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Solomon Becomes King

I Kings 1—2; I Chronicles 29:21-30

I Kings 1 in Brief

Where I Chronicles portrays the solid support Solomon received from the people of Jerusalem as the successor to King David, I Kings gives the inside story of a fractured royal family begun in II Samuel. Adonijah, the fourthborn and oldest surviving of David's 19 sons, knew that Solomon was David's heir apparent to the throne. He persuaded Abiathar, the high priest, and Joab, the commander of the army, to support him in a preemptive coronation just outside Jerusalem.

Nathan the prophet, Zadok the priest, Jehoiada the military hero, and Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, informed the aged and infirm King David of the attempted coup. David roused himself and authorized a public coronation and enthronement of Solomon. Adonijah's supporters fled on hearing of this, and the would-be king sought sanctuary at the horns of the altar and pled for his life. The outwardly repentant Prince Adonijah was put on probation by Solomon and was sent home by the new king.

a David Advises Solomon (I Kings 2:1-12)

“Observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses. Do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go.”

—I Kings 2:3

David and Solomon reigned together over Israel for an unspecified amount of time. Eventually, David realized the time of his death was imminent (vs. 1). He summoned Solomon for final words of advice that distilled the wisdom of 40 years of rule. The advice consisted of two parts: spiritual counsel (vss. 2-4) and pragmatic counsel about how to handle the transition of power (vss. 5-9).

David's spiritual advice began, “Be strong, act like a man” (vs. 2). The Philistines had used these words to inspire desperate courage to die in battle (see I Sam. 4:9).

David said them to inspire Solomon's obedience to the Law.

David foresaw two outcomes if Solomon carefully observed the "ways," "decrees," "commands," "laws," and "requirements" of the Law of Moses (I Kings 2:3). (These terms were often used interchangeably to describe the obligatory terms of the covenant.) First, Solomon would prosper in everything he did, no matter where he went. Second, God would keep His promise to David of maintaining the Davidic dynasty as long as his descendants walked with the Lord (vs. 4; see II Sam. 7:11b-16).

Ask Yourself . . . *What is the most important piece of spiritual advice I need to follow at this point in my life?*

David's pragmatic counsel about maintaining the power of the monarchy involved dealing with three men to whom David had been personally indebted: Joab (I Kings 2:5, 6), Barzillai (vs. 7), and Shimei (vss. 8, 9). Solomon, however, could not permit his father's obligations to interfere with his reign.

The first man was Joab, David's nephew and the commander of his army. Joab was a fiercely loyal man, but regularly thought he knew better than David what was good for the kingdom.

For instance, just recently Joab had appeared to think Adonijah would be a more worthy successor to David than young Solomon, so he had supported Adonijah's abortive bid for the throne (see 1:7).

David reminded Solomon of how through the years Joab had murdered the two men David had considered as replacements for Joab—Abner, the former commander of King Saul's forces (see II Sam. 3:27), and Amasa, the former military commander of Absalom's rebellion (see 20:9, 10). David assured Solomon that prudence required that Joab die before he could cause trouble for the kingdom (I Kings 2:5, 6).

After reigning for 40 years, David died and was buried in the City of David. (In the Old Testament, "the City of David" refers to Jerusalem; in the New Testament, "the City of David" refers to Bethlehem.) This memorial marks the traditional site of David's tomb in Jerusalem.



By contrast, David urged Solomon to show public honor to the descendants of Barzillai, who had treated David in a kindly fashion when Absalom had driven him from Jerusalem into temporary exile (vs. 7; see II Sam. 17:27-29). David had wanted to honor 80-year-old Barzillai and his descendants, but the old man had refused (see 19:34-37). Showing this honor would demonstrate to Adonijah's wavering followers how supporters of the rightful king would be treated.

David counseled Solomon to beware of another survivor of the Absalom rebellion. Shimei was a descendant of King Saul's clan in Benjamin. When David fled Jerusalem because of Absalom, Shimei had cursed and shamed him (see 16:5-8). During his lifetime, David never punished Shimei for cursing the king because he had sworn an oath not to personally cause him injury (I Kings 2:8).

