

**Meadgate Spring 2019
The Early Kings**

Session 7 – David and Solomon

Bible Background – 2 Samuel 13-24

Last time we left on a cliff-hanger! David's daughter Tamar has been raped by her half-brother Amnon, and her full-blood brother Absalom, on hearing the news, states:

"Be quiet now, my sister; he is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart".

2 Sam 13:20

It seems a very callous response – what is Absalom up to?

David was "furious" on hearing about Tamar's rape (2 Sam 13:21), but he does nothing. Absalom does not challenge Amnon – in fact, he does not say a word,

Tamar lived from that day on in Absalom's house, a "desolate woman" (2 Sam 13: 20)

Two years later, Absalom engineers a plot to get Amnon and the other sons of David to a feast. When Amnon has been drinking, Absalom orders his men to kill Amnon. The other sons flee, and an incorrect report reaches David that all his sons have been killed.

He immediately shreds his clothes, as a sign of mourning, but then is informed that only Amnon has died, and is made aware of Absalom's hatred following the rape of Tamar.

Absalom flees, and is away for three years. Although David mourns for Amnon, he eventually longs to see him (2 Sam 13:38). David saw a bitter replay and amplification of his own sins.

God had predicted that David's family would suffer as a result of his sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah. God forgave David, but he did not cancel the consequences of that sin.

Joab, David's commander, manoeuvres events so that Absalom and David can be reconciled, and Absalom returns. However, David will initially not let him into the palace, or to see him face to face. Two years pass, and Absalom is frustrated, so when Joab does not intervene to get him into the palace, he sets one of Joab's fields on fire!

Absalom and David meet, Absalom bows with his face to the ground, and the king kisses him.

"In the course of time, Absalom provided himself with a chariot and horses and with fifty men to run ahead of him.

***2** He would get up early and stand by the side of the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone came with a complaint to be placed before the king for a decision, Absalom would call out to him, "What town are you from?" He would answer, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel."*

3 Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you."

4 And Absalom would add, "If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that he receives justice."

5 Also, whenever anyone approached him to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him and kiss him.

6 Absalom behaved in this way towards all the Israelites who came to the king asking for justice, and so he stole the hearts of the men of Israel."

2 Sam 15:1-6

Note that when Absalom provides himself with a chariot and men to run in front of it, it was a direct fulfilment of what Samuel had warned the people about in 1 Samuel 8:11 (Session 3)



POINTS TO PONDER

- How quickly do you trust others?
- Is trust automatic in a family?
- What tactics did Absalom use to engender trust?
- Are you trustworthy? If so, how did this happen?

Absalom's Conspiracy and rebellion

2 Samuel Chapters 15-20

This is a highly complex and tricky section of the narrative in 2 Samuel. Please see an excellent article on this in [Appendix I](#), which hopefully sorts out the various characters. However, there are a number of key points to mention:

1. Absalom could have made an excellent king: the people loved him, but he lacked the inner character and control needed in a good leader. His appearance, skill and position did not make up for his lack of personal integrity. When David sinned, he repented and his relationship with God was restored. When Absalom sinned, he just kept on sinning.
2. Absalom systematically tried to eradicate any obstacle to him becoming king. He first had his half-brother Amnon killed, who was David's firstborn and the most likely successor, and then plotted to kill his father David.
3. When David is absent from Jerusalem, attempting to quell the rebellion, Absalom uses this absence to go to Jerusalem, and provokes David by lying with his father's concubines on the roof of the place "in the sight of all Israel" (2Sam; 16:21-22). In so

- doing he became a “stench in your father’s nostrils” , and fulfilled the condemning prophecy of Nathan as a consequence of David’s sin with Bathsheba (2Sam.12:11-12)
4. Ziba, the so-called protector of Mephibosheth, continues to try to play both sides against the other. His lies to David cost him dearly.
 5. David is beginning to lose confidence in his ability to rule, and rule well. He is swayed by conflicting reports of both the conspiracy, and who to trust. Yet throughout, David’s heart remains true to God.
 6. David attempts to protect the Ark of the Covenant. Originally taking it towards the scene of potential conflict with Absalom, he orders its return to Jerusalem. Its loss would have been devastating.
 7. Joab, David’s commander, is a key figure in the rebellion. Constantly faithful to David, his military strategy is astounding. However, despite David’s request that his soldiers “be gentle with Absalom for my sake” (2 Sam 18:5), Joab kills Absalom when he gets caught in the branches of a tree.
 8. David is made aware of Absalom’s death, and weeps and mourns for him (2 Sam 19:1). Instead of being grateful for the quelling of the rebellion, the king’s response causes his entire army to be ashamed and humiliated (2 Sam.19:3-6). He confronted the king with a cutting truth, and challenges him to redress the situation before nightfall, otherwise he will have no army left.
 9. David has one further smaller rebellion to deal with, from Sheba, a Benjamite. It is dealt with, not by David, but again by Joab

