Abishag, a Shunammite, and she became his nurse, concubine and source of body heat. The king, however, had no intimate relations with her.

It was during this time of illness that Adonijah sought the opportunity to claim the throne for himself. Adonijah was David's fourth son. David's first son and third son, Amnon and Absalom, were killed, but there is no mention of what happened to David's second son Kileab in the Bible. It is assumed that Kileab either died at a young age, or was not considered fit to be king. Whatever the case may be, Adonijah felt it was now his right to take the throne. Adonijah was a very handsome man, and very capable. He was a royal advisor to his father (2 Sam 8:18), even before Solomon was born, giving him much more experience than his younger brother that God chose to be king. Outwardly, Adonijah looked like the perfect match for a king: handsome, talented, and currently the oldest qualified son. In his pride he lifted himself up, and said, “I will be king.”

As he was growing up, David never interfered with him by asking, “Why do you behave as you do?” There are proverbs that say, “Folly is bound up in the heart of a

child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him (22:15),” and, “Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death (23:14).” David never disciplined Adonijah, perhaps because of his sin against Bathsheba, he had lost the moral authority to do so. Because he didn’t deal with his child’s sin, Adonijah grew up thinking that there are no consequences for his sin – so what was once the apple of David’s eye has become a thorn in his side. He rose up in pride, and did not honor his father or his God.

Adonijah rebelled against his father David and showed contempt towards him. He did not receive appointment as the king, and he didn’t even wait until his father, the current king was dead – but proclaimed himself to be the new king. Joab, the current commander of David’s army, and Abiathar David’s priest conspired with Adonijah, showing how little faith they had in David the aged king and the young, inexperienced Solomon. Zadok the priest, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, and David’s personal bodyguard did not support Adonijah and were opposed to his campaign. Adonijah continues in his foolishness by throwing a large feast and inviting all of his brothers, the royal officials in Judah, and all those who supported him. He sacrificed sheep, cattle and fattened calves to God, even though God did not approve of anything he did. And he intentionally did not invite Solomon, because he knew that Solomon was actually supposed to be the successor to the throne.

Nathan was a prophet of God who knew the Lord loved Solomon (2 Sam 12:25), and he knew now was the time to take urgent action. He first went to Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother, who did not know about the plot. He appealed to her based on survival, saying in verse 1:12 “Now then, let me advise you on how you can save your own life and the life of your son Solomon.” Bathsheba was moved, and went to speak to king David, her husband. She said to him in v.20 “My lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to learn from you who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.” The nation of Israel knew the king was getting older, and that it was time for a successor. Everyone in Israel was waiting in anticipation for David to name the new king.

While Bathsheba was still speaking, Nathan came in according to plan, and testified about the same thing. This gave more credibility and urgency to the situation, as the conspiracy was confirmed by the testimony of 2 of people dear to David. Nathan’s strategy worked, and David took immediate action. He summoned Bathsheba back into the room and then took an oath: look at v. 29 “As surely as the Lord lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble, I will surely carry out today what I swore to you by the Lord, the God of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place.”

This was met with enthusiastic approval, as Bathsheba bowed low with her face to the ground, and, kneeling before the king said, “May my lord King David live forever!” David called in Zadok the priest and Benaiah the mighty man and told them the plan to inaugurate Solomon as the king. This was also met with hearty approval, as the men said, “Amen! May the Lord, the God of my lord the king, so declare it. As the Lord was with my lord the king, so may he be with Solomon to make his throne even greater than the throne of my lord King David!” This was what they desired in their hearts: they desired the will of God to be done, and when they see that it was carried out, they cry out Amen! in their hearts. When something we desire happens, we shout in excitement and approval, let’s make every effort to desire what the Lord desires.

The rebellion of Adonijah was thwarted and overruled in every way. Adonijah hired men and chariots to meet him at En Rogel. Solomon was placed on the king's mule and escorted by the king's own personal bodyguard to Gihon. Adonijah was not even confirmed king, but Solomon was anointed with a horn full of oil just like his father was. Adonijah had a select few people feast with him, but an entire city shouts and rejoices with Solomon, so much that the ground shook with the sound. Adonijah had not received any approval, but for Solomon, king David bowed and worshipped in his own bed saying in v.48, "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has allowed my eyes to see a successor on my throne today." The way of this world also pales in comparison to God's way. Oswald Chambers writes in his 3/27 devotional entry, (and I paraphrase): there is a difference when the devil tempts you to be lifted up, and when God calls you to be lifted up. When the devil tempts you up, you find that you have to cling tightly to the top, but when God calls you up, you find there is abundant room to move.

