

Solomon or Adonijah

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back to that chapter, 1 Kings chapter 1, and take up the reading once again at verse 42, page 335, 1 Kings chapter 1, verse 42.

While he was still speaking, behold, Jonathan, son of Abiathar the priest, came in, and Adonijah said, Come in, for you are a worthy man, and bring good news. Jonathan answered Adonijah, No.

I think it's quite obvious to anyone reading this chapter what takes place in it. It's one of these chapters that speaks for itself. There are some mysteries in the chapter. One of the mysteries is, why did they particularly look for a beautiful woman to look after David?

I'm not quite sure what the answer to that is. They specifically looked for a particular type of woman. There are other mysteries, there are other questions that arise in the chapter as well. But on the whole, the chapter speaks for itself. It's David's last days.

He has reigned for something like about 40 years in Israel. And like everyone else, his reign has to come to an end because he has grown old, and he is going to die.

[1 : 29] But if anyone knows their history, they know that history, usually the focal point of any history always is the palace. And it's the same with the history of Britain, for example.

You have all the kings, the Tudors and the Stuarts. And you'll know that the most precarious time in any history, usually, is when one king dies and another one comes to the throne.

Because usually, or very often rather, what happens is that when the old king dies, there's sometimes an attempt by someone else to take over the reins or to take over the throne.

This happened in many places, in many histories of many countries, but it happened in the Bible on several different occasions, and this is one of them. And the first chapter here, and the book is going to tell us, and the first part of the book of Kings is going to tell us about the reign of Solomon.

And Solomon, of course, as you know, was the next king of Israel after David. He was the son of David, but he was a particular kind of man. The Bible tells us that he was the wisest man that ever lived.

[2 : 42] And it focuses a lot of attention on him, his person, and his reign. And I would like, beginning tonight, over the course of a few weeks, to focus our attention on what the Bible tells us about King Solomon.

We know that he started well. He finished badly. And, of course, we'll come on to that, how Solomon fell by wandering away.

His heart wandered away after other gods towards the end of his reign. But we'll come on to that, God willing, in due time. And what we're doing this evening is focusing on the beginning of his reign that took place just before the death of David.

What I'd like to do is to focus on the various characters that appear in this chapter. There are four or five different characters, all of which give us a picture of something that's important for us and something that's amplified and developed in the rest of the Bible.

And these principles range from something which is wise, something like, for example, Nathan and Bathsheba, the wisdom with which they approached the king, to the downright unbelief of Adonijah.

[4 : 00] In fact, we may as well start there. What's happening is that Adonijah, who was one of, in fact, he was the eldest of David's sons. He saw his chance to become king.

He obviously believed that he was the rightful king. And he wanted to grab it while he had the chance. Perhaps he heard this, that David was old. Well, he knew that David was old, but he perhaps, well, he would have known, of course, about his sickness and the fact that he wasn't able to get warm.

And one of the mysteries that appears in this chapter is the way that halfway through the chapter, David all of a sudden seems to come to life and finds a new vigor and energy that he doesn't have at the beginning of the chapter.

And I just wonder whether he had some kind of virus or something at the beginning of the chapter that he managed to recover from towards the end. I don't know. But it does appear there's a contrast between the David at the beginning who couldn't get warm and had to be physically warmed by someone else.

And the end of the chapter where David is once again directing the affairs of his kingdom. But in any case, David's reign with the best will in the world was coming to an end.

[5 : 12] And the eldest of his sons saw his chance to grab the throne before anyone else did. And when this came to light, he, he, David's close confidence came to him and they told David what was happening.

And David made sure the rest of the rest of the chapter that he arranged for Solomon to become king. And that's what the chapter is all about.

It reminds you a bit, doesn't it, of the story that Jesus told in Luke chapter 14 of verse 8 where he says this.

And when you're invited by somebody to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him. And he who invited you will come to say to you, give your place to this person.

And then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. Well, that's exactly what happened between Adonijah. He decided to take the best place first, the place at the head of the table, the throne itself.

