

1 Kings 2: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0 : 0 0] 1 Kings chapter 2 When David's time to die drew near, he commanded Solomon his son, saying, I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God walking in his ways, and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do, and wherever you turn, that the Lord may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart, and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.

Moreover, you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner the son of Ner, and Amasa the son of Jethar, whom he killed, avenging in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist, and on the sandals on his feet.

Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his grey head go down to Sheol in peace. But deal loyally with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table.

For with such loyalty they met me when I fled from Absalom your brother. And there is also with you Shimei the son of Gerah, the Benjaminite from Behurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim.

But when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put you to death with the sword. Now therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man.

[1 : 3 5] You will know what you ought to do to him, and you shall bring his grey head down with blood to Sheol. Then David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David. And the time that David reigned over Israel was forty years.

He reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established. Then Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, and she said, Do you come peacefully?

He said, Peacefully. Then he said, I have something to say to you. She said, Speak. He said, You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel fully expected me to reign.

However the kingdom has turned about and become my brother's, for it was his from the Lord. And now I have one request to make of you. Do not refuse me. She said to him, Speak. And he said, Please ask King Solomon.

He will not refuse you, to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife. Bathsheba said, Very well, I will speak for you to the king. So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah.

[2 : 4 1] And the king rose to meet her and bowed down to her. Then he sat on his throne and had a seat brought for the king's mother, and she sat on his right. Then she said, I have one small request to make of you.

Do not refuse me. And the king said to her, Make your request, my mother, for I will not refuse you. She said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as his wife.

King Solomon answered his mother, And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also, for he is my older brother, and on his side are Abiathar the priest, and Joab the son of Zeruiah.

Then king Solomon swore by the Lord, saying, God do so to me and more also, if this word does not cost Adonijah his life. Now therefore, as the Lord lives, who has established me and placed me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death today.

So king Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he struck him down, and he died. And to Abiathar the priest the king said, Go to Anathoth, to your estate, for you deserve death.

[3 : 46] But I will not at this time put you to death, because you carried the ark of the Lord God before David my father, and because you shared in all my father's affliction. So Solomon expelled Abiathar from being priest to the Lord, thus fulfilling the word of the Lord that he had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

When the news came to Joab, for Joab had supported Adonijah, although he had not supported Absalom, Joab fled to the tent of the Lord, and caught hold of the horns of the altar. And when it was told king Solomon, Joab has fled to the tent of the Lord, and behold he is beside the altar.

Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go, strike him down. So Benaiah came to the tent of the Lord, and said to him, The king commands, Come out. But he said, No, I will die here.

Then Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me. The king replied to him, Do as he has said, strike him down and bury him, and thus take away from me and from my father's house the guilt for the blood that Joab shed without cause.

The Lord will bring back his bloody deeds on his own head, because, without the knowledge of my father David, he attacked and killed with the sword two men more righteous and better than himself, Abner the son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jethar, commander of the army of Judah.

[5 : 04] So shall their blood come back on the head of Joab, and on the head of his descendants forever. But for David, and for his descendants, and for his house, and for his throne, there shall be peace from the Lord forevermore.

Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and struck him down and put him to death, and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness. The king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada over the army in the place of Joab, and the king put Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar.

Then the king sent and summoned Shimei and said to him, Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and dwell there, and do not go out from there to any place whatever. For on the day you go out and cross the brook Kidron, know for certain that you shall die.

Your blood shall be on your own head. And Shimei said to the king, What you say is good, as my lord the king has said, so will your servant do. So Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days.

But it happened at the end of three years, that two of Shimei's servants ran away to Achish, son of Meirca, king of Gath. And when it was told Shimei, Behold your servants are in Gath, Shimei arose and saddled a donkey and went to Gath to Achish to seek his servants.

[6 : 12] Shimei went and brought his servants from Gath. And when Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and returned, the king sent and summoned Shimei and said to him, Did I not make you swear by the lord and solemnly warn you, saying, Know for certain that on the day you go out and go to any place whatever you shall die?

And you said to me, What you say is good, I will obey. Why then have you not kept your oath to the lord and the commandment with which I commanded you? The king also said to Shimei, You know in your own heart all the harm that you did to David my father.

So the lord will bring back your harm on your own head. But king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the lord forever. Then the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he went out and struck him down, and he died.

So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon. In 1 Kings chapter 2 the alien king David dies after he has given instructions to Solomon his successor concerning the kingdom.

The chapter begins with these final instructions, and the rest of the chapter largely concerns the execution, some of them in the form of actual executions, Final discourses are an important part of a few figures' lives in scripture.

[7 : 25] Jacob, Moses, David, and Jesus in particular. David has already delivered a number of farewell discourses or teachings. His oracle in 2 Samuel chapter 23, his charges to Israel and Solomon at the end of the book of 1 Chronicles.

Now this delivered to Solomon. This is similar to the charge given to Joshua by Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 31 verses 7 to 8. Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it.

It is the lord who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed. Keeping the law of Moses in all of its aspects so that the promise of the Davidic covenant will be fulfilled is an important part of David's teaching here.

The importance of the law is underlined by the way that it is spoken of in detail. Keep the charge of the lord your god, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commands, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses.

Solomon is supposed to be the model Israelite relative to the law. He keeps the law, and he represents as the chief worshipper faithfulness and loyalty to the law as he keeps it and observes it.

[8 : 44] He will also be the one most responsible for establishing the public observance, administration, and enforcing of the law. For instance, in the formation of a central sanctuary, according to Deuteronomy chapter 12, a king who did not perceive himself to be subject to the law of God would be a very dangerous thing.

