

# THE BOOKS OF THE KINGS; THE THEOLOGY OF KINGDOM RULE

Stories have been told since the beginning of time. There is good reason for this. Stories capture the interest of the hearer and are often easy to remember. We all remember movies we've seen and books we've read. Sometimes the purpose of stories is merely to entertain, but often they are told in order to teach a lesson. Jesus told stories. They are able to pull meaning from the culture and convey important lessons. C.S. Lewis was one of the best in modern times at this. As we are drawn into the plot, we immerse ourselves in the story and if we are attentive, we can actually feel what the characters feel. This is the power of a good story.

Today we begin a journey through the books of 1 and 2 Kings. In the Hebrew Bible, these are considered to be one book. People often think that these books are more history than anything else. But I want you to see that these books are more about theology than history. The stories in them are there for a purpose, and that purpose is not just to report history. As we go through the books and read these stories, we will build our theology as to how God works in and through His people.

There is a great deal of overlap between the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. We will need to pay attention to that and will reference those books at time in order to gain a more thorough context. There is structure to these books, as is in all the books of the Bible. They are not mere reportage. They are not merely the writings of those chronicling the history of Israel. We will go over the structure of the book at a later time. But the fact that there is a discernable structure of the book goes to show us that God has more to say and more for us to learn than mere history.

As the book of Kings opens, we are at the end of David's life and reign. We are about two thirds of the way through the golden age of Israel. We are still in the united monarchy, that is, the kingdom of Israel is still one entity. But the kingdom will go through a civil war, splitting it into within a few decades. Things mentioned in Samuel are now coming to fruition and some of David's errors have the chickens coming home to roost. David is now an old man and his strength is failing him. That situation frames the beginning of the book.

## **2 Sam. 7: 12 – 17**

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, <sup>15</sup> but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. <sup>16</sup> And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. <sup>17</sup> Your throne shall be established forever.” <sup>17</sup> In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

- Nathan the prophet prophesying that David will have a son who will build the temple and that David's throne will be established forever. This is what is coming to the fore in the beginning of Kings.

Now I want you to begin to understand how biblical narrative works. Think of biblical narrative as watching a series on Netflix. There are many episodes, each with characters and a plot. But the plot doesn't

stop there. Each episode builds up to a greater story – the story of the whole series. Things within the story are there for a purpose. They help to set up and establish what comes next.

### **1 Kings 1: 1-4**

*Now King David was old and advanced in years. And although they covered him with clothes, he could not get warm. <sup>2</sup> 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.” <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> The young woman was very beautiful, and she was of service to the king and attended to him, but the king knew her not.*

These first four verses, along with what we read in 2 Samuel are the set-up for the rest of the episode (first chapter) and the rest of the book.

We are told that David is old and cold. This is something of an idiom – a figure of speech in the day that clues us into how the ancient Israelites, as well as other surrounding peoples thought about things. Being cold in advanced years, especially for a king was not a good thing. It spoke of virality, or more exactly, the lack thereof. This was why a beautiful young woman was sought for David. A king had to be seen as viral. When that was gone, his power and authority were brought into question. We can see even in the times of the European monarchies.

It was thought that a beautiful young woman would “warm up David” meaning that his virality and power would return. In the

Hebrew, the word “let” and the phrase “lie in your arms” had a sexual connotation. At the end of verse 4 we see that “David knew her not.” This is not saying that David was a good man and refused her comforts. It is saying that David could no longer perform the duties of a husband. You get the picture. In their world, this meant that the king was no longer fit to reign. And this sets up what comes next. You just “saw” the opening scene of the first episode of this “Netflix series.” The screen faded to black and now the next scene opens with the antagonist of the plot. Look at who he is and what he hopes to accomplish in light of the opening scene. Palace intrigue waits you, the viewer!

