

1 Kings Chapter 2

Verses 2:1-9: “Solomon”, as David’s co-regent, is given some needed advice concerning how to rule. It was traditional in the ancient Near East for a king to pass on a formal set of wise instructions to his “son” and successor. “Joab” and “Shimei” remained as unresolved problems of state for David. Joab had murdered two generals (2 Sam. 3:27; 20:10), not to mention Absalom (2 Sam 18:14). And as head of the military forces and party to David’s most intimate activities (e.g. 2 Sam. Chapter 11), had become too strong for David to deal with. Shimei had openly opposed and even cursed David (2 Sam. 16:5-13; 19:6-23). “Barzillai,” on the other hand, had supported the king in times of great need (2 Sam. 17:27-29; 19:31-39).

A dying man’s final words are significant. David’s charge consisted of instructions on being God’s “man” (2:1-4) and securing the kingdom (2:5-9). The order is also important: fulfilling the second part without the first would render it useless. Christian leaders should always be men and women of “the Book”, ones who do not just read the Word but live it (James 1:22).

1 Kings 2:1 "Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying,"

“He charged Solomon”: Leaders typically exhorted their successors, e.g., Moses (Deut. 31:7-8), Joshua (Josh. 23:1-6), and Samuel (1 Sam. 12:1-25). So also, David gave Solomon a final exhortation.

This did not immediately follow the anointing of Solomon as king (in chapter 1). We read (in 1 Chronicles chapters 23 and 24), David recovered enough from the illness, that he gathered the princes of the tribes of Israel together to charge them with what they were to do. We will give just two Scriptures from that to show this.

1 Chronicles 23:1-2 "So when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel." "And he gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites."

It would be good to read it all, to see the impact of that.

1 Kings 2:2 "I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man;"

“The way of all the earth”: An expression for death (Josh. 23:14; compare Gen. 3:19).

“Be thou strong ... shew thyself a man”: An expression of encouragement (Deut. 31:7, 23; Josh. 1:6-7, 9, 18; 1 Sam. 4:9) With which David sought to prepare Solomon for the difficult tasks and the battles in his future.

It appears from this, that Solomon had been dependent upon David for many of the decisions he made in his early reign as king. David is now explaining to Solomon that he must be brave, and stand as a man would stand. He must now accept the decision making that goes with being king

as part of his duty as king. The weight of the government will now be on Solomon's shoulders. Going the way of the earth is speaking of dying.

1 Kings 2:3 "And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:"

“Keep the charge of the Lord thy God”: David admonished Solomon to obey the Mosaic law so he could have a successful kingship (compare Deut. 17:18-20).

1 Kings 2:4 "That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel."

“His word”: The unconditional Davidic Covenant was made by God with David (in 2 Sam. 7:4-17), and confirmed to Solomon (in 1 Kings. 9:5). Promising the perpetuation of the Davidic dynasty over Israel.

“If thy children take heed to their way”: David declared that the king’s obedience to the law of Moses was a necessary condition for the fulfillment of the divine promise. The book of Kings demonstrates that none of the descendants of David remained faithful to God’s law. None of them met the conditions for the fulfillment of the divine promise. Rather, David’s words provided a basis for explaining the Exile. Thus, the ultimate and final King of Israel would appear at a later, undesignated time.

David looks back over his time as king and realizes the importance of being totally obedient on the will of God. He explains to Solomon the blessings that go with him being obedient to that will of God. Prosperity in his reign is his own choice. He must keep the Law of Moses, not only in formality, but from his heart being stayed upon pleasing the LORD. David tells Solomon that even more blessings than had been bestowed upon him will be Solomon's, if he will remain faithful to the LORD. The word "continue", means establish in this particular instance. The blessings of the LORD are conditional however. Solomon and his children must walk in the truth of the LORD for a blessing to be upon them.

1 Kings 2:5 "Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, [and] what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that [was] about his loins, and in his shoes that [were] on his feet."

“Abner ... Amasa”: These were victims of Joab’s jealousy and vengeance, who were killed after warfare had ceased (2 Sam. 3:27; 20:10), thus bringing Joab’s punishment as a murderer (Deut. 19:11-13).

