

FIRST KINGS

Chapter 1

David in His Old Age

1 Now King David was old and advanced in years. And although they covered him with clothes, he could not get warm. 2 Therefore his servants said to him, “Let a young woman be sought for my lord the king, and let her wait on the king and be in his service. Let her lie in your arms, that my lord the king may be warm.” 3 So they sought for a beautiful young woman throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. 4 The young woman was very beautiful, and she was of service to the king and attended to him, but the king knew her not.

1:1–12:24 The narrative of the Solomonic era is an exquisite example of literary inversion, in this case consisting of nine sections. The first and last are parallel, as well as the second and eighth, etc.—and the fifth section, which occupies the central position in the structure, is the longest of the nine and describes Solomon’s building projects. (CSB).

1:1–2:10 Although 1 and 2Sm are devoted primarily to the life and reign of David, the story of how he transferred the kingdom to Solomon is recorded here. Drained of vitality (vv 1–4), David still took a firm hand in settling the contest for the throne (vv 5–37). (TLSB)

1:1 *advanced in years.* 2Sa 5:4 indicates that David died at about 70 years of age (cf. 1Ki 2:11). (CSB)

1:2 *arms.* Accepted practice of supplying warmth to a person with poor circulation (Ec 4:11). The mention of David’s ebbing vitality introduces the account of the two contenders for the throne. (TLSB)

1:3 *Shunammite.* Abishag came from Shunem (2Ki 4:8; Jos 19:18; 1Sa 28:4), located near the plain of Jezreel in the tribal territory of Issachar. (CSB)

The beautiful Abishag hailed from Shunem, where the Philistines encamped when they defeated Saul in the battle of Gilboa (1Sm 28:4; cf 2Ki 4:8–17). Abishag became the subject of subsequent court intrigue (2:13–25). (TLSB)

1:4 *king knew her not.* Significant in connection with Adonijah’s request to be given Abishag as his wife after the death of David. (CSB)

1:1–4 Opening 1Ki is the account of the last days of King David. The conclusion of David’s great reign and epic life reminds us of the mortality of all people, for all are sinners and must die. Yet through the Messiah—great David’s greater Son—we have hope and confidence beyond this life to the glories of heaven. • Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us the inspired, inerrant, and authoritative books of Scripture. Guide us as we read Your Word to find therein Your priceless promises through the Messiah, in whose name we pray. Amen. (TLSB)

Adonijah Sets Himself Up as King

5 Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, “I will be king.” And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. 6 His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, “Why have you done thus and so?” He was also a very handsome

man, and he was born next after Absalom. 7 He conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest. And they followed Adonijah and helped him. 8 But Zadok the priest and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada and Nathan the prophet and Shimei and Rei and David's mighty men were not with Adonijah. 9 Adonijah sacrificed sheep, oxen, and fattened cattle by the Serpent's Stone, which is beside En-rogel, and he invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officials of Judah, 10 but he did not invite Nathan the prophet or Benaiah or the mighty men or Solomon his brother.

1:5 *Adonijah.* The fourth son of David (see 2Sa 3:4), who was at this time approximately 35 years of age. It is likely that he was the oldest surviving son of David. (CSB)

Apparently the oldest surviving son of David (cf v 6). *be king.* Adonijah either did not know or disregarded David's choice of a successor (vv 13, 17). His political intrigue is similar to Absalom's conspiracy (2Sm 15:1), except without force. Adonijah, like Absalom, was handsome and pampered (v 6). (TLSB)

exalted himself. A unilateral attempt to usurp the throne, bypassing King David's right to designate his own successor (Adonijah must at least have known that his father favored Solomon; see v. 10). If successful, it would have thwarted God's and David's choice of Solomon. (CSB)

fifty men to run before of him. Adonijah here follows the example of Absalom before him. (CSB)

Signaling his presence and importance. (TLSB)

1:6 *never disciplined.* David appears to have been consistently negligent in disciplining his sons. (CSB)

