

David Makes Solomon King

First Kings 1: 28-53

DIG: What is Bathsheba's mood coming before David again? On hearing David's promise? What ceremonies are involved in the coronation of Solomon? What significance do they have? What did Jesus mean by these very same symbols (Matthew 21:1-5). Who are Benaiah, the Kerethites and the Pelethites? What role do they play here? Whose job does Benaiah want? What is significant about the timing of Solomon's inauguration? How do the various people respond to the news of Solomon's coronation? Why did Adonijah take hold of the horns of the altar (Exodus 21:1-14)? Why do you think this act was designated as a way of seeking refuge from judgment? Is Solomon's response fair or soft? Should Adonijah be suspicious? Why?

REFLECT: Is the LORD with you in ways you can feel and know? Do you need more of that kind of "with-ness?" Why or why not? When you see a schemer at work, do you step in and get involved? Or keep quiet and mind your own business? Why? Are there any worries, rumors, political maneuvering, which are causing you concern? Can the group help? In your family, are you the eldest child, the youngest or in any other way "favored" by your parents? How did your parents' fairness (or lack of it) affect you?

David's health began to fail him in 971 BC

After learning that his oldest living son, Adonijah, was trying to seize the throne from God's chosen successor, Solomon, King David called in Bathsheba because she had left the bedroom when Nathan's presence was announced (see Em - Adonijah Sets Himself Up as King). Similarly, Nathan must have left the room when the queen was recalled. It was part of their plan to appear independent of one another and to avoid the appearance of collusion. So she came into the king's presence and stood before him. The two were alone. The king then took an oath, "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 ADONAI, the God of Isra'el, 'Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place' (First Kings 1:28-30)." By making Solomon his co-regent immediately, David stayed in command and Solomon would do his bidding. Solomon was no longer merely the prince or even his heir apparent. He was then co-regent with his father and the king of Isra'el.⁵⁰⁸ Nathan's and Bathsheba's double strategy had worked. David was still the key player, still master of his own house, still capable of an act of great authority.

Then she bowed low with her face to the ground and, kneeling before the dying king, said: May my lord King David live forever! Then King David took full command of the situation, saying: Call in Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet and Benaiah (see [Ej - David's Mighty Warriors](#)). When they came before the king, he said: Take the Kerethites and the Pelethites (foreign mercenaries and David's loyal bodyguard) commanded by Benaiah, those loyal to me, with you and set Solomon my son on my own mule and take him down to Gihon. The fact that Solomon was mounted on David's royal mule demonstrated to the people that the anointing had David's blessing. The presence of Zadok and Nathan indicated Divine approval, and that of Benaiah military approval. The site of the anointing was just outside the City in the Kidron Valley, on the east bank of the Ophel. It was at that time Jerusalem's major source of water and was therefore a natural gathering place of the people.⁵⁰⁹ There have Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Isra'el. Blow the trumpet and shout, "Long live King Solomon!" Then you are to go up with him, and he is to come and sit on my throne and reign in my place. I have appointed him ruler over Isra'el and Judah (First Kings 1:31-35).

The end of the scene in the king's bedroom gives the last word to Benaiah who was ready to replace Joab as the top military man. He answered the king, "Amen! May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, so declare it. As ADONAI was with my lord the king, so may He also be with Solomon to make his throne even greater than the throne of my lord King David (First Kings 1:36-37).

So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah, the Kerethites and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon mount King David's mule, which was like riding in the king's limo or arriving on Air Force One. Then they escorted him to Gihon. Zadok the priest took the Sacred oil of dedication preserved for such an occasion (see the commentary on Exodus Fp - The Altar of Incense in the Sanctuary: Christ, Our Advocate with the Father) from the Tabernacle at Gibeon (First Kings 3:4), and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, "Long live King Solomon." Everything went as planned. The public celebration was enormous. All the people went up after him, playing pipes and rejoicing greatly, so that the ground shook with the sound (1 Ki 1:38-40). The choice of Gihon as the location of the public anointing and proclamation of Solomon as king may well have been dictated by its proximity to En Rogel. By this means David left no doubt in anyone's mind as to his own wishes in the matter. It was clear that the king's decisive act was received with overwhelming public approval.⁵¹⁰

Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they were finishing their feast. On hearing the sound of the trumpet, Joab asked, "What's the meaning of all the noise in Tziyon." Even as he was speaking, Jonathan son of Abiathar the priest arrived. He had assisted David during Absalom's rebellion (Second Samuel 17:17-22). Adonijah thought he was bringing good news and said: Come in. A worthy man like you must be bringing good news. "Not at all," Jonathan answered. "Our lord King David has made Solomon king. The king has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, the Kerethites and the Pelethites, and they have put him on the king's mule, and Zadok and Nathan have anointed him king at Gihon. From there they have gone up cheering, and the City resounds with it! That's the noise that you hear. Moreover, Solomon has taken his seat on the royal throne (First Kings 1:41-46).

