

Week 30: David's Son's Presumption: Adonijah

Hook



Main Point: Mankind cannot thwart the plans and promises of God.

Age doesn't always bring wisdom. Below are news headlines and the age of the accused.

1. ***Man accused of Assault with Deadly Weapon for Throwing Alligator into Wendy's Drive-thru***¹ – 23 years old
2. ***Man Gets Tired of Waiting at Hospital, Steals Ambulance, Drives Home***² – 62 years old
3. ***Vero Beach Man Tries to Break into Jail "to Visit Friends"***³ – 24 years old
4. ***Man Arrested for Practicing Karate on Swans***⁴ – 34 years old

Q: What were some catalysts in your life that helped or forced you to mature?

Q: Where in Scripture does God use a younger person to instruct someone more senior?

Q: Does God value seniority in leadership? What does God value most in a leader?

Transition: In today's story, the kingdom of Israel is passed to the younger brother, Solomon. Slighted over this choice, big brother Adonijah makes a move to take the throne.

RECAP: In the last few lessons, we saw David sin yet again at the very end of his life. But we also saw him repent, turn back to God, and conclude his story with worship. Though David messed up a lot in his life, he ultimately had a heart that desired to follow God. But most of his children did not share this same heart for the Lord. In this week's lesson, we see another of David's sons set himself up as king, seeking his own power and fortune regardless of what God had ordained and promised.

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Book (Note: *Chronicles does not include the story of Adonijah.*)

Main Point: Mankind cannot thwart the plans and promises of God.

1 Kings 1:1–10; 1 Chronicles 22:6–10; and Proverbs 19:18 [Read]

Talking Point 1: Godly people seek the Lord's will, not their own power.

Q: Why did Adonijah put himself forward to be king? Why might that have made sense according to the ways of the world?

Q: What role does discipline play in preparing your children to be successful?

At this point in the story, we have moved from the book of Samuel to the book of Kings. Remember that what we call 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one book, just written on two scrolls because of length; the same for 1 and 2 Kings. The book of Samuel is the story of Saul and David, the beginning of the monarchy. It is a contrast between what happens when the people choose their own king based on the characteristics the world looks for in a king (Saul) and what happens when God chooses a king after His own heart (David). The book of Kings continues the story of the monarchy, showing us what happened with the kings after David who turned their hearts away from worshipping God alone. Dividing the story between the two books at this point emphasizes David's reign as the climax of the monarchy, and the downhill slide after his reign.

One might think that the reign of Solomon was the climax, with all the prosperity and peace Israel enjoyed during his reign and because of his great God-given wisdom. Many reading the history of Israel would call Solomon's reign the Golden Age of the monarchy. But even with all his wisdom, Solomon turned away from the Lord to worship other gods, which is why the monarchy fell apart and the kingdom was split in the next generation. Ultimately, his reign was not successful in God's eyes.

The book of Kings describes Solomon's reign with the phrase that it repeats over and over for most of the kings after him – "Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done" (1 Kings 11:6). This was the litmus test for the leadership of Israel throughout the monarchy, whether they followed the Lord "wholly" as David had done or followed other gods. David became the standard by which all other kings were measured, not because he did everything right but because he followed the Lord "wholly" and did not commit idolatry.⁵ So the story of Solomon begins at the start of the book of Kings, which describes the downfall of the monarchy, instead of at the end of the book of Samuel, which describes the rise of the monarchy.

The account of David's death coming in at the start of the book of Kings as opposed to the end of the book of Samuel symbolizes what the book will be about: the death of the monarchy.⁶ Sick or injured kings and princes appear often in Kings, symbolizing the weakness of the kingdom.⁷ In this opening, David was so old and sickly that he could not keep warm, so they brought in a beautiful young woman to lay with him; the passage points out that David and this woman did not engage in sexual relations.

Following Absalom's death, Adonijah, whose name means "My Lord is Yahweh," was David's oldest son and would have been next in line for the throne had God not promised that Solomon would succeed David (1 Chronicles 22:9). It would have been natural for him to set himself up as king. He did exactly what Absalom had done; he got chariots and horses and 50 men to run before him (1 Kings 1:5; cf. 2 Samuel 15:1). The text tells us that David had never challenged *anything* Adonijah had done, not just this show of power, showing us what happens when children are given whatever they want and allowed to do whatever they want. It is strange that the man after God's own heart seems to avoid disciplining his children, as God's wisdom in Proverbs so often commands.

