

1 Kings 1 // Long Live King Solomon

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[0:00] Our lesson for today is from 1 Kings, sections from the first chapter 1, which is on page 334 of the church.

Even when they put covers over him. So his attendants said to him, let us look for a young virgin to serve the king and take care of him.

She can lie beside him so that our Lord the king may keep warm. Then they searched throughout Israel for a beautiful young woman and found Abishag, a Shumanite, and brought her to the king. The woman was very beautiful. She took care of the king and waited on him, but the king had no sexual relations with her. Now Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith, put himself forward and said, I will be king.

So he got chariots and horses ready with 50 men to run ahead of him. His father had never rebuked him by asking, why do you behave as you do? He was also very handsome and was born next after Absalom.

[1:27] Adonijah conferred with Joab, son of Zeruah, and with Abiathar the priest, and they gave him their support. But Zadok the priest, Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shemai and Rei, and David's special guard did not join Adonijah.

Adonijah then sacrificed sheep, cattle, and fattened calves at the stone of Zoholeth near En-Rugel. He invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officers of Judah. But he did not invite Nathan the prophet, or Benaiah, or the special guard, or his brother Solomon.

Then Nathan asked Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, Have you not heard that Adonijah, the son of Haggith, has become king, and our lord David knows nothing about it?

Now then, let me advise you how you can save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. Go in to King David and say to him, My lord the king, did you not swear to me your servant?

[2:42] Surely Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne? Why then has Adonijah become king? While you are still there talking to the king, I will come in and add my word to what you have said.

So Bathsheba went to see the aged king in his room, where Abishag the Shumanite was attending him. Bathsheba bowed down, prostrating herself before the king.

We will now move forward to verse 28. Then King David said, Call in Bathsheba. So she came into the king's presence and stood before him.

The king then took an oath. As surely as the Lord lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble, I will surely carry out this very day what I swore to you by the Lord, the God of Israel.

Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place. Then Bathsheba bowed down with her face to the ground, prostrating herself before the king, and said, May my lord David live forever.

[3:52] King David said, Call in Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada. When they came before the king, he said to them, Take your lord's servants with you, and put Solomon my son on my mule, and take him down to Gihon.

There shall Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel. Blow the trumpet and shout, Long live King Solomon! Then you are to go up with him, and he is to come and sit on my throne and reign in my place.

I have appointed him ruler over Israel and Judah. Benaiah son of Jehoiada answered the king, Amen! May the Lord, the God of my lord the king, so declare it.

As the Lord was with my lord the king, so may he be with Solomon, to make his throne even greater than the throne of my lord King David. So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, the Kerathites and the Pelathites went down, and put Solomon on King David's mule, and they escorted him to Gihon.

Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet, and all the people shouted, Long live King Solomon!

[5:18] And all the people went up after him, playing pipes and rejoicing greatly, so that the ground shook with the sound. We will now skip forward to verse 49.

At this all Adonijah's guests rose in alarm and dispersed. But Adonijah, in fear of Solomon, went and took hold of the horns of the altar.

Then Solomon was told, Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon, and is clinging to the horns of the altar. He says, Let King Solomon swear to me today, that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.

Solomon replied, If he shows himself to be worthy, not a hair on his head will fall to the ground. But if evil is found in him, he will die. Then King Solomon sent men, and they brought him down from the altar.

And Adonijah came and bowed down to King Solomon. And Solomon said, Go to your home. This is the word of the Lord. Good morning, St. Silas.

[6:26] Innes, thanks so much for reading that. Some wild names in there. Good to get through that. And great to be looking at this portion of God's words together.

It's, if you didn't look it up, it'd be really helpful to do that. It's 1 Kings chapter 1, page 334 in the church Bibles, as we look at this together.

And you can find an outline on the back of the notice sheet to follow as we look at this. But let's ask for God's help. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that you are a speaking God, and your promise that all of the scriptures have been breathed out by you, and are profitable for us. And so we ask, may the words of my mouth, and the thoughts and reflections of all of our hearts, be pleasing in your sight. O Lord, our rock, and our redeemer.

Amen. The writer G.K. Chesterton said that when he became a Christian, for the first time in his life, he realized why he always felt homesick, even while he was at home.

[7:36] He was describing this sense that he'd always had, that even when he was at home, there was somewhere else he longed to be. And C.S. Lewis wrote a lot about this experience that we have of longing, longing for a place, a people, longing to be home.

We long for a better world. We long to be somewhere different. And C.S. Lewis wrote about how some of us experience this as nostalgia. If you're some of our Hong Kong Chinese, I got Joanne to translate for me nostalgia, so I don't know if that is the Cantonese for nostalgia.