Also, the royal officials have come to congratulate our lord King David, saying: May your God make Solomon's name more famous than yours and his throne greater than yours! And King David bowed in worship on his bed and said: Praise be to ADONAI, the God of Isra'el, who has allowed my eyes to see a successor on my throne today (First Kings 1:47-48). Because this had transpired in David's bedroom, either Nathan or Zadok (or both) must have quoted David's words to the people. From his eyewitness report, Jonathan made it clear that at that very moment, Solomon was the king of Isra'el.

At this, all Adonijah's guests rose in alarm and disappeared like rats off a ship going down. The party was over. Nobody wanted to be seen with Adonijah. Earlier it had been acknowledged that if Adonijah had won, Solomon and his mother would be marked for death. Now the shoe was on the other foot. So Adonijah, in fear of Solomon, went and took hold of the horns of the bronze altar in the Tabernacle (see the commentary on Exodus Fa - Build an Altar of Acacia Wood Overlaid with Bronze). This method of seeking sanctuary was a time-honored custom. In Isra'el the grasping of the horns of the altar didn't provide sanctuary for every criminal - only those guilty of the unintentional slaying of another. The horns were the projections at the corners of the bronze altar on which the blood of sacrifice was smeared. To grasp the horns was to claim the protection of God until the case was judged.⁵¹¹ The symbolism of taking hold of the horns of the bronze altar seems to have meant that since YHVH had been gracious to man, as seen in accepting man's offerings to atone for his sins, so one man should be gracious to another man who had offended him.⁵¹² It appears that Adonijah believed that the corners of the bronze altar was a holy place and would provide him with some protection from Solomon's vengeance. But when Solomon was told, "Adonijah is afraid of you and is clinging to the horns of the altar, saying: Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death by the sword." Solomon replied: If he shows himself to be worthy, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground; but if evil is found in him, he will die (First Kings 1:49-52).

Then King Solomon sent men, and they brought him down from the altar. And Adonijah came and bowed down to King Solomon, and Solomon said: Go to your home (First Kings 1:53). A bargain seemed to be struck, a promise of good behavior in exchange for clemency. But Adonijah didn't live up to his end of the bargain. After David's death, he would come to Bathsheba and make a daring request. He wanted to be given Abishag, the Shunammite who had last ministered to the king, as his wife (First Kings 1:1-2). The problem was that she had the status of a concubine, part of the king's harem, and as Absalom found out - anyone claiming a woman in the king's harem, claimed to be the king (Second Samuel 16:20-23)! He made his pitiful request to the queen mother by reminding her that he was "supposed" to be the king, and receiving Abishag would be a nice little consolation prize. But in making his request, Adonijah foolishly signed his own death warrant.

Bathsheba dutifully relayed the request to Solomon, perhaps with rolling eyes (First Kings 2:19-22). She seemed to be an indifferent messenger. But surely she understood, as Adonijah apparently did not, the inevitable outcome of the request. Solomon's response was swift and clear. Ask for Abishag? Why not ask for the entire Kingdom? Adonijah had not only threatened Solomon, but he had failed to accept the will of God. Benaiah, the hatchet man of the new regime, was dispatched and the rebellious Adonijah was killed.⁵¹³

Sooner or later what happened to Adonijah will happen to those who sit on the throne of their own universe. We may be popular for a time. Especially if we throw great parties. We may be able to find people who will sing our praises. But eventually our pleasures will turn sour and we will end up all alone, like Adonijah. This has happened to some of the most famous people in the world. Ask Adolf Hitler, who tried to rule the world but died alone in his concrete bunker underground at his own hand. Or ask Howard Hughes, who was the richest man in the world but died alone and afraid - a recluse, self-imposed in his own home.

Better yet, ask yourself: How well has life worked out when you have tried to have it on your own terms, with yourself as the king or queen and everyone else as your servant? Has it been everything you had hoped for, or has it failed royally to live up to your expectations? And what will happen when you hear the blast of God's trumpet at the final judgment? Will it bring the good news of your salvation, or will it be the sound of your doom? Sooner or later the party will be over. Which means each of us has a choice to make. Do I still claim to run my own life, or am I ready to enthrone Jesus Christ as my King?⁵¹⁴