

Establishing the Kingdom

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[0:00] Following this morning's Bible reading in the Pew Bibles, if you turn to page 337, it says!

1 Kings 2, but it's going to be shorter.! When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon, his son.

I'm about to go the way of all the earth, he said. So be strong. Act like a man and observe what the Lord your God requires.

Walk in obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations, as written in the law of Moses. Do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go, and that the Lord may keep his promise to me.

If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.

[1:23] Now you yourself know what Job, son of Zeruah, did to me, what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies, Abner, son of Ner, and Hamasa, son of Jeher.

He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime, as if in battle. And with that blood he stained the belt round his waist and the sandals on his feet.

Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his grey head go down to the grave in peace. But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai, of Gierad, and let them be among those who eat at your table.

They stood by me when I fled from your brother Absalom. And remember, you have with you Shimei, son of Gerah, the Benjaminite from Beharum, who called down bitter curses on me the day I went to Mahanaim.

When he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord, I will put you to death by the sword. But now do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom.

[2:37] You will know what to do to him. Bring his grey head down to the grave in blood. Then David rested with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David.

He had reigned for forty years over Israel, seven years in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David and his rule was firmly established.

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

Then he added, I have something to say to you. You may say it, she replied. 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.

Now I have one request to make of you. Do not refuse me. You may make it, she said. So he continued. Please ask King Solomon.

[3:43] He will not refuse you. To give me Abishag, the Shunammite, as my wife. Very well, Bathsheba replied. I will speak to the king for you.

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.

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

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 Job, son of Zeruah. When 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.

[4:56] 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.

So King Solomon gave orders to Benaiah, son of Jehoiada. And he struck down Adonijah and he died.

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.

So Solomon removed Abiathar from the priesthood of the Lord, fulfilling the word the Lord had spoken at Shiloh about the house of Eli. The kingdom was now established in Solomon's hands. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Well, thank you for reading that so well for us, Lamont. And it's great to see you all here this morning as we dive into 1 Kings chapter 2 together.

[6:07] It's a big passage. We've read the first half of it, but we'll look at the second half as well. It should be greatly helpful if you could keep your Bibles open. It's predominantly page 336 if they've fallen shut.

And join with me in prayer as we come to the Lord's word together. Heavenly Father, we come before your word this morning, seeking to know more of who you are, of what you have done, of what you are doing, and what you will do.

And so we ask that your spirit would be working powerfully in all of our hearts this morning. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer.

Amen. Well, who rules the world right now? What would you say? Who rules the world? When you look at all that is going on right now, who rules the world?

Maybe if, like me, you were watching the news yesterday, you'd conclude, well, I don't know who rules it, but it seems like America certainly wants to. Or maybe you'd conclude that actually, with all of the division and conflict that we see all around us, not just in the Middle East, that no one rules the world right now.

[7:27] That that's a ridiculous thought, to think that there is anyone who's in control of all the mayhem that we see around us. That the promised utopia of a universal peace that we've all been working for, seemingly, is so far away that to suggest that there is one ruler, to suggest there is one king of the world who is in control of it all, is so ridiculous.

Does anyone really have a grip on all that's going on? Even in our own country, things seem as divided as ever. And on that basis, it's easy to despair.

It's easy to think, where on earth is this all heading? And so, Christians in the room, if someone came up to you and asked, how do you react to times like these?

What would you say? Well, I don't know what you'd say, but I hope after our time together this morning, thinking about God's king and his kingdom, we'd say that in times like these, we rejoice that the Lord is king, even if it doesn't always look like it, and that he rules over it all.

Now, last week, Martin kicked off our series in One Kings, as we saw the kingdom in chaos, with multiple claims to the throne and attempted coup, rival coronations, a sign of deep division that has marked God's kingdom in Israel since they got to the land, especially in 2 Samuel.

[9:05] If we were on the ground there, the question of who rules would be just as important there as sometimes it feels today. And last week, Martin helped us understand that the books of one and two kings are going to be really helpful for us because they give us a glimpse of what kingdom life in God's kingdom should look like, what it will look like.

God has brought his people to his land with the promise of abundant blessing if they obey him and live under his king. And yet the kingship in Israel so far has suffered constant rebellion after rebellion.