[6 : 23] And Solomon, of course, was asked subsequently to take him away and to take that place for himself. And it was all, of course, because God had ordained, God had commanded.

It was God that arranged for Solomon to be king instead of Adonijah. But let's look at this man, Adonijah. Have you ever wanted something badly? Because that's what it comes down to, isn't it?

Have you ever so desperately wanted something? Your heart is set on it, and if you don't get it, your whole world collapses in on itself. And you think there's nothing more to live for.

I wonder if that experience has ever, if you have ever had that experience. Occasionally, I watch The X Factor on TV. And sometimes watch it at the very beginning of the series, when there's these thousands of people, beggars belief, that these thousands and thousands of people that wait hours and hours and hours just for a chance to become famous.

Now, for many of them, I guess they don't take it too seriously. And for them, once they don't get through, it's no big deal. But, you know, you see some of them, and they've been months preparing for this.

[7 : 41] Choosing the best clothes, finding the right kind of songs, doing themselves up to make themselves as good-looking as they possibly can, so that when the moment arrives, they give it their best shot.

And when they get the rejection, their whole world collapses. Some of them fall on their knees.

You know, it's quite sad, isn't it, that people live for such a shallow existence in this world, and yet there are thousands of them. I guess it's like playing the lottery. You know, for that one wee chance of becoming rich and famous, they're prepared to do anything.

And when it doesn't come their way, when they hear the word no, their whole world collapses. And they're in tears.

And they're in despair because they've lived for this moment. That's the way Adonijah was. I don't know when he first set his heart on being king.

[8 : 43] You know, you're quite wrong to think that our generation alone is the only generation where there is celebrity culture. There's celebrity culture in every generation. It's just different shapes and sizes and forms.

And much of that celebrity was all to do with who you were and how famous you were. And, of course, the famous people in those days were the kings and the royal family and those who attended them.

And a lot was down to your good looks, believe it or not. That's why Adonijah is specifically mentioned here as a good-looking guy. Why do you think it mentions that?

Because it was a big deal in those days, just as it's a big deal in every age. Your looks say a lot, and they attract the attention of people. Absalom was the same.

Saul was the same as well, head and shoulders above everybody else. Everybody else. And people were able to put their confidence in him. These things are specifically mentioned for a reason.

[9 : 40] So there was always celebrity culture. That's the way it was in the Old Testament. They didn't have the mass media that we have, but it was there just the same, nonetheless. And Adonijah was fixated by this prospect of being king, perhaps for years before, having realized that he was the oldest in the family of David, that he wanted more than anything else.

And the chapter tells us he prepared for it. He gathered people together, same as Absalom did years before, by probably gathering the discontents. In any kingdom, you always get your discontents.

People who don't like the king, and who would do anything to have a different regime. After all, 40 years is a long time. We want a new beginning.

We want somebody to really bring change. Same as you do. Same as the promises that you get from different political parties. It was the same then. And Adonijah would go to these people and he would say, I can give you that change.

What's more, I'll give you a special place in my kingdom. If you work with me, follow me, stick with me, I will give you a special place. And people are willing to do anything for that special place, aren't they?

[10 : 51] And it's easy, it was easy for him to gather an army of people around him, of supporters around him, and work towards this moment when at the right time he would, and he did all the right things.

He got a retired priest. He got a retired army general, Joab, who had been with David, but him and David didn't get on latterly. David didn't trust Joab.

Even though he was a relative, he didn't trust him. And Joab, of course, had killed Absalom. And so there was bad blood between the two of them. And one was, the feeling of one was as strong as the feeling of another.

Joab disliked David exactly the same, to the same extent as David disliked Joab. And so he was able to gather all of these discontented people who wanted a change and who wanted to make sure that their position was secured in the new kingdom.

He conferred with Joab and with Abiathar the priest, and they followed Adonijah and helped him. The conspiracy grew and all of a sudden came to a head.