I'm trusting her. So nostalgia is this experience we have where you get this wave of longing to be back somewhere from your past, because you have this feeling of intense joy about that memory of that place or the people you were with.

And C.S. Lewis pointed out that what we kind of grow to realize as we grow up is that if we really went back, if we really could go back to that place we feel nostalgic for, it wouldn't actually be as joyful as we remember it.

It's almost like the mind plays a trick on us. And C.S. Lewis said that it's not actually a mind trick. These things that we're nostalgic for are images of what we truly desire in our hearts.

[9:02] And he went on, our longing to be reunited with something from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we've always seen from the outside, isn't a mind trick.

It's the truest description of our real situation that we find ourselves in. So what he was getting at here, and G.K. Cheston was getting at as well, is that the Bible has an answer to this longing that we feel for home.

And the answer the Bible gives is the kingdom of God, where God's people will live in God's place under his rule, and they'll enjoy the blessing of relationship with him.

It's what we were made for and our hearts long for. Now, as we start this new series in 1 Kings, we can trace the unfolding story of the Bible so far as a story of that kingdom, the kingdom of God. And you can see it on the chart on the screen, that the Bible starts so well with God making his kingdom. You get this pattern of the kingdom in the Garden of Eden as God's people are living in God's place, and they're enjoying good relationship with God under his rule.

[10:14] And then it goes catastrophically wrong as they reject God's rule, and they're sent in exile from the Garden of Eden as they rebel. But God hasn't finished with his kingdom plans, so he promises to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12 that God will restore his kingdom through Abraham's descendants.

And he blesses Abraham's children, so they become a great nation over hundreds of years. And then he rescues them in the Exodus under Moses, out of slavery, and brings them in the conquest under Joshua into the promised land of Canaan, God's place.

So they're God's people living in God's place, and he gives them his law so that they can live under that law and be blessed by his presence. And God has set above them a king, his anointed king, David.

That's the story of 1 and 2 Samuel, as God's Christ, God's messianic king, is ruling over his people. Now the books of one and two kings come next, and they are books of absolute highs and lows in this story of the kingdom of God.

We're going to see in this opening section of 1 Kings in the coming weeks that under King Solomon, the people of God experience a golden age in the kingdom.

[11:36] It's as good as it gets for the Old Testament people of God. But by the end of 2 Kings, it's ended in unmitigated disaster after a series of unfaithful kings that people end up in the horror of exile from the promised land.

They blow it, and all that's left is for them to cry by the rivers of Babylon, looking back at how good it had been before they messed it up, before their kings messed it up.

Now we're obviously looking at this after Jesus. So how do we look at a book like 1 Kings? Well, when we think about the kingdom of God for us today, we have to think about the already and the not yet of being in the kingdom.

There is an already, in one sense, the kingdom of God has already come. Mark records the first words in Jesus' ministry as, the time has come, the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe the good news. So in Jesus having come and died and risen, that we might be part of his kingdom, and the Father having sent the Spirit that we can come to know God, we already live in the kingdom, the saving reign of God.

[12:45] And wherever somebody accepts Jesus as their saving king, they become part of the kingdom that God is building. But there is a profound not yet to the kingdom of God because we still live in a world that is governed by sin and death, a world where we still live in mortal bodies.

We can't stop sinning and we can't stop dying. And so we're yearning in hope. We're exiles from the kingdom, longing to be there, longing for Jesus' return when he appears in glory and fully establishes his righteous rule.

So we catch up with King David in chapter one of One Kings, and our first point is we see two grave dangers that show the weakness of the kingdom. The first danger is that internally it looks very weak.

David is old and cold in verse one. When King David was very old, he could not keep warm even when they put covers on him. And then they search Israel for a beautiful young woman to be like a hot water bottle for David.

And they find this beautiful woman, Abishag. Now, if you're thinking that sounds a bit dubious, I think it is very dubious. At the beginning of Esther, this is what a pagan king does.

[14:02] He searches the land for a new wife because he doesn't like his wife. He's bored of her. This is what pagan kings might have done. It's not what you expect the king of God's people to do.

It's not what you expect his advisors to do, but he needs to step up and sort this out. And we see him not doing that. He doesn't get a grip.

He seems bed bound. He's an impotent king, old and cold. So the kingdom looks weak under David. And the second big danger that puts it in peril is that it's being challenged. In verse five, David's youngest son, Adonijah, decides he's going to have a crack at getting the throne. He's a usurper. And everything we learn about Adonijah is bad, verse by verse. In verse five, he puts himself forward and says, I will be king. But we know that from one Samuel, that that's not what God's king is meant to do.

