

1 Kings 1

Introduction

1. Chronology:
 - a. 1st and 2nd Kings were originally one book and span 410 years of Israel's history—approximately 970 BC to 560 BC
 - b. 1st Kings begins with the death of King David and the coronation of King Solomon in the first 11 chapters, but the rest of the book and all of 2nd Kings focuses on the tumultuous time known as the divided kingdom when Israel split into two kingdoms ruled by different sets of kings
 - c. 2nd Kings ends with both Israel (the northern 10 tribes) and Judah being taken captive by Assyria and Babylon
 - d. So, this places 1st and 2nd Kings between the book of 2nd Samuel (which chronicles King David's 40-year reign) and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah (which chronicle Israel's release from Babylonian captivity and their return to the land)
 - e. Two other OT books, 1st and 2nd Chronicles, record much of the same material
2. Authorship:
 - a. We don't know who the author is because he doesn't identify himself
 - b. Because the 1st and 2nd Kings span over 400 years, the author could not have been alive for all of the events, but was likely a historian who researched Israel's history (much like Luke did for his Gospel and the book of Acts)
 - c. In fact, the author mentions at least three other historical sources in these two books: The Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41), the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (1 Kings 14:19), and the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (1 Kings 14:29); there are 33 references to these three sources in 1st & 2nd Kings
 - d. We know that he wrote 1st and 2nd Kings after 560 BC because the last thing he recorded was the release of King Jehoiachin from prison (in exile) which occurred in 560 BC
 - e. Based on what appears to be the purpose of the two books, it's probable that he was either an exile still living in Babylon or one of the Jews who had already returned to the land in one of the three waves of refugees to return to Israel in the ~100 years after the captivity ended
3. Themes and Purpose:
 - a. One purpose is obviously to record the history of Israel, specifically the monarchies
 - b. However, one of the themes that arises in both books is Israel's lack of faithfulness to the covenant (especially that of the kings) and the resulting consequences
 - c. In fact, in 2nd Kings, Elijah and Elisha constantly warn Israel about their disobedience and warn them that they will face God's punishment if they don't repent of their sins
 - d. So, it appears that the author's purpose wasn't simply to record history, but to use Israel's past from before being carried off into exile as a lesson for those who would return to the land after the exile; in other words, 1st and 2nd Kings serve as a warning not to repeat the past once they returned to the land!
4. Introduction to 1st Kings:
 - a. Over the next few months, we're going to be focusing on just the first 11 chapters of 1 Kings which (again) covers the life and reign of King Solomon

- b. When God chose David as Israel's king it was with the intent that David's kingdom would endure forever with David's descendants ruling over Israel (2 Samuel 7:16)
- c. However, there seemed to always be a string of men who weren't content with God's purpose and plan and sought to make themselves king over Israel:
 - 1) Saul tried repeatedly to kill David in order to hold on to the role
 - 2) When Saul died, Abner (the commander of his army) attempted to make Saul's son Ish-bosheth king over Israel (2 Samuel 2-4)
 - 3) Even David's own son, Absalom, tried to overthrow him and become king (2 Samuel 15-18)
 - 4) As if that wasn't enough, another "**worthless fellow**" named Sheba attempted another revolt with the 10 northern tribes (2 Samuel 20)
- d. As we learned in 2 Samuel, the Lord promised David that Solomon would be Israel's next king; that was His plan, but as we begin 1st Kings we learn that not much has changed from when David was king; there are still men who reject God's purpose and plan and seek to establish themselves as Israel's leaders