[12 : 02] They did all the right religious things. They sacrificed sheep and oxen and fatted cattle by the serpent stone, which is beside Enrogel, to make sure that everyone who followed them was confident in their ability to at least make a religious show, although it's quite obvious from Adonijah's life, that he had no thought of the Lord.

And that was obvious because of who he didn't invite. It wasn't obvious because of who he did invite. It was obvious because of who he didn't invite. He didn't invite Nathan, the prophet.

And we'll find out what kind of a man Nathan is in a few moments' time. Benaiah, or the mighty men, or Solomon, his brother. Why did he not invite him?

Solomon was a younger brother. By rights, by rights, Adonijah laid claim to the throne being the oldest in the family. He was the heir to the throne by rights, but he knew that this was a different kingdom.

This wasn't an ordinary kingdom. This was God's covenant kingdom. And it was God who chose who his covenant king was going to be. But this is what happens when you try and achieve your own dreams and at the same time push God out of the picture.

[13 : 25] And by refusing and by failing to invite Nathan and Benaiah and Solomon, these were the men whose allegiance lay with the Lord. They weren't invited.

Because every time he saw them and met them, they were the ones that reminded him of the living and the true God who he didn't serve. If you want to live your life as a wannabe, and you're pushing God out of your dreams and your ambitions, then it's the easiest thing in the world to cut off every reminder that there is of who God is.

You just arrange not to listen. You've done it plenty times, haven't you? It's the easiest thing in the world. And you can get through a lot of life by just cutting out every reminder that there is, that there is a God.

And one day, you and I will be accountable to God. If you really want to live your life outside of God, yes, you can push him out. That's what Adonijah did. But believe me, God will catch up with you.

That's what happened in this chapter. Make no mistake, the time will come when you will be brought to see the error of your ways, but it may be too late.

[14 : 41] You know, there's a verse in the New Testament that tells us that every knee will bow before Jesus. That doesn't just mean people who have been converted in this world.

It means every soul that ever lived in this world will bow before Jesus. Not just the people who are alive at his coming, but everyone. You will bow one day before Jesus.

I will bow before Jesus. Every single soul, those who have died young, those who have died old, those who have been atheists, every knee will bow before Jesus. But some of them will bow in ecstatic love, longing to be with him forever.

Other people will bow in sheer terror. That's what the Bible says. Just the kind of terror that we see here in this chapter when Adonijah was eventually forced to come and bow before Solomon.

And we'll see in a few moments' time, in fact, we'll see all the way through the life of Solomon how Solomon is a foreshadow of Jesus. Now, of course, that doesn't include when he fell and when he wandered away.

[15 : 51] But being the Lord's anointed, that all was foreshadowed in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus. And we'll see that in a few moments' time. But that's what happened to Adonijah.

Adonijah put himself first and tried to achieve his own dreams and live his own life while pushing God out of the equation altogether.

Is that what you're doing this evening? How long have you been doing it? What do you hope to achieve? Eventually, it will come to nothing.

It will not work. What does it profit a man, says Jesus, if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? That's what it's all about.

So what we need to do tonight is to seek first whatever we do in life. To seek. And with the Lord, you can achieve far more than you ever can achieve without him.

[16 : 52] You can be... The fulfillment that you get with the Lord is a real fulfillment. It's not an imaginary one. It's not one that just brings things for yourself. But it's one that serves him and loves him and glorifies him.

It's one that is filled. Have you ever seen that? Did you notice as we read through this chapter the joy there was? Such joy that the earth split with all the singing and with all the rejoicing and celebration that there was.

That pictures the joy that there is in heaven. Heaven is an ultimately, perfectly, eternally happy place with a kind of happiness that you and I can never experience in this life.

And yet, what you find is people that they don't believe that. And they rather want to find and to grab their own kind of happiness and their own kind of joy in this world.

It doesn't work. It comes to... It will eventually come to nothing. That's what poor Adonijah did. Adonijah, who wanted to be first and wanted to be king.

[17 : 56] He wanted to achieve his own dream. And his whole world must have fallen apart when he discovered that someone else had been made king instead of him.