[14:58] You're not meant to seize the kingdom. You humbly entrust yourself to God's plan. And he confers his kingdom on the right king. He puts his trust in chariots and horses instead of God in verse five.

In verse six, Adonijah is spoiled. His dad never rebuked him. He's got dashing good looks. He's very handsome. That's not in itself a bad thing if you're a very handsome person. But here it's very bad because it makes him just like Absalom, his brother who conspired against King David and caused a civil war in 2 Samuel.

This is bad. In verse seven, he picks the wrong friends. And in verse eight, he invites, well, he doesn't invite. All the key righteous people, the good guys, they're all missing from his guest list for this great party he throws.

So God's priest is missing, God's prophet and David's special guard. Then he calls this great feast in verse nine. And we get translated the place as the stone of Zoholeth.

[15:59] But you could translate it the serpent's stone, which is pretty ominous in the promised land because when a serpent turned up in Eden, it didn't end well. Now, as we look at Adonijah, the prince, maybe this seems all too topical for us this week in Scotland as we've all over our news been reading about a prince, a former prince behaving badly, where he stands in line to the throne.

He got arrested. It's been everywhere. This is not like that. This is not just another royal scandal for a constitutional monarchy. God has promised that his blessing to the world will only come through his chosen king ruling faithfully over his people.

So this is a cosmic problem. Adonijah is an antichrist. He's setting himself up among God's people against God's anointed king.

And all the momentum seems to be with him. The point for us is that often in the Bible, the kingdom of God has moments like this, moments where it looks very shaky.

It looks precarious. That seems to me is what this whole chapter is about. It struck me when I was preparing that you could very easily start the book of 1 Kings at the beginning of chapter 2.

[17:19] We didn't, in that sense, chapter 1 is not needed for the story. David is old. He passes on the throne to Solomon, his son. God's anointed. Why is chapter 1 here?

It's there to make us feel how at the time, things would have seemed very uncertain, very weak, precarious. And today, when we look for the kingdom of God, we look at the church, at God's gathering of people under the saving rule of his king, and things can look very weak, can't they, for the church today.

I was involved with a church in Edinburgh, Chalmers Church, finding their next minister, and Mark's come from Italy. He's been in Naples for 15, nearly 20 years, planting a church.

It's got about 35 members. It looks very weak. The outside world seems to have success, power, the promises of a bright future.

We look at the visible church. The institutional church has got great cathedrals, and very often, its church leaders don't teach the gospel of Jesus faithfully.

[18:32] But when you look for faithful, Bible-based churches, very often, they're small, they're weak. In Scotland, a good number of them have had to leave buildings behind, leave assets behind, to take a stand on God's word.

The kingdom looks very precarious, and you can find yourself thinking, will there really be a church, a living church, in Scotland in one or two generations' time? What should we do when the kingdom of God seems weak?

Well, secondly, we see two faithful servants bravely seek the kingdom. We meet Nathan, the prophet, and Bathsheba. And Nathan brings God's word to Bathsheba.

The prophets are very important in kings because they bring God's word to the people. So in verses 11 to 14, as he gives Bathsheba a plan of what to do, this is God's word to Bathsheba, and then she does exactly what she's told to do from God's word.

So in verse 15, she takes a great risk and goes to see the aged king in his room where Abishag is there attending him, and she bows down to him in verse 16, and the king says, what is it you want? [19:47] And she has the courage to obey the word, and she tells David about Adonijah, and that it was Solomon who was meant to be king, and then look at verse 20.

She says, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you to learn from you who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. That's the big idea of the chapter.

Who's going to sit on the throne after David? God's anointed or a usurper? Then Nathan the prophet arrives, and he, like Bathsheba, is brave enough to come and tell David what's going on. And certainly in this chapter, whatever's gone on before with Bathsheba and Nathan, in this chapter, they're being presented to us as models of courageous, risk-taking faith that shows that they love the kingdom of God.

Everyone in Israel is looking the other way. Everyone would have been talking about Adonijah's feast and everyone's kissing Adonijah's ring, but our eyes are on this model of quiet, faithful obedience.

[20:55] Two people who are resolved we're going to seek God's kingdom and God's righteousness. Now, what each of us might do with that model in our own lives is going to look very different for each of us.

As we head into our Passion for Life mission, it might look like taking a risk of causing conflict in our friendships because we bravely invite friends to come and hear more about Jesus this Friday with the concert or the events next week.

Or it might be about the ways that we're involved in ministry, serving Jesus and serving his kingdom by serving others. The church in London that I went to in my 20s when I'd just become a Christian, it's just having its 25th birthday celebrations at the moment.

