

I Will Make You a House

I Kings 1:1-53

Today we are going to begin a new study of I and II Kings.
These books describe the decline of Israel.
And, in particular, they catalogue the failure of the Davidic monarchy.

As an optimist, I tend to enjoy reading I and II Samuel. These books describe the rise of the Davidic monarchy.
But God has given to us the failure of the Davidic Monarchy to help us in our faith today.

I and II Kings were written more than 2,500 years ago, to a people living on the other side of the planet. That means that we should expect many differences in the way that they think about life. And yet, the Israel of old is joined together with the Church of today.

I and II Kings are more than history books. They are written with a theological purpose. And the goal is always to encourage your faith and obedience to Jesus Christ.

As I preach through Kings, I would encourage you to do your own study. Begin in Samuel and read all the way through all four books.
Get yourself a notebook. Write down your observations and questions. If nothing else, you can use these notes as you talk amidst yourselves. So often, people tell me that they had a question, but that they cannot remember what it was. If you take the time to write them down, you will have them.

I am going to tell you what I believe to be the theological purpose for I and II Kings.
At this point, you are going to have to trust me.
But as we get into our study, you will have to decide for yourself if you agree with me.

I believe the theological purpose of I and II Kings was to prevent struggling believers from abandoning their God.

Why do I say this?

Because in these books, the most important reasons that made one proud to be an Israelite were being stripped away.

In America, we are proud of our freedoms.
We love our freedom of speech.
We love our freedom to choose our representatives in free elections.
We love our freedom to choose what sort of career we would like to have, or where we will live.
We love our freedom to worship our God.

Our freedoms are usually what defines us as Americans. They are what makes us proud to be Americans. If you strip away our freedoms, it is easy to become discouraged and to wonder, "What is the point of being an American?"

Ancient Israel was not built upon freedom like America.
But they did have reasons for being proud to be Israelites.
And these reasons were all being stripped away.

Each of these reasons were joined together with promises that God had made to His people. (Four "P"s)

God had promised His people **protection**. The greatest symbol of this protection was the city of Jerusalem, with its strong walls.

God had also promised His people **prosperity**. The symbol of prosperity was the fruitfulness of the Land. (Peace and Rest)

God had also promised a **person** who would rule over His people in righteousness. This person would provide justice for all. That is something that we hold dear as Americans.

But most important of all, God had promised His **presence**. He had promised to dwell with His people. This was most tangibly seen in the Temple, which replaced the Tabernacle.

Each of these together were the ingredients that would produce God's rich blessing upon God's people.

What made an Israelite proud to be an Israelite was their belief that their God would provide rich blessing.

But in the books of Kings, each of these pillars would be shaken to the core.
The glorious hopes for the people of Israel had come to a crashing halt.
The promises given to Abraham and to Moses and to David were crumbling.
The Israelites found themselves without a homeland, without a Temple, without a king, and without prosperity. They were slaves in Babylon.
Who would not question whether there were any true benefits to following Yahweh.

The books of Kings were written to breathe hope into a floundering people's faith.
They were written during the early years of the Exile of Judah into Babylon.

Imagine being one of those exiles.
The promises of God to establish his kingdom had been building for more than a thousand years. God had called Abraham around 2,000 BC. God had sent Moses to redeem His people out of Egypt around 1,500 BC. God had raised up David around

1,000 BC. And He promised to build a house for David – to give David a dynasty who would rule over a kingdom of righteousness and blessing.

Now, some 400 years later, you have watched a son of David being taken captive into Babylon. The walls of the city of David were in ruins. And the Temple was destroyed.

All the previous victories now seem empty.

What was the point of David defeating Goliath if it would end like this?

What was the point of David conquering Jerusalem if it would only fall in the end?

And why did Solomon build the temple? What good has it done, having this house of God in Jerusalem?

What is the point of everything that has gone on?

Have we fooled ourselves into thinking that Yahweh was the only true God?

So yes, the people living in Exile were questioning everything about their faith.

The hard truth is that many of them would abandon their faith and embrace the religion of the Babylonians.

As a pastor, ministering to people in the 21st Century, my ears perk up when I hear that. Many, if not all of us, know people who have abandoned the Christian faith. For one reason or another, they no longer have confidence that Jesus is the answer to their problems.

And, if we are honest, the faith of many who are sitting here today is not always as strong as we would like. The fact that God inspired the Book of Kings to be written tells me that He understands when our faith is weak. And He is active in speaking to us through His Word to strengthen our faith.

The Apostle Paul tells us that the purpose of the Book of Kings is really the purpose of every OT book.

Romans 15:4 ⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

The connection between the past and the present is the common struggle with discouragement. When we are discouraged, we are tempted to abandon our faith in Christ and trust in the gods of this world to give us happiness.

