

Survey of the Bible part 13

The last time we were together we left David being given an ultimatum in response to his sin of numbering the people of Israel. And so, the Lord sent the prophet Gad to deliver the ultimatum to David.

2 Samuel 24:11-15 ¹¹ When David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, ¹² "Go and speak to David, 'Thus the LORD says, "I am offering you three things; choose for yourself one of them, which I will do to you.'"" ¹³ So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, "Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider and see what answer I shall return to Him who sent me." ¹⁴ Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us now fall into the hand of the LORD for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man." ¹⁵ So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time, and seventy thousand men of the people from Dan to Beersheba died.

David didn't want to fall into the hands of men but into the hand of the Lord.

Considering that God is creator and Lord and Judge of all, why would he rather fall into the hand of a righteous and wrathful God, then into the hands of men?

Because he knew from his past experience that God is full of mercies and He acts righteously when men don't. In all likelihood David figured that God would make the right choice for David when David couldn't.

But, what David may not have figured on was the severity of the judgment on the rest of Israel and he finally responds.

2 Samuel 24:17-19 ¹⁷ Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was striking down the people, and said, "Behold, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who have done wrong; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let Your hand be against me and against my father's house." ¹⁸ So Gad came to David that day and said to him, "Go up, erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." ¹⁹ David went up according to the word of Gad, just as the LORD had commanded.

2 Samuel 24:25 ²⁵ David built there an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Thus the LORD was moved by prayer for the land, and the plague was held back from Israel.

And so, now we jump forward into the latter years of David as we come to the book of 1Kings.

1 Kings 1:1 ^{NAU} Now King David was old, advanced in age; and they covered him with clothes, but he could not keep warm.

Old age and the ability for the body to stay warm is not unusual and there are a variety of medical reasons for this; from a B-12 deficiency to anemia. But here we have David in a situation that his staff recognizes and in those days if you were cold all of the time you wrapped yourself in more clothing.

But evidently this didn't help and so they go to the next step.

1 Kings 1:2-4 ² So his servants said to him, "Let them seek a young virgin for my lord the king, and let her attend the king and become his nurse; and let her lie in your bosom, that my lord the king may keep warm." ³ So they searched for a beautiful girl throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. ⁴ The girl was very beautiful; and she became the king's nurse and served him, but the king did not cohabit with her.

Evidently, David's wives and concubines weren't able to generate enough heat and so what do you do? What anyone would do. Find a beautiful young virgin and lay next to her for hours at a time. It's good to be king.

But David's inability to keep warm was the least of his problems at this time because, like all throughout his life as King, someone wants his job.

1 Kings 1:5-7 ⁵ Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." So he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen with fifty men to run before him. ⁶ His father had never crossed him at any time by asking, "Why have you done so?" And he was also a very handsome man, and he was born after Absalom. ⁷ He had conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest; and following Adonijah they helped him.

Evidently, there seemed to be somewhat of a power vacuum in Israel, quite possibly because of David's age and his inability to lead as in his youth and so Adonijah sees an opportunity and in no uncertain terms makes a decision. I will be king.

Well, who is Adonija? Adonijah was one of David's sons born to his concubine, Haggith. He was born in Hebron while David was on the run from Saul who was trying to kill David at the time. We're told he was the fourth son. Absalom was the third.

What is interesting is that to do this you don't simply ride into town and set yourself upon the throne. To have such power conferred upon you, you need a power above you to set that up.

In this case, who does Adonijah go to?

Joab, the son of Zeruah and Abiathar the priest.

Both of these men have been with David for many years serving the King. We're not told why they would have supported Adonijah but we do know a little about Joab. Remember, Joab was not a yes man for David. He confronted the king on a variety of issues and so he may have simply seen that David was incompetent in his old age and decided to back a younger horse.

In doing this he also confirmed that he didn't trust Solomon, whom he knew was in line to the throne, to be a competent king for Israel. By the way, Solomon was born years after Adonijah, and Solomon was also the son of Bathsheba. And so, I'm sure Adonijah, the older son of David, felt that he, rather than Solomon, should be next in line.

But when the king of Israel makes a decision to place his son Solomon on the throne instead of another son, and your military commander backs someone else, what is this called?

Treason. And somehow, Joab convinces Abiathar the priest to agree to this arrangement. And so, you've got two powerful people in Israel backing Adonijah. You have a military leader with men who will follow him, and you have a spiritual leader with people who will side with him. This is the combination you need to usurp the throne and gain the trust of the people.

Adonijah was very shrewd. But he made a calculated mistake. He didn't take into account David's love for Bathsheba and a promise David made to Bathsheba.

1 Kings 1:15-21 ¹⁵ So Bathsheba went in to the king in the bedroom. Now the king was very old, and Abishag the Shunammite was ministering to the king. ¹⁶ Then Bathsheba bowed and prostrated herself before the king. And the king said, "What do you wish?" ¹⁷ She said to him, "My lord, you swore to your maidservant by the LORD your God, *saying*, 'Surely your son Solomon shall be king after me and he shall sit on my throne.' ¹⁸ "Now, behold, Adonijah is king; and now, my lord the king, you do not know *it*. ¹⁹ "He has sacrificed oxen and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the sons of the king and Abiathar the priest and Joab the commander of the army, but he has not invited Solomon your servant. ²⁰ "As for you now, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. ²¹ "Otherwise it will come about, as soon as my lord the king sleeps with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be considered offenders."

After this Nathan the prophet comes to David with the same news and David calls Bathsheba back into his presence and says this.

1 Kings 1:28-30 ²⁸ Then King David said, "Call Bathsheba to me." And she came into the king's presence and stood before the king. ²⁹ The king vowed and said, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all distress, ³⁰ surely as I vowed to you by the LORD the God of Israel, saying, 'Your son Solomon shall be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place'; I will indeed do so this day."