Adonijah gathered on his side Joab, David's general, and Abiathar, the priest who had been with David when he was on the run from Saul. But it's more telling who didn't join him – Zadok the priest, David's mighty men, and Nathan the prophet. Nathan, in particular, because he was the one who gave the words of God's covenant promises to David about his son (Solomon) who would build the temple, and his future Son (Jesus) who would rule forever (2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 22:6–10).

Nathan knew Adonijah was not the one to whom the Lord had promised the throne. Adonijah specifically did not invite Solomon to his feast, which means Adonijah knew God's promise, too. Adonijah's name means "My Lord is Yahweh," but he was not treating Yahweh as his lord at all. He was exalting himself instead of trusting the Lord to choose the next king. Like Adam and Eve, he was trying to take power for himself rather than doing what God said. By the end of the story, God would show Himself to be Lord, whether Adonijah recognized Him as Lord or not.

Q: How could David have such a blind spot when it came to disciplining his children? What does this tell us about our own blind spots?

Q: In what ways do we try to exalt ourselves and put ourselves on the throne of our lives rather than trust the Lord to do what is best?

1 Kings 1:11–31 and Psalm 71:12–24 [Read]

Talking Point 2: Godly people follow through on the Lord's will.

Q: Why were Solomon and Bathsheba's lives in danger?

Q: Why did David say he would do what he had sworn by the Lord to do?

Again, Nathan stood up to David to make sure the right thing would be done, even when his life could have been in danger. Because Adonijah had set himself up as king, if David died without making a formal announcement, the people would be behind Adonijah as king, even though David had already told Bathsheba that God had said the next king would be Solomon. Adonijah would likely kill both Solomon and Bathsheba to get rid of his competition. If we only read this story in Kings without reading the account in Chronicles of David, who told Solomon that God had said the kingdom would go to him, we may have the impression that Nathan and Bathsheba were conspiring to tell David something that wasn't true. By reading both stories, we see they were simply reminding him of what God had previously told both him and Nathan and what David himself had earlier told Solomon and Bathsheba. First Chronicles 23:1 tells us that David was old and made Solomon king, putting chapter 23 in this time frame, but he had told Solomon about God's promise before that, in chapter 22.

Both Nathan and Bathsheba bowed before him and paid him homage. They respectfully asked David if he had changed his mind and made Adonijah king. They confronted him with the truth, but they honored him in the way they did it. David swore to Bathsheba that he would do what he had promised and make Solomon king that very day – because he had sworn to her by the Lord, and the Lord was the One who had redeemed his soul out of every adversity.

Though Adonijah's actions are strikingly similar to Absalom's, David's response seems different, at least at first. With Absalom, David had run away and put his trust in God to choose who would prevail. But this time, he was too old to run, and Solomon was too inexperienced to fight Adonijah (1 Kings 3:7). In this case, putting his trust in the Lord looked like following through on what God had promised by declaring Solomon king. Both actions put his trust in the Lord, just in different ways.

In Psalm 71, David told of God's righteous deeds and saving acts (vv. 15–16). Even when he was old and gray, he declared God's power to the next generation (v. 18). Because the Lord had redeemed his soul, he trusted in the Lord and praised Him with all he had – his harp, lyre, lips, tongue, even his soul (vv. 22–24). He spoke and sang of God's faithfulness, but he also lived it out by putting his trust in God's promises and following through on what God had commanded him to do.

Q: How has God been faithful to you? How would you describe His saving acts and righteous deeds toward you?

Q: How can you declare God's goodness to the next generation? What would it look like to praise Him with your whole self, all you are and all you have?

Q: How can you know what the will of God is for your life? What kind of changes would you need to make to follow through on His will?

1 Kings 1:32–52 and Psalm 20 [Read]

Talking Point 3: God humbles those who exalt themselves and exalts the humble.

Q: How, why, and when did Adonijah change his attitude?

Q: How did Adonijah humble himself before the Lord and Solomon? How did Solomon react to Adonijah's humility?

