

SHOW YOURSELF A MAN

1 Kings 1:1-2:46

Key Verse: 2:2,3

“I am about to go the way of all the earth.” He said, “So be strong, show yourself a man and observe what the Lord your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go.”

These are the words which King David spoke to his son, Solomon, a man loved by his father David and loved by the Lord, the man whom David had established as king of Israel. Chapter 2 ends with the words, “The kingdom was now firmly established in Solomon’s hands.” Solomon reigned over Israel 40 years. His reign was one of great peace and prosperity. He was a man renown for his wisdom. He loved God and for the most part, walked in the ways of his father David. God loved him and blessed him. (Solomon’s nickname was Jedidiah, which means “loved by the Lord.”--2Sa 12:24,25) These two chapters tell us how the kingdom of Israel was firmly established in Solomon’s hands.

Part 1: David makes Solomon King

King David was old. He seemed to have lost interest in the things that matter to men. He was greatly loved and cared for by his servants. He had finished his work. The kingdom was united. There was peace. He expected his last days to be quiet and uneventful. His servants decided to find a young woman to sleep with him and keep him warm, and they found a beautiful young girl, Abishag. She attended David and took care of him, but he was not interested in having sex with her. It seemed obvious that he would not live much longer and it seemed that he was not so mentally alert. There was one thing left for him to do, however. He had to establish his successor. His oldest living son, Adonijah decided to make his move. He put himself forward and said, “I will be king.” He must have known that David intended for Solomon to follow him to the throne. This was exactly why he wanted to move fast, even before the death of David. He thought that he was the one who should be king. He was handsome. He was the oldest. He thought that he was the best possible man for the job because his father had never rebuked him or said anything negative to him. So he prepared a feast at a place near En Rogel. He invited David’s top general, Joab and the priest Abiathar, with his son Jonathan. They had been loyal to David in the time of Absalom’s attempted coup de tat. He also invited all his brothers, the king’s sons (with the exception of Solomon) and all the men who were royal officials. His intention was clear. He planned to

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confirm himself as king. He expected the distinguished priest Abiathar to anoint him. And he had the strong man of the kingdom, General Joab, to support him.

Adonijah reckoned without taking Nathan the Prophet into consideration. He deliberately did not invite Nathan, or his half-brother Solomon or Benaiah, the general in charge of David's personal body guard. Nathan knew that God had picked Solomon to be king after David. David also knew this. (1 Ch 22:9,10) Nathan went to Bathsheba, mother of Solomon. Nathan knew Bathsheba well. He had rebuked David when he committed adultery with her, and he had conveyed the message of forgiveness when David repented. After Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite died in battle, David married Bathsheba. The son conceived in sin died, but after that, David had 4 sons by Bathsheba. Nathan knew that God had chosen their son, Solomon to be king after David. Solomon was the fruit of David's repentance and forgiveness, and the fruit of God's love for David. So, Nathan went to Bathsheba and asked her to speak to David, reminding him of his promise that Solomon, her son would succeed him as king. While Bathsheba was talking with David, Nathan came in and confirmed what she said.

Suddenly David became alert. He became a king again. He stopped being a weak old man, not interested in anything. He told Bathsheba, "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 the Lord, the God of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place." (1:30) David then took steps to have Solomon crowned king. He called Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet and Benaiah the general and had them let Solomon ride to Gehan on David's mule. There Zadok was to anoint him king over Israel; they would blow the trumpet shouting, "long live king Solomon" then escort him to the palace and have him sit on David's throne. They followed David's instructions and David appointed Solomon king over Judah and Israel. All the people rejoiced. (1:28-40)

When Adonijah and his guests heard the sound of the trumpet and shouting, they wondered what was going on. Jonathan, son of the priest Abiathar, reported that King David had made Solomon king. He reported that Solomon had taken his seat on David's throne and everyone had come to congratulate him. Adonijah and his guests disbursed in great fear. Adonijah went to the temple and sought protection by clinging to the horns of the altar. This was protection for an innocent man. He had not committed a crime, so Solomon did not have him executed. He sent him home.

