

## **Kingship** **1 Kings 1:1-2:46**

### **Introduction**

What possible relevance does this antiquated book have for our lives? I mean, other than helping you win at Bible trivia over your in-laws, or give you some potential names for your kids, what benefit is there in looking at these chapters?

As we shall see, Kings is very relevant for our lives. Paul said, "For whatever was written in former days [OT] was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom 15:4). In Kings, like other OT books, we will find instruction, encouragement, and hope. We need these blessings that we may endure faithfully.

Kings belongs to the history section of the Old Testament, in a section that is referred to as the Former Prophets. It includes Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. In Joshua, God's people take the Promised Land, as promised in the previous story of the patriarchs and the Exodus. In Judges, a number of interesting figures like Gideon, Deborah, and Sampson lead the nation, which covers about 400 years. Judges, as a whole, shows the nation in a downward spiral in need of a godly king. In 1 Samuel, we find the account of the prophet Samuel, and the beginning of the monarchy. Saul is the first monarch. His story is in 1 Samuel. David looms in the background of 1 Samuel, as the king to come. 2 Samuel is the story of David's reign.

The books of 1-2 Kings (originally one book) covers about 370 years of history. The third larger than life king is Solomon, whom we read about in the first 11 chapters of 1 Kings. Then there are a number of kings that follow. The final scene shows the kings in exile.

The story of Kings in a word is this: *decline*. Seeds of decline appear in the beginning part of the story, then that decline takes on different appearances throughout the book (Dever, *The Message of the Old Testament*). The book opens like many books actually end, with the leading figure dying (e.g., Genesis, Joshua). This is fitting since Kings is about the decline of the kingdom. This decline ends in a judgment.

We will make a number of applications throughout, but let me just introduce three broad applications in light of this story of decline. Kings is about *worship, the Word, and weakness*. First, God's people were called to *worship* God alone, but Kings tells the sad story of idolatry among God's people. Though Solomon builds the great temple to worship, he falls prey to idolatry, as well. The kingdom is divided because of idolatry (11:33-35). We regularly read about what each king did with the "high places" or idols. Did he tear them down, or not? They are judged based upon this important act.

Since a more important question does not exist than, "Whom will you worship?" we see that Kings is most relevant.

Second, regarding *God's Word*, God told the people how to live previously. Much of the content in the first five books of the Bible is referred to in Kings (especially Deuteronomy). They were to live by God's Word, but the kings, and their people fail to do so. In Kings, God raises up prophets, most famously Elijah and Elisha, who perform great wonders, and speak God's word to the people. Later in the book, Josiah recovers the Word and leads a reformation.

Since we too are a people of the book, we need to consider and apply the message of Kings.

Regarding *weakness*, the story of kings shows us that every human leader has limitations. After the monarchy divides, all of the kings of Israel fail. Judah's kingdom is somewhat mixed. After Solomon (who appears to be continuing the power and the glory of Israel through his unparalleled wisdom, only to drift into the folly and the shame of Israel), two kings are exemplary: Hezekiah and Josiah. Six kings of Judah are praised with the qualification that "the high places aren't removed." They are: Asa, Jehosaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Azariah, and Jotham. The others are condemned. It is obvious that another King is needed.

So Kings is a story that involves the sinfulness of kings and the people they represent; their persistent idolatry and associated injustice. It is a story of a sad reversal, and the need for another King, the ultimate Son of David. In Genesis, a promise was made to Abraham saying, "Kings will come from you" (Gen 17:6; cf., 35:11). God kept his promise, and sent forth the king to end all kings, Jesus.

We find topics like political maneuvering, material prosperity, power plays between nations, alliances, violence, injustice, war, international trade, compromised worship, dying children, and many more familiar experiences (Oley, 20). Through it all, we meet God. Judging? Yes, but also dispensing mercy and providentially controlling human history. A God of promise and salvation, whose royal line will ultimately culminate in the ultimate Son of David, Jesus.

Kings speaks to everyone, every church, and every nation that might be going through turmoil. It was in the midst of turmoil, chaos and confusion that Jesus said that the people were "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (9:36). He came to save a rebellious people. And eventually, the God over history will "unite all things in him, things in heaven and on earth" (Eph 1:10).

These three broad applications: worship, Word, and weakness will appear throughout our study.