Joab had done David an injustice when he killed Absalom, after David had said not to. This however, was during a war, and David did not kill him for this. The death of the other two captains of David's however, happened in a time of peace. They were treacherously done. In the case of Abner, he had pretended friendship to get him there, and then murdered him. It was not a fair fight because Abner was not aware there was a problem. He had no opportunity to defend himself. This type of murder requires the death of the person who is the murderer. This by itself would have been enough, but he actually killed a relative unmercifully when he murdered Amasa. The reference to the blood on "his girdle" and "shoes", was when he killed Amasa. The blood got on his girdle and even ran into the shoes of Joab. He had not killed them in war, they were at peace. Both of these things were worthy of death by Hebrew law.

1 Kings 2:6 "Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace."

Which though young, wisdom began to appear in him, even in the life of his father, David. He therefore exhorts him to use the wisdom he had, and take the first and fittest opportunity to cut him off for his former murders and late treason, as a dangerous man to his government and the peace of it.

"And let not his hoary head go down to the grave in peace": That is, let him not die a natural, but a violent death; and let not his grey hairs be any argument for sparing him, or any reason for delaying the taking of him off, because he would in course die quickly. For he must be now an old man, as old as David, or perhaps older; since he had been his general forty years, even all the time of his reign (see 2 Samuel 2:13).

Joab was the leader of the army. It might cause trouble with the army, if he killed Joab. Solomon must carefully carry out David's wishes here. David does want Joab to pay with his life. He must not get old (hoar head), and die from natural causes. He must be killed for these sins.

1 Kings 2:7 "But show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother."

"Sons of Barzillai": David told Solomon to repay Barzillai's kindness to David (2 Sam. 17:27-29), by showing similar kindness to Barzillai's sons.

(2 Sam. 17:27-29 and 19:31-39), describe what "Barzillai" did for David. Eating at the king's "table" was the equivalent of having a pension and royal allowance for food and clothing, with a house and land to support the guest and his or her family. When David exhorted Solomon to let the sons of Barzillai "eat at his table" (2:7), he had already provided a pattern for such generosity. Years before, David had made a covenant with Jonathan, the son of Saul, promising that Jonathan's descendants would always have his protection. After Jonathan was dead, David discovered his crippled son, Mephibosheth, living in exile and fear in the wilderness. David brought Mephibosheth into his royal household and promised him, "you shall eat bread at my table continually" (2 Sam. 9:7). Solomon learned firsthand from his father what it meant to honor those to whom honor was due.

“Eat at thy table”: A position of honor that could include a royal stipend (2 Sam. 9:7; 1 Kings 18:19; 2 Kings 25:29).

Barzillai had befriended David when he was running from Absalom. David wants Solomon to befriend his sons now, by furnishing them the things for their livelihood. They were not living in the house of Solomon, but got provisions from the treasury of Solomon.

1 Kings 2:8 "And, behold, [thou hast] with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I swore to him by the LORD, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword."

“Shimei”: He had angrily stoned and vehemently cursed David when David was escaping from Absalom (2 Sam. 16:5-13). Shimei’s actions were worthy of death (Exodus 22:28), and David counseled Solomon through subtle means to arrange for his just punishment (verses 36-46).

1 Kings 2:9 "Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou [art] a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood."

I. e. "Do not treat him as an innocent man. Punish him as in thy wisdom thou deem best. Not capitally at once; but so that he may be likely to give thee in course of time a just occasion to slay him." So, at least, Solomon seems to have understood the charge (See 1 Kings 2:36-46).

This is speaking of the Shimei, who cried out curses on David, as he fled from Absalom. Some of David's men wanted to kill him then. David would not for fear that this might have been a message from the LORD. When he was on his way back to Jerusalem, this same man begged David not to put him to death with his sword. David made him this promise. Now, David is explaining to Solomon that he must not let him live to be an old man, and die of natural causes. He must be punished for that long ago transgression.

Verses 10-11: This is speaking of David's death and his burial with honor with those who had gone on before him. He reigned as king 40 years. This is explained that 7 years of that time he reigned over just Judah. The other 33 years, he was king of all Israel.

Verses 10-12 (see 2 Sam. 5:5; 1 Chron. 29:26-28).

King David’s death marked the end of a momentous 40 year reign in Israel’s history. But the line of David would continue on Israel’s throne, eventually culminating in the birth of the Messiah.

1 Kings 2:10 "So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David."

That is, evidently in Mount Sion. In (Nehemiah 3:16), the “sepulchers of David” are noticed, and they are plainly alluded to in (Ezekiel 43:7; 43:9). They became the regular tombs of the kings,

with some exceptions particularly noticed. It was in token of special honor that the High Priest Jehoiada, the preserver of the royal dynasty, was buried therein (see 2 Chronicles 24:16).