And one of the things the minister there was saying as he was calling the church to give thanks for the ways that he's sustained that church for 25 years was how thankful they are to God for the people who have just stuck around at the church in central London.

The people who walked into that church, Christ Church, saying, we're actually only in London for a year or two years. It's just an adventure and then we're going to be on our way. And then they realized we're useful here for the kingdom.

[22:17] We can see God at work here in this church. We can see new people arrive every year, students, workers, and we can be useful for the kingdom here. And so they've stayed five years, ten years or longer.

And there are people there who would have loved personally to move out of London, somewhere where there was more space. But they've stayed where they are because they see that they're useful for the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is marked by faithful servants who seek the kingdom and love it and serve it. And it leads to our third point from the chapter as we see David's response to Nathan and Bathsheba.

We see two unfailing promises and our passion for the kingdom. Now David gets completely transformed here. Suddenly, old called David.

Look at verse 29. The king then took an oath. As surely as the Lord lives who has delivered me out of every trouble, I will surely carry out this very day what I swore to you by the Lord, the God of Israel.

[23:21] Solomon, your son, shall be king after me and he will sit on my throne in my place. So in verse 32, now the right guests, the good guys, are called in. A prophet, a priest, and a mighty man of valour.

Verse 32. Call in Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada. And he gives instructions to take Solomon to Gihon and in verse 34, he says, There shall Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel.

Blow the trumpet and shout, Long live King Solomon. And then verse 35. Then you are to go up with him and he is to come and sit on my throne and reign in my place.

So humanly speaking, it's this zeal of David that saves the kingdom. But the truth is, it's God who saves the kingdom. The writer of 1 Kings chapter 1 doesn't mention God at work all through the chapter, but he is unmistakably showing us that however weak things looked and however silent God seemed to be, God has got the kingdom safely in his hands.

But he's pleased to work through human agents to do that. Later on in 1 Kings, we'll see God work with great miracles and sometimes that pleases God to do that.

[24:42] But often what pleases God is to work in a 1 Kings chapter 1 kind of way. Not through miracles, but through his people. The kingdom of God is literally what revives David.

It's what gets him out of bed in the morning. We thought he was completely past it. In the opening paragraph, he reminded me of my maths teacher when I was 14.

Not with the whole business with Abishag, but I had this maths teacher when I was 14. He was due to retire at the end of the year and we all knew it was a few years too late.

And if he'd known things about maths at one stage, he'd forgotten them by the time he was teaching us. And we all just kind of had to learn maths without him for a year. And when you read about David in 1 Kings 1, it's a bit like that.

He looks completely past it. And you feel like someone should have had the guts to tell him years ago that he needed to pass on the baton to Solomon. And now it looks like it's too late.

[25:43] And then suddenly, he's active again and he's decisive. He's got fire in his heart again. Why? Because David's undying passion is for the kingdom of God.

Would that be the passion that gets us out of bed in the morning? Or is it a trip to find the perfect sofa? Or checking on our investments? Or a trip to the beach?

Or improving how much we can bench press? What is it that kind of is our zeal, our passion? Could it be the kingdom of God? People coming to know God?

Well, if we don't feel like David, if we don't have that zeal burning within us for the kingdom, he shows us what can increase that passion in our hearts.

First, he reflects on his spiritual past. That God has always been his deliverer. Did you notice that? He says, as surely as the Lord lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble.

[26:45] And this is what drives David to write his songs, his great psalms. It's the theme of so many of them. Psalm 30, Psalm 34, Psalm 16, is that he was in the pit.

This poor man cried out to the Lord and the Lord lifted him. The Lord rescued him. And he writes song after song about that, that God is a great saviour who delivers.

And we can recalibrate our hearts towards the kingdom when we reflect on how we were dead in our transgressions and sins. We were without hope and God who is rich in mercy made us alive by his spirit.

He sent Jesus to save us, to seek us, to give us forgiveness, to free us from our shame, to give us new life knowing God and a future.

The second thing that sparks David's passion for the kingdom comes in that strange instruction in verse 33. He says, take your Lord's servants with you and put Solomon my son on my own mule and take him down to Gihon.

[27:51] Now why use a mule? Why not a war horse or a chariot for a king? Well at the end of the book of Genesis, Abraham's grandson, Jacob, blesses, he gathers his sons and he blesses them as Jacob's renamed Israel.

So this is the people of God being blessed and Jacob prophesies over the sons about the future and he prophesies of a great coming king in the line of Judah and he says this in Genesis 49, the scepter will not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.