A. The first thing we see is a threat to Solomon becoming king (1:1-10)

- 1. David is old and frail (READ 1:1-4):
 - a. He is "**old, advanced in age**"—he became king at age 30 and reigned for 40 years which would make him approximately 70 years old at this time
 - b. He is also in poor health, not being able to "**keep warm**"
 - c. To help care for him, his servants recruit a young maiden named Abishag to serve as his nurse and lie with him to keep him warm
 - d. The author is clear, however, that she is service as David's nurse and he did not engage in relations with her
- 2. David's son, Adonijah, sees an opportunity and decides to make himself king (READ 1:5-10)
 - a. As David's oldest surviving son, he likely felt a sense of entitlement to inheriting the throne:
 - 2) His three older brothers were already dead (Amnon and Absalom were killed and Chileab apparently died shortly after birth or as a child)
 - 3) In the nations surrounding Israel, the oldest son generally inherited his father's kingdom
 - 4) But here's the problem—Adonijah knew that the LORD had declared that Solomon would be king (READ 1 Kings 2:15)
 - b. In spite of knowing the LORD's plan, Adonijah does three things to seize the throne:
 - 1) He begins by putting together a small army: "**chariots and horsemen and fifty men to run before him**"
 - 2) He then recruits two men from David's inner circle: Joab, the commander of his army, and Abiathar the priest
 - 3) Finally, he throws a coronation feast and invites "**all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the men of Judah, the king's servants**" (9)
 - 4) The one thing he doesn't do is invite Nathan the prophet, Benaiah (one of David's mightiest fighting men), and Solomon, the one who was supposed to be king—do we have to wonder, Why?
- 3. Takeaways:

- a. One takeaway comes from the words of Adonijah: **“I will be king”**:
 - 1) Adonijah was an arrogant, self-promoting, man
 - 2) There have always been, and always will be, men like him who seek to rule over God’s people
 - 3) God had personally chosen Israel’s first three kings (Saul, David, and Solomon), but here we have a man attempt to circumvent this and arrogantly declare himself king
 - 4) Such a man is never fit to lead God’s people, and this is especially true when it comes to the Church
 - 5) Look at what John says of one such self-proclaimed leader in 3rd John 9-10 (READ)
 - 6) It reminds me of when Jesus caught His disciples arguing over who was the greatest; this appeared to have happened twice because Luke records two different instances in Luke 9 and 22 (His rebuke—the one who is least and becomes a servant will be great)

TONS of recent article, books, podcasts, and even sermons addressing the crisis of narcissistic leaders/pastors in the Church (e.g. taking lessons from narcissistic CEOs on how to run a church)

- 7) Peter gave us a picture of what a pastor or leader should look like (READ 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- b. A second takeaway comes from something the author wrote about Adonijah (6): **“His father had never crossed him at any time by asking, ‘Why have you done so?’”**
 - 1) A second trait of Adonijah was that he was an undisciplined, likely incorrigible, man
 - 2) At first read and face value this verse might seem to imply that David knew about Adonijah’s plot but didn’t confront him over it, but in v. 11 Nathan states that David was unaware of the plot
 - 3) The Hebrew phrase translated **“at any time”** is more literally **“from his days”** which according to BDB is an idiom referring to one’s earliest days (e.g. his youth)—shoutout to Matt Dailey who found the BDB reference
 - 4) The NET and NIV translations do a good job of rendering the nuance of this, and what the author is telling us is that as Adonijah was growing up, David never truly rebuked or disciplined him for his behavior
 - 5) As a result of the lack of discipline, he turned out much like his two older brothers, Amnon who raped his half-sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13) and Absalom who tried to overthrow David
- c. God has an aversion to such men shepherding His flock

B. The next thing we see is how Nathan and Bathsheba intervened to ensure Solomon became king (1:11-27)

1. Nathan devises a plan to inform King David of Adonijah’s actions (READ 1:11-14):
 - a. He reveals to Bathsheba that Adonijah had made himself king, and done so without David’s knowledge
 - b. He warns her about the danger this brings to her life and Solomon’s
 - c. He calls on her to go and remind David of the promise that Solomon would be king, and inform him that Adonijah had declared himself king