Many rulers deem themselves to be exceptions, and Solomon should not be one of them. The covenant of 2 Samuel chapter 7 is being fulfilled here. It is also reminiscent of the teaching of Deuteronomy chapter 17 verses 18 to 20.

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children in Israel.

Deuteronomy is largely a final exhortation of Moses, and much that we see here should remind us of that. David is like Moses. He is the one who receives the covenant and the plans for the house of the Lord.

He is the one who starts the work of the deliverance, but does not complete it. Solomon is like Joshua. He is the one who will bring the people into rest. In the verses that follow, David instructs Solomon to deal with some of the dangerous discontents in the land, Joab and Shimei, while blessing the descendants of Barzillai the Gileadite, who had assisted him in the rebellion of Absalom.

[10 : 18] Shimei will be judged, and Barzillai will be blessed. on account of the parts that they played. Joab has been a powerful compromising presence throughout the 40 years of David's reign.

David couldn't deal with him, but now Joab needs to be finally removed for his crimes and treacheries. When David dies, Solomon rises to the throne. The most important things at this stage are establishing who will be part of the administration of Solomon, and also for Solomon to demonstrate his power so that he can secure order.

In the early stage of the king's reign, there will be threats and attempts to take advantage of his naivety or his weakness. Some will try and see how far they can push him, and whether he can be overpowered, or whether he will back down when confronted.

We might find this chapter rather brutal. If we do, it would be very good to bear in mind the recent history of the nation, where David's failure to deal decisively with men like Joab, Amnon, Absalom, and Ananiah had cost him and the kingdom very, very dearly.

Many, many thousands of lives had been lost because certain key figures hadn't been effectively crushed, and because David's obvious weakness had left the door wide open for cunning and powerful enemies.

[11 : 29] And it could have been so much worse. David's failure to exert the power necessary to establish a firm order made the nation vulnerable to the power of wicked men, such as Joab and Absalom.

If men like Joab were not dealt with decisively at the very outset, they would continue to be the most powerful forces in the land. Solomon needs to establish his dominance over the serpents within the kingdom.

Where a firm and unrivaled power is not demonstrated over them, regions can easily collapse into war and be subject to assault from external forces. The pacification of the enemies of the Davidic king is a very important theme in scripture.

Enemies, internal or external, must either bow and pay homage, or suffer absolute destruction. The great messianic psalm too is a good example of this. Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us burst their bonds apart, and cast away their cords from us.

[12 : 30] He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

I will tell of the decree. The Lord said to me, You are my son. Today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Now therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way. For his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all those who take refuge in him. The Davidic king is praised because he acts shrewdly with the enemies of the people of God.

His wrath is quickly kindled. He won't tolerate the serpents when they are up to their business, but will deal with them decisively and quickly. We see a similar thing in Psalm 110.

[13 : 56] On the day of his wrath, he will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses. He will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. He will drink from the brook by the way. Therefore, he will lift up his head.

These are the two great messianic Psalms in the New Testament. The securing and demonstration of dominance and strong deterrence against all enemies is a precondition for peace in a fallen world.

The king is like Adam in the garden. If he does not effectively stand against the serpents and protect the bride, the consequences may be catastrophic. The serpents more generally will recognize that he is a soft touch and will prey upon him all the more.

A squeamishness about necessary judgment or an excessive weakness is not a virtue in a king. The king is not to be a man of blood, not to be a man given to violence, or a man who delights in violence, or a man who takes life unjustly.

However, he should use violence effectively in the task of justice and in establishing peace that will provide the foundation of his kingdom. Adonijah is a serpent figure who held the feast for his coup near the serpent stone.

[15 : 02] He tries to revive his claim upon the throne with cunning by asking for Abishak. Marrying the concubine of the former king was a power move and Adonijah tries to use Bathsheba to get to Solomon.

Solomon is wise enough to what is going on and he proves himself an effective guardian of the nation in executing Adonijah, to whom he had shown mercy at the end of the preceding chapter. Solomon is not precipitous in executing judgment.

He waits for people to reveal their true colors, but when they do, he deals with them swiftly and effectively. He shows mercy to Abiathar the priest after his part in Adonijah's rebellion, on account of Abiathar's former service of David.

The removal of Abiathar fulfills the prophecy against the house of Eli that was given in 1 Samuel chapter 2. No such mercy is shown to Joab. Joab has revealed his wicked character all too fully during the reign of David.

He was the most dangerous and powerful serpent of all. Furthermore, as long as Joab was not dealt with, blood was on David's house, in whose name Joab had acted. The failure of David to deal with Joab earlier had been a fatal weakness.

[16 : 09] Solomon's executing of Joab at the start of his reign removes a bloodthirsty, violent, predatory and unjust man who had opposed Solomon coming to the throne and whose continued power would greatly threaten the peace of the kingdom.

Shimei is also shown mercy and judgment. He is placed in a situation of refuge, where his life is spared, but he must remain where he is, on fear of death. However, like Adonijah, he fails to observe the terms of his pardon and he must be put to death.

Shimei was a man of the house of Saul, so this is another judgment upon Saul's house. In the place of such treacherous and violent men, faithful men like Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, Zadok the priest, and the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite are exalted.

The result is a nation that is far more secure and much more likely to enjoy peace and justice. The kingdom is established in the hand of Solomon, as he makes clear at the very beginning of his reign that all opposing elements must either bow or be destroyed, and that while he is just and merciful, he is firm and strong, and that people should not trifle with him.

He will not allow the serpents and the men of violence to prey upon the bride. A question to consider. What are some of the ways in which events and persons in this chapter foreshadow Christ and his story?

[17 : 28] What are some of the ways in which events and persons