## **1 Kings 1-2**

Let us jump into the narrative in the opening chapters. Throughout our study, we are going to cover a lot of ground each week. I will look at the text historically, theologically, and practically, making appropriate Christ-centered, gospel saturated connections for us. My plan is to give an overview of a lot of sections (considering sections like verses). I would call what I am going to do each week "sectional exposition" rather than verse-by-verse exposition, since we will

not read every verse, but we will cover every section. We will hit the major units of thought, and try to cover the main theological emphases each week. You will do well to read for yourself, and discuss some more of the pieces in your growth groups.

The dominant idea in the chapter one is on *kingship*. Olley says, “The seventy instances of the noun king or related verb is the most in any chapter of the Bible” (The Message of Kings, 39). Immediately King David is mentioned, and then the big question is, Who will replace David? Will it David act as king? Will Adonijah's conspiracy to be the king work? What will happen to Solomon?

In the first two chapters, I want to raise two questions related to kingship...

### **#1: Who Is the King? (1:1-53)**

As we examine this first chapter, consider the following: (a) A Suffering King, (2) A Self-Appointed King, (c) Servants to the King, and (d) A Sovereignly Appointed King.

#### **A. Suffering King (1-4)**

The story begins with Israel's famous king, David. But all is not well with him. The text says that he is *old* and *cold* (1). They cannot manage to get him warm, and so they opt for another solution. They do a “Miss Israel Beauty Pageant,” and select the stunning Abishag, to care for him, and increase his vitality (2-4). Later, Adonijah will attempt to take her himself (for his own devious reasons). Apparently, she is intended to get David sexually excited (the passage has several sexual overtones “in your arms” [Gen 16:5; 2 Sam 12:8; Micah 7:5]; “knew her not” [Gen 4:1]). Olley reminds us, “This is to be read in the context of a court where the king has a number of wives and concubines (2 Sam 5:13; 15:16)” (41). However, David does not respond to her beauty presumably because he cannot (4).

Chapters 1-2 paint a picture of a suffering king, who no longer has the same physical or political power. David slew giants, killed lions with his hands, and conquered kingdoms, and nurtured sheep. Now he is dying, impotent, and powerless. Perhaps, these things signify *the declining nation itself*.

A few applications emerge. First, *we must face our frailty as well*. At some point, all of us will begin feeling the affects of aging and physical decline. Our bodies will not function properly, and many of us will find ourselves on a deathbed. And we will die, like David, not accomplishing all that we set out to accomplish.

What should you remember in those days? You should remember that your identity is not bound up in what you can do. Your identity is in who God has made you to be in Christ. You are not your gift. Do not let your abilities lead you to pride, and do not let your inabilities, lead you to despair. You are not your accomplishments.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones is one of my heroes. He preached in London for several years, and God used him in his generation mightily, and his work continues to impact people. However, when Lloyd-Jones was dying of cancer, he was unable to do all that he used to do. However, Lloyd-Jones knew that his joy and identity was not bound up in how he could perform. He reflected on the words of Jesus, as he talked to his biographer saying, “Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice in that your names are written in heaven” (Lk 10:20). He then said, “Our greatest danger is to live upon our activity. The ultimate test of a preacher is what he feels like when he cannot preach. Our relationship to God is to be the supreme cause of joy” (Iain H. Murray, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Fight of Faith*, 738). What should give us great joy in our living, and in our dying, is our relationship to God through Christ (cf., 2 Cor 4:16-18).

Do not rejoice ultimately in what you look like, in what you have, or in what you can do, but in the fact that your name is written in heaven.

Another application I see is *the need for transitional plans*. We do not see in David the type of training that Jesus did with his disciples or that Paul did with and taught Timothy (cf., 2 Tim 2:2). As you peak into the next paragraph, notice that David never “displeased Adonijah.” He never disciplined him, as a father must do. He had not trained him, or any other potential leader for the future. Churches and organizations often fall apart because no training of future leaders has taken place. Let this text serve as a reminder to us of the importance of preparing the next generation of leaders, fathers, mothers, and missionaries. We must train and deploy.

## **B. A Self-Appointed King (5-10)**

Whenever succession is needed, emotions tend to rise. Sometimes war and violence occur, and many times manipulative conspiracies are at work. Here, Adonijah tries to make himself king (5). In his pride, and in view of David’s weakness, he tries to appoint himself. Of course, he was next in David’s line. He was the fourth born son. Absalom (the third son) killed Ammon, the oldest son. Absalom was put to death (2 Sam 18:9-17). No one knows what happened to the second, Chileab (2 Sam 3:2). Perhaps, he died young. But David himself was the youngest when selected as king. The oldest has not always had priority. At any rate, Adonijah should have been with his dying father, instead he was up to no good.