God's Word tells us that the promise of eternal life is found only in Him, and in His Son – Jesus Christ.

And even when everywhere you look, you see reasons for discouragement, you can trust God's Word of promise.

When every reason for following Christ seems to be collapsing, it is the Word of God that will never fail you.

This is the point that Kings will make over and over again. You can trust my Word. My Word will never fail.

Let's look at the text.

I Kings begins with David as an old man.

"King David was old and *advanced in years*."

When the writer chose the phrase "advanced in years", he was being very purposeful.

2 Samuel 7:11-12 Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹² When your *days are fulfilled* and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

The idea of being "fulfilled" gives a sense of completion.

But "advanced in years" simply means old.

It does not give the same sense of completion.

The writer wants us to know that David has more to do.

Compare this with the parallel passage in I Chronicles written a hundred years after Kings, when Israel had returned to the Land.

1 Chronicles 23:1 When David was old and *full of days*, he made Solomon his son king over Israel.

So, right from the beginning, we are given a clue that everything is not well as David comes to the end of his life.

Instead of a smooth transition from reign of father to son, we see Solomon's coronation in jeopardy. And instead of David having the strength to "make Solomon king over Israel" we find David weak, and unable to keep himself warm.

The days of David are not full. David is just old... and weak.

David has been the source of confidence for God's people. He is sort of like our George Washington.

But instead of a paragon of strength, David is weak.

What do you do when the one upon whom you have relied for so long is too weak to help you?

What do you do when your own strength is gone?

Where do you look for help, then?

Read I Kings 1:1-4.

Up until this point, David has been the hero. Even with his failures, he has been a man after God's own heart. He has walked by faith. He has listened to God's Word.

Which is why, when we come to the opening verses of I Kings, we are discouraged to find an unflattering picture of David in his old age.

This is not a story about David's sinfulness. It is a story about David's weakness.

And seeing the weakness of your hero can shake you to your core. When I was 36 years old, playing basketball, I ruptured my ACL and did significant damage to my meniscus. I am not setting myself up as a hero, except in the mind of a 7 year old boy, my son Michael.

I will never forget the look on his face when he saw me the day after my surgery, lying in bed with my leg in a machine. To a seven-year-old boy, dad was the model of strength and security. Here I was looking frail and helpless.

As we begin the book of Kings, we see David weak. This is intentional.

The one who killed Goliath, the one who had slain his ten thousands... could not keep himself warm.

The writer is making a theological point. You simply need to know that it was purposeful to present David in such a weakened condition.

Theologically, David can no longer be the pillar of strength who would deliver God's people. Your faith must not depend upon the strength of any man.

David is so weak that he must be helped by a young woman, Abishag the Shunammite. She serves as an electric blanket.

The fact that David does not know Abishag, that means "have sex with her", subtly tells how very weak he was.

David's weakness creates a power vacuum. And into that vacuum comes Adonijah. Adonijah is the oldest living son of David.

And he believes that he should be the next king of Israel.

As readers, we are to see Adonijah as a rival to God's chosen king – Solomon.

We are to fear that Solomon will be cut off.
We are to feel the drama of God's promises possibly failing to come to pass.
David is weak. His weakness may result in the failure of God's promise to give the throne to Solomon.

How often do we think that the fulfillment of the promises of God depend upon our strength?
If we are not strong enough, then God's promises will not come to pass.

What is more, Adonijah is presented to us as the "strong one".

1 Kings 1:5 ⁵ Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.

Adonijah is seeking to become king by his own might. He is exalting himself through his own wisdom and strength.

On the other hand, Solomon was way down the line of potential heirs.
Humanly speaking, by mere appearances, it would NOT have been obvious that Solomon should be the one to succeed David.

Adonijah had a better resume.
Adonijah was a good son of which his dad was pleased.
Adonijah was handsome, like his dad.
He was next in line for the throne.
If you wanted the best man for the job of leading Israel, you would probably have cast your vote for Adonijah.

Some of David's most trusted leaders abandoned David and gave their support to Adonijah.

One was Joab, the leader of the army, and formerly David's right-hand man.
Another was Abiathar – the high priest who had been with David from the beginning.
I have my own questions about Joab. But the defection of Abiathar would have been a huge blow.

Why would these men give their support Adonijah?
Because they saw Adonijah as strong, a natural leader.
And in politics, you look for human strength.
Only God's kingdom is not built upon human strength.
The promises of God do not depend on human strength.

Not everyone gave their support to Adonijah.

Look at v. 8, “BUT” Zadok the priest, and Benaiah (one of David’s mighty men and an army commander), and Nathan (the PROPHET), and some others... were not with Adonijah.

This is important theologically.

The army is divided.

The priesthood is divided.

But God’s chosen prophet is clearly on the side of Solomon.