That's the first person then that you find in this chapter. But then, of course, there's David. David. And he's a very different David to the one we read about in the last book.

The book that tells us about his rise to the throne from the time he was a little boy fighting Goliath with the five stones and all that happened to him.

This time of service to King Saul, how he was able to fight with bears and lions and how he was able to be such a military leader, a successful military leader.

There was nobody as confident and strong and bold as David because he fought on the side of the Lord and the power of the Lord by faith in the Lord God was his rock and his defense and look at what he wrote, all the Psalms that he wrote, praising God out of his own experiences.

[19 : 07] He was a man who knew the Lord intimately and he knew how important God was and he had spent the best years of his life serving the Lord apart from when he fell and when he sinned with Bathsheba.

Bathsheba, the Bathsheba that he ultimately married and the Bathsheba that became the mother of his son, Solomon. Solomon, who now God wanted on the throne of Israel.

But before we come to that, don't you notice at the very beginning of this chapter how different David is? Here is this man who was able to do anything at all.

He was almost invincible, wasn't he? And now he's shivering on a bed, unable to do anything. All his strength is sapped away.

He's completely incapable of living a normal life. And that reminds us, doesn't it, of our end.

[20 : 09] It reminds us of what we are. You know, we talk, you know, you might feel tonight that you're in the best years of your life. You're a young person. You've got so many years ahead of you. So you think.

So you imagine. But you know, even if you do, all these years are going to come to an end. One day, you will be like this. I'll never get over the experience that I had with a guy I knew as a wee boy.

A person I knew. And I used to look up to this guy. When I was growing up, I used to look up, this guy was so strong. I suppose every wee boy has that experience with some people, you know.

And this guy was like a hero. He was so tough. He had arms that appeared to be like three trunks. And nothing. You know, you could, you started trembling as soon as he walked into the room.

You know. And he would sort of pick you up with one hand. I remember going to see him just before he died. He was lying on a bed, unable to get up.

[21 : 15] And that was one of the moments in my life when I was confronted with what we really are. And what we think we are and what we really are are two different things.

Don't ever forget your own mortality tonight. Don't ever be deceived by how well you feel. Or how many years you think you've got ahead of you.

you depend for every breath you take. You depend upon the Lord. I've said this so many times before. But it's true, isn't it? We're made up of molecules and atoms that are held together by God himself.

And God could change the whole thing in a moment of time. And yet we refuse to serve him. We refuse to listen to him. I can't understand that at all. Because to me, the purpose of us being here is to serve the Lord and enjoy him.

And to come to know him. And to come to follow him. And to do that while you still have that strength. And while you still can find the real fulfillment that there is in this life that God can give you.

[22 : 21] Not that you try and get yourself. But even King David who was such an example apart from his fall. But he was such an example of what it is to be a Christian and to be a man of God.

And he... But you know, David had failings as well. Didn't he? I just mentioned one of them. And that one actually had repercussions with respect to Adonijah.

You know, people say, well, David was forgiven for his adultery with Bathsheba and for the way in which he ordered the killing of Bathsheba's husband at that time.

And we say, well, he was forgiven before the Lord. And some people make an example of that. Of if God can forgive David, he can forgive anybody. That's true. And we take great encouragement from Psalm 51 and Psalm 32 that tell us of David's experience of his repentance before God and how he found forgiveness because of the loving kindness and the mercy and the grace of God.

Absolutely. I would never deny that. That doesn't mean that there were no consequences to what he did. These consequences followed him for the rest of his life.

[23 : 35] His life was never the same again. Don't be mistaken. God promised him the sword will never leave your house. And if you follow David's reign from that moment onwards, you will discover that the sword never left his house.

And David was subjected to all kinds of shameful uprisings and family disputes. And I'm not talking about an argument here and there, the kind of arguments that we have in our families.

I'm talking about people killing each other, his sons killing each other. Ramnon, who was killed by Absalom. Then Absalom's uprising, he was killed by Joab.