Adonijah had several problems, even though on the surface he looks like a king. First, *he “exalted himself”* (5). He has a lust for power and praise. He does the opposite of what the Scriptures teach, namely, to “humble yourself” (cf., 1 Pet 5:5-6), and put others ahead of yourself (Phil 2:3-4). God exalts the humble, but opposes the proud. (cf., Prov 6:16-17). God will sometimes exalt the humble to positions in this life (Ps. 75:6). Ultimately, in the next life, God will exalt those who have humbly served him (cf., Luke 14:11). Adonijah personifies Psalm 49:12: “Man in his pomp will not remain” (cf., 49:20).

He had a “Yearbook Theology.” Do you know what that is? How many of you remember getting a Yearbook in High School? If you were like me, one of the first things you did was immediately go looking for *your* picture. But that was not because you had not already seen it! You probably picked it out. It was already framed and put him in the family’s house. Yet, I went

straight to that picture. I made sure they spelled my name correctly. Then, what next? Sports pictures. I flipped there, and then to the clubs, looking for my pictures. A Yearbook Theology is a self-centered view of life. It's an "It's all about me" spirit. This view of life is lived out by the decisions we make, the way we spend our money, and even the way we read the Bible. We often go to the Bible without any intent on seeing the nature and glory of God, but for other reasons. We need a Yahweh-centered theology instead of a Yearbook Theology, desiring to exalt God instead of self.

Maybe a better example is pop culture. It is a self-absorbed, self-addicted movement. In reality TV, many are famous for no good reason. They are stuck on themselves. The production team follows these individuals around, and teenagers want to be like them, thus perpetuating a self-exalting culture! Find a better model: Jesus. He actually had something to boast in, yet made himself nothing and served others. Then the Father exalted him. He now gives us the power to live out an others-focused life. Adonijah should have been thinking of his dying father, but he was doing what he always did, think about himself.

Second, he *sought his own pleasure* (6). He had always got what he wanted (6a). Added to his spoiled nature was his handsome nature (6b). Here is a spoiled, attractive, self-centered dude - recipe for disaster. Apparently, David never disciplined him because he was busy doing other things, or perhaps because he favored him to the point of not rebuking him. He never used the "purpose driven paddle!" Let this serve as a warning to fathers. Children must be disciplined. We discipline them because we love them, just like the fathers discipline of us. (Prov 3:11-12)

Third, he sought *the wrong counsel*. Verses 7-10 describe how he confers with Joab, and Abathar, instead of Zadok (the priest), Benaiah, or Nathan the prophet. This reminds me of the Proverb, "Whoever walks with the wise will become wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm" (Prov 13:20). He accumulated supporters who would not contradict him. He turned away from the prophet because he wanted to do things his way. We commit this error when we fail to seek counsel from God's Word. When a person is considering marrying an unbeliever, or when one is considering how to spend money without first studying God's Word, they are not living under the authority of Scripture.

Fourth, *he opposed God's King*. He acts as the serpent in this story. He represents the evil one. He tried to become king by the "Serpent's Stone." The word "Zohelath" means "slithering" (Leithart, 37). Because of his serpentine character, Solomon will put him to death. The enemy always opposes God's plan. Solomon later said, "A servant who deals wisely has the king's favor, but his wrath falls on the one who acts shamefully" (Prov 14:35). Adonijah is about to reap the results of shamefully opposing God's king.

We can learn from Adonijah. He teaches us of the need to submit to God's will and God's Word, not to pursue our own self-interest nor listen to those who tell us what we want to hear. Our purpose in life, as the Westminster Confession says is "to glorify God and enjoy him forever." Adonijah has his own confession, "to glorify self, and pursue my own enjoyment." Even though his name means "Yahweh is my Lord," he does not live like it.

We should be aware of Adonijah types in the church, as we remember what true Christian leadership is. In the New Testament, we read of a guy named, Diotrephes “likes to put himself first, [and] does not acknowledge our authority” (3 John 9). Here Adonijah does not respect the leaders God has put in place, and does not seek godly counsel. Instead, he puts himself first.

Biblical leaders have a calling, and they are known for godly character. On the surface, Adonijah is everything one might want. He's gifted and attractive. But leadership is not about giftedness as much as it is about *Christ-likeness*. Let us be careful in appointing people to leadership, considering their life before their ability (cf., 1 Tim 3:1-7).