And one thing you can trust in the book of Kings is the Word of God coming through God’s true prophets!!!!

Adonijah goes through the motions of garnering his support.

He is ready to make a power grab for the throne.

When the text tells us that he is “exalting himself”, we are to understand that he has not received any word from God through the prophets that he is to be king.

The fact that he offers sacrifices by “the Serpent’s Stone” is suspicious. We can only guess that this is included to remind us of the Serpent in Garden that is bent on destroying God’s true Messiah.

Look at verse 11, who puts a wrench in Adonijah’s plans?

Nathan, the true prophet of God.

At this point, Nathan has not received supernatural insight into Adonijah’s plan.

Somehow, he is “providentially” made aware of it.

Nathan’s concern is that David, in his weakness, does not know of the plans of Adonijah.

Just as we think that God’s promises depend upon human strength, so we also think that God’s promises depend upon our being smart enough to anticipate and deal with every problem in life.

And yet, David is disturbingly clueless.

If the fulfillment of God’s promises depended upon the strength and knowledge of David, those promises are in trouble.

At this point, Nathan does not go directly to David. Instead, he goes to Bathsheba, Solomon’s mom. Nathan, the one who had earlier confronted David of his sin with Bathsheba, now approaches Bathsheba to speak wisdom to David.

The story drips with irony.

Bathsheba and Solomon are reminders of David’s greatest failure. And yet, God chooses them to bring about His promises.

In the world of politics, you would have paid lots of money to have hidden the whole story of Bathsheba. But God's ways are not the ways of the world.

Is it not wonderful that the blessing does not depend upon our perfection? It is through Bathsheba that God chooses an heir to succeed David.

The first step in his plan is for Bathsheba to remind David of his sworn oath to appoint Solomon as his heir. While she is doing this, Nathan will "just happen" to stop by. He will confirm to David, "O yeah, I remember you saying that, David!"

The author inserts a bit of irony in the story, in verse 15, by telling us that Abishag was present with David when Bathsheba visits him.

Can we say "awkward"?

For some unknown reason, we are led to think that David's loyalty and devotion to Bathsheba is not what it once was.

Bathsheba does not seem to be concerned with jealousy.

She is concerned with getting her son to be king.

She reminds David that it was not only his sworn oath to Solomon to make him king, but also that David was following the word of the LORD to make Solomon king.

The question for the reader is this: Will God's Word to David that Solomon would be king fail?

Will the intrigues of men thwart the plan of God?

In verse 18, Bathsheba speaks so boldly that you might think that it would anger David.

"David, are you even aware that Adonijah is proclaiming himself king?"

"How can you be so blind?"

She tells him all that Adonijah is doing.

And then she challenges him to do something about it.

The "eyes of all Israel" are on you.

If you do not make Solomon king, he and I will become criminals under the reign of Adonijah.

At this time, Nathan walks in and confirms to David all that Adonijah is doing to take the throne. He lets David know that he and Zadok and Benaiah have not joined this conspiracy.

The ball is now in the court of David. But David is not the warrior that he once was. Will he have strength for this battle?

The importance of Nathan as the prophet of God is easily missed.

God uses Nathan to reignite in David a zeal to carry out the will of God.
This is theologically at the center of this first scene.

David is weak physically.
The believers living in Exile are weak spiritually.
That which revives David, will also revive the Exiles.
What is it that revives David?
The Word of the LORD coming through the true prophet of the LORD.

At this time, Nathan is not bringing a new word from the LORD. He is simply reminding David of the Word previously spoken by the LORD.

The renewed strength in David is almost shocking!
The king who was unable to keep himself warm is now asserting himself in his duties as the reigning king.

In vv. 28-31, David calls Bathsheba to his side and reassures her personally of his commitment to make Solomon king. More importantly, he affirms to her that it is God's will to make Solomon king.

Bathsheba is so taken aback by the transformation in David that she cries out in verse 31, "May my lord king David live forever!" She certainly is affirming her own devotion to David as king.

Next, David calls in his other allies: Zadok the priest and Benaiah the warrior.

David institutes his own plan to appoint Solomon as king. Probably the most significant difference between David's plan and Adonijah's plan is the importance of Solomon being anointed by both Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet. (v. 34)

The prophet Samuel anointed David to be king.
It is easy to miss the author's clear intention to place the ministry of the prophet at the center of the story.

But for the exiles who have lost their king, who no longer have a holy city, and who no longer have a visible temple, what do they still have to strengthen their faith?

They have the ministry of the prophets declaring to them the Word of God.
It is the Word, and the Word of God alone, that strengthens our faith in times of discouragement.

It is also important in the story to see that loyalty to God's anointed king is more important than being pragmatic.

We see this in Benaiah. He continues to trust that God had made promises to David. His loyalty to David is in direct contrast to the defection of Joab.