That is exactly what happened to Adonijah. When all of his guests heard the commotion, they were terrified, alarmed and dispersed, and we see Adonijah clinging to the horns of the altar. The altar that he made many sacrifices to God's disapproval, is now his refuge. Many people will mock or make fun of God, but when it becomes a matter of life or death, they will suddenly depend on him. Adonijah would not come down until Solomon took an oath not to put him to death, and Solomon replied in v.52 "If he shows himself to be a worthy man, not a hair on his head will fall to the ground; but if evil is found in him, he will die." Solomon had mercy on Adonijah, and thus we see that his throne was established in mercy.

Part II: The Requirements of God

The time drew near for David to die. We followed him from the beginning of his journey when he was a little shepherd boy in Bethlehem, and Samuel came to anoint him with a horn of oil. He faced the Philistine giant Goliath with courage, and told him "the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel (1 Sam 17:46)." Saul becomes jealous of him and tries to kill him, so David flees, but twice he had the opportunity to kill Saul, but did not take it because he respected the Lord's chosen king. When Saul dies, David becomes king over Judah but remains in Hebron for 7 years, until the civil war is over, and becomes king over all of Israel.

In Jerusalem, God promises that one of his descendants will be an eternal, everlasting king, and the Lord gives David victory in everything he does. During an idle time, he falls into sin with Bathsheba, and murders Uriah, his own soldier. His own son Absalom then rises up tries to take his throne, and he flees, but eventually God delivers him from his own son. David returns as the king of Israel and defeats all his enemies and avenges those who were wronged by the previous king. In the final chapters, he sings a life testimony to the Lord, and secures peace for the future of Israel. In the last chapter of 2 Samuel, David designates a plot of land to build a temple for the Name of the Lord. He anointed his son Solomon as his successor, who now sits on the throne of Israel. The time has drawn near for him to die, and he gave a charge to Solomon:

Let's all read v.2-3 together: "I am about to go the way of all the earth," he said. "So be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in

the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go.” Solomon was young when he became king – some scholars put him at around 20 years old. David was about to go the way of all the earth – he was about to die, and he would soon be gone. Solomon would have the task of leading the entire nation of Israel. That’s why David encouraged him, “So be strong, show yourself a man,” and in addition to these things, David tells him to “observe what the Lord your God requires.” In order to rule, Solomon needed to observe what God requires. The first requirement is to walk in his ways. That means to live according to God’s command. In Solomon’s time, there was a lot of temptation to turn away from God, and the temptation was probably even greater because he had such great wealth and power.

The second requirement is to keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses. In Deut 17, there are instructions for what the king of God’s people must do – when he takes the throne, he must write for himself on a scroll a copy of the laws, read it day and night so that he may learn to revere the Lord and follow Him carefully. We can do similar things today – having our daily bread, reading the word daily, committing some verses to memory, writing devotionals, testimonies or copying down verses. And by doing this day and night, we can learn to revere the Lord and follow Him carefully.

What are the results? The end of verse 3 says that we will prosper in all that we do and wherever we go. The Bible states this promise in several places, for example, Psalm 1:2-3 says, “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.” David gave these instructions to Solomon because he personally experienced this promise. Often we have read in 2 Samuel how the Lord gave David victory wherever he went. David knew the secret of prosperity, and that is by following carefully the law of the Lord. By prosperity I do not mean health and wealth, though God may grant if he chooses. By prosperity I mean success in general that glorifies God. Even in small ways, we can prosper. There have been issues at work that seem to drain all my time and energy, but God never fails to deliver me from them and grant me success at work, while trying to serve ministry at IIT. All glory and honor goes to Him who gives me wisdom, strength and spirit.

Verse 4 shows another reward for walking in his ways – let’s all read v.4: “and that the Lord may keep his promise to me: ‘If your descendants watch how they live and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.’” We must watch how we live, not recklessly, or without care, but with self control and according to God’s ways. Many of us know the greatest commandment by heart: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (Matt 22:37),” but few of us, including myself, practice this all the time. But to daily love the Lord with all of our heart, with all of our soul, and with all of our minds – what a difference that would make in our lives! God’s promise to David is a messianic promise, and our Lord Jesus Christ came to be the king who will forever sit on the throne of Israel.

The next part of David’s charge to Solomon was to carry out judgment against threats to the peace of Israel. Joab was guilty of shedding innocent blood, and David asked Solomon to deal with him according to his wisdom. David also remembered the sons of Barzillai, who supported David when he was fleeing from Absalom, and asked

Solomon to allow them to eat at the king's table. So not only is guilt remembered, but David also remembers the kindness done to him in his life. It's a good encouragement to always be kind to others. And finally there was Shimei, who violently called down curses on David as he was fleeing from Absalom. Shimei had a deep seated hatred of David, and David advised Solomon to watch him closely. After David had given Solomon these charges, he was laid to rest. 1 Chron 19:28 said "He died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honor. His son Solomon succeeded him as king." He wasn't buried with his father down in Bethlehem, but in the city he founded, the City of David. Solomon's rule was now firmly established.