### **C. Servants of the King (11-27)**

In response to Adonijah's power play, the first of many prophets in Kings appears: Nathan. He is not on the Adonijah bandwagon. In the following verses, we read of Nathan speaking to Bathsheba (11-14), Bathsheba speaking to David (15-21), and then Nathan speaking to David (22-27). [Read]

Nathan is very important in this story. He stirs David to action. He stands in the gap. His first appeal is to Bathsheba. He has spoken to David face to face, but now he takes an indirect approach. Some argue that he has bad motives here, and we certainly want to read Kings without rose colored glasses, but it seems that he wants what is best for the kingdom.

Bathsheba honors the king (16) and reports the situation. We are reminded of what brought her to the court in the first place. David may have been Israel's greatest King but he was not perfect. Yet, God used him despite his failures, just as he continues to use individuals today. Bathsheba is concerned for the kingdom, and understands that if David does not appoint Solomon, then she and her son will be rivals to the throne. She ends by saying, “the eyes of all of Israel are on you” (20). They were looking for an answer. It is David's responsibility to appoint a king.

While she speaks to David, Nathan directly addresses the king in a way that is respectful (22-27). Previously, Nathan told David a parable to get a response, but now he asks a question (27).

We may note how small acts have big consequences. Do not ever underestimate one thing that you do for the kingdom. Jesus said, that if you give a cup of cold water in his name, that you would not lose your reward. Honor the King of Kings, and do what you can for the kingdom. It might be simple conversations with a student or co-worker about the gospel; spending time with a person going through a trial; inviting them to worship service or small group; caring for a single mom; opening up your home for others showing kingdom hospitality (cf., Luke 14:12-14); forgiving a brother or sister; supporting missionaries. Nothing is insignificant when it is done for the glory of King Jesus. Matthew Henry said, “Whatever power, interest, or influence, men have – they ought to improve it to the utmost for the preserving and advancing of the kingdom of the Messiah” (Vol 2).

#### **D. A Sovereignly Appointed King (28-53)**

Following this dialogue, David answers, and makes Solomon the king (28-37). “She who initially had become the object of David’s lust, and whose husband had been a pawn to a sacrifice, is now the recipient of the words that guaranteed here safety and the safety of her son” (Olley, 45). We see grace here. David is leading in his weakness.

David acknowledges that while he is the Lord's anointed, he himself is not the Lord. He invokes the name of the Lord, showing that he is submissive to the Lord. He also acknowledges that the Lord delivers from "adversity" (29), implying that God has intervened in this crisis.

Next, we see the crowning of Solomon (32-40). David tells the trio, Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah to put Solomon on the king's mule, and bring him to Gihon (33). This was to mark Solomon as the favored son, and was also a symbol of kingship (cf., Zech 9:9, Matt 21:1-11). He also tells them to anoint Solomon as King and blow the trumpet (34). In verses 38-40, they fulfill the king's commands, and as a result a party happens (40). The writer says, “the earth was split by their noise” (40b).

Once Solomon is declared King, Adonijah gets the news (41-45). Jonathan the priest quickly pledges allegiance to David, calling him “our lord.” He reports, “Solomon sits on the royal throne” (46-48). As a result of the news, “all of the guests of Adonijah tremble, and each went his own way” (49). Adonijah goes to the altar, as a holy place, believing it will protect him from Solomon (invoking Ex 21:12-14?). Solomon says, that if he will show himself worthy, then, he will not put him to death.” Verse 53 says that Adonijah submits to Solomon, though one wonders if this is just out outer expression. Is he truly paying homage to the king?

This account makes us think of David’s greater son, Jesus. It calls to our attention Palm Sunday. Jesus would ride into the city on a donkey. The people would shout “Hosanna.” He was the rightful king, who dispensed mercy, not to those who are worthy, but to every unworthy person who bows the knee to his lordship. One day, Paul says, "every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." What a merciful King, we have in Jesus. His throne is greater than throne of David or Solomon. His name is more famous than that of David or Solomon. Jesus said, “Something greater than Solomon is here.”

Submit to his kingship with gladness. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom (cf., 1 Tim 1:17).

Submit to his kingship sincerely. Do not just mouth pious words. Jesus said on the last day, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt 7:21) He will say to them, “I never knew

you” (23). Do not just make a decision because others are doing it, and do not trust in some ritual that is empty if meaning. Repent and turn to the King in surrender.

## **#2: What is the King to Do? (2:1-46)**

Final words are important words. In David’s final words, he gives Solomon a spiritual charge” urging him to obey God's Word (2:1-4). These final words remind us of Moses’ instruction for Israel’s king (Deut 17:14-20) and remind us of his charge to Joshua (Josh 1:6-9). They are also reminiscent of the blessed man of Psalm 1. Solomon is to walk in the law of the Lord, to mediate on it, and experience blessing.