David never was the same again because he lost the trust of his people and he lost the trust of his family. And that's why we read here that had a consequence to Adonijah.

Adonijah grew up to be a brat. That's what made him so selfish. Now I'm not making excuses for Adonijah. I'm not making excuses for him at all.

[24 : 37] There is no excuse and we can't blame our background for our bad behavior. We have to go to the Bible. All the more reason why we go to the Bible to discover how God wants us to live.

You can't blame him and yet your background always does have something to do with it. Same here. Dave, we read specifically that his father, verse 6, had never at any time displeased him by asking, why have you done this and so?

Now I'll tell you why he didn't. Because the moment that David would, and it was the same with Absalom and it was the same with Amnon, Amnon raped his own sister. And David never said a word to him.

Do you know why? Because if the moment David opened his mouth, Amnon would have said to him, who are you to talk to me? Don't you dare open your mouth to me. We all know what you did.

And it was the same with Absalom as well. When Absalom killed Amnon, David couldn't go to Absalom and say, well of course, we know that Absalom was an exile for some time. But David couldn't do, he was, his hands were tied because everybody knew that he had the skeleton in his cupboard.

[25 : 44] He could never be the same. And it was the same with Adonijah. Same here again. He could never be the same to any of his family. He lost his authority with his family.

Because that's because authority begins with our own conduct. And if our families don't see it in ourselves, they won't listen to us. And I speak to myself, they won't listen to us.

We don't have, we've lost that authority if we don't act consistently to them and in front of them. And if we're not examples to them. And so that's the way that things went with David.

He had lost his authority. But there was something else, another weakness. That this chapter highlights for us. And that is that he seemed to want to put off a difficult decision.

And the decision was who was going to be king after him. Now he knew all along who was going to be king after him. Because God had told him. We find that earlier on in his life.

[26 : 45] God had indicated to him that Solomon was to be king. And David knew it. Bathsheba knew it. That was Solomon's mother. She knew it. But very few other people knew it.

Perhaps Nathan. Very few other people. He hadn't announced who was going to be king after him. Perhaps people would have been asking, same as I suppose people in this country, have often asked why our queen has not stepped aside so that Prince Charles can come to the throne.

nobody knows the answer to that. Nobody knows the answer. And it's difficult to work out why David hadn't announced who was to be king.

And I just wonder if it was just too hard for him to make that awkward announcement because you know what we always are, we're inclined so often when there's an awkward decision to be made we just put it off.

Keep putting it off. I'm not making it today because it's awkward. Perhaps he knew there was going to cause trouble. The moment he announces Solomon's to be king Adonijah becomes jealous and he thinks there's going to be trouble.

[27 : 59] Well there's going to be trouble anyway. Whatever, whenever he decides to announce it there was trouble and in actual fact there was trouble. In chapter 2 we find out at the end of the story you can read it for yourself or come on to it next time all being well.

But there was going to be trouble anyway. But there would have been far better if he had been clear and he had made the decision and been bold enough to make that decision because he knew that it was God's way and God's plan.

In any case he was forced into it tactfully by Nathan and Bathsheba. Nathan was you know an extraordinary man.

You know he's one of the unsung heroes of the Bible. He's one of the unsung heroes. And I reckon Bathsheba turned out to be a very faithful woman as well.

Because what motivates them? I wonder what motivates them. Well I guess that there was a certain measure of fear because if Adonijah had come to the throne then Solomon's life may have been in danger and maybe Bathsheba's life would have been in danger as well because they were adversaries.

[29 : 06] They would have been adversaries to Adonijah and I don't think Adonijah was the kind of person that took too kindly to negotiation and to diplomatic affairs. Adonijah was so greedy for the throne he would have taken it at any cost and he would have got rid of any prospect or any threat to to compete with him.

But it seems to it strikes me as strange again one of the mysteries of this chapter. Why it was that Nathan and Bathsheba when they got wind that Adonijah had been crowned albeit unofficially he had been crowned king and that there were a number of people following him they decided on a tactful approach to David.

