

That The LORD May Establish His Word

I Kings 2:1-46

Chapter two is all about the establishment of the Kingdom of Solomon.

In verse 12, we read “So Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established.”

And then in verse 46, we read, “So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.”

The hand of God has raised Solomon to the throne and has “established” him in that position.

That means that God is the one who brought his kingdom into being. And it means that God is the One who ensures the ongoing existence of the Solomon’s reign.

The kingdom is not teetering. It has a solid foundation and will endure.

But you know, and the original hearers knew, of the decline of the kingdom of David and Solomon. In truth, we are wondering if the kingdom promised to David is indeed secure. Is it as firmly established as we had first thought?

Is it not true that the security and welfare of the kingdom is only as good as the king who sits on the throne?

Has the rebellion of the king undone what was once “firmly established”?
Has the failure of David’s sons ripped the tree up by its roots so that there is no hope of it ever growing strong and tall?

These are the “big picture” questions pestering the hearts of God’s people living in Exile.

And they arise because God had made covenant promises to David.
Listen carefully to the wording of God’s promise to David.

2 Samuel 7:12-16 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. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, ¹⁵ but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.

God commits to David to “raise up” David’s offspring (initially this is Solomon) when David dies.

And God commits to “establish his kingdom.”

God also says that this offspring (initially Solomon) will build a house for the LORD. In the immediate context, He is referring to the Temple that Solomon will build.

God also says that He will establish the throne of Solomon’s kingdom forever. God will be to Solomon a father. And God will consider Solomon His son.

The privilege of being a son that matters most in this context is the fact that when the son rebels, the father does not just cast him off. Instead, the father disciplines his son while maintaining steadfast love for him.

God stubbornly refuses to quit loving him.

And then, God makes a promise that would have been so difficult to understand how it could ever come to pass.

16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."

God promises to establish David’s kingdom forever. Even in the face of the stubborn rebellion of David’s offspring.

The certainty of this kingdom coming into existence, and then enduring forever, is absolutely guaranteed.

The Exiles are questioning whether this promise has somehow been annulled. They are living in a land far away from the Promised Land. You might even say that they find themselves all the way back at the beginning. They are living in the land where Abraham lived, where God had called him from some 1,500 years before.

The purpose of the author is to rebuild his hearers confidence that God’s promise will indeed still come true.

If Israel can be compared to a tree, he is trying to rebuild hope that the tree has not been ripped from the ground by its roots.

It may have been cut down close to the ground. But that does not mean that God is finished with her. God has promised to establish the kingdom of David forever. And the Israelites, but continue to hope that God will be faithful to his word.

At the same time, the author wants his hearers to have some concept of what this kingdom will be like when it comes.

The reign of Solomon, more than any other, is portrayed as the ideal kingdom.

Chapters 2-10 paint a picture of the ideal.

If you are going to have hope even in the darkest times, you must be able to imagine what the good times will be like.

And you must believe that God has not forgotten His promise to bring about these good times.

The author presents Solomon and his kingdom as the ideal.

Eventually, the author will also lead us to the place where Solomon fails us, and his kingdom comes crashing down.

But for the next several chapters, Solomon and his kingdom are presented as almost perfect.

The key word is “almost”. Every so often there will be little hints that the kingdom of Solomon may not be as perfect as we had hoped.

We ended chapter 1 with Solomon being made king.

Now that Solomon is king, how will he make his hold over the kingdom secure? The answer is that he will have to eliminate enemies and reward those loyal to him.

Chapter 1 ends with Adonijah, David’s older brother who sought to be king, being put under a sort of “house arrest”. Some time has elapsed.

David again comes to the place where he believes himself to be close to death. David gives Solomon his final advice, not just as father to son, but as one king to his successor.

It is ironic, David, who was so weak that he could not keep himself warm, tells Solomon to be strong. But David’s charge is the right charge for anyone who is given such a heavy weight of responsibility.

Moses charged Joshua with almost the same words.

Joshua 1:6-7 ⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.

Joshua needed strength and courage to lead God’s people into the Promised Land.