- d. The final part of the plan was for Nathan to enter and confirm Bathsheba's claim—it appears that Nathan was following the principle in the Law of confirming something by two witnesses
2. Bathsheba and Nathan follow through with the plan and confronts David (READ 1:15-27):
- a. Her discussion with David involves:
 - 1) Reminding David of his promise that Solomon would be king
 - 2) Informing him of Adonijah's treachery
 - 3) Reminding him of his duty to announce Solomon as king
 - 4) And a warning that if he didn't act her life and Solomon's would be in danger
 - b. Her words are gracious and kind, but they also serve as a gentle rebuke
 - c. Nathan enters and follows up in similar fashion
 - d. Once again, at the risk of being too hard on David, we have to ask why he hadn't already taken care of business and announced Solomon as king considering his health? He is old and frail at this point, and by not doing so he may have not only put the kingdom in jeopardy but the lives of his wife, son and even his closest advisors
3. Takeaways:
- a. This is the second time Nathan had to intervene at a significant point in David's reign:
 - 1. The first was when the Lord sent him to rebuke David over his sins regarding Uriah and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12)
 - 2. Now, we have him intervening again to preserve God's promise and the lives of Bathsheba and Solomon
 - 3. It's hard not to see, at least from a human perspective, how critical Nathan's actions were: his actions, as well as Bathsheba's, not only saved the lives of Bathsheba and Solomon, but ensured the preservation of God's plan for Solomon and Israel
 - b. In quite the contrast to Adonijah's motives, Nathan's motive is simply to see God's purpose and plan fulfilled
 - 1. I find it interesting that unlike the first incident when the LORD spoke to Nathan and told him to go to David, there is no mention here of God telling Nathan to approach David
 - 2. It appears Nathan, did it simply because he knew what God's plan was and acted accordingly; he didn't seem to need a special invitation from God to act
 - 3. Notice, however, that he did it with grace and respect—the same way he confronted David the first time regarding Uriah and Bathsheba
 - 4. I can't help but think how important such believers are in our churches today, in part to hold pastors, teachers, and elders accountable

C. Next up, we see David respond by immediately calling for Solomon to be anointed king (READ 1:28-40)

**I want to focus on just two points from these verses

- 1. The first is that David responds immediately:
 - a. He promises Bathsheba that Solomon will be king by the end of the day

- b. This is one of the hallmarks of David’s character—when confronted he always seemed to respond immediately and with humility:
 - 1) When David was confronted over his banishment of his son Absalom after killing Amnon to avenge his sister, David responded by allowing Absalom to come back
 - 2) When Nathan confronted David over his sins regarding Uriah and Bathsheba, he responded immediately with remorse and repented
 - 3) When the Lord was angry with him for taking a census of Israel and brought a pestilence upon Israel, David pleaded with God to spare Israel and hold him responsible
 - 4) The same is true here when he responds immediately to Bathsheba and Nathan and commands that Solomon be anointed as king

- 2. The second thing that stands out to me is David’s wisdom and brilliance in how he handles the situation (he does four things):
 - a. He immediately calls on Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the head of his mighty men to anoint Solomon as king—this is brilliant because Zadok and Nathan represent the divine authority behind Solomon’s selection, and Benaiah was David’s right hand man which implies his authority is behind making Solomon king
 - b. He tells them to do it at Gihon—why Gihon?
 - a) It was just outside Jerusalem and the main water source for Jerusalem which made it one of the most popular meeting places
 - b) It was also where the tabernacle was located
 - c) In contrast, Adonijah chose to make himself king by offering sacrifices “**by the stone of Zohemoth**” which some scholars believe was a Jebusite altar for worshipping a Canaanite snake god; this is why some translations list an alternate translation of “by the Serpent Stone” (ESV even translates it this way in the main text)
 - c. He also told them to transport Solomon to Gihon using his personal mule
 - d. Finally, they were to bring Solomon back and immediately seat him on the royal throne
 - e. David may have been old and physically feeble, but he appeared to still have all of his cognitive abilities and knew how to counter Adonijah’s actions

D. Finally, the last thing we see is Solomon’s first act as king (READ 1:41-53)

- 1. How might we expect Solomon to respond considering Adonijah had made himself an enemy and tried to steal what was rightly his?
- 2. Secular kings would have certainly executed Adonijah, not just for his actions but to send a message to others
- 3. But instead, Solomon exercises mercy and restraint
- 4. Takeaway: this is certainly reflective of his father, David, but it is also true of the One True King, Jesus, who will one day inherit the throne of David and Solomon and rule for all eternity

E. Conclusion

One last big takeaway:

1. From an earthly perspective it looks like Solomon almost didn't become king, and if it weren't for the quick thinking and actions of Nathan and Bathsheba, things would have turned out quite differently
2. However, God's plan to have Solomon serve as Israel's king was never really in jeopardy, at least from a divine perspective; He promised David that Solomon would become king, and He did because God is sovereign
3. That doesn't mean, however, that it didn't matter what Nathan, Bathsheba and David did; God used them to bring about His plan