



We now cover the end of David's golden reign and the beginning of Solomon's splendid rule. This would mark Israel's golden age, with a united monarchy and due to David's righteous rule, the pouring of God's great physical blessings on them.

But, unfortunately, there would be palace intrigues to the very end of David's rule. As David's health declined, political jockeying for kingship increased among his two older sons. Three of David's sons had already died.

Amnon, David's oldest son, who had raped his half sister, was killed by a vengeful Absalom. David's second son, Chileab, must have died at an early age, for he is not mentioned again. Then Absalom, David's third son, after his rebellion, was killed by Joab. Next in line was Adonijah, (2 Sam. 3:4), but David had let it be known that God had chosen Solomon (1 Chr. 22:9). Yet David was very fond of Adonijah, who, with his good looks and charisma, reminded him of Absalom, and hence, had not corrected his misguided and dangerous ambitions.

So we begin the book of 1 Kings with this background in mind. 1 Kings 1:1-4 says, "Now King David was old, advanced in years; and they put covers on him, but he could not get warm. Therefore his servants said to him, 'Let a young woman, a virgin, be sought for our lord the king, and let her stand before the king, and let her care for him; and let her lie in your bosom, that our lord the king may be warm.' So they sought for a lovely young woman throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. The young woman was very lovely; and she cared for the king, and served him; but the king did not know her."

This is a common disorder of the elderly, since their blood circulation often becomes reduced and the extremities do not get enough blood and warmth in the system, a type of hypothermia. It seems all of David's existing wives were too old to provide the type of 'round-the-clock nursing care and warmth' that Abishag was able to provide.

*Nelson's Study Bible* says, "Using a healthy person's body warmth to care for a sick person is a medical procedure noted by the second-century Greek physician Galen and the Jewish historian Josephus". Yet, the Bible said David never "knew her" which means he never had sex with her. He

probably remembered all the grief he had caused himself and his nation by multiplying his women, against God's will in Deut. 17. We read he never went back to his old concubines either. In any case, David's health was in a steep decline and Adonijah saw a chance to beat out Solomon for the throne.

Although Adonijah should have known better, through political intrigues, he won over Abiathar, a high-ranking priest and Joab, the powerful military commander, to his cause of becoming the next king. Usually, this meant promising to continue them in their positions and raise some of their sons and friends to power. But how they could back such a farfetched plot, knowing what had already happened to Absalom, shows how powerful and corrupting political ambitions can blind even veteran leaders.

So Adonijah takes the initiative and invites all his powerful backers to proclaim him as the next king. He figured he would then ride the crest of popularity and the momentum that would force King David's hand. After all, he was technically the next in line. So he deliberately avoided inviting to his banquet and sacrifice those who would not support him, such as Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet and Solomon himself (1 Kings 1:8-10). In this way, Adonijah exalts himself against God's will. But even late in his life, David has a hard time exercising proper discipline with his children (1 Kings 1:6) and this good-hearted king made the mistake to his shame of overindulging some of his children—including now, Adonijah.

Since Adonijah, just as Absalom, was attractive and charismatic, he used these abilities to convince many of the powerful leaders of the rightness of his cause and, of course--of the accompanying rewards.

Abiathar already had problems siding with the wrong crowd, and now backs Adonijah, although he knew Solomon should be the next king. Perhaps it was a way for God to bring about the prophesized end of the priestly succession of Eli's family (1 Sam. 2:27-36). Joab, too, may have been influenced in some way by God to make this blunder (twice)—of backing Adonijah and reaping a fitting punishment.

*The JFB Commentary* explains, "The Lord had reserved to Himself the right of nomination (Deut. 17:15), which was acted upon in the appointments both of Saul and David. In the case of the latter the rule was so far modified that his posterity were

guaranteed the perpetual possession of the sovereignty (2 Sam. 7:12)...Adonijah, in common with what the people generally expected, this natural succession should be followed in the Hebrew kingdom as in all others. Nathan, who was aware of the old king's solemn promise to Solomon, and, moreover, that this promise was sanctioned by the divine will, saw that no time was to be lost. Fearing the effects of too sudden excitement in the king's feeble state, he arranged that Bathsheba should go first to inform him of what was being transacted outside the walls, and that he himself should follow to confirm her statement."

So, after Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, and Nathan the prophet, open David's eyes to this deadly conspiracy, he puts an end to the question of succession by immediately placing Solomon on the throne before his death—in a great and dramatic public display. Zadok anoints Solomon as king and Nathan is there as the prophet of God. All of Jerusalem rejoices—except for the conspirators who suddenly hear the deafening noise inside the city.

As his plans backfire and all his conspirators flee, Adonijah is understandably terrified. He flees to the altar and grabs the horns, pleading for mercy. "This was in keeping with the traditional function of the altar as a haven of refuge for those who had committed unintentional crimes (Exodus 21:12-14)" (*Nelson Study Bible*).

Adonijah's treason, however, is far from unintentional—so the king sends men to remove him from there. Yet, for the time being, Adonijah is forgiven—Solomon giving him temporary clemency no doubt out of respect for David. One "Absalom" was enough. But Solomon's words indicate he is on probation. Abiathar the priest and Joab are also put on probation and removed from office.

In the parallel account of 1 Chr. 23, David now prepares Solomon to build the temple and organizes the duties and personnel—including Levites, singers and musicians. In 1 Chr. 23:27, David changes how the Levites are to be numbered. Previously the Levites began to serve at age 30, apparently because the work of breaking down, transporting and setting up the tabernacle was considered too demanding and meticulous for younger men. Now the moving of the tabernacle will no longer be necessary (1 Chronicles 23:25-26), and allows the Levites to begin temple service at age 20, the age of "adulthood" for the rest of the tribes.