Solomon, as king of God's people, would also need strength and courage to lead God's people.

Only the needed strength would not primarily be physical. It would be the inner strength and courage of character to uphold God's commands, to remain loyal to Yahweh.

The King had the heavy burden of leading God's people in the way of righteousness. Not only must he seek to live according to the law. He must also rule according to that law. The people's blessing, and the blessing of the nations, depends upon him.

David has felt this weight. And now he wants Solomon to feel this burden as well.

walking in his ways...

as it is written in the Law of Moses...

4 **that the LORD may establish his word
that he spoke concerning me,**

saying,

'If your sons pay close attention to their way,
to walk before me in faithfulness
with all their heart
and
with all their soul,
you shall not lack a man
on the throne of Israel.'

The end of this charge includes the wording of the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7. If each king, in the line of the sons of David, will indeed follow God's laws, then the Davidic dynasty will continue forever.

The king should feel a deep responsibility to shepherd God's people in the way of the LORD. For a king to abandon this responsibility would mean his own doom. God would not tolerate forever a rebellious king.

Just as Solomon cannot tolerate people in his kingdom who are seeking his demise, so the LORD cannot forever tolerate a king who opposes the ways and statutes of the LORD, who is the High King over His people.

At this point, I want to caution you as a reader of the story.

You should not hear David's charge to Solomon and immediately personalize it to yourself.

Of course, it is right to want to be strong and courageous. And it is right to want to keep God's law.

But the weight of kingdom does not depend upon you, or your obedience.

You are not the king of Israel. You are a citizen of that kingdom.

You need a strong king, a righteous king who is obedient to the Law, who will lead you in the way of righteousness, and who will bring to you the blessing of the LORD.

Solomon, as king over Israel is a foreshadow of Jesus is our Mediator.
As our Mediator, he is Prophet, Priest, and King.
We do pretty well thinking of Jesus as Prophet and Priest.
But we need to do better in thinking of Him as King.

So, rather than immediately hearing the charge of David and applying it directly to yourself, picture yourself living in a monarchy. And think of how helpless you would be to ever know God's blessing without having a good king.

As we go through the book of Kings, we are to feel the frustration of the people as each king fell short of his duty.

You are not to think, "It really does not matter what the king does. I can walk with God on my own."

Instead, you are to think, "My personal blessing is dependent upon the obedience and rule of a godly king."

It is also important to know that just as David "charges" Solomon, he also pleads with God to give Solomon the grace necessary to be a good king.

1 Chronicles 29:19 ¹⁹ Grant to Solomon my son a whole heart that he may keep your commandments, your testimonies, and your statutes, performing all, and that he may build the palace for which I have made provision."

Eventually, we will see that Solomon failed to keep his charge.
But more than seeing Solomon's failure, we can also ask, "Has God failed to answer David's prayer?"

This is the real question.
God has made promises to David.
David has asked God to fulfill those promises.
Will God keep His promises?
Will God answer David's prayers?

David's charge is foundational to the rest of the book of Kings.
He is speaking it to Solomon, but he just as well could have recorded it and had it replayed for every king who would come after Solomon.

Now, we are roughly half way through the sermon and we have only dealt with 4 out of 46 verses. We still have a lot of ground to cover.

The theme of the rest of the chapter is punishments and rewards.
And knowing who to punish and who to reward is not always easy.

David begins with Joab.

Solomon is very aware of Joab, and his disloyalty to David.

If you have read I and II Samuel, you know that Joab is a complex character who has been David's army commander for many years.

The two primary acts of disloyalty surrounded Joab's killing of two men.

Abner and Amasa.

Both men held the same position as Joab – commander of the army of Israel. For reasons we will see, Joab killed these men against David's wishes.

Joab took matters into his own hands and murdered them.

Abner was the commander of the army under King Saul.

When David killed Goliath, Abner is the one who fetches David and brings him before Saul.

