

1 Kings 2:13-46
October 20, 2024

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: For those of you who are parents, have any of your children tried to manipulate you? If yes, do certain examples come to mind that you would be willing to share? And some of you were teachers...did any students try to manipulate you?! [Let people engage]

Transition: We are picking up where we left off last week. David has made Solomon king, and David has died. You will recall that Adonijah tried to steal the kingship with the help of Joab and Abiathar the priest, but his plot to become king failed. Now that David has passed, Adonijah realizes he is in a world of hurt, which is a gross understatement! So Adonijah tries to manipulate his mother, Bathsheba, to protect his life. Let's see how the story plays out. Let's begin.

BOOK:

Solomon's Throne Established

¹³ Now Adonijah, the son of Haggith, went to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. Bathsheba asked him, "Do you come peacefully?"

He answered, "Yes, peacefully."¹⁴ Then he added, "I have something to say to you."

"You may say it," she replied.

¹⁵ "As you know," he said, "the kingdom was mine. All Israel looked to me as their king. But things changed, and the kingdom has gone to my brother; for it has come to him from the LORD.

¹⁶ Now I have one request to make of you. Do not refuse me."

"You may make it," she said.

¹⁷ So he continued, "Please ask King Solomon—he will not refuse you—to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife."

¹⁸ "Very well," Bathsheba replied, "I will speak to the king for you."

¹⁹ When Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah, the king stood up to meet her, bowed down to her and sat down on his throne. He had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat down at his right hand.

²⁰ "I have one small request to make of you," she said. "Do not refuse me."

The king replied, "Make it, my mother; I will not refuse you."

²¹ So she said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given in marriage to your brother Adonijah."

²² King Solomon answered his mother, "Why do you request Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? You might as well request the kingdom for him—after all, he is my older brother—yes, for him and for Abiathar the priest and Joab son of Zeruah!"

²³ Then King Solomon swore by the LORD: "May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if Adonijah does not pay with his life for this request!"²⁴ And now, as surely as the LORD lives—he who has established me securely on the throne of my father David and has founded a dynasty for me as he promised—Adonijah shall be put to death today!"²⁵ So King Solomon gave orders to Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, and he struck down Adonijah and he died.

²⁶ To Abiathar the priest the king said, "Go back to your fields in Anathoth. You deserve to die, but I will not put you to death now, because you carried the ark of the Sovereign LORD

before my father David and shared all my father's hardships." ²⁷ So Solomon removed Abiathar from the priesthood of the LORD, fulfilling the word the LORD had spoken at Shiloh about the house of Eli.

²⁸ When the news reached Joab, who had conspired with Adonijah though not with Absalom, he fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar. ²⁹ King Solomon was told that Joab had fled to the tent of the LORD and was beside the altar. Then Solomon ordered Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, "Go, strike him down!"

³⁰ So Benaiah entered the tent of the LORD and said to Joab, "The king says, 'Come out!'" But he answered, "No, I will die here."

Benaiah reported to the king, "This is how Joab answered me."

³¹ Then the king commanded Benaiah, "Do as he says. Strike him down and bury him, and so clear me and my father's house of the guilt of the innocent blood that Joab shed. ³² The LORD will repay him for the blood he shed, because without the knowledge of my father David, he attacked two men and killed them with the sword. Both of them—Abner son of Ner, commander of Israel's army, and Amasa, son of Jether, commander of Judah's army—were better men and more upright than he. ³³ May the guilt of their blood rest on the head of Joab and his descendants forever. But on David and his descendants, his house and his throne, may there be the LORD's peace forever."

³⁴ So Benaiah, son of Jehoiada went up and struck down Joab and killed him, and he was buried on his own land (or buried in his tomb) in the desert. ³⁵ The king put Benaiah, son of Jehoiada over the army in Joab's position and replaced Abiathar with Zadok the priest.

³⁶ Then the king sent for Shimei and said to him, "Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and live there, but do not go anywhere else. ³⁷ The day you leave and cross the Kidron Valley, you can be sure you will die; your blood will be on your own head."

³⁸ Shimei answered the king, "What you say is good. Your servant will do as my lord the king has said." And Shimei stayed in Jerusalem for a long time.

³⁹ But three years later, two of Shimei's slaves ran off to Achish son of Maacah, king of Gath, and Shimei was told, "Your slaves are in Gath." ⁴⁰ At this, he saddled his donkey and went to Achish at Gath in search of his slaves. So Shimei went away and brought the slaves back from Gath.

⁴¹ When Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and had returned, ⁴² the king summoned Shimei and said to him, "Did I not make you swear by the LORD and warn you, 'On the day you leave to go anywhere else, you can be sure you will die'? At that time you said to me, 'What you say is good. I will obey.'" ⁴³ Why then did you not keep your oath to the LORD and obey the command I gave you?"