David succeeded as a warrior and king, but not as a father, having spoiled this son. (TLSB)

born next after Absalom. David's firstborn, Amnon, had been killed by Absalom, the third oldest, who likewise had died a violent death. Presumably, the second in line was also dead (2Sm 3:2–3; 13:23–33; 18:9–15). (TLSB)

very handsome. Attractive physical appearance was an important asset to an aspirant to the throne (see 1Sa 9:2; 16:12; 2Sa 14:25). (CSB)

1:7 *Joab son of Zeruiah.* Joab's alignment with Adonijah may have been motivated by a struggle for power with Benaiah (see v. 8; 2Sa 8:18; 20:23; 23:20–23). Joab held his position more by his standing with the army than by the favor and confidence of David (see 2:5–6). (CSB)

David's nephew, who "was in command of all the army" (2Sm 20:23). No reason is given why Adonijah had Joab's and Abiathar's support. (TLSB)

Abiathar the priest. Escaped when "Saul had killed the priests of the LORD" at Nob (1Sm 22:20–22), joined David, and rendered him valuable service before and after he became king (1Sm 23:6, 9; 2Sm 15:35–37; 17:15–16). (TLSB)

1:8 Adonijah and his conspirators were rejected by (1) Zadok, Abiathar's associate (2Sm 8:17; 15:29); (2) Benaiah, captain of David's bodyguard; (3) Nathan the prophet, who denounced David's crimes but brought the Lord's promise of an eternal kingdom (2Sm 7:4–17); (4) Shimei and Rei, two officials (Shimei, not to be confused with the man who cursed David [2Sm 16:5–14], may have become one of Solomon's 12 officers; 4:7); (5) David's "mighty men" (distinguished warriors), which no doubt also

included the servants (v 33) who likely composed the royal guard, the Cherethites and the Pelethites (v 44). (TLSB)

Shimei. Not the Shimei of 2:8, 46; 2Sa 16:5–8; perhaps the same as Shimei son of Ela (4:18). *Rei*. See NIV text note. There is no other OT reference to Rei if taken as a proper name. (CSB)

1:9 *Adonijah then sacrificed*. Here also Adonijah followed the example of Absalom. (CSB)

En Rogel. Means “the spring of Rogel”; located just south of Jerusalem in the Kidron Valley. Apparently the site of a spring had some kind of symbolic significance for the business at hand. (CSB)

Lit, “fountain of the fuller,” a spring just below Jerusalem where the Kidron Valley and the Valley of Hinnom merge (Jsh 15:7–8; 18:16). (TLSB)

his brothers. Adonijah sought to extend his popularity within the royal family. (TLSB)

1:10 *Nathan ... Benaiah ... mighty men. Solomon his brother*. Clear rivalry existed. (TLSB)

1:5–10 Even before David’s death, a rivalry between two of his sons develops, as Adonijah prepares to take over the reign. Sin and greed lead to dissension—that has not changed. How ugly to witness family rivalry over an inheritance (cf Lk 12:13–15), which is precisely the matter here, especially addressed by the Ninth Commandment. Pray that your family avoids such temptations and plans well for peace. Because of Christ, we are able to forgive one another and live peaceably in His generous heritage of grace. • Lord God, keep me from jealousy and strife. Lead me to trust Your will for my life. In the Savior’s name, I pray. Amen. (TLSB)