David also gives Solomon a “political charge.” He tells Solomon about what he should do with the threats to the kingdom (5-9). This advice is carried out in verses 13-46. I will focus most of my attention on verses 1-4.

We might break down the spiritual charge and political charge by simply saying that the king is to *keep the covenant*, and the king is to *reign*. With both of these, we see that Solomon is to be vigilant, not passive.

### **A. Keep the Covenant (1-4)**

As David is dying he issues his command to Solomon. (Note the writers' choice of words, “When David's time to die drew near.” The Psalmist said, “Our times are in his hands” [Ps 31:15]). He tells his son to “be strong” (c.f., 2 Tim 2:1, Eph 6:10) and “be a man” (c.f., 1 Cor 16:13). We might expect a father to say something like that. Whenever, I go out of town, sometimes I say to my oldest son, “Be the man of the house.” But what makes a man? Physical strength? Career success? Sexual conquest? Political power? Belonging to the Million Miler club? Athletic dominance? (Bo Jackson, Bow Knows, dominate on Tecmo Bowl - gone in one injury).

No. If these are the only things we live for, we are wasting our lives as men. David gives us a very simply understanding of godly manhood: obedience to God's Word. The Word makes a man.

David tells his son/king that he is to walk in God's ways, which are put forth in the statutes, commandments, rules, testimonies, in the Law of Moses. These words emphasize the totality of God's Word.

There is nothing wrong with having ambition in the world of business, sports, the academy, and other vocational efforts. But God's Word puts these pursuits of proper perspective. They help us understand them.

For Solomon, he was a king. Yet, his kingship was founded on God’s Word. He was to rule differently than others. He was not a law unto himself. He was to keep God's law.



The benefit of following God's Word is clear in the end of verse 3, "that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you turn." While God would continue to be faithful to David's line because of his promise (2 Sam 7:14-16), Solomon would not enjoy the blessing if he did not follow God's Word.

The same is true for us. We are blessed when we walk in God's word (Ps 1). This does not mean that we will never suffer. It means that we will experience blessing in a variety of ways. Jesus said, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (24). Jesus says that those who know him will bear fruit. Those individuals are wise. They enjoy the blessing of having a firm foundation, even when the floods come.

In verse 4, David mentions to Solomon a double-blessing for obeying God's Word. He says not only will he have personal blessing, but he will also have a *perpetual dynasty*. Solomon was David's son, and God promised David an everlasting kingdom. The continuity of the dynasty depended on obedience to God's Word. On the one hand, this was clearly a conditional promise. (Ps 132:11-12)

But God made other promises that were unconditional (2 Sam 7:16). So, which kind of promise was it? Conditional or unconditional? This is a tension raised in the Old Testament. But Jesus Christ resolves the tension.

Solomon, like his father, and like the other kings, would fail. They couldn't keep the law perfectly. Yet, God would keep his promise of preserving the kingdom. And eventually, One would keep the law perfectly. Christ came down, keeping the law perfectly. God kept his promise; Christ the King, kept the covenant.

God's promises to David were both conditional and unconditional. Conditional, in that the king had to live out the demands, but unconditional, in that God stated that wrong doing on the part of David's successors would not lead to the end of the dynasty. The kingdom came on the King's obedience, and by God's own promise. God's promise never failed, and God's ultimate King never did either. This is why we bow down to Jesus, and why we call him "King of Kings." (Insanity - "I earned it." Only Jesus earned it).

Build your life on the Word of God, and worship the hero of the Word: Jesus. What a King we have! Sin is our attempt to make ourselves king; salvation is Christ, the King substituting himself for his servants. He lived the life we could not live, and died the death we should have died. Now, he is the risen and reigning exalted Lord. Glorify and enjoy him.

## **B. Reign (5-46)**

David then gives Solomon instructions about two enemies of the kingdom, and one friend, as he prepares Solomon to reign. Apparently, David thinks Joab is too dangerous to be allowed to live once David is gone, and orders for him to be eliminated. Joab had long served as

the commander of David's army, but he occasionally tried to pursue his own agenda, and there was blood on his hands from his actions against Abner (2 Sam 2:18-23; 3:1-39), and Amasa (2 Sam 20:1-10, 20:23). Joab was dangerous. One can only wonder why David never brought him to justice earlier.