The latest coup by Adonijah last week was headed off. And this morning, we get the start of Solomon's reign. And the question is, what kind of king will Solomon be?

Can he bring the unity and security needed? Can he bring that promised life? We've got three points this morning. You'll find them on the back of your notice sheet, if that's helpful for you to follow along.

But let's dive in together at our first point. The promise of life under God's king, verses one to four. Back in 2 Samuel 7, God promised David an eternal kingdom where someone in his line would reign forever, where God's people, Israel, would dwell securely, enjoying life to the full as never experienced before.

[10:39] Now, kingship in the Bible is a bit different from kingship today. Well, King Charles, how much power, authority does he really have? How much does he rule? If King Charles told us to do something, are we really gonna go and do it?

If he went one way, would we follow? But back then, the king was really the leader of the nation. They held the power and authority. He was divinely anointed by God and tasked with leading the people in right relationship with him.

And with this in mind, this is how David, as he's about to die, charges Solomon. Look at verses two and three with me. David says, David knows that this is what will make or break Solomon's kingdom.

So whether or not he obeys the Lord and does what the Lord requires, that is his headline advice from David to his son Solomon. Obey the word of the Lord.

God's people need a king that obeys the Lord. Only then will they prosper. Only then will they get life to the full. I mean, if we think about it, if at work you have a manager who just goes off and tells you do whatever you want, it doesn't really matter what the rest of the organization is doing.

[12:21] We'll just do a side project because I think this is really more fun and this is better. That business is not going to flourish. If the different arms of it don't do what the CEO calls them to do and go their own way, the whole thing collapses.

If you decide to go off on your own mission, not listening to the one who organizes it all, things rarely end up well. And it's striking here that David defines doing this as being strong, of obeying the Lord.

He knows that strength is not found in armies or other impressive physical things. Strength, says David, is found in walking in obedience to God.

A strong king is one who truly takes to heart God's word, who loves it and follows it and knows that that is where life is found. He also tells Solomon to act like a man.

This isn't a call just to man up and get on with it, Solomon. This is what you've got to do. No one cares if you've got feelings about it. Just stoically get on with it, be a man. No, it's not that. Neither is it, just do whatever you want, Solomon.

[13:36] You know, just whatever you feel like you want to. You've got the, you're the king, just do as you see fit. No, it's not all of that. In the Bible, when the Bible is talking about men and women, on the whole, it is broadly the same.

But yet in scripture, there is something of the quality of biblical manhood as a calling to lead yourself in obedience to the Lord.

We see that over scripture, that is that and to lead anyone else that the Lord entrusts to you in obedience to the word of God. That's Solomon's chief calling here and we see it repeated throughout scripture.

He says, if you want to be a man, Solomon, if you want to be strong, don't go power crazy and try to do it all yourself. Don't try and take over everywhere if the Lord doesn't call you to. No, if you want to be strong, walk in obedience to God's word.

And you'll take people with you. And so for us men, if we want to be strong, if we want to act like men in 21st century Scotland, we need to be serious about walking and leading ourselves in obedience to God's word.

[14:54] You want to be strong, build the muscle memory of obedience to the Lord. It's what real manhood is like.

And these first four verses that we have are fundamental for us as we go throughout the rest of kings. Israel needs a king who walks in obedience to God.

It's only then that they will prosper. And there's a dynamic here that we'll see again and again of as with the king, so with the people. If the king walks in obedience to the Lord and does what he says, the people will follow him, happily go after him.

But actually, if the king also then just walks off into mass idolatry, walks away from the Lord, well, the people will follow after him as well. As with the king, so with the people.

Such is his power and influence where he goes, the people follow. Think it's an idea that is somewhat depicted in The Lion King. Simba is exiled and as he is exiled, Scar takes over.

[16:04] He assumes the throne and we see the kingdom become an absolute shell of itself. The color is completely drained from the land. The animals are scrawny.

It's all gone so horribly wrong from what life was meant to look like in the kingdom. But then when Simba returns and he takes his place as the rightful king, everything changes.

The color floods back in. The animals prosper. The animals sing and dance for joy. They're under the right king. And life is like how it's never been before.

They need the right king to lead them in the right way. And so it was for the people of Solomon's day. They needed a king to lead them in obedience to God.