I'm not sure why but in any case they obviously knew David and that was the first thing that they knew him well enough to know what was the best approach towards him but the other thing about Nathan was he was the kind of person who was never afraid to tell the truth and to confront someone with the truth even when it hurt and even when it might it might raise the prospect of falling out with a person he had done that before he was the man who God had sent to confront David when David fell he committed adultery with Bathsheba and he ordered the killing of her husband he was the man who had to go and to tell him how badly wrong he had gone that can't have been an easy prospect you put yourself in his shoes I wouldn't like to have done that and yet it strikes me that there's something really important here about the relationship that ought to be amongst

God's people on the one hand we must never be afraid of awkward situations even amongst God's people and we must never be afraid of telling it as it is Nathan on the second occasion shows that he's prepared to do that to confront a difficult situation you know the easiest thing in the world is to try and keep the peace by saying to somebody what you think they want to hear the easiest thing in the world would be for Nathan not to have taken anything to do with this and gone into retirement somewhere well if Adonijah is going to be king so be it if David's not going to announce that's his problem but Nathan was consumed by the well-being of God's people and this wasn't any ordinary kingdom this was God's kingdom and even if it meant death Nathan was going to stand for the Lord and he was going to nothing too awkward for him or too difficult for him to do because he knew it was the right thing to do

I think once again the Bible challenges us make sure you do the right thing and say the right thing I don't know who I'm talking to tonight I don't know what kind of situations you might get into this week but who knows this very passage may have something to say to you about a situation you're in and you're the easiest thing in the world is to duck out and to just melt away somewhere but that's not what we've been raised for we have been raised to do the right thing what God wants us to do and whether you're a Nathan or whether you're a Bathsheba whether you're a person who's a little bit further away from David or a person who is close to David that doesn't mean you don't be tactful this whole passage is a lesson it's a model in tactfulness and wisdom and wisdom is being able to weigh up a situation even a difficult situation and sit down and work out what's the best and gentlest yet firmest approach how are we going to approach this situation properly and prayerfully and in a right manner and Nathan and Bathsheba are able to work out that's what wisdom is you and I need wisdom in this world as followers of the Lord we need wisdom because we're involved in so many awkward difficult painful situations and we need the Lord to work within in our homes in our places of work as local counselors as bosses as I don't know whatever the Lord has raised us for this purpose and we need the wisdom to be able to on the one hand not to duck out of the situation but on the other hand to approach it as wisely and as prayerfully as we possibly can and you know

[34 : 04] God you know in this whole chapter the Lord is working through all of this but he's working through the skills and the intuition of his people you know there are some people I remember hearing Mordualic saying this once the late Mordualic Macleod and I remember hearing saying this he was talking about Moses and how Moses' mother had made a basket for her son and how she was mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11 by faith Moses' mother hid him and I remember hearing saying this there are some people who are so stupid who think that if God's going to work he's going to work in his own way and it's not going to involve them I've never forgotten that because it's true here we have again Nathan and Bathsheba said this is God's kingdom he'll sort it out in his own way we don't want anything to do with it but that's not the way

God works God works through and in the planning and the skills and the operation of his people through the subtlety of his people we have to be subtle we have to be harmless as doves and yet wise as serpents don't we you and I both need that wisdom for the week and once again the Bible is giving us that wisdom the Bible equips us with everything that we need to live in a difficult world the Lord knows how difficult your situation is he knows but he's given you and I the skills to prayerfully depending on him to approach every situation with grace with strength and with his spirit may we do so in his name let's pray our father in heaven we ask lord now that you will equip us like

Nathan and like Bathsheba as we deal with people who we come across we ask oh lord that you will show us your way and lead us in your way and keep us from being so afraid that we refuse to be in the place that you want us to be and to do what you want us to do keep us lord from fearing with that kind of fear but help us to be confident in what the lord has done for us and what the lord has made us in Jesus name amen he so to be his Lord a lamb of and his and him