Note:

David was a great king, but not a good father. He should have learned from Saul’s treatment of Jonathan how to deal with sons.

Joab was a great military leader, and there is no record of his troops ever losing a battle. He was a brilliant and ruthless strategist, but he was seldom concerned about casualties of war. His career is one of great accomplishments and shameful acts. He does not seem to have acknowledged God, and without God’s guidance, became eventually self-destructive. However, he was not afraid to confront a king with the truth, however painful. He was prepared to give sound advice, and he could “**feel the pulse of the people**”. Such people are very rare, and exceptionally valuable to leaders. They can bridge the gap between leaders and those they lead.

David’s census

The closing chapter of 2 Samuel teaches us about a census David took of his fighting men. 24:1 tells us that:

“The anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, “Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.””

Interestingly, we read in 1 Chronicles 21:1 that;

"Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel."

Which is right?

Would God demand this of David, or allow it to check his response?

The census of the men took 9 months and 20 days, and although Joab had counselled the king against such a course of action, he was overruled. Joab had to report the end results to David – a total of 800,000 able-bodied men who could handle a sword in Israel, and 500,000 in Judah.

Immediately hearing the report, David was "conscience stricken" (2 Sam 24:10), and immediately regretted it, repenting before God:

2 Sam 24:10

"He (David) said to the Lord, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, O Lord, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing."

Why was the census foolish? A census is commanded in Numbers to prepare the army for conquering the Promised Land (Numbers 1; 2; 26:2). But the land was now at peace, so David is guilty of ambition, so that he could glory in the size of his army rather than in God's ability to protect them regardless of the numbers!



POINTS TO PONDER

- *Where do you place your trust and sense of security?*
- *How do overwhelming odds cause you to think about God's protection?*

The night the census results came in, God's word comes to the prophet Gad, who has the awesome task of pronouncing God's judgement on David for the census;

"I am giving you three options. Choose one of them for me to carry out against you."

13 *So Gad went to David and said to him, "Shall there come upon you **three years of famine** in your land? Or **three months of fleeing from your enemies while they pursue you**? Or **three days of plague in your land**? Now then, think it over and decide how I should answer the one who sent me." 2 Sam 24:12-13*

Which would you have chosen?

David **opts for the plague, and 70,000 people die as a result**. An Angel of Death was dispatched to carry out this awesome judgement, but as he stretches his hand over Jerusalem (presumably to destroy it), God calls "Enough." (2 Sam 24:16). David sees the

angel, and more importantly, sees him stop. In his continued repentance, David offers his life instead of his nation.

The slaughter stops at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

The prophet Gad instructs David to build an altar there. David wants to buy the threshing floor from Araunah, but he initially refuses, offering David whatever he needs to sacrifice there as a gift.

In a crucial principle of response, David replies:

"No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."

2 Sam 24:24

SOLOMON – 1 Kings Chapter 1-2

BIBLE BACKGROUND – 1 KINGS 1-11

In the opening verses of 1 Kings 1, we have some strange comments about King David being very frail, and constantly cold. His servants found a beautiful virgin, a Shunnamite, called Abishag, for David. We are carefully told that she nursed the king, and lay down with him only to keep him warm, and that he had no sexual relationship with her. It was not unusual for a king in those times to be both polygamous and have a harem. Abishag would have probably been considered one of the harem. (She will feature more prominently in chapter 2.)

We learned from Session 6 that David fathered 20 sons that we know of, although included in this is the first son born to David and Bathsheba, who lived for just 7 days, and is not named. **Amnon** (David's firstborn) was killed by **Absalom** (son #3) in revenge for Amnon killing Absalom's blood-sister **Tamar**.