And so it is for us now. God's people need a king who walks and leads them as well. We cannot do it if left to ourselves.

[17:03] We cannot do it under the wrong king. If we try that, then we all just go different ways. There's division and chaos. We need a king. The promise of life, of life to its full, is under God's king.

And it's a promise of glorious, prosperous life. And these blessings are only there with the king. He is crucial. And so here, knowing that we live the other side of Jesus' death and resurrection, we know that Jesus is the descendant of David, the only one who perfectly walks in obedience to God. He is the only one who perfectly brings God's people into that promised life. It is only under Jesus that life to its full is found.

And he leads all those who will bend a knee. That is life under God's king. That's David's charge to Solomon.

But under God's king right now, things on the ground are precarious. Our second point this morning, the period of turmoil under God's king.

[18:15] Verses 5 to 12. Just last week, we saw that Adonijah was trying to assert himself as king, declaring, I will be the next one, relying on himself, not God.

We saw him sacrificing on the stone of the serpent, as it can be translated, a symbol of Satan and rejection of God, booting himself up in opposition to God.

And this wasn't a one-man rogue mission. This was an insurrection. He took Joab, the commander of Israel's armies, and Abiathar, the head priest, people with power and sway in national life.

This wasn't a quick rebellion easily squashed, but a serious moment. And I think what makes this little chunk so interesting is verse 12.

Look down to there with me. It says, so Solomon sat on the throne of his father David and his rule was firmly established. The bit of David's speech that we've just skipped is essentially him listing different people who are threats to Solomon's rule, different people who don't want to see him as king.

[19:29] And yet, the narrator tells us that before any of those people have been dealt with, God's king reigns securely. His rule is firm even in the midst of turmoil and enemies, of chaos.

God's king rules. Let's look at who David speaks of. Back to verse 5. We have Joab. David says, Now you yourself know what Joab, son of Zeruiah, did to me.

What he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies, Abner, son of Ner, and Amasar, son of Jether. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime. To Samuel, Joab killed not under instruction from God or his king, but for his own revenge and selfish interest.

And yet again, in chapter 1, he sided with Adonijah, rejecting the authority of God's king and seeking to destabilize the kingdom. He set himself up as an enemy of God's king and a murderous one too.

Similarly, verse 8, Shemai saw the turmoil and sided with God, against God's king. He called down curses upon David and opposed his rule. And it was only after David had quelled the turmoil that he came begging for mercy.

[20:49] Even though God had already appointed David as king, when faced with turmoil, Shemai turned away from him, went out from under him and opposed him. And although David granted mercy, he was an insurrectionist at heart who opposes God's king.

But contrasted here with Joab and Shemai are the sons of Barzillai in verse 7. Even when things looked chaotic, when the turmoil was all around and Absalom was fighting against David, they didn't abandon God's rightful king.

They knew that under that period of turmoil, they needed to unite under him and trust in his rule. And if, as we thought about earlier, the promise of life is only to be found under God's king, then right now there is real tension in the kingdom.

as David dies in verse 10 and Solomon rules having been anointed by God, there are many threats against God's king. There are many people out there who do not want to see Solomon on the throne, who want to take God's people away from the Davidic kingship and try and find life elsewhere.

But even before all of that, Solomon's rule is firmly established. And this tells us something really significant, I think, about our time here on earth just now.

[22:15] That even on the ground, as we feel weak and wobbly, as we look around and it feels like turmoil everywhere, God establishes his king on his throne and he will not let the enemies win.

He is secure. This is not that different to what we experienced just now. Josh opened at the start with a prayer based upon Psalm 2 with this idea that God has boot his king enthroned above all his enemies.

He rules now, even though the enemies are still trying to defeat him. But his rule is firm and one day he will come and judge them for standing in opposition.

It's a pattern there, it's a pattern with Solomon here, but ultimately it's the shape of Jesus' rule as he is the great Davidic king, the Psalm 2 king.

Where is Jesus right now? Well, he's reigning, he's ruling at the right hand of God. His rule is firmly established. God's king rules right here, right now, even if it doesn't always feel like it or look like it.

[23:30] even though people live in opposition to him, even though it seems like those who want nothing to do with him get away with it, even though our country is divided, even though it feels like the church is just hit by one scandal after another, Christ reigns in the turmoil.