Evidently David still considered Shimei to be a scoundrel capable of troubling or embarrassing Solomon. He advised his son to be wise in dealing with Shimei and to look for cause to execute him (vs. 9). Solomon would demonstrate graciousness by honoring Barzillai and intolerance of disrespect by executing Shimei. Solomon could use the loose ends of the Absalom rebellion to tie off any lingering threats from Adonijah's attempted coup.

Ask Yourself . . . *What is the most important piece of commonsense advice I need to implement at this time?*

When David died, he was honored with burial in the old fortress part of Jerusalem, which he had captured for his capital and which bore his name (vs. 10; see II Sam. 5:6-10). The last 33 years of David's reign had been spent in Jerusalem as the king of all the tribes. This was after the seven years in Hebron when only the tribe of Judah acknowledged him as their king (I Kings 2:11; see II Sam. 5:5).

From the beginning of his reign Solomon found his throne secure because David had prepared and advised him well (I Kings 2:12). In addition to making preparations for the temple, David did everything in his power to prepare his son to lead Israel through its golden period of peace and prosperity. As we mature in Christ, we too ought to give serious thought to the legacy we will leave behind to those who will follow in our footsteps.

I Chronicles 29:21-30 in Brief

Solomon's formal inauguration as king was marked with lavish sacrifices and feasting. Zadok the high priest was anointed again at the same time to mark the unity of purpose between king and priest. All of David's royal officials transferred their allegiance to Solomon and the Lord richly blessed the young king. David's death marked the end of an illustrious 40-year reign marked with military victories, honor, and accomplishments.

b Solomon Removes a Rival (I Kings 2:13-25)

“As surely as the LORD lives—he who has established me securely on the throne of my father David and has founded a dynasty for me as he promised—Adonijah shall be put to death today!” —I Kings 2:24

Adonijah was the fourth son born to David during his seven-year reign at Hebron (see I Chron. 3:2). Adonijah would have been about 35 years old at the end of David’s 40-year reign. He evidently thought young Solomon still susceptible to overthrow, because he approached Bathsheba, the queen mother, with a proposal containing a hidden threat to her son (I Kings 2:13, 14).

Adonijah conceded that the kingdom that had once belonged to him (for a few days) was now handed over to Solomon. Perhaps as a concession, he requested that he be allowed to marry Abishag, David’s nurse and companion during his final days of feebleness (vss. 15-17; see 1:1-4). Bathsheba distrusted Adonijah, but she saw no harm in his request to marry the Shunammite. So she consented to bring the matter up with Solomon (2:18).

By the customs of the day, a person who took a ruler’s wife or concubine also took his authority. Absalom had ceremonially approached David’s harem to indicate he had

replaced David as king (see II Sam. 16:22). Abishag had never become a concubine to David (see I Kings 1:4), but she evidently had entered the royal harem because her future was under Solomon’s authority. Since Adonijah unreasonably believed that “all Israel” had preferred him as king over Solomon (2:15), he must have felt marriage to Abishag would open a new claim to the throne.

Solomon greeted his mother respectfully and affectionately promised to grant her any request she made of him (vss. 19, 20). When Bathsheba requested royal permission for Adonijah to marry Abishag, however, Solomon’s tone toward her quickly changed from

David’s Wives

Old Testament texts name eight of David’s wives and 19 of his sons (II Sam. 3:2-5; I Chron. 3:1-9; 14:3-7). Adonijah seems to have felt

Michal (Saul’s Daughter)	Ahinoam	Abigail (Nabal’s widow)	Maacah
▼	▼	▼	▼
No Children	Amnon	Kileab (Daniel)	Absalom

OTHER SONS:

Ibhar • Elishua • Elpelet (Eliphelet) • Nogah • Nepheg • Japhia • Elishama • Eliada (Beeliada) • Eliphelet • (Plus other sons by concubines)

that of loving son to that of a threatened monarch. He recognized the implicit claim to the throne in such a marriage. He clearly understood the power of Adonijah’s ambition as the oldest heir and understood that Adonijah had a powerful religious ally in Abiathar the priest and a deadly military ally in Joab (vss. 21, 22). Some commentators believe that Abishag was the Shunammite described in the Song of Solomon, so there may have also been a romantic interest that Adonijah was threatening.