*1Kings 1:5 Now ʿAdonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, “I will be king.” ʿAnd 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, ʿand he was born next after Absalom. 7 He conferred with ʿJoab the son of Zeruiah and with ʿAbiathar the priest. And they followed Adonijah and helped him. 8 But ʿZadok the priest and ʿBenaiah the son of Jehoiada and ʿNathan the prophet and ʿShimei and Rei and ʿDavid’s mighty men were not with Adonijah.*

*1Kings 1:9 Adonijah sacrificed sheep, oxen, and fattened cattle by the Serpent’s Stone, which is beside ʿEn-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 ʿSolomon his brother.*

The first of many characters to be introduced is Adonijah, the last surviving son of David from wives other than Bathsheba. Amnon,

Chileab and Absalom are all dead. Adonijah sees the situation of his father and seeks to take advantage of it. He wants the throne for himself. We read that he is a handsome man, like King Saul. But he is not respectful of the David, his father, who is now the king. Compare in this respect to his father, who, though he knew God had given him the throne, would not take it before God put him there (he didn't kill Saul even though he had two occasions to do so). But Adonijah himself is not wholly to blame for this. Look again at verse 6.

*6 His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, "Why have you done thus and so?"*

It appears that David had been something of a neglectful father. He let the boy do whatever he wanted to do and was never disciplined for anything. Children are to be raised. If they are left to their own devices, this is what can happen. You can plant a garden, but if you don't weed the garden, weeds will take over. You can raise a garden, or you can raise weeds.

So Adonijah took advantage of the situation in lieu of the way he was raised, or the lack thereof and gathered together some men of position in the kingdom in order to take the throne. This is what we call a coup. Joab, a military man and Abiathar, a priest joined Adonijah in this power grab. We then have a list of the good guys:

*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.*

Another priest, Zadok, along with Nathan the prophet, and three military men: Benaiah, Shimei, and Rei, all remained loyal to David.

Everyone listed, whether good or bad have played parts in David's story through the years.

- Nathan and the role of prophets throughout the book

This scene ends with Adonijah and his crew sacrificing at a spring next to the Serpent's stone (Zohelath - the **serpent-stone**, a rocky plateau near the centre of the village of Siloam, and near the fountain of En-rogel).

The scene then fades to black. We now see what the problem will be for this episode. The promised line of David is being threatened. The rest of the episode will deal with solving this problem. I hope this helps you to see the plot evolving and to get into the story yourself. We can't read the bible in a flat manner. The Bible isn't a collection of random thoughts or facts. Everything is in there for a reason. The Bible has structure and purpose.

The intervention of the prophet

*1Kings 1:11 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?"<sup>12</sup> Now therefore come, let me give you advice, that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon.<sup>13</sup> 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?'<sup>14</sup> Then while you are still speaking with the king, I also will come in after you and confirm your words."*

*1Kings 1:15 So Bathsheba went to the king in his chamber (now the king was very old, and Abishag the Shunammite was attending to the king). <sup>16</sup> Bathsheba bowed and paid homage to the king, and the king said, "What do you desire?" <sup>17</sup> She said to him, "My lord, you swore to your servant by the LORD your God, saying, <sup>18</sup> 'Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne.' <sup>19</sup> <sup>20</sup> He has sacrificed oxen, fattened cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the sons of the king, <sup>21</sup> Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander of the army, but <sup>22</sup> Solomon your servant he has not invited. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> Otherwise it will come to pass, when my lord the king <sup>25</sup> sleeps with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be counted offenders."*

*1Kings 1:22 While she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet came in. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> And Nathan said, "My lord the king, have you said, 'Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne'? <sup>25</sup> For he has gone down this day and <sup>26</sup> 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, <sup>27</sup> 'Long live King Adonijah!' <sup>28</sup> But me, your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon he has*

*not invited. <sup>27</sup> 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?"*

*1Kings 1:28 Then King David answered, "Call Bathsheba to me." So she came into the king's presence and stood before the king. <sup>29</sup> And the king swore, saying, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my soul out of every adversity, <sup>30</sup> 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." <sup>31</sup> Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the ground and paid homage to the king and said, "May my lord King David live forever!"*

- The role of the prophet. Intervening, not being passive. Speaking on God's behalf, David's behalf and Israel's behalf.
- God's people must be active and not passive. Nathan wasn't being conniving. He was moving in God's interest as well as David's.
- David then acts upon the wisdom and the word coming from God. We must be willing to do this also. We can't just sit back and let things go when God is speaking and moving in our lives.
- Scene fades to black (commercial break?)