There is nobody, there is no thing that could possibly ever dethrone Christ. He is seated right now ruling and reigning. There is no power, there is on heaven or on earth that can stop his rule.

This is an eternal reality, it is a certain reality that right now whatever we see going on, Christ rules and the present turmoil will not last forever.

Our third point, the pending judgment under God's king, verses 13 to 46. God sees that all that is going on in this period of turmoil and he doesn't let it go unpunished.

Even though judgment is delayed, even though it might seem to get away with it at this time, God's king brings true meaningful justice. The fragility, the vulnerability of life here on earth doesn't last forever.

[24:51] God's king acts. This is a big section of our passage but it's bookended really clearly by two statements. We've already looked at verse 12 so glance over to verse 46.

Lamont read it for us at the start and the narrator tells us the kingdom was now established in Solomon's hands. So we go from Solomon ruling the kingdom and that's established his rule and now after everything that happens in between the kingdom is established.

They are two different things. They must be because it's only after everything that's happened in verse 46 we're told that now the kingdom was established in Solomon's hands and the

establishment of his kingdom means the quelling of the turmoil.

The killing of those who oppose his kingdom and seek to destroy it. I wonder how you felt when we read some of it. I know that some of you were in growth groups this week looking at this passage as well.

I wonder how your initial first impressions were if you did that for a period where three people just get killed and sometimes we worry what is going on here?

[26:10] It sounds a bit like revenge killings. Something as if like when the Taliban took over Afghanistan and they went about killing all their enemies is this cold-blooded revenge?

Is Solomon's kingdom off to a horrendous start? Is what he's doing justified? What do we make of this? Well I don't think it's off to a horrendous start.

I don't think scripture encourages us to read it that way. Solomon's efforts to establish his kingdom bring justice upon those who have opposed God and have murdered people.

There are three main scenes here that follow a similar pattern. We'll focus in on Adonijah but let me show you the similarities between the three of them. Each of them are guilty of treason.

Each of them have betrayed God's king in one way or another and sided against his rule. Each of them are given a chance to submit to bend the knee to say to Solomon I was wrong I submit to your rule.

[27:15] Adonijah though makes another play for the throne after being let off once. Joab refuses to come out from the altar. Shemai disobeys Solomon's order not to depart Jerusalem.

And each time in the narrative Solomon references there being a price to pay for their wrongdoing for them standing themselves up against God and his king.

And then he talks about establishing the throne or securing the throne of the kingdom and then he sends Benaiah to execute justice.

Three scenes with a similar structure doing the same big thing and as well as closing off some accounts from 2 Samuel. But if that lost you don't worry come back with me we're going to drill in to Adonijah together as an example of the wider play that's happening.

Well Adonijah having failed in his attempt to claim the throne Solomon showed mercy to him he said back in chapter 1 verse 52 if he shows himself to be worthy not a hair in his head will fall to the ground but if evil is found in him he will die.

[28:27] Time has passed Solomon is now on the throne and Adonijah makes an appearance again not it seems to submit to Solomon but to make another play.

He appears not to Solomon but to Bathsheba and requests verse 17 please ask King Solomon he will not refuse you to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife.

Now Abishag the Shunammite is a young virgin the one who was brought to keep David warm in chapter 1 and this is not a romantic love story their eyes did not meet across a crowded room and fall in love with each other that's not what's going on here.

This is a very political move. It's a play for the throne. If Adonijah is wed to Abishag it strengthens his claim but Solomon is on to his brother he knows exactly what's going on here.

verse 22 he says to 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 or alternatively yes and would you like the keys to the kingdom as I leave my own palace and my own throne as well I could just hand it all over to him I'll get it cleaned before I leave and be ready for him Adonijah was shown mercy once before but he's forfeited that now he has yet again raised himself up over God's king and Solomon continues verse 23 may God deal with me be it ever so severely if Adonijah does not pay with his life for this request and Benaiah is sent out and he kills him there is a price that needs paid for rebelling against God Solomon is going to unite the kingdom and lead them in obedience to the promised life he must remove all those who won't bend the knee there is pending judgment under