Later on, there is a war between the army of Saul and the army of David. Abner leads Saul's army. And Joab leads David's army. In the heat of a battle, one of Joab's younger brothers, Asahel, is pursuing Abner. Abner warns Asahel to stop pursuing him. Abner knows that he is the better warrior. But Asahel won't listen.

Abner kills Asahel. Of course, Joab now hates Abner and wants personal revenge for the death of his younger brother.

Some time later, Abner is falsely accused of having slept with Saul's concubine. This would have been viewed as an act of treason.

This accusation infuriates Abner, and he defects over to David's side.

Abner and David make a covenant with one another.

David sends Abner on a mission. He is given the task of leading the people who were loyal to Saul over to David.

Joab has been away fighting during this whole encounter.

He already hates Abner for killing his brother.

He tells David that he has been foolishly deceived by Abner.

And then, he takes it upon himself to kill Abner in cold blood.

David does not immediately deal with Joab.

But he gives his word that Joab's action must be avenged.

There are many questions surrounding this story.

But the only one that matters to David, and to the writer, is that Joab killed a man who had just entered into a covenant bond with King David.

The other man that David mentions is Amasa. This story occurs some years later, during the attempted coup of David's son Absalom.

Absalom makes Amasa commander of his army.
He overlooks Joab in the process.

The scenario is eerily similar to the previous story.
Amasa leads the armies of the rebellion.
Joab is commander of the army of David.

But as providence would have it, when David regains his position, instead of punishing Amasa, he makes Amasa commander of his army.

2 Samuel 19:13 ¹³ And say to Amasa, 'Are you not my bone and my flesh? God do so to me and more also, if you are not commander of my army from now on in place of Joab.'"

Obviously, Joab is furious.
He sees David's attempt to unite with those who have been rebellious as foolish.

Again, Joab takes matters into his own hands and kills Amasa in cold blood.

Joab's pattern is to trust in his own judgment more than walking in submission to the king.

Joab believed that the end justified the means.

The cause for which Joab cared was the strength of the kingdom.

And so, Joab acted consistently with what he determined was best for the strength of Israel.

David knows Joab is powerful, and ruthless.

And so he tells Solomon to "act according to your wisdom" but do not let Joab die in peace.

Even though he has technically served David for years, he is deemed disloyal.

The fact that Joab continues to remain disloyal is seen in his participation in his assisting Adonijah against Solomon.

David makes clear that Joab must be punished for his shedding of innocent blood, and for his doing this in direct disobedience to the will of his King.

Joab has not in any way admitted his guilt or sought forgiveness for his actions.

The writer of kings is making a theological point.

Disloyalty to God's appointed king deserves to be punished.

And without repentance, it will be punished.

Joab must be punished for his disloyalty.
Next, David urges Solomon to reward the sons of Barzillai for their father's loyalty.

7 But
 deal loyally with the **sons of Barzillai** the Gileadite,
 and
 let them be among those who eat at your table,
 for with such loyalty they met me
 when I fled from Absalom your brother.

Barzillai was a wealthy man who lived in Gilead.
He helped David when he was on the run from his son Absalom.
Absalom was popular and most people had embraced him as their new king.

But a handful of individuals risk their own lives to provide food for David and his companions.

Barzillai was one of these men.
Eventually, God restores David to the throne in Jerusalem.
David wants to reward Barzillai by bringing him to eat at his table.
But by this time, Barzillai was 80 years old and only wants to live out his years at his home.

The important point is that Barzillai blessed David, but David was not really able to bless Barzillai because he was very aged.

David bears a burden to debt to Barzillai. Solomon is to inherit that burden. He has a royal obligation to provide for those who have been loyal to his dad.

We should not miss the irony that one who served at David's right hand is not to die in peace. But the one who was largely unknown is to be richly rewarded for his loyalty to David in a time of need.

This is a good place to inject yourself into the story. You should want to be like Barzillai who helped the king in his time of need. And do not think that since Jesus is up in heaven that he no longer has any need. Remember Jesus' words in Matthew 25. When you have done it to the least of these, you have done it unto me. Help your brothers and sisters in Christ, and trust that your acts of love will be richly rewarded by your King.