Nathan and Bathsheba Before David

11 Then Nathan said to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, “Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king and David our lord does not know it? **12** Now therefore come, let me give you advice, that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. **13** Go in at once to King David, and say to him, ‘Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your servant, saying, “Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne”? Why then is Adonijah king?’ **14** Then while you are still speaking with the king, I also will come in after you and confirm your words.” **15** So Bathsheba went to the king in his chamber (now the king was very old, and Abishag the Shunammite was attending to the king). **16** Bathsheba bowed and paid homage to the king, and the king said, “What do you desire?” **17** She said to him, “My lord, you swore to your servant by the LORD your God, saying, ‘Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne.’ **18** And now, behold, Adonijah is king, although you, my lord the king, do not know it. **19** He has sacrificed oxen, fattened cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the sons of the king, Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander of the army, but Solomon your servant he has not invited. **20** And now, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. **21** Otherwise it will come to pass, when my lord the king sleeps with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be counted offenders.” **22** While she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet came in. **23** And they told the king, “Here is Nathan the prophet.” And when he came in before the king, he bowed before the king, with his face to the ground. **24** And Nathan said, “My lord the king, have you said, ‘Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne’? **25** For he has gone down this day and has sacrificed oxen, fattened cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king’s sons, the commanders of the army, and Abiathar the priest. And behold, they are eating and drinking before him, and saying, ‘Long live King Adonijah!’ **26** But me, your servant, and Zadok the priest, and

Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon he has not invited. 27 Has this thing been brought about by my lord the king and you have not told your servants who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?”

1:11 *Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother.* The queen mother held an important and influential position in the royal court (see 2:19; 15:13; 2Ki 10:13; 2Ch 15:16). (CSB)

has become king. Although the preceding narrative does not relate the actual proclamation of Adonijah’s kingship, it can be assumed (see v. 25; 2:15; cf. 2Sa 15:10). (CSB)

1:12 *save your own life and the life of your son Solomon.* It was common in the ancient Near East for a usurper to liquidate all potential claimants to the throne in an attempt to secure his own position (see 15:29; 2Ki 10:11; 11:1). (CSB)

Nathan countered Adonijah’s plot by warning Bathsheba that Adonijah would kill her and her son, following the prevailing custom of slaying all members of the opposing party (v 21). (TL SB)

1:13 *did you not...swear to me ... ?* Although 2 Samuel does not record David’s oath concerning the succession of Solomon, it does suggest that Solomon was the son through whom the Lord’s promise to David for an eternal dynasty would be carried forward. (CSB)

The Bible does not record such an oath; however, no trickery on aged David is suggested. Such an oath could have been made at Solomon’s birth (2Sm 12:24; cf 1Ch 22:9–13). (TL SB)

1:14 *confirm your words.* Reminding David of the oath. Testimony required two or three witnesses (Dt 17:6). (TL SB)

1:16 *Bathsheba bowed.* In ancient royal households, even a king’s wife had to show him deference in public (cf Est 5:1–2). (TL SB)

1:18–20 Bathsheba’s appeal builds urgency, hinting that David has lost control. (TL SB)

1:21 *sleeps with his fathers.* A conventional expression for death (see Ge 47:30; Dt 31:16). (CSB)

1:24–27 Nathan confirms the story about Adonijah (vv 17–21) but leaves the matter of succession to David. (TL SB)

1:24 Nathan approached David diplomatically by raising a question that revealed the dilemma. Either David had secretly encouraged Adonijah to claim the throne and thereby had broken his oath to Bathsheba and Solomon (see v. 27), or he had been betrayed by Adonijah. (CSB)

1:25 *Long live King Adonijah!* An expression of recognition and acclamation of the new king (see 1Sa 10:24; 2Sa 16:16; 2Ki 11:12). (CSB)

1:26 Hints at impending conflict and loss of some of David’s long-standing allies. (TL SB)

1:11–27 Intrigue increases with word of Adonijah’s maneuvers to gain the throne. Nathan shows proper reserve, stating facts and asking the king what his intentions are. When stakes are high, we may feel the urgency to rob others of their decisions. However, God would have us honor the calling of others by assisting them with facts and good counsel. The Word of His prophets is ever ready to counsel and encourage us in the way of peace, indeed, in the way of life everlasting. • Almighty God, our times are in Your hands. Lead us to use our time on earth wisely, as we live for Him who died for us. Amen. (TL SB)