It was not enough for David just to declare Solomon king; he had to make a ceremony of it to combat the ceremony Adonijah was performing. David had Solomon ride on his own mule, symbolizing that Solomon would sit in his place. The mule was a powerful animal, but it also served as a contrast to Adonijah's chariots, showing that a true king of Yahweh trusts in the Lord, not in chariots and horses (Psalm 20:7). It was also a foreshadowing of Christ, who would ride humbly into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). They blew the shofar and anointed Solomon with the oil from the tabernacle, showing that he was the true king, the one chosen and anointed by God. The noise of the people celebrating was so loud "the earth was split by their noise" (1 Kings 1:40). The city was in such an uproar that Adonijah heard it.

Adonijah's servants told him what had happened. All his followers left him, and he feared Solomon, not just because the support for Solomon was so great but because he had clearly been chosen by the Lord (1 Kings 2:15). Adonijah went straight to the tabernacle, grabbed the horns of the altar, and asked that Solomon swear not to put him to death. The text uses a terse series of short clauses – he fears, he rises, he goes, he takes hold. This was an immediate response to the new situation in which he found himself, so different from just a few minutes before when he was reveling in his own glory and celebrating his ascent to power. He did not try to challenge Solomon but called him "king" right away and prostrated himself before him. The man who had exalted himself was now brought low before the one God had chosen, his younger brother.⁸

A typical king in the ancient world likely would have killed Adonijah just out of principle, to punish him for his presumption and to get rid of his competition before he could form a new rebellion and try to take the throne again. But Solomon proved himself to be a king of peace (as his name means) by telling Adonijah that as long as he proved himself to be righteous, he would live. Solomon wasn't out to get revenge or show his power or authority over Adonijah. As God's choice for king, he was to show grace and mercy to all who humbled themselves before the Lord, just as God does.

Q: In what ways do you struggle with humbling yourself before God? In what ways do you struggle with pride or exalting yourself?

Q: How has God humbled you through circumstances in your life?

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Took

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Psalm 20 tells us that the Lord saves His anointed (v. 6), those who put their trust in Him. Adonijah knew the promises of God and tried to take the throne for himself anyway. But God proved to him that no human being can thwart His plans. The Lord will fulfill His promises to His people and work all things for their good and His glory (Romans 8:28). We simply need to put our trust in Him.

Q: What promises has God made to you in which you can put your trust? What would it look like for you to put that trust into action?

Q: How does it make you feel to know that God's plans cannot be thwarted?

CHALLENGES

THINK: In what ways do you need to humble yourself and put your trust in the Lord? In what areas of your life are you still trying to hold onto control? In what places are you still trying to sit on the throne of your life? Where do you still need to submit yourself to the lordship of Christ? What would it look like practically for you to do so?

ACT: Research all of God's promises to His people in the Bible. You can use a concordance or a search engine to search the Bible yourself and/or look up a book, sermon, podcast or other resource. Just make sure you verify whatever someone else preaches or teaches by checking the Bible for yourself.

PRAY for God to reveal His will to you. Ask Him to show you His promises and how you can walk in trust and faith. Ask Him to humble you so you can walk in obedience to Him as your king. Thank God for all He has done in your life and praise Him for being a promise keeper.

NEXT TIME in *The Life of David*: Next week, we will look at the very last story in the life of David, in which he passes on his wisdom to Solomon. David tells Solomon the secret to prosperity and success as a king of Israel – to worship the Lord only, follow and trust in Him, and execute justice among His people.

¹ <https://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/florida-man-throws-alligator-wendy-drive-thru-article-1.2525005>

² https://www.tampabay.com/news/bizarre/Florida-patient-loses-patience-steals-ambulance-to-get-home-from-hospital_166219339/

³ <https://www.wpbf.com/article/deputies-vero-beach-man-high-on-flakka-tries-to-break-into-jail-to-visit-friends/1328210>

⁴ <https://www.cbsnews.com/detroit/news/man-arrested-karate-kick-swan/>

⁵ Joseph Benson, *The Holy Bible: The Old and New Testaments: with Notes, Critical, Explanatory, and Practical, Vol. 1* (London, UK: J. Kershaw, 1825).

⁶ Peter J. Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006).

⁷ T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 13* (Waco, TX: Word Publishing, 1985).

⁸ Peter J. Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006).