David Acts on the words and actions of Nathan and Bathsheba.  
Resolution to the problem found and acted upon (for now)

*1Kings 1:32 King David said, "Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada." So they came before the king. <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> 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!' <sup>35</sup> 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." <sup>36</sup> And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, "Amen! May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, say so. <sup>37</sup> 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."*

*1Kings 1:38 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. <sup>39</sup> 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!' <sup>40</sup> 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.*

- The mule – compare with Jesus entering Jerusalem.
- The blowing of the trumpet – an official announcement that everyone can hear. Think of the trumpet blasts in the book of Revelation.
- Anointing with oil, it is now official that Solomon is king.
- The earth was split by noise. An obvious hyperbole. Not a literal splitting of the earth.
- Scene fades to black.

Adonijah and Company Respond

*1Kings 1:41 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?"<sup>42</sup> 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."<sup>43</sup> Jonathan answered Adonijah, "No, for our lord King David has made Solomon king,<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup> Solomon sits on the royal throne.<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> 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.'"*

- Adonijah's coup has been blocked – point – counterpoint.
- David has seen the promise that his son, the proper son now sits on his throne. What a blessing when we see God's hand move in our lives and His promises are fulfilled! We need to acknowledge and celebrate those times, as well as remember them, because there will be a time in the future when we need those memories to get us through another trial!

Cliff-hanger Ending and set-up for future drama

*1Kings 1:49 Then all the guests of Adonijah trembled and rose, and each went his own way. <sup>50</sup> And Adonijah feared Solomon. So he arose and went and took hold of the horns of the altar. <sup>51</sup> 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.’” <sup>52</sup> 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.” <sup>53</sup> 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.”*

- Adonijah seeks a safe space, the horns of the altar. This was seen to be a place where no harm could come to a person. He now fears for his life because Solomon now sits on the throne with all the support of the king and now all the nation knows it.
- Solomon shows grace and wisdom. He could have ordered Adonijah’s death and been well within his rights as king, to do so.
- This should be our first response also. When we have been wronged, we need to act accordingly.
- There are times for a separation, of sorts. But reconciliation should be the first thing attempted.
- We will see in the future what becomes of this.
- Scene fades to black and the credits begin to roll.

Application: Lessons to learn

- As you go through the narrative (stories) of the Bible, think of them as a Netflix episode – part of a bigger series.

- **When something doesn't sit right with you, don't pass it up, but chew on it. There is a reason it doesn't sit right.** It is there for a purpose. It is either part of the plot, or there is something, maybe cultural or linguistic you are not seeing. Find that!
- **Compare David's patience in taking the throne with Adonijah's zeal and arrogance.** We aren't to act presumptuously for our own ends. If Adonijah had been meant to be king, he would have been anointed and crowned with all the pomp in which Solomon was. He wanted what he wasn't supposed to have. He was covetous and prideful. We can't act that way!
- **We need to see and appreciate, as we go through the book, the role of the prophet.** We will see some bad times in the history of Israel, and those usually coincide with an absence of the prophet. **These are times when the supernatural element of listening for, and hearing God have gone by the wayside. This means that people are in default mode, going about their days in the normal course of business.**
- This is a trap into which we can and do fall. We get into the rhythms of life, a normal day, and God hasn't been praised or consulted. And that cannot happen! **God has to be sought after and heeded!**
- **God's people have to be active, not passive!** We are here to intervene on the behalf of others as God's imagers. We aren't busybodies, but we are to act on legitimate concerns. And we need to do so as Nathan did, in a humble but active way.
- **David acted on what he knew God had promised him specifically.** None of us have been promised a king's throne. But God has spoken to us and told us things. David's promise wasn't given in a vacuum. Nathan knew of it. We can't be presumptive. But we can hear what God has spoken to each of us in that still,

small voice. And we need to listen for it attentively and patiently.

- **What has God told or promised you?** Think about that. Search your mind for it. And if nothing comes to mind, then ask Him what is next on the agenda. Wait patiently for the answer.
- **Keep the story line of Kings in mind. Let the plot develop and see the hand of God and the actions of His people as they unfold. Our lives and our relationships work the same way.**