Solomon Anointed King

28 Then King David answered, "Call Bathsheba to me." So she came into the king's presence and stood before the king. 29 And the king swore, saying, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my soul out of every adversity, 30 as I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel, saying, 'Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place,' even so will I do this day." 31 Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the ground and paid homage to the king and said, "May my lord King David live forever!" 32 King David said, "Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada." So they came before the king. 33 And the king said to them, "Take with you the servants of your lord and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. 34 And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpet and say, 'Long live King Solomon!' 35 You shall then come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne, for he shall be king in my place. And I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah." 36 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, "Amen! May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, say so. 37 As the LORD has been with my lord the king, even so may he be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David." 38 So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule and brought him to Gihon. 39 There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" 40 And all the people went up after him, playing on pipes, and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth was split by their noise. 41 Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they finished feasting. And when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, "What does this uproar in the city mean?" 42 While he was still speaking, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came. And Adonijah said, "Come in, for you are a worthy man and bring good news." 43 Jonathan answered Adonijah, "No, for our lord King David has made Solomon king, 44 and the king has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites. And they had him ride on the king's mule. 45 And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king at Gihon, and they have gone up from there rejoicing, so that the city is in an uproar. This is the noise that you have heard. 46 Solomon sits on the royal throne. 47 Moreover, the king's servants came to congratulate our lord King David, saying, 'May your God make the name of Solomon more famous than yours, and make his throne greater than your throne.' And the king bowed himself on the bed. 48 And the king also said, 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who has granted someone to sit on my throne this day, my own eyes seeing it.'" 49 Then all the guests of Adonijah trembled and rose, and each went his own way. 50 And Adonijah feared Solomon. So he arose and went and took hold of the horns of the altar. 51 Then it was told Solomon, "Behold, Adonijah fears King Solomon, for behold, he has laid hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me first that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.'" 52 And Solomon said, "If he will show himself a worthy man, not one of his hairs shall fall to the earth, but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die." 53 So King Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and paid homage to King Solomon, and Solomon said to him, "Go to your house."

1:28 *David answered.* David's political will and savvy did not suffer from senility. He issued precise instructions for an enthronement ceremony (vv 32–37) and still commanded loyalty (vv 38–40). (TLSB)

Call Bathsheba. She had left the bedchamber when the prophet received an audience (v 23). Nathan likewise withdrew when David recalled his wife to announce he would assure Solomon's accession (vv 28–31). (TLSB)

1:31 *May my lord King David live forever!* An expression of Bathsheba's thanks in the stereotyped hyperbolic language of the court (see Ne 2:3; Da 2:4; 3:9; 5:10; 6:21). (CSB)

1:33 *your lord's servants.* Presumably including the Kerethites and Pelethites (see v. 38). (CSB)

my own mule. Although crossbreeding was forbidden in the Mosaic law (Lev 19:19), mules (perhaps imported; see Eze 27:14) were used in the time of David, at least as mounts for royalty (see 2Sa 13:29; 18:9). To ride on David's own mule was a public proclamation that Solomon's succession to the throne was sanctioned by David (see Ge 41:43; Est 6:7–8). (CSB)

Mark of royalty (2Sm 13:29; 18:9). When One "greater than Solomon" (Mt 12:42) entered Jerusalem on a donkey, the people expressed their expectations by shouting: "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Mt 21:9, 15). Jesus claimed to be a king, the Anointed, the Messiah, but His "kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18:36–37). (TLSB)

Gihon. The site of a spring on the eastern slope of Mount Zion. (CSB)

Spring in Kidron Valley north of En-rogel (see note, v 9), from which Hezekiah later dug a tunnel to the Pool of Siloam. A spring may have been chosen for the site of coronations because the perpetual flow of water signified a stable and resourceful reign. (TLSB)

1:35 *ruler.* Hbr word translated "prince" in 1Sm 9:16; cf 1Sm 10:. (TLSB)

Israel and Judah. The distinction between Israel and Judah was rooted in the separate arrangements by which David became king over these two tribal units (see 2Sa 2:4; 5:3). (CSB)

1:37 *throne greater.* Not a deprecation of David's accomplishments, but an expression of total loyalty to David and Solomon. Benaiah shared David's own desire for his chosen successor (see vv. 47–48). (CSB)