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Part 2: Solomon's throne established (chapter 2)

David knew that just having the title “King” was not enough to make the throne secure. He gave Solomon some important advice. First of all, Solomon must show himself to be a man. He must be courageous and decisive in his actions. He must exercise leadership with justice and compassion. Most importantly, he must submit to God and to his laws. A king is not autonomous. He is accountable to God. He is not above the law of God. He, like everyone else, must submit to God's law. So David said, “Observe what the Lord your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go.” (3) David continued, remembering God's promise to him: “...the Lord promised me: 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.” (4, 2 Sa 7). David shared with Solomon his most important secret of kingship: David loved God; he inquired of the Lord; he lived by God's law. And God gave him victory.

David gave some practical advice, too. He knew that there were certain men who would make big problems for Solomon down the road, and several people who he could count on to help him. First, Joab. Joab was David's first cousin, the son (along with Abishai and Asahel) of his aunt Zeruah. He was a powerful and able general and he had been intensely loyal to David. Sometimes he had done David's dirty work. But he had broken David's heart by personally killing Absalom when he was hanging helplessly by his hair caught in a tree. David's direction to Solomon to kill Joab does not rest on a personal grudge, however. David's most important task as king was to unite the kingdom. It was almost impossible, but with God's help and with radical humility, he had succeeded. There were two men who were crucial to this task. One was Abner, Saul's general, Abner. (He was also Saul's cousin.) Abner was serving Saul's son, Ish-Bosheth who claimed Saul's throne as king Israel. Abner knew that God wanted David to be king of the united kingdom. After a long war, he conceded and defected to David, spurred by a quarrel with Ish-Bosheth over a woman—Saul's concubine. David planned to give Abner a high rank in the army and through him, unite the kingdom. But Joab didn't like it. He didn't like having a general who was older and more experienced on David's staff. So, he found an opportunity and an excuse and killed Abner. His excuse was that Abner had killed Joab's brother, Asahel. Indeed, Abner had killed Asahel in self-defense in battle. But the fact was that Joab killed an innocent man in peacetime. This event almost disrupted David's plan to unite the kingdom, but

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David humbled himself and walked in the funeral procession of Abner and made it clear that Abner's assignation was not his doing. And the kingdom was united.

The other man Joab killed in peacetime was General Amasa, Amasa was also David's and Joab's cousin. He joined the rebellion of Absalom and served as the commanding general of Absalom's army. When Absalom was defeated, he came over to David. David forgave him and wanted to make him general in the place of Joab. He wanted to reunite the kingdom that had been fractured by Absalom. He gave General Amasa the task of hunting down a rebellion leader named Sheba. Amasa didn't move fast enough. Joab killed Amasa and took over. He also caught Sheba and nipped the revolt in the bud. The fact that he treacherously killed two men in peacetime for personal reasons made him liable. He could be executed legally.

Solomon followed David's direction. He sent General Benaiah to execute Joab. He could not claim immunity by holding on to the horns of the altar. He was guilty, so the horns of the altar could not save him.

David also remembered Barzillai who had stood by him, and he asked Solomon to remember him, too. Abiathar (son of Ahimelech the priest of Nob) [1 Sa 22] had served David faithfully from the time of his fugitive life until the rebellion of Absalom. So Solomon did not kill him. He removed him from the priesthood and sent him to his home. A prophesy given to Eli in the time of Samuel was fulfilled. Shimei was the man who had taunted David as he was fleeing Jerusalem. He had not committed a capital crime, so Solomon put him under house arrest. Shimei, however, didn't take Solomon's direction to remain in Jerusalem seriously, and once he left Jerusalem to find a runaway slave. When he returned, he was executed.

Adonijah was the biggest threat to the throne. He revealed his ambition to get the throne when he asked for Abishag, David's concubine. This was reason enough for Solomon to have him executed. In all of these cases, Solomon was careful not to act in the heat of anger. Nor did he use personal grudge as an excuse. His dealings with all of these people was according to the law. He was indeed seeking to be a king who is accountable to God, who keeps the law of the Lord. He told Shimei, "King Solomon will be blessed, and David's throne will remain secure before the Lord forever." The kingdom was now firmly established in Solomon's hands (2:46).