

May 11

1 Kings 1 and 2

Today we read about the end of David's life and we see the transition of power to Solomon. Let's take a look at a few of the events that led to Solomon assuming the throne and then we will end with some final words from King David.

As King David's health is failing, Adonijah's, David's oldest surviving son, attempts to set himself up as king. What about David's sons? Let's take a look real quick. Amnon, the oldest son was slain by Absalom because of the rape of his sister Tamar. David's second son died before that time probably of natural causes, and Absalom, David's 3rd oldest son died in an ill-fated attempt to overthrow his father David. Adonijah was, in his mind, next in line to the throne, and he began, regardless of the plans of his father or the will of God, to move to secure that throne for himself. David was weak, apparently very isolated and feeble, and Adonijah saw his chance.

Adonijah knew he needed to support so he asked Joab and Abiathar -- two of David's closest confidants -- to a banquet at which he has himself proclaimed king. They are drawn either wittingly or unwittingly into Adonijah's party. It is important to understand that there is no evidence to suggest that either man was ever disloyal to David himself, only that they guessed wrong about who would emerge from the potential power struggle between Adonijah and Solomon. It is easier to attach blame to Abiathar. He was a priest and presumably could have inquired of God or his prophet to determine the choice of God. He didn't, and he chose the wrong side. On the other hand, we read that Zadok, the priest, Benaiahson od Jehoida, Nathan the prophet, Shimei and Rei and David's special guard did not join Adonijah.

Meanwhile, with the intervention of Nathan and Bathsheba, King David reaffirms his oath that Solomon should be king. Plans are made to anoint Solomon and there is an interesting instruction King David gives regarding Solomon that I wanted to mention. Did you catch that Solomon was to be set on David's mule? As he road the mule he was escorted to Gihon and there instruments blasted and people rejoiced saying "Long live King Solomon!" I can't help but think of Jesus here riding into Jerusalem on a donkey while people shouted, "Hosanna Hosanna." From the line of King David came King Solomon ...and eventually, Jesus, our King above all kings! How cool is that?

Well because the kingly procession was so loud it broke up Adinojahs party and he soon realized he could not challenge the will of David. So what did he do? He fled. Scripture says that he fled to the tent of the Lord and took hold of the horns of the altar. When someone grasped the horns of the altar, they were asking for the protection of God until the case was judged. This prevented excessive blood revenge. In the Middle Ages this practice was still being carried on, as suspected felons would often flee to a church to claim "sanctuary." The sanctuary was a place for protection of the innocent but not to the guilty. Solomon agrees to spare

Adonijah's life if he proves to show himself a worthy man and Adonijah is sent home.

We close today with David's "last words" and final charge to Solomon. I imagine if I were sitting with King David I'd want to ask him, "In reflecting on all that you have experienced in life as a leader what wisdom can you pass along?" And then we read in these words in II Sam 23: "When one rules over men in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, he is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings the grass from the earth." What does it mean? Well simply put: If you lead with integrity and with a view to God's glory, not your own, you can expect the blessing of God. David expresses his confident faith that God will keep covenant with him and make good on every single promise he has made. David knew that his God was a covenant-keeping, promise-keeping God. He believed so much in the faithfulness of God to make good on his promises that he passed them along to his son. In his closing hours with Solomon he exhorted him with the Lord's words: '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.' Above all the final instructions David gave his son, he made sure he communicated the most important thing for the continuation of the throne – an uncompromised faithfulness to God.

I hope that our tour through the life and times of David the King has been as useful and instructive for you as it has been for me. He certainly was not a perfect king. His failures were at time colossal, but as we have already noted several times, his repentance was always genuine, he knew how to worship God, his prayers were raw and powerful, and at the core of his heart he hungered after God and after righteousness.

LA – The following paragraphs are Soper's recap of all the characters of David's life. I included this in case you want to do a review on any of them (seeing as though the material for today is shorter than normal).

Let's see if we can recall some of the most significant people in the life of David, the king of Israel.

I'll try to classify them by type. See how many of these individuals, who played prominent roles in the life of David the King, you can remember. First, let's think about the prophets with whom David had so much to do. The first and most important of them is, of course, Samuel, who anointed David to be king after God removed his blessing from the life of Saul. Then later, after David was king and Samuel was dead, we meet Nathan the prophet, who shook his finger in the king's face and said, "You are the man." There is also Gad -- a prophet of God who occasionally brought the Word of the Lord to the great king of Israel.

There are two Philistines who play prominent roles in David's career. The first is Goliath who died at the hand of David in a climatic encounter on the battlefield.

The other is Achish, the king of the Philistine city of Gath, where David on two occasions fled to avoid the wrath of Saul.

The family of Saul is important. There are six members of the royal family who are important in David's story: Saul himself; his son Jonathan - David's best friend; Saul's other son Ish-Bosheth, the rival king; Michal, the daughter of King Saul, who became David's first wife, and was reclaimed by David when he came to power over all of Israel; finally, there is Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan to whom kindness is extended out of respect for the memory of his father. Less important but significant enough to show up three times in the biblical accounts is Shimei, Saul's relative, who tried to curse David and was treated mercifully by the king.

In addition to Michal, David had many other wives, but only two of them play anything like a primary role in his life. They are Abigail, the widow of the fool Nabal, and Bathsheba, the "widow" of the Hittite warrior Uriah.

These wives produced many children. Five of them need to be remembered -- Amnon the oldest; Tamar the half-sister who he raped and because of whom he later died; Absalom, the vengeful brother of Tamar who later tried to usurp his father's throne; Adonijah, next in the line of succession, who, like Absalom, coveted the throne of Israel for himself and like his arrogant brother lost it. Finally, there is Solomon, the wise son whose story we will take up next.

The mighty men of David -- his military leaders are prominent from time to time, and always are lurking right behind the scenes, ready to do whatever is necessary to establish and maintain the Davidic kingdom. Of these, the most important is his guard Joab who is calculating, vengeful, decisive and loyal to David (if not to Solomon.) The "three" and the "thirty" are the two most celebrated groups of soldiers. (Uriah the Hittite was one of the thirty.) Abner was also a military man of note -- he was Saul's general. Joab killed him.

Two priests are prominent. First, Abiathar, who fled after the massacre of priests by Saul at Nob, bringing to David the ephod of God. Later there was Zadok, who followed David's wish, (and God's), and helped to establish Solomon in David's place.

Last we ought to mention Ahitophel, David's counselor, who went over to Absalom, and Hushai, David's friend who produced the advice that thwarted Ahithophel and led him to suicide. If you can remember those 23 people along with Jesse, David's father, you will have a fantastic "handle" on the life and times of David the King.