Part III: The Rise of Solomon

God had chosen Solomon out of David's sons to rule after him, and this was what David had said concerning this: "But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign. (1 Chron 22:9)." In what seems like a series of coincidental events, when we look at the rest of this chapter in light of God's promise we can see that God had worked these things out in order to give Solomon peace and rest on every side, including the inside of Israel. These events also worked out to assert the authority of Solomon as king, and to show that he was a merciful, gracious, but also a righteous ruler.

First we see Adonijah return, some time after Solomon had become king. Adonijah was given mercy by Solomon to be allowed to live, even though he plotted against the king. He comes to visit Bathsheba, but she asks if he comes in peace, since she was partly responsible for the ruin of his conspiracy, and he confirms it. Here, he asks Bathsheba to ask Solomon to take Abishag the Shunammite for his wife. He might have thought that if Bathsheba asked, Solomon could not refuse this request. Bathsheba, on the other hand, did not know what Adonijah was up to. She may have thought it would be ok, since David had no intimate relations with her. When she brought the request to Solomon, he immediately knew that Adonijah was plotting something again, like hoping to resurrect his claim to the throne by taking a concubine of the former king. He could use this to start another conspiracy, or get his foot closer into the door to the throne. David gave orders to Benaiah to strike him down, and Adonijah fell by the sword.

Then Solomon remembered the others who were involved in the conspiracy: Abiathar the priest and Joab son of Zeruah. He first went to Abiathar and rightly judged that he deserved to die for plotting against Solomon, but because of his service to David and sharing in David's hardships, he was given grace to live. Though his life was spared, the office of the priesthood was taken away, and his family no longer served in that capacity. This event fulfilled the prophecy God spoke about Eli, all the way back in 1 Sam 2! God remembers the promises that he makes, and carries them out.

Next in line was Joab. Not only would his death remove a potential threat to the kingdom, but it would also clear David's family of the guilt that was on Joab's head. He murdered Abner and Amasa, 2 innocent men, in cold blood. He thought he could find refuge at the altar of the Lord, but he was a murderer, and was struck down at the altar.

Finally, Solomon knew he had to keep watch over Shimei, who hated David. He ordered Shimei to move to Jerusalem and live there, but he could not go beyond the distance of the Kidron Valley, which is a few hundred feet from the city borders. He gave Shimei grace to live, and Shimei accepted these conditions enthusiastically. Solomon allowed him to prosper, as he kept a house with slaves. Three years later, however, two of his slaves ran away to Gath, and he went out to get them. He broke his oath to Solomon, and showed contempt for this command. From there Solomon summoned him, judged him, and ordered him struck down.

This was the last of threats to the peace of Solomon's kingdom, and it was now firmly established in his hands. Notice how Solomon did not unjustly punish each person, but he gave them mercy and grace. He allowed them to live as long as they did not do evil. God gave them over to their sin, meaning, God did not restrain them from sinning, and they brought their judgment upon themselves.

Solomon's kingdom was a preview of the kingdom that is to come. 1 Chron 29:25 says, "The Lord highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him royal splendor such as no king over Israel ever had before." In the kingdom that is to come, there will be one more highly exalted than Solomon, in a kingdom much more rich and glorious and any kingdom that ever existed – ruled with grace, mercy, wisdom, righteousness and justice. Those who would seek to threaten the peace of this nation will be judged, and cut off, while those who have walked faithfully before their king with all their heart and soul will never fail to see the king of Israel. This king is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, he is the only way into the kingdom.

God did not restrict Solomon's enemies from sinning, and they were struck down, but there is one who can keep us from falling. Jude 1:24-25 says, "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."

When Solomon was acknowledged as king, a thousand bulls, a thousand rams and a thousand male lambs, together with their drink offerings and other sacrifices in abundance were made for all Israel. Everyone ate and drank with great joy in the presence of the Lord that day (1 Chron 29:21-22). When Jesus comes again, there will be great rejoicing, even greater than that day.

Do you have a rebellious heart, like that of Adonijah? You may be a good, moral and decent person, but is your heart rebellious against God? Are you secretly proud against God, thinking, that you don't really need him? Or, are you keeping the requirements of God? The Lord requires that you walk in his way, obey his commands, and love him daily with all that you have – all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength. If you do this, you and your children may find prosperity in all you do or wherever you go. If not, repent, and look to Jesus as the Savior and the one who can keep you from falling. Solomon rose to become king by God's sovereign will, and Jesus Christ is going to come again in greater glory, and bring in an eternal, everlasting kingdom promised to King David and to all others who will be men and women after God's own heart.