⁴⁴ The king also said to Shimei, "You know in your heart all the wrong you did to my father David. Now the LORD will repay you for your wrongdoing. ⁴⁵ But King Solomon will be blessed, and David's throne will remain secure before the LORD forever."

⁴⁶ Then the king gave the order to Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, and he went out and struck Shimei down and killed him.

The kingdom was now firmly established in Solomon's hands.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Adonijah was making another move to take over the throne. Abishag had been David's concubine and a king's harem was considered the property of the king in that culture and was passed on to the next king. By obtaining Abishag as a wife, Adonijah would then have two claims to the throne: 1) he was the older brother of Solomon and 2) he would be married to one of the women of King David's harem.

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Jesus said, "All who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matt. 26:52). The cruel lessons taught by the history of these passages bear out this truth. Joab had been loyal to David, but he had been power-hungry and ruthless. His own ugly death was reminiscent of the many killings he himself had carried out.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Kings 2)*. Victor Books.

B. Judgment on Adonijah (vv. 12–25).

Had Adonijah remained in his proper place, he would have lived, but he stubbornly refused to yield. In asking for the hand of Abishag, the last of David's wives (1:1–4), Adonijah was making a rash claim; for everything of David's had been turned over to Solomon. Bathsheba seems to have been an innocent go-between in this entire episode. Solomon realized the treacherous implications of his brother's request and made it clear that he knew also the treachery of Abiathar and Joab (v. 22). Adonijah had gone too far; now he had to die.

C. Judgment on Abiathar and Joab (vv. 26–35).

Solomon honored the priest's office by not slaying him, but he banished him from service. This fulfilled 1 Sam. 2:30–36. When Joab heard of his friend's exile, he knew that judgment would soon come to him; so he, like Adonijah, fled to the altar for protection. Joab was guilty of murdering several men and he had to pay for his sins. Benaiah became the new general of the army, and Zadok was made the high priest. It's interesting to note that Benaiah was a priest (1 Chron. 27:5) who turned general.

D. Judgment on Shimei (vv. 36–46).

This was the man who so cruelly cursed David when he was fleeing from Absalom (2 Sam. 16:5ff). Solomon ordered him to remain in Jerusalem where he could be watched, a sentence far more merciful than he deserved. However, Shimei tried to "call his bluff" by disobeying the king's order, and it cost him his life. If these many judgments of Solomon seem cruel, keep in mind that these were enemies of the king and therefore enemies of the Lord.

Merrill, E. H. (1985). *2 Samuel*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 491-494) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

1. SOLOMON'S PURGES (2:13–46)

To lay a firm foundation for his reign Solomon had to deal with his and his father's enemies.

a. Adonijah's execution (2:13–25)

2:13–14. **Adonijah** had not abandoned his hope of becoming king (cf. 1:5). But to take the throne he would have to dispose of Solomon. The plot that he conceived was clever. He began his maneuvering by approaching **Bathsheba**, the queen **mother** (but not his own mother, who was **Haggith**; cf. 2 Sam. 3:4), through whom he hoped to receive a favorable decision from Solomon. In view of Adonijah's previous plotting **Bathsheba** initially expressed caution. But he convinced her that his intentions were peaceful; superficially they were, but ultimately they were not. He persuaded Bathsheba to listen to what he had **to say**.

2:15–16. Adonijah may have honestly believed that **all Israel looked to him as their king**, but this hardly seems to have been the case; Adonijah’s wishful dreaming had convinced him of this. The throne had never been his. His saying that the present state of events had **come ... from the LORD** seems to have been a pious ploy designed to convince Bathsheba that he had accepted Solomon’s anointing as God’s will and had submitted to it. There is no evidence that Adonijah was ever sincerely interested in what the Lord wanted. But there is much evidence that he was interested in what *Adonijah* wanted! His pious profession along with his apparent acquiescence to Solomon’s anointing persuaded Bathsheba that Adonijah had no lingering aspirations to become king. So she gave him permission to proceed with his proposal.

2:17–18. Bathsheba apparently interpreted Adonijah’s request for **Abishag** (cf. 1:3–4) as simply the desire of a handsome young man for the hand of a beautiful young woman. Bathsheba’s excitement for this seemingly innocent love affair moved her to agree to present his request to **the king**. She probably relished the thought of having a part as a matchmaker.

2:19–21. **Solomon** respectfully greeted his mother by standing **up to meet her** and bowing **to her** when she entered the **throne** room. He gave her the seat of honor **at his right hand** so she could converse comfortably with him. She had only **one small request**; at least she perceived it as small. Assuming it was a small request, Solomon agreed to grant it.