“The city of David”: I.e., Jerusalem (compare 8:1).

1 Kings 2:11 "And the days that David reigned over Israel [were] forty years: seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem."

“Forty years”: David ruled from ca. 1011-971 B.C., probably with Solomon as co-regent during his final year (compare 11:41).

1 Kings 2:12 "Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly."

“Established greatly”: Solomon’s succession enjoyed the Lord’s approval, and Solomon experienced unchallenged authority, prosperity, and renown (verse 46).

It seems that the actual reign of Solomon began at the death of David. He had been announced king before, but had let his father make the weightier decisions until his death. It seems now, that Solomon has taken over the responsibilities of king and has become strong. It helped for the kingdom to be established by David. Solomon built upon the foundation that was already there.

1 Kings 2:13 "And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably."

Into her apartment; Abarbinel thinks it was a few days after the death of David.

"And she said, comest thou peaceably?" In a friendly manner, with no ill design, only to pay a friendly visit; for she might fear he came to avenge himself on her, and destroy her, because she had been the instrument of disappointing him of the kingdom, and of getting her son Solomon set upon the throne, and established in it. And therefore could not tell what envy, rage, and disappointment, might prompt him to.

"And he said, peaceably": He meant no harm unto her.

Adonijah probably came to Bath-sheba, knowing that she had great influence on Solomon. He was possibly, afraid to go directly to Solomon. She remembered that he had tried to become king and now asks him if he has come in peace. He answers her, peaceably.

1 Kings 2:14 "He said moreover, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And she said, Say on."

He signified that he came upon business: and she said, say on; intimating her readiness to hear what it was.

Verses 15-18: For Adonijah to say, “The kingdom was mine, and all Israel had set their faces on me”, was an exaggeration with the intent to undermine Solomon and manipulate “Bath-sheba,” the queen mother (1:1:4, 15).

1 Kings 2:15 "And he said, Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and [that] all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign: howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's: for it was his from the LORD."

“All Israel set their faces on me”: A reference to Adonijah’s perceived right to the kingship as the oldest surviving son according to ancient Near East custom.

Another possibility of why he came to Bath-sheba could have been that he knew she and Nathan went to David to tell him of Adonijah's take-over attempt. He still has not given up to the fact that Solomon is king. He says it should have been his, and that all the people supported him as king. It is as if he is angry with the LORD for choosing Solomon over him.

1 Kings 2:16 "And now I ask one petition of thee, deny me not. And she said unto him, Say on."

And but one, and a small one too, as Bath-sheba herself after calls it.

"Deny me not": Or "turn not away my face"; with shame and sorrow, which would be the case should he be denied.

"And she said unto him, say on": Let me hear it.

1 Kings 2:17 "And he said, Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king, (for he will not say thee nay,) that he give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife."

Adonijah’s request for David’s concubine, “Abishag” (1:2-4), constituted a virtual claim upon the throne (see the note on 2 Sam. 3:7-10). Therefore Adonijah was executed (verses 24-25).

“Give me Abishag”: In the ancient Near East, possession of the royal harem was a sign of kingship (compare 2 Sam. 3:8; 12:8; 16:20-22). Adonijah’s request for Abishag was an attempt to support his claim to the kingship and perhaps generate a revolt to usurp the throne. Bath-sheba didn’t see the treachery (verses 18-21).

Adonijah is fully aware that to have the king's wife to wife would be a way of saying he was king. He comes to Bath-sheba with this request because she might plead his case with Solomon. He perhaps feels she might not see that he is indirectly asking to be proclaimed the rightful king.

1 Kings 2:18 "And Bath-sheba said, Well; I will speak for thee unto the king."

Very well spoken, the thing is good and right.

"I will speak for thee unto the king": "And use her interest with him, not seeing into his design, but pitying an unfortunate man.

Verses 19-34: Women in antiquity were often considered political capital. Adonijah wanted "Abishag" so he would have a claim to the throne. It was a foolish request that proved him a traitor and cost him his life (1:52). Solomon also killed "Joab", further removing any threat to his throne from Adonijah's circle. The search for Joab took them to an outlying area of Israel ("Shunem"), southeast of Mount Carmel.

1 Kings 2:19 "Bath-sheba therefore went unto king Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand."

Solomon showed great respect for his mother, when she came to speak on behalf of Adonijah. To sit at the right hand of the king was a place of honor.

1 Kings 2:20 "Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; [I pray thee], say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother: for I will not say thee nay."