That still leaves a lot of sons in possible contention for the Throne of David. The 3rd son, **Daniel**, is not in the picture, (possibly had died by the time the book of 1 Kings starts), so the focus now shifts to son # 4, **Adonijah**. David is by now approx 70 years old, and in failing health. Adonijah puts himself forward, stating that he would be king (1 Kings 1:5). He amasses horses, chariots, and men to "run ahead of him" (1; 5), but note the cutting remark in 1:6;

"His father had never interfered with him by asking, "Why do you behave as you do?"
1 Kings 1:6

Here we have more evidence that David's parenting skills leave a lot to be desired!
Adonijah tries to gain support, with limited effect (1 Kings 1:7-8)

Adonijah's Supporters	Adonijah's Opposers
Joab, son of Zeruiah Abiathar the priest	Zadok the priest Benaiah son of Jehoiada Nathan the prophet Shimei Rei David's special guard

Adonijah tried to proclaim himself as king, and legitimise his actions by making a public sacrifice at the Stone of Zohelath near En Rogel (1 Kings 1:9). He did not invite David's special guard, Nathan, Benaiah or his brother Solomon to the subsequent "celebrations".

NOTE

A public show of apparent worship cannot make something God's will, and God had not chosen Adonijah as the next king.



POINTS TO PONDER

- *In what ways do you think people try to defend their bad actions before God?*
- *Why do people think this might "work"?*
- *Is the phrase "merciful judge" an oxymoron? Defend your answer!*
- *Can we influence God's will?*

Nathan the prophet now intervenes, and approaches Queen Bathsheba with news of Adonijah's actions.

"Then Nathan asked Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, "Have you not heard that Adonijah, the son of Haggith, has become king without our lord David's knowing it?"

12 *Now then, let me advise you how you can save your own life and the life of your son Solomon.*

13 *Go in to King David and say to him, 'My lord the king, did you not swear to me your servant: "Surely Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne"? Why then has Adonijah become king?'*

14 *While you are still there talking to the king, I will come in and confirm what you have said." 1 Kings 1; 11-14*

In verse 13, we have a reference to an oath David had apparently sworn to Bathsheba about Solomon as his successor. This speaks volumes about David's feelings towards both Bathsheba and Solomon, for Solomon was in fact 8th in line to the throne. (not including the

unnamed 7 day-old prince who dies, and assuming that Daniel, the 2nd son who is not mentioned in the early part of 1 Kings 1, has already died. Amnon, David's firstborn son, has been killed on the orders of Absalom).

After intervention by both Bathsheba and Nathan the prophet, David is made aware that Adonijah has proclaimed himself King, and David immediately orders that Solomon be made king. He is to ride on the king's mule, and at Gihon is to be jointly anointed by Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet. David affirmed that Solomon would reign in his place over both Judah and Israel.

They carried out David's commands, crowning Solomon as king, and;

"Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, "Long live King Solomon!" 40 And all the people went up after him, playing flutes and rejoicing greatly, so that the ground shook with the sound." 1 Kings 1:39-40

It was this sound that alerted Adonijah that there might be a problem!

Adonijah is made aware, even at the feast he has made to proclaim himself as king, that David has made a very different proclamation.

POINTS TO PONDER



- *Sometimes it takes getting caught before someone is willing to give up their scheme*
 - *When Adonijah heard the sound of rejoicing, he panicked*
 - *He ran to an altar of mercy – but only AFTER his treason was exposed.*
 - *Do you get caught up in a mess – and then ask God for mercy?*

Adonijah fled to the horns (Corner posts) of the altar. (1 Kings 1:50). This is one of the few examples we have of the horns being accessed as a place of sanctuary. Solomon initially gave Adonijah a reprieve, conditional on him showing himself to be a "worthy man". Adonijah is brought before Solomon, and bows low.