2:22–25. However, he knew immediately that her proposal had far-reaching consequences that would threaten his throne. So he refused to agree to it. **Abishag** had become a member of King David’s harem. Even though David never had sexual relations with her, Abishag’s presence in the harem entitled her to part of David’s inheritance. In the people’s eyes she had been David’s concubine. “Among the Israelites, just as with the ancient Persians (Herod. iii. 68), taking possession of the harem of a deceased king was equivalent to an establishment of the claim to the throne” (C.F. Keil, “The Books of the Kings,” in *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, 3:32).

Bathsheba may have thought that because Abishag was not really one of David’s concubines this would be no problem. But **Solomon** in his wisdom realized that the people would regard Abishag as a concubine and therefore would interpret Adonijah’s marriage to her as a claim to the throne. Also since **Adonijah** was **older** (v. 22) than Solomon (cf. 2 Sam. 3:4 with 2 Sam. 5:13–14) the people would assume that he had more right to be **king** than **Solomon**. The people generally did not recognize that God’s purposes in election frequently violated the natural order of primogeniture. (For example, God chose the younger brother in His selection of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and many others.) Solomon’s perception of Adonijah’s wicked intent led him to reply with much indignation to **his mother**. He had not executed his brother for his attempted coup before David died; **Solomon** had shown him mercy (1 Kings 1:52–53). But **Adonijah** was still plotting against the Lord and His anointed. Solomon was not only just in having **Adonijah ... put to death**, but he also acted as a good steward of the kingdom that had been committed to him by God (**as He promised**). (On the words **As surely as the LORD lives** see comments on 1:29.) **Benaiah**, the captain of the guard, carried out the king’s order immediately.

b. Abiathar’s dismissal (2:26–27)

2:26–27. **Abiathar, the priest** who sided with Adonijah, could have been justly executed by Solomon for conspiracy. But because Abiathar was a priest of Yahweh who had **carried the ark** (served as high priest) during David’s lifetime and because he had faithfully **shared all** of David’s **hardships**, Solomon merely **removed** him from his office and restricted him to his

hometown of **Anathoth** three miles northeast of Jerusalem. (Centuries later Jeremiah was born in Anathoth, Jer. 1:1.)

The author of 1 and 2 Kings noted that this act of Solomon fulfilled God's prophecy that Eli's line of priests, of which **Abiathar** was a member (see the chart "The Ancestry of Zadok and Abiathar," near 2 Sam. 8:15–18), would be cut off (1 Sam. 2:30–35). In this brief statement one of the 1 and 2 Kings' author's purposes can be seen clearly: to demonstrate the faithfulness of God to His **Word**.

c. Joab's execution (2:28–35)

2:28–30. **The news** that **reached Joab** was evidently what had befallen **Adonijah** and Abiathar (vv. 23–27), his fellow conspirators. Joab had been head of the army under David (2 Sam. 8:16). Now Joab, like Adonijah, sought the protection **of the horns of the brazen altar** in the courtyard of **the tent** (tabernacle) in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Kings 1:50). This was a place of refuge for those whose lives were in danger. The Mosaic Law provided refuge there for all but murderers (Ex. 21:13–14).

Why did Joab seek refuge there since he was a murderer? Perhaps he thought that Solomon was after him only because of his part in Adonijah's attempted coup and that **the king** did not know of or care about his murdering Abner and Amasa. But it was for all these sins that **Solomon** sought Joab. Solomon probably did not want to defile the tabernacle by shedding human blood there so he told **Benaiah** to order **Joab to come out**. But the commander refused. Joab would not let go of the altar's horns. **Solomon ordered** that he be treated like the murderer he was and struck **down** on the spot.

2:31–33. For his murders Joab was executed without mercy. As long as **Joab** remained alive, David's **house** (dynasty) bore some responsibility for Joab's action since he had murdered **Abner** and **Amasa** (cf. 2 Sam. 3:22–30; 20:8–10) in connection with his official duties. Solomon (like David before him, 1 Kings 2:5–6) wanted to remove any obstacle to God's blessing on his reign and to identify Joab's **guilt** with **his own house** alone.

2:34–35. **Benaiah**, head of the royal bodyguard, returned to the tabernacle and carried out the king's order. **Joab** did not die in total disgrace, however, for **he was buried on his own land in the desert**. This was possibly the wilderness of Judea east of Bethlehem. To be buried in one's own land was an honor bestowed on Joab for his long service to David.

Solomon replaced Joab with **Benaiah**, promoting him to head of **the army**. **Zadok the priest** filled the place left by **Abiathar** (cf. v. 27).

d. Shimei's execution (2:36–46)

2:36–38. **Shimei** must have been a dangerous man. He was treated as such by both David and Solomon, though what is recorded of him here seems on the surface to be of minor importance. When David fled Jerusalem, being pursued by Absalom, Shimei verbally and physically attacked David and his officials. David's men recognized the danger Shimei posed for the king and asked David's permission to kill him then and there (2 Sam. 16:5–13).