Ask Yourself . . . How can I be more perceptive of spiritual dangers around me without becoming overly fearful?

Solomon did not hesitate about what to do. David had advised him to be ready to deal with any sort of threat to the throne. He took an oath in the name of the Lord to see that Adonijah was executed for treason that very day. King Solomon commissioned Benaiah to execute Adonijah, and Benaiah did so immediately (vss. 23-25). Benaiah had been the commander of David’s bodyguard (see II Sam. 23:20-23). As such, Adonijah had excluded him from his command in favor of Joab. Spiritually speaking, we also must never “negotiate at the table of the enemy.” Any sin that threatens to entangle us must be dealt with swiftly and severely.

and Sons

that his claim to the throne as the oldest living son of David should have taken priority over the expressed wishes of his father.

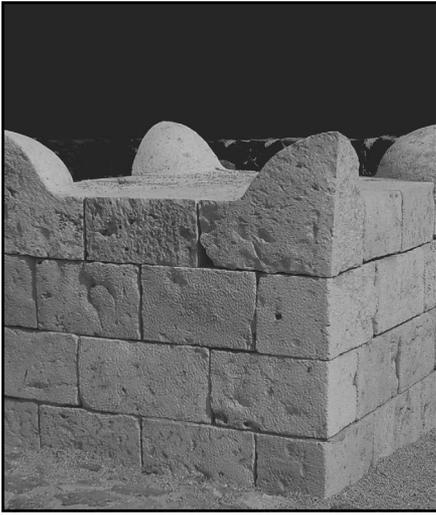
Haggith	Abital	Eglah	Bathsheba (Uriah’s widow)
▼	▼	▼	▼
Adonijah	Shephatiah	Ithream	Shammua Shobab Nathan Solomon

C Solomon Removes the Conspirators (I Kings 2:26-35)

When the news reached Joab, who had conspired with Adonijah though not with Absalom, he fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar.

—I Kings 2:28

The only other execution Solomon ordered was that of Joab, David’s old commanding officer, a man of blood (see vs. 5). Concerning every other threatening individual Solomon adopted a wait-and-see attitude. Solomon exiled Abiathar the priest from Jerusalem to his family



An incense altar with horns on its corners. Joab grabbed the horns of the tabernacle altar in the hope that his life would be spared.

landholdings in Anathoth, a Levitical village slightly more than three miles north of the city in the territory of Benjamin (vs. 26a).

Abiathar had conspired with Adonijah and Joab against Solomon, but he also had carried the ark of God when David brought it to Jerusalem (see I Chron. 15:11-15) and when David fled before Absalom (see II Sam. 15:24, 29). Long before, Abiathar also had shared in David's flight from Saul as well as all the trials of the monarchy (I Kings 2:26b).

Abiathar evidently abided by the terms of Solomon's exile for the remainder of his life. He alone stayed out of trouble and avoided execution. His removal from office completed the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy against the house

of Eli, made during the time of Samuel's youth, that Eli's family would be cut off and replaced with a faithful priestly line (vs. 27; see I Sam. 2:31-36).

Ask Yourself . . . *In what kinds of circumstances might I be tempted to change my loyalties to protect my job or my popularity?*

When Joab heard that Solomon had executed Adonijah and exiled Abiathar, he sought sanctuary by going to the tent David had erected to house the ark of the covenant. There he grabbed the horns of the altar (I Kings 2:28). The law acknowledged legal sanctuary at the altar for all but premeditated murderers (see Exod. 21:13, 14). Since Adonijah had received a probationary sentence after grabbing the horns of the altar, Joab may have hoped for the same (see I Kings 1:50-53).