[30:31] God's king for all who set themselves up against him but the option of mercy is real there's another person we've not mentioned yet in this passage Abiathar the priest in verses 26 and 27 a short message but instructive I think Solomon says that he deserves to die he has rebelled against the king but spares his life and sends him out back to his fields

and he submits we do not hear from Abiathar again where Shemai is sent back to his house and told do not leave Jerusalem he disobeys and he dies after being shown mercy Abiathar is told go home he stays home having bent the knee and submits to God's king God's king brings both mercy and justice and doing so verse 46 he establishes his kingdom as we go on into the future chapters of Solomon's reign we'll see that promised life that is found under

Solomon's rule but to enjoy that life in the kingdom the kingdom must be secured against those who are intent on destroying it and as Solomon establishes his kingdom with justice and mercy it is only a shadow of the kingdom of Christ when he comes to establish his fully in his new creational kingdom what does a passage in Kings that is predominantly taken up with David instructing and solemn executing orders to go and kill people that most of us haven't heard of before have to do for us well as I've struggled and toiled and worked at this this week I think what would it do for the first readers likely those still in exile or those just back from exile well how would this encourage them well I think it encourages them that while they might look around and think who rules the world well they might look around at all the very powerful enemies the division within their own people and think what is going on while they're tempted to despair at it all they can rejoice that God's promised king for them will rule over all the turmoil and one day bring judgment on all those who oppose him all those who set themselves up against Christ king and so no matter how it looks they can trust and rejoice in God's promises and whereas they looked forward to

God's coming king and his rule being established well we know that Jesus is that promised king he is that Davidic king who sits forever on the throne and that means that he reigns now for this short time before he comes again to establish his new creational kingdom and if that is true if Christ really will return to judge today will return to judge that means that today is the day to bend the knee it means that today while mercy is still freely available today is the day God's word is clear that all of us have rebelled against God's king we have all set ourselves up instead against him there is a price to be paid for that there is a cost our God is a God of justice so do not accept do not delay in accepting his mercy and coming under his king and joining for life life to his full there is no better day today is the day to bend the knee to king

Jesus and if you've already done that how much more reason do we have to trust and rejoice in God's king as a church if this coming week every single person that we've invited to events that we've prayed for would come to passion for life events this week if none of them come if this building is stone cold empty this week we all pray it won't be if the council implements parking Monday to Sunday 24-7 and cost us an absolute fortune if Satan takes away much loved and cherished members of our church family and it feels like everything has gone against us as a church we can still trust that God's king rules and he reigns we can still help each other rejoice in Christ's rule no matter what happens here in all the turmoil we face Christ reigns

Christ rules we can still trust that Christ is king and so how can we help each other as we walk alongside each other keep remembering that whatever I see however I feel Christ does rule now and he will come again and maybe you're someone like me who is tempted to look at the world you put on the news and you see all of the conflict and division and everything going on in the world and the temptation is to despair to think where is the Lord in all of this it doesn't feel like the coming kingdom can't be shaken it doesn't feel like there's justice for the oppressed but let's not be people who talk about all that's going on as if the rule of Christ is irrelevant as if he has nothing to say about this as if that's all there is but let's bring his kingship to light over it

[36:26] Christ rules over the turmoil and so even when we are tempted to despair we can rejoice whatever is going on or maybe right now it's more your personal circumstances if life is genuinely just really hard just now maybe you feel overwhelmed maybe you just feel like everything that could go wrong has you're wondering what has gone on here life isn't all that it was cracked up to be what we need to do is we need to fix our eyes upon our king who rules right now in heaven and he sees what is going on there is nothing hidden to him and he will return in justice bringing justice through his judgment and for our short times here on earth as we live in the turmoil let's not neglect to help each other keep rejoicing in the king let's not neglect to help each other remember the lord is

king it's a great old hymn calls us rejoice in glorious hope our lord and judge shall come and take his servants up to their eternal home lift up your hearts lift up your voice rejoice again i say rejoice the lord is king he rules now and he will bring us to his new creational kingdom let's pray heavenly father we praise you that there is a certain to come day when christ will return and bring justice upon this world thank you for the mercy you show all who decide to unite under him and we pray that as we live in this present age of turmoil you would help us to rejoice in him no matter our circumstances trusting in his work anticipating his kingdom being firmly established in jesus name amen