David's Final words (1 Kings 2:2-8)

On his death-bed, David gave final instructions to Solomon;

1. *Be strong and show yourself a man*
2. *Observe all that God requires*
3. *Walk in God's ways and keep His commands and laws, in order to prosper in all you do and wherever you go (This was a condition of God fulfilling His promise to David, so that David's descendants would never cease to have someone on the throne of Israel.)*
4. *Take revenge on Joab, David's commander, for killing Abner and Amasa, 2 other commanders, in peacetime.*
5. *Show kindness to the sons of Barzillai, allowing them king's table privileges, as they had stood by David during Absalom's rebellion.*
6. *Deal with Shimei – the one who had cursed David. David swore not to kill him – but this did not mean protection from Solomon. Solomon instructed to "bring his gray head down to the grave in blood"*

David stressed first the need for Solomon to make God the centre of his life, and to make god's laws the centre of his life and government, so that the kingdom would be preserved.

God's Conditional promise

David and his descendants would remain in office as kings **ONLY** when they honoured and obeyed God. When David's descendants failed to do this, they lost the throne (2 Kings 25)

God's UNCONDITIONAL promise

David's line would go on forever. This was directly fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, a direct descendant of David (Romans 1:3-4)

David dies, having reigned for 40 years, aged approx. 70, and is regarded as Israel's greatest earthly king.

Adonijah tries again! (1 Kings 2:13-25)

"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 Shunnamite 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 Shunnamite be given in marriage to your brother Adonijah."

22 King Solomon answered his mother, "Why do you request Abishag the Shunnamite 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 Zeruiah!"

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."

Note:

1. For Adonijah to "possess" Abishag, part of David's harem, was equivalent to claiming the throne.
2. Absalom had done the same thing in his rebellion against David (2 Samuel 16:20-23).
3. Solomon understood EXACTLY what Adonijah was trying to do.

Solomon has now removed the strongest rival to his throne.

He now has to deal with the other instructions from his father David. Note that Joab, a co-conspirator with Adonijah, also tries to obtain mercy by holding onto the horns of the altar (1 Kings 2:28)

Appendix 1 gives details of the ways Solomon achieved this.

Final POINTS TO PONDER



- *Solomon is now politically ready to start reigning as king*
- *He has removed obstacles – but was this David’s primary injunction?*
- *If you had a clean slate – where would your future start, and what would your plan look like?*

APPENDIX 1
Who joined Adonijah's conspiracy, and who remained
loyal to David? (1 Kings Chapter 1)

Contrast the fate of those who rebelled and those who remained loyal to David, God's appointed leader. Adonijah, the leader of the conspiracy, met a violent death (2:25). Those who rebel against God's leaders rebel against God.

Joined Adonijah	Remained with David
<p>JOAB (1:7) Brilliant military general and commander of David's army. He continually demonstrated his belief that cold-blooded murder was as acceptable as a fairly fought battle. Solomon later had him executed.</p>	<p>BENAIAH (1:8) Distinguished himself as a great warrior. Commanded a division of David's army—over 24,000 men. One of the Thirty, he was also placed in charge of David's bodyguard. Solomon later made him chief commander of the army.</p>
<p>ABIATHAR (1:7) One of two high priests under David. He was a son of Ahimelech who had helped David, and David promised to protect him. Abiathar repaid David with his treachery. Solomon later had him banished, fulfilling the prophecy that Eli's priestly line would end (1 Samuel 2:31).</p>	<p>ZADOK (1:8) The other high priest under David. His loyalty gave him the privilege of crowning Solomon. He became the sole high priest under King Solomon.</p>
<p>JONATHAN (1:42) Abiathar's son. He helped David stop Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 17:17-22) but supported this rebellion by another of David's sons.</p>	<p>NATHAN (1:8) God's prominent prophet during David's reign. The Bible says he wrote a history of David and Solomon.</p>
<p>CHARIOTEERS (1:5) Hired by Adonijah, apparently more loyal to money than to their king.</p>	<p>SHIMEI (1:8) This man was probably the Shimei who was rewarded by Solomon and appointed district governor in Ben jamin (4:18). (He was not the same person who cursed David at Bahurim and brought on his own death under Solomon.)</p>
<p>50 RUNNERS (1:5) Recruited to give Adonijah a "royal" appearance.</p>	<p>REI (1:8) Only mentioned here. Possibly he was an army officer.</p>
	<p>DAVID'S BODYGUARD (1:8, 10) David's army was highly organized with several different divisions of troops. It is enough to know that many of his leaders remained true to their king.</p>