Following David's advice, Solomon eliminated Joab by commissioning Benaiah once again as his executioner. The plan must have been to kill Joab outside the tent, but Joab refused to leave the altar when he realized that his life was forfeit. Benaiah did not want to shed blood on the altar, so he reported back to Solomon that Joab would not come out to him (2:29, 30).

At this point, Solomon revealed that he regarded Joab as a premeditated murderer who could not take sanctuary at the altar. Solomon could place bloodguilt on Joab's head and claim peace for his own house even as he ordered Benaiah

back to the altar to kill the old soldier (vss. 31-33).

Benaiah carried out his second execution by killing Joab as he clung to the horns of the altar. Because of his years of devoted service to David, Joab was permitted an honorable burial on his ancestral property in the Judean desert near Bethlehem (vs. 34; see II Sam. 2:32).

At this point, Solomon promoted his greatest religious and military supporters to replace the exiled Abiathar and the executed Joab. Benaiah replaced Joab as commander of the armies of Israel; Zadok replaced Abiathar as high priest (I Kings 2:35).

Once Solomon had eliminated two problem people, he replaced them with people he could trust. Once we've eliminated a problem in our lives, we must "fill the gap" with a permanent solution, or the problem will return to fill the void.

d Solomon Removes a Scoundrel (I Kings 2:36-46)

The king also said to Shimei, "You know in your heart all the wrong you did to my father David. Now the LORD will repay you for your wrongdoing." —I Kings 2:44

Solomon ordered Shimei to move from his ancestral home in nearby Bahurim (see II Sam. 16:5) and live in Jerusalem, where royal observ-

ers could monitor his movements (I Kings 2:36, 38). Shimei may have represented a segment of the tribe of Benjamin who felt the descendants of King Saul were the rightful royal line and that the Davidic line consisted of usurpers (see II Sam. 16:8; 19:17). If he had been allowed to leave the city, he may have used the opportunity to stir up a revolt against Solomon. Although David had pardoned Shimei for cursing him (see 19:23), he never trusted the Benjamite and advised Solomon to liquidate him (see I Kings 2:9).

Three years after Shimei was bottled up in Jerusalem, two of his slaves escaped to Gath, one of the Philistine cities near the Mediterranean coast (vss. 39, 40). Solomon had forbidden Shimei to cross the Kidron Valley (vs. 37) to the east of Jerusalem in the direction of Bahurim. Perhaps the old man thought he could claim that he hadn't crossed the Kidron Valley no matter how far west he went.

Ask Yourself . . . *What are some ways I have rationalized sin so it didn't seem so bad?*

Eventually Solomon heard that Shimei was back from Gath. When the king ordered Shimei to come to him, he reminded him that he had taken an oath in the name of the Lord not to leave Jerusalem. David's oath had kept Shimei alive as long as David lived, and Shimei's oath could have kept him alive the rest of his natural life. But he had broken it. Solomon reminded Shimei of three things: first, how gravely he had

wronged David when he cursed him; second, that it was the Lord who was repaying him; and, third, that David's royal line would be blessed by the Lord (vss. 41-45).

Shimei had to face the consequences of his actions. Reasonable boundaries were placed upon him and he violated them. God has also given us reasonable boundaries to live within. If we cross those boundaries, we will have no one to blame but ourselves for the consequences.

Ask Yourself . . . *What boundaries has God established in my life? What is likely to happen if I cross them?*

Benaiah carried out his third execution for Solomon when he struck down Shimei upon the king's orders. Solomon had acted on the pragmatic political advice of David, and the result was that the throne of all Israel was even more secure for the son than it had been for the father (vs. 46).

All of the events in the Shimei story took place in an area no more than 25 miles across. In that narrow space, however, Shimei showed just how far removed in character he was from the honor and trustworthiness of King David, who had kept his word to Shimei all his life.