Now keep in mind, Adonijah has already set himself up as king and so David has to act quickly to remedy this problem. And he does.

1 Kings 1:32-39 ³² Then King David said, "Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada." And they came into the king's presence. ³³ The king said to them, "Take with you the servants of your lord, and have my son Solomon ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. ³⁴ "Let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there as king over Israel, and blow the trumpet and say, '*Long* live King Solomon!' ³⁵ "Then you shall come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne and be king in my place; for I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and Judah." ³⁶ Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king and said, "Amen! Thus may the LORD, the God of my lord the king, say. ³⁷ "As the LORD has been with my lord the king, so may He be with Solomon, and make his throne greater

than the throne of my lord King David!" ³⁸ So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule, and brought him to Gihon. ³⁹ Zadok the priest then took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "*Long live King Solomon!*"

Well, Adonijah hears of this and how all the people are praising God for the new King, Solomon, and how all the leaders, both military and spiritual, are acknowledging Solomon as King. And so, Adonijah panics.

1 Kings 1:50-53 ⁵⁰ And Adonijah was afraid of Solomon, and he arose, went and took hold of the horns of the altar. ⁵¹ Now it was told Solomon, saying, "Behold, Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon, for behold, he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.'" ⁵² Solomon said, "If he is a worthy man, not one of his hairs will fall to the ground; but if wickedness is found in him, he will die." ⁵³ So King Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and prostrated himself before King Solomon, and Solomon said to him, "Go to your house."

By all rights, Solomon could have killed his half brother, Adonijah, for treason, but he doesn't. But the stipulation was that his life would be spared unless wickedness is found in him.

All's Adonijah had to do was fade into the background and keep his nose clean. But evidently, that's not a desire of Adonijah. Adonijah goes to Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, and asks her to go to her son and make a request for Adonijah.

1 Kings 2:17 ¹⁷ Then he said, "Please speak to Solomon the king, for he will not refuse you, that he may give me Abishag the Shunammite as a wife."

Who is Abishag?

She was the beautiful young virgin who was chosen for David to keep him warm. And so, Bathsheba goes to her son and brings this request on behalf of Adonijah. And evidently, Solomon is not happy about this?

1 Kings 2:22 ²² King Solomon answered and said to his mother, "And why are you asking Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him also the kingdom-- for he is my older brother-- even for him, for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruah!"

Why is Solomon so upset?

Because he's asking for a precious possession that belonged to his father David, the same man Adonijah would have destroyed to become king. And not only does this arouse anger against Adonijah but it reminds Solomon of the two men who backed Adonijah, Joab and Abiathar the priest.

And so, Solomon commands that all three men be put to death, and they are. The next phase of Solomon's life has him doing something that is quite strategic for the future of Israel.

1 Kings 3:1-15 ^{NAU} Then Solomon formed a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her to the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem.

Why would Solomon have made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, by taking his daughter in marriage?

It's the old adage, stay close to your friends, but stay closer to your enemies. To keep Egypt from attacking Israel, Solomon ensures that there will be a covenant in blood to keep them at bay. As long as the Pharaoh's daughter is alive there will be peace.

But why would Pharaoh agree to this?

Because he feared the God of Israel and knew that though he was one of the most powerful kings on earth with a nation that was powerful, it had a history of dealing with Israel in the past and he has not forgotten that.

Now in those days, you might remember, that even though Jerusalem was the capital city of Israel, there was no one designated place to bring sacrifice to the Lord because the Lord did not allow David to build a temple, due to David's sin against the Lord.

1 Kings 3:3-15 ³ Now Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except he sacrificed and burned

incense on the high places. ⁴ The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place; Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵ In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, "Ask what *you wish* me to give you." ⁶ Then Solomon said, "You have shown great lovingkindness to Your servant David my father, according as he walked before You in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward You; and You have reserved for him this great lovingkindness, that You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day. ⁷ "Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸ "Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted. ⁹ "So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" ¹⁰ It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. ¹¹ God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, ¹² behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. ¹³ "I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. ¹⁴ "If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days." ¹⁵ Then Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and made peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

We didn't get as far as I would have liked to today, but there was so much that has happened in the first three chapters of 1Kings that really sets up what God is going to do among the people of Israel that we really had to address it.

And it's in this chapter that we have one of those stories that stands out among all of the stories of the word of God and we'll end today with this.

1 Kings 3:16 - 28 ¹⁶ Then two women who were harlots came to the king and stood before him. ¹⁷ The one woman said, "Oh, my lord, ¹this woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth to

a child while she *was* in the house. ¹⁸ "It happened on the third day after I gave birth, that this woman also gave birth to a child, and we were together. There was no stranger with us in the house, only the two of us in the house. ¹⁹ "This woman's son died in the night, because she lay on it. ²⁰ "So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead son in my bosom. ²¹ "When I rose in the morning to nurse my son, behold, he was dead; but when I looked at him carefully in the morning, behold, he was not my son, whom I had borne." ²² Then the other woman said, "No! For the living one is my son, and the dead one is your son." But ¹the first woman said, "No! For the dead one is your son, and the living one is my son." Thus they spoke before the king. ²³ Then the king said, "¹The one says, 'This is my son who is living, and your son is the dead one'; and ¹the other says, 'No! For your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.'" ²⁴ The king said, "Get me a sword." So they brought a sword before the king. ²⁵ The king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other." ²⁶ Then the woman whose child *was* the living one spoke to the king, for ^{1a}she was deeply stirred over her son and said, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him." But the other said, "He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide *him*!" ²⁷ Then the king said, "Give ¹the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him. She is his mother." ²⁸ When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had ¹handed down, they feared the king, for ^athey saw that the wisdom of God was in him to ²administer justice.