1:39 *Zadok ... anointed Solomon.* Kings chosen by God to rule over his people who were not in a line of dynastic succession were anointed by prophets (Saul, 1Sa 9:16; David, 1Sa 16:12; Jehu, 2Ki 9). Kings who assumed office in the line of dynastic succession were anointed by priests (Solomon, here; Joash, 2Ki 11:12). The distinction seems to be that the priest worked within the established order while the prophets introduced new divine initiatives. (CSB)

horn of oil. Perhaps containing the anointing oil described in Ex 30:22–33. (CSB)

Cf Ex 30:23–32 for the preparation of anointing oil. (TLSB)

tent. The tent David had erected in Jerusalem to house the ark (see 2Sa 6:17) rather than the tabernacle at Gibeon. (CSB)

Not the tabernacle, which was in Gibeon (cf 3:4), but a tent David had set up in Jerusalem to house the ark (2Sm 6:17). (TLSB)

1:40 *pipes.* Apparently a common instrument. (TLSB)

split. Hyperbole; sound of their rejoicing was great. (TLSB)

1:41 *heard it.* Although Gihon may not have been visible from En Rogel, the distance was not great and the sound would carry down the Kidron Valley. (CSB)

What does this ... mean? Adonijah and his band lacked Absalom's wife and perverse determination to seize the throne. They expected no resistance. (TLSB)

1:42 *Jonathan son of Abiathar.* See 2Sa 17:17–21. (CSB)

Formerly a secret informant for David. (TLSB)

1:43 *Solomon king.* Not the news Adonijah wanted to hear, but he did not contest David's decision (vv 41–48). Solomon promised to spare his rival's life (vv 49–53). He wisely sought peace in the royal family. (TLSB)

1:46 *royal throne.* Thrones were transportable; in artwork they are sometimes depicted with wheels. (TLSB)

1:47 *bowed himself on the bed.* Expresses David's humility and physical infirmity. (TLSB)

1:48 *sit on my throne.* In Solomon's succession to the throne David sees a fulfillment of the promise in 2Sa 7:12, 16. (CSB)

1:49 *went his own way.* No one wanted to be identified with Adonijah's abortive coup now that it appeared certain to fail. (CSB)

1:50 *took hold of the horns of the altar.* The horns of the altar were vertical projections at each corner. The idea of seeking asylum at the altar was rooted in the Pentateuch (see Ex 21:13–14). The priest smeared the blood of the sacrifice on the horns of the altar (see Ex 29:12; Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34) during the sacrificial ritual. Adonijah thus seeks to place his own destiny under the protection of God. (CSB)

One guilty of unintentional manslaughter could flee for refuge to the altar (cf Ex 21:12–13). Apparently, this applied to other crimes punishable by death. (TLSB)

1:51 *swear to me first.* Emphasizes the extent of Adonijah's fear. (TLSB)

1:52 *worthy man.* Who recognizes and submits to Solomon's office and authority. *if evil is found in him.* If he shows evidence of continuing opposition to Solomon's succession to the throne. (CSB)

1:53 *Solomon sent.* He assumed royal functions before David's death. The record does not specify how long the co-regency lasted or whether it is included in computing the length of Solomon's reign (cf 1Ch 22:6–29:25). Cf 2Ki 15:5 for another such coregency. Father-son rule likely occurred in other instances, a factor that helps to solve some difficulties in the chronologies of the reigns during the divided kingdom. (TLSB)

1:28–53 Informed of Adonijah's intentions, David declares that Solomon is to succeed him as king according to God's purposes. Human scheming cannot overthrow God's plans. This is a warning to all who think they can defy the Almighty, but it is also a great comfort to us whose lives and futures are in the hands of the merciful and gracious God. • Lord God Almighty, I thank You for Your guidance of my life, assuring me that in Your Son, Jesus, You are reigning for my good, both now and eternally. Amen. (TLSB)