But David did not allow this. He did not pardon Shimei's traitorous actions, but postponed Shimei's execution probably because of all that he was facing at the moment in view of Absalom's rebellion. Shimei was from the same clan as Saul's family (2 Sam. 16:5).

Solomon summoned **Shimei** and passed judgment on him: he was restricted to living **in Jerusalem**; the city would be his prison. In particular Shimei was not to **cross the Kidron**

Valley just east of Jerusalem. If Shimei crossed the Kidron he would probably head home to stir up insurrection among the Benjamites. Solomon told Shimei that he would be executed if he disobeyed Solomon's orders. **Shimei** understood his sentence, agreed to abide by it, and did so **for a long time** (three years, 1 Kings 2:39).

2:39–40. After **three years ... two of Shimei's slaves ran off to Gath** in Philistia, about 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Shimei's decision to leave Jerusalem to pursue **his slaves** revealed his low view of Solomon's authority.

2:41–46. **Solomon** then recognized that Shimei's attitude had not changed. Because Shimei had violated the terms of his sentence Solomon had every right to execute the punishment he had graciously postponed. Like Adonijah, **Shimei** had not changed. Solomon reviewed the terms of Shimei's sentence with him to justify his action (vv. 42–43). Solomon's chief concern was the security of **David's throne** (v. 45); this apparently had been David's concern too with respect to Shimei.

As David had commanded (vv. 8–9), **Solomon** put **Shimei** to death. But Solomon's prior mercy in dealing with Shimei (vv. 36–37) absolved **the king** from any charge of being vindictive or unfair.

In all Solomon's dealings with his political enemies—men who conspired against the will of God during David's reign—the young king's mercy and wisdom stand out. Because of his wise handling of these threats to the throne **the kingdom was then firmly established in Solomon's hands**.

Mathews, K. A. (1998). The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 135). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Solomon's Kingdom (2:1–46). David's deathbed instructions warned Solomon that only obedience to the Lord would secure his kingdom. He advised Solomon to execute Joab for murdering Abner and Amasa (see 2 Sam. 3:22–27; 20:4–10) and to deal swiftly with Shimei for his treachery (see 2 Sam. 16:5–14). David died after his forty-year rule (1011–971 B.C.), but the kingdom was secure in the hands of his successor.

The enemies of David and Solomon received their retribution. Adonijah was executed because he asked for the hand of Abishag, a member of the royal harem. Solomon interpreted this request as tantamount to staking another claim to the throne. Zadok replaced Abiathar as chief priest because the latter had sided with Adonijah. This banishment of Abiathar fulfilled God's judgment on his ancestor Eli's house (1 Sam. 2:27–36). Benaiah executed Joab and replaced him as captain of Solomon's armies. Shimei also was executed because he disregarded the limitations of his house arrest (1 Kgs. 2:36–46a). The narrator aptly stated the conclusion of this struggle: "The kingdom was now firmly established in Solomon's hands."

Tatum, S. L. (1972). 2 Samuel. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (p. 195). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

The Elimination of Solomon's Enemies (1 Kings 2:13–46)

The passage—Adonijah, denied the throne he thought he deserved, had the audacity to ask for Abishag the Shunammite to be his wife. She had been David's nurse. Perhaps Adonijah still had some notion of setting up a rival throne. Perhaps he only wanted a beautiful woman for his

wife. At any rate his request seems foolish. It cost him his life. Adonijah made his request to Bathsheba. She told Solomon. Solomon interpreted it as an insult and a threat. He sent one of his servants to kill Adonijah. He counted it wickedness that Adonijah should want one of his father's concubines.

Solomon banished Abiathar the priest. He sent him to Anathoth. He said he deserved to die, but he spared him because he had carried the ark of God and had shared the afflictions of David his father.

When Joab heard Adonijah had been killed, he was afraid for his life and ran to the tent of the Lord and caught hold of the horns of the altar to beg for mercy and safety from death. Solomon sent for him to come out. He would not. Solomon ordered him killed on the spot.

Shimei had been ordered by Solomon not to leave Jerusalem. He said he would die the day he left. After two years he left Jerusalem to recover some runaway slaves. Solomon had him killed for his disobedience.

Truth for today—Jesus said, “All who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matt. 26:52). The cruel lessons taught by the history of these passages bear out this truth. Joab had been loyal to David, but he had been power-hungry and ruthless. His own ugly death was reminiscent of the many killings he himself had carried out.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Kings 2:13-46). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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