Twenty-four chief men are chosen to head up the courses of priests who are to serve in some sort of rotating fashion at the temple. Note that Ahimelech, the son of Abiathar, has taken over his father's priestly duties (compare 18:16; 2 Samuel 8:17).

David gathers the leaders together to explain the transfer of power and his goals for Solomon. David starts by discussing his consuming passion—to build the temple of God—and says that God did not allow him to build it because he was a man of war, his reign being replete with bloodshed. He points out that God Himself chose Solomon as king and the one to build the temple (1 Chronicles 28:5-6). Later Solomon tells Hiram that David was surrounded by too many wars, and that a time of peace would now permit him, a man of peace, to build the temple (1 Kings 5:3-5).

Now David turns the huge amount of materials gathered, the organizational and detailed building plans to Solomon. He then explains God revealed the design to him (1 Chronicles 28:12, 19). Similarly, God had revealed the plans for the tabernacle to Moses (Exodus 25:8-9) to ensure that His earthly dwelling was patterned after the one in heaven (Hebrews 8:5).

In addition, David admonishes Solomon to live uprightly before God and then gives Solomon some last-minute instructions on some "unfinished business." David had never properly dealt with Joab's treachery and siding with Adonijah was the last straw, so Joab should be punished. David especially singles out Barzillai for reward and Shimei should be held responsible for his malicious behavior.

In his final "psalm," David said God directly told him that "he who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (2 Samuel 23:3). This recalls the type of individuals Moses was to seek out to place in positions over God's people: "able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness" (Exodus 18:21). Indeed David himself, in spite of his mistakes, was such a man. As God will later state about him: "David did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:5). This does not mean that David sinned only in this one matter. It means that only once in his spiritual life did he really stray far from God, defying Him through serious disobedience for an extended period. Still, he deeply repented and showed it with his actions. Despite his great sin in this matter, and of foolishly

taking a military census, David was, overall, "a man after God's own heart" (see Acts 13:22).

David then dies at the age of 70, after reigning a total of 40 years. But that, of course, is not the end. For he will one day rise again, at the resurrection from the dead, into the Kingdom of God to reign over Israel once more (see Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 37:24). But he will then live and reign as a perfect and spirit being, as David himself well knew, once having prayed to God, "As for me, I will see your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (Psalm 17:15).

Solomon had sternly warned Adonijah, his older brother, to avoid any future appearance of wanting to take over the throne (1 K. 1:51-53). Yet, it seems Adonijah disregarded his younger and inexperienced brother's warning and thought this teenager would not have the valor to carry out his threat. So, after David's death, Adonijah renews his conspiracy against Solomon. He again gets the backing of Abiathar and Joab—they had not learned anything. He now searches for a way to strengthen his standing among the people. After all, Solomon was probably around 18 years old, and of a gentle disposition.

They come up with a way to increase his standing—asking for Abishag, David's last concubine and still a virgin, to be his concubine. The king's concubines were considered part of the royal property inherited by the next king (2 Samuel 12:8). We also remember what Absalom did, and the row General Abner had with Ishbosheth, when he took one of Saul's concubines (2 Sam. 3:6-8).

Solomon rightly understood Adonijah's request for Abishag was an indicator he was still plotting to take over the throne. Adonijah used Solomon's own mother as an unwitting accomplice in the plot to boost his image and this was the last straw. They had underestimated Solomon's intelligence and resolve, and he swiftly stamped out the conspiracy.

He formally deposes Abiathar, and the rest of his family, from any further role in the priesthood. Zadok's appointment to replace Abiathar as head priest fulfills the prophecy given long before that God would raise up a faithful priest to replace the line of Eli (1 K. 2:26-27, 35; 1 Samuel 2:35; Ezekiel 44:15). Then Joab is executed as an accomplice, which also fulfills David's directive (1 Kings 2:5-6).

Shimei, one of Saul's ambitious descendants, is given a relatively mild sentence of remaining inside Jerusalem, but under penalty of death if he leaves.

After three years, it seems he forgets the seriousness of the penalty, or Solomon's resolve to carry it out, and is also executed (1 Kings 2:46).

The Bible tersely says, "Thus the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon" (1 K. 2:46). This shows how Solomon's swift disciplining of the conspirators to the throne established peace and none dared to challenge his rule anymore.

After all the political intrigues for the throne are over, he is now free to focus on the betterment of his kingdom—and, thanks to the able rule of his father and God's blessings, he has so much going for him.

Eugene Merrill says, "By the time of David's death, a carefully devised political and religious apparatus was in place. The old tribal distinctions still existed, but with David there had come at last a sense of national unity in both secular and spiritual affairs. Israel was now a full-fledged nation among the nations of the world. All the constituent elements associated with nationhood—army, political bureaucracy, and central cult—were well established. It was up to Solomon now to build on that foundation and to make God's people a *kingdom of priests* through whom God would bless the world" (*Kingdom of Priests*, p. 284).

Halley adds, "This era of David and Solomon was the Golden Age of Hebrew history. David was a warrior, Solomon a builder. David made the Kingdom, Solomon built the Temple. In the outside world, this was the age of Homer, the beginning of Greek history. Egypt, Assyrian and Babylon, at the time, were weak. Israel was the most powerful kingdom in all the world and Jerusalem, the most magnificent city, and the Temple, the most splendid building on earth. They came from the ends of the earth to hear Solomon's wisdom and see his glory. The famous Queen of Sheba exclaimed after seeing Solomon's kingdom and wisdom, 'The half was not told me'" (p. 191). We will read about this incredible period of peace and prosperity the next time.