David also gives orders regarding Shimei the pro-Saul Benjaminite, who cursed David and threw stones at him previously (2 Sam 16:5-14). Later Shimei regretted what he had done and asked for mercy, and the king granted it, promising not to put him to death "today" (2 Sam 19:18-23). He admits that he swore that he would not kill him on that day, yet he encourages Solomon to "bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol" (9). Perhaps he was saying that Solomon was not bound to this promise as David was.

Twice, he mentions Solomon's "wisdom" (6, 9). He will receive more wisdom in the following story.

Some wonder about this counsel. Was this brutal? Was David acting like the Godfather, killing off all of the rivals to secure one's own power?! Is this an example of failure on part of David? Should he have let these men go?

We have to remember that these were kings; it was their job to render justice. Further, they were divinely anointed kings, and "any assault against his royal person was tantamount to an attack against the kingdom of God" (eg., 1 Sam 24:6). Their opposition was no small thing.

In between these two acts, is a story of kindness. David instructs Solomon to reward old friends. Barzillai provided bread and supplies when David ran from Absalom (2 Sam 17:27-29). He was loyal to the King, and made personal sacrifice for the kingdom.

In verses 10-12, we see the death of David mentioned. He slept with his fathers, and he reigned for forty years. His reign was the greatest of Israel's history. He was buried in the city he built. Later, other kings will be judged in light of David. Then the succession is noted in verse 12, "Solomon's reign is firmly established." It is noted again at the end of the chapter, "So the kingdom was firmly established in the hands of Solomon" (46). God is keeping his promises. Ultimately, the Psalmist said, "The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all" (Ps 103:19). God is the ruler of all, and he allows us the happy and holy privilege of embracing his rule.

David's death points forward to the need for another King. Peter would preach at Pentecost and declare that David was "buried, and his tomb is with us to this day" but Jesus, the Holy One, would not see corruption (Acts 2:22-36). Jesus would rise from the dead, as the ultimate King.

Let me summarize verses 13-46. Here, Solomon acts according to David's instructions. He deals with the enemies his father mentioned and with other threats. In verses 13-25, *Adonijah* is executed after he makes another play on the kingdom by trying to obtain Abishag. Being with the king's concubine amounted to a claim on the throne (though she may not have technically

been a concubine, she did attend to the king, cf., 2 Sam 16:20-22). Solomon interprets it as a wicked conspiracy. Then we read about his associates. *Abaithar* is banished from office (26-27); *Joab* is executed because he is still in cahoots with Adonijah, and because David wanted him executed (31-34). In verse 35, Solomon then replaces *Abaithar* and *Joab* with *Zadok* and *Benaiah*. As for *Shimei*, he is confined to Jerusalem, and threatened if he ever leaves (36-38). He did not follow this warning and was put to death (46).

The writer simply tells this story without saying if all of these actions were necessary or condoned. Motives are not commented on either. What he can say is that Solomon is the king, and these rivals have been eliminated. I think Solomon is acting justly, though I understand the concern over these actions. As mentioned, these threats were serious. Adonijah was told that he would not die if he did not act wickedly (1:52), but he did act wickedly; Joab should have been dealt with earlier; Shimei acts foolishly not obeying orders.

One thing is certain, God knows. The writer of Proverbs said, "All the ways of man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit" (Prov 16:2). The King of all the earth will judge perfectly. Throughout the Psalms we read of God's justice: "For the Lord, the Most High, is to be feared, a great King over all the earth" (Ps 47:2); "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness" (45:6); "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne" (89:14).

Perhaps this is a story of mixed motives, like much our lives. This does not justify unjust actions, but is only intended to once again highlight human weakness in leadership and the need for a perfectly just King and a better kingdom. Thankfully, God by his grace, made good on his promise, and gave us the Ruler we need in Jesus. Now, on this side of things, we understand of course, that zeal for the kingdom today does not mean taking lives, but giving up our lives for the good of others and the glory of God. And we know, that one day we will give an account to this King.

### **Who is Your King?**

While we know the rest of Kings tells the story of decline, another King would eventually reign. Is he, Jesus, your King? We have already noted the superiority of the kingship of Jesus. He is the perfectly righteous, infinitely wise King. He is majestic, merciful, and eternal. Paul exalted Christ saying that he "is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone dwells in immortality.... To him be honor and eternal dominion" (1 Tim 1:15-16). Bow to this one who has invited you to his table. Submit to him. Love him. Trust him. For he has come, as Isaiah and others promised:

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of his government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.  
(Isaiah 9:6-7 ESV)