Joab had abandoned David, no longer believing that David had the strength to reign. Joab is a very complex character. But in the end, Joab is more committed to a strong kingdom than he is to God's promised kingdom.

In contrast, Benaiah continues to trust in God working through his anointed son, David.

1 Kings 1:36-37 ³⁶ And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, "Amen! May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, say so. ³⁷ As the LORD has been with my lord the king, even so may he be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David."

Notice that Benaiah is not looking for a great man. He is trusting in the LORD to make His chosen man great.

Even as they were languishing in Exile, God's Word is encouraging His people to wait upon God to provide an anointed son of David to fulfill his promised blessing. He is encouraging them to not abandon their hope. They do not need human greatness. They need God to work to make normal men great.

Today, we know that the anointed Son of David is Jesus Christ. Even in a day where many are abandoning Christ, we are to remain loyal to Christ. There is no question of the greatness of Jesus' character. But while He walked the earth, he did not possess the qualities of human greatness. He came in weakness, even to the point of death, therefore God exalted Him to the highest place.

We are to emulate Benaiah in his loyalty to God's chosen servant. We are to continue believing in Jesus even when many are mocking Him.

As the plan is carried out, the people go wild. They are happy to have Solomon as king. And through this entire scene, Solomon is only a pawn in the play. He is not exalting himself. He is being exalted.

But take notice, other than maybe Nathan, there is not a clear hero in the story. There is not some glorious miracle that Solomon performs to win his throne. Instead, it is the hand of providence alone that brings about success.

This too would encourage the exiles. They could trust the hand of providence even while they lived in Babylon.

Now we come to the reaction of Adonijah and his allies in vv. 41-48.

When they hear the shocking news, they are afraid. They know that seeking to make Adonijah king could mean the death of them all as traitors.

Adonijah is so frightened that he “takes hold of the horns of the altar”. At the four corners of the altar were horns.

We are not sure how the tradition developed, but taking hold of these horns was a way of seeking the protection of the LORD Himself.

How will Solomon respond to Adonijah’s plea for mercy?

It basically boils down to this. If Adonijah will be loyal to Solomon from here on out, he will be allowed to live. If he attempts another coup, he will be put to death.

Solomon then mercifully places him under house arrest.

And so, the first scene of the Book of Kings comes to an end.

Lessons:

1. The kingdom blessing depends upon the strength of God alone.

David is old and weak.

The exiles have no strength to redeem themselves.

If the promises of blessing depend upon the strength of men, all hope is lost.

2. The Word of God, coming through the Prophet, can be trusted.

God wants us to live by faith. He wants us to trust His voice given to us in the Bible.

It is our faith in His written word that most pleases Him.

The glory of the Christian faith is that God’s promises can be trusted even in the worst of times.

3. God’s strength alone has made Jesus king.

Just as God made certain that Solomon would be king, so He has anointed Jesus to be installed at His right hand.

We must constantly remind ourselves that Jesus’ ascension to the throne did not come about by our strength, or wisdom, but only by the sovereign hand of providence.

4. We are called to remain loyal to Jesus.

Nathan, Bathsheba, Benaiah, Zadok... are all affirmed in the story because they remained loyal to God’s chosen king: David, and then Solomon.

David and Solomon are only foreshadows of Jesus Christ.

We must remain loyal to Jesus, even when it might appear that someone else is better qualified to provide the happiness we want.

The world is full of promises.
Politicians will make all sorts of promises to you during this election cycle.
Advertisers are constantly making promises to you.
Friends make promises to you.
Employers make promises to you.

But your loyalty and devotion belong to Jesus.

You worship Jesus.
You pray to Jesus.
You submit your heart to Jesus.

Why?

Because you believe that it is He alone who can give to you the promised blessing for which your heart yearns.

The exiles were living in dark times.
They were tempted to abandon their God along with His covenant promises.
It was only their continued confidence in the Word of God that would hold them fast.

5. The hand of providence continues to work today.

Throughout chapter 1, we are not given any direct appearance of God.
And yet, His hand is everywhere present.
And it is His sovereign hand that drives the entire story.
God is not looking for heroes.
His grace and His providence are in the business of making heroes.

If David had been a hero, it was because God had made him a hero.
And when David had no strength of his own to be a hero in our story, the hand of providence, working through the encouragement of God's Word, lifted David up again.

In the days of David's strength, he wanted to build a house for God.
But in the days of David's weakness, God continued to build a house for David.

God is continuing to build a house for David.
Jesus is the king over David's house.
And all who give their loyalty to Jesus will experience the rich blessings of living in that house.

The world will think you are foolish to continue trusting in Jesus.
They will tell you that Christianity is only a human religion founded on human promises.
Nothing could be further from the truth.
All God's promises are yes and amen in Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Romans 15:13 ¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.