He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch. Now what's going on here is you would never tether a donkey to a vine or a fruitful branch.

Why? Because the donkey will eat all the good fruit. You wouldn't do that unless the grapes were so abundant in the land that it didn't matter.

You could let your donkey eat what it likes. So here is a prophecy that God's promised future that he'll bring through this king in the line of Judah is going to be so abundant that his people will be so prosperous you'll even be able to tether your donkey to a fruitful branch and not worry about it. [29:22] In other words, David is saying as he says, put him on my mule. I've set my hope on God's promises and I trust that he is going to bring a glorious future through his Messiah.

500 years later, the prophet Zechariah picks up this hope when he prophesies about the ultimate Messiah in David's line and he says to Israel, rejoice greatly, daughter Zion.

See your king comes to you righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. And 500 years on from Zechariah, crowds from Jerusalem will see a descendant of David approach the city on a donkey and they'll put their cloaks on the road for the donkey to ride on and they'll cut branches from the trees and wave them and they'll shout, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

And when that happened, the people of the city of Jerusalem saw the commotion and came out and said, who is this? And the crowds answered, this is Jesus. Hosanna to the son of David.

So David is showing us here that what can grow our passion for the kingdom is remembering that the Lord has delivered you and me and the Lord is going to bring a wonderful future through his king, the Lord Jesus.

[30:48] And as we finish, we get a glimpse of what that future will be like in our fourth point, two contrasting parties and our response to the kingdom. The coronation of Solomon takes place and a messenger, Jonathan, reports it to Adonijah at his great feast.

You know, he's having this massive party with all these people there and then look at verse 43. Jonathan says, our Lord King David has made Solomon king.

And then verse 48, he gives David's words that David has said, praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has allowed my eyes to see a successor on my throne today.

And then for Adonijah, look what happens to the party, verse 49. At this, all Adonijah's guests rose in alarm and dispersed. It's all suddenly over and Adonijah flees to the altar and he grabs the horns as a plea for mercy and he's told in verse 52 to submit to the new king and he bows to Solomon and he goes home.

And it's a picture for us of the future that God promises for our world in Philippians chapter 2 as he says that God has exalted Jesus to his right hand and one day every knee will bow to King Jesus.

[32:10] So the gospel call today, the call that Jesus is God's Christ and Lord, God's King, it's a call to put down your arms and submit to the rule of King Jesus.

And if you do that today, you'll find welcome and refuge. But all around us today, people are choosing not to do that and the party away from God can look very appealing to us, very happy, very lively and it can make you feel like the call to follow Jesus is a call to miss out on all the fun. Well, let's remember Adonijah's feast and how it ends. God promises us that Jesus will come in glory and when he does, the world's party will be over in a flash.

There will be nothing fun about being part of that party on that day. But for those who are loyal to God's King, there is a different party going on in verse 39.

Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, Long live King Solomon!

[33:21] And all the people went up after him playing pipes and rejoicing greatly so that the ground shook with the sound. Now when Taylor Swift played her concerts at Murrayfield two years ago, there was an earthquake, wasn't there?

It was in the news that there was seismic earthquake readings six kilometres away from Murrayfield. Apparently it was when they sang Love Story that the ground shook.

Well here, there was no speaker system like that. There's no PA to magnify things. But the simple joy of the ordinary people who humbly trust the promises of God makes the earth move.

The shouts, the acclamation, the relief, the excitement that when things had looked so precarious, God had the kingdom safely in his hands. And this party too is a glimpse of the future.

It's a foretaste of the party for those who will celebrate on the day of Christ because they've put their trust in God's promises about him.

[34:31] When he comes in glory, what will add to the joy will be that all of us there will know that in our hearts we've resisted Jesus' rule, we've compromised, we've let Jesus down.

But he went into Jerusalem on a donkey, not to be lifted on the throne, but to be lifted up on a cross. So the earth will shake with the joy of a multitude that no one can count, singing, worthy is the Lamb who was slain.

And thank you for the cross, my friend, full of joy that our King welcomes us gladly because he willingly chose to die the death we should have died.

Let's pray together. Ride on, ride on, in majesty, in lowly pomp, ride on to die, bow your meek head to mortal pain, then take, O Christ, your power and reign.

Heavenly Father, we praise you that the kingdom is in your hands. We thank you for your promises to bring us home to the wonderful future our hearts long for through your King, the Lord Jesus.

[35:54] As we come to the Lord's table now, we ask that your Spirit will give us a deeper love and a deeper passion for your kingdom. And we pray your kingdom come in Jesus' name.

Amen. Thank you.