It was but one, and a little one, and therefore she hoped it would be granted.

"I pray thee, say me not nay": Do not refuse it, or deny it me, or turn me away with shame and disappointment.

"And the king said, ask on, my mother, for I will not say thee nay": Since it is a small one, as thou says, and provided it is fit and lawful to be granted.

Solomon wanted to grant the wishes of his mother. He loved her and even owed his being king to her as well. If the petition is within his will to grant, he would certainly do it.

1 Kings 2:21 "And she said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife."

For so Adonijah was by his father's side; and Bath-sheba makes use of the relation, the more to move upon him to grant the request.

Bath-sheba is not aware of the implications of this. She reminds Solomon that Adonijah is his brother. She probably thinks that Adonijah is just in love with Abishag. She certainly is not aware, that this is a trick to take the kingdom from Solomon.

1 Kings 2:22 "And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also; for he [is] mine elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah."

“Ask for him the kingdom”: Solomon recognized Adonijah’s request as the prelude to his usurping of the throne. Because Adonijah’s request violated the terms of loyalty Solomon had previously specified (1:52), he pronounced a formal, legal death sentence on Adonijah (verses 23-24).

Solomon tells his mother here, that she is actually asking for him to turn the kingdom over to Adonijah and his friends, Joab and Abiathar. She has asked something that was against the will of Solomon and against the will of David, if he were living. And most of all it was against the will of the LORD.

1 Kings 2:23 "Then king Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life."

To prevent his mother pressing him to have her petition granted.

"Saying, God do so to me, and more also": Lay such and such evils upon me, and more than I care to express.

"If Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life": To his own prejudice, and even to the loss of his life; in which Solomon suggests it would issue, being a fresh overt act of treason. He knew, from what Bath-sheba said, that this was his petition, and that he had spoken of this to her, and put her upon making it for him. And who no doubt related to Solomon the whole of the conversation that passed between them, and to which he seems to have some respect in his answer.

Solomon had sworn to let Adonijah live, as long as he did no evil. This is an evil act of deception by Adonijah. This is outside the oath that Solomon had made. Adonijah has broken the oath himself, with such a request.

1 Kings 2:24 "Now therefore, [as] the LORD liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me a house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day."

“As he promised”: Solomon viewed himself as the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise to David (in 2 Sam. 7:12-16; see also 5:5; 8:18-21). The ultimate fulfillment will be the Messiah, Jesus, who will return to Israel and set up His kingdom (see Isa. 9:6-7).

1 Kings 2:25 "And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell upon him that he died."

The chief of the body-guard is the chief of “the executioners” (see 1 Kings 1:38), apparently, in the case of great criminals, carrying out the sentence of condemnation with his own hand (compare Judges 8:20-21).

Adonijah had brought this upon himself. He knew what he was doing. Solomon was not tricked by Adonijah. Solomon sent his bodyguard, Benaiah, and he killed Adonijah for this terrible sin. Solomon knew his mother was innocent of wrong doing. Adonijah had tricked her.

1 Kings Chapter 2 Questions

1. When David realized that the time for him to die was near, what did he do?
2. Where do we find Scriptures that let us know David lived a little while after Solomon was anointed king?
3. What is meant by "going the way of all the earth"?
4. David told Solomon to be strong and show himself a _____.
5. When David dies, the weight of the government will be on _____ shoulders.
6. In verses 3 and 4, what does David tell him to do?
7. Why is David so sure this is the thing to do?
8. How must he keep the law of Moses?
9. "Continue", in verse 4, means what?
10. What terrible things had Joab done?
11. Why was this murder?
12. What does David want done to Joab?
13. Why will Solomon have to be careful how he goes about it?
14. What is meant by "hoar head"?
15. Who did David ask Solomon to show kindness to?
16. Why?
17. Who had sorely cursed David?
18. What does David want Solomon to do to him?
19. Where was David buried?
20. How long had David reigned?

21. Who did Adonijah come to, for help in speaking for him to Solomon?
22. Why was she chosen for this?
23. What did Adonijah say belonged to him?
24. Who did he blame for it not coming to him?
25. What was his request?
26. How did Solomon act on seeing his mother?
27. What is Adonijah really asking for?
28. What did she ask for Adonijah?
29. What does she remind Solomon of, as she asks?
30. What does Solomon tell Bath-sheba, she is really asking for?
31. What was the condition of the oath Solomon had made to Adonijah?
32. What did Solomon do to Adonijah for this sin?
33. Who actually carries out the punishment?