Lastly, David advises Solomon to deal with Shimei in vv. 8-9.
He tells Solomon that he is a wise man.
This implies that Solomon will need wisdom in knowing the truth about Shimei.

Shimei had always been loyal to the house of Saul.
He mocked David and threw stones at him when he was on the run from his son Absalom.

But when David had regained his power, he begged David for forgiveness.
David granted him that forgiveness.
But had Shimei only put on a show of loyalty?
Did he say the right words, but not really have a heart change?
Now that Solomon is king, David has his doubts about Shimei's true loyalty.

Here ends the end of David's advice.
In vv. 10-12, we are told of David's death and burial.
His reign was long and full. And now Solomon was "firmly established" as king.

But the question remains, "Will Solomon punish his enemies and reward his allies?"
And will Solomon have the wisdom to distribute these rewards and punishments?

Adonijah comes back into the story. Remember, we had left him under house arrest.
In the last chapter, Bathsheba had helped to bring to light Adonijah's plot to take the throne. But in this chapter, Bathsheba is the one who has the wool pulled over her eyes.

As readers, we wonder why can she not see Adonijah's intention to steal the throne from her son?

Adonijah is crafty. He plays Bathsheba's heart like a guitar string.
He wants Bathsheba to feel sorry for him.
It wasn't his fault that God had chosen Solomon over him.
And what is wrong with him wanting some consolation for his loss.

Add to this that Bathsheba has no love for Abishag anyway, and you begin to understand why she might want her gone from the king's household.

And so, Adonijah asks Bathsheba to influence her son to give him Abishag as his wife.
And Bathsheba agrees to help.

We are supposed to feel the irony. In the previous chapter, the kingdom seemed to hinge upon Bathsheba and Nathan as they sought to help Solomon. But now, Bathsheba is unwittingly working to undermine her son's position as king.

Who is the true power behind Solomon being firmly established as king?
None other than the LORD himself.
And this time the LORD works through giving His king the wisdom to discern the plot.

Bathsheba approaches Solomon in humility.
She is not purposely plotting against her son.
She gives him the proper respect as king.
And he gives her the proper respect as the queen mother.

She tells Solomon that she has a "small request".
Solomon promises to grant her the request.

This is a true promise.
But the one thing that Solomon cannot grant to his mother is to abdicate the throne.

Solomon immediately sees through the plot of Adonijah.
And instead of granting the request, he does just the opposite.
He pronounces an oath before the LORD, this is truly binding him to his word, that
Adonijah's plot against Solomon will result in Adonijah's life being taken from him.

Adonijah has proven his disloyalty. And he will be justly punished.
Every word of Solomon at this point is meaningful.

24 Now therefore
 as the LORD lives,
 who has established me
 and
 placed me on the throne of David my father,
 and
 who has made me a house,
 as he promised,
 Adonijah shall be put to death this day."

25 So
 King Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada,
 and he struck him down,
 and he died.

Solomon acknowledges the sovereign hand of God in "establishing" him as king.
Solomon rightly sees his being established as a fulfillment of God's covenant promise to
David to "make him a house".
And Solomon rightly understands that the rebellion of Adonijah is not just a rebellion to
him personally, but in truth a rebellion to the LORD himself.

Solomon acts as judge. And he sends Benaiah, his commander, to execute him.

Next, Solomon will have to deal with Abiathar the priest.
Abiathar also took part in the plot against Solomon.
He had sided with Adonijah.
Should he not also be judged with Adonijah?

But again, Solomon shows great wisdom.
Instead of having Abiathar executed, he sends him to his home.
He tells him that he is deserving of death. But he does not have him killed, why not?

Because of his previous loyalty to David.
He had carried the ark of the LORD and had shared in his father's affliction.

We are to see in Abiathar's punishment how Solomon uses precision in his judgments. He could have just cleaned house. Everyone associated with Adonijah dies! Instead, he is able to see the details of each person individually.

Even though Abiathar had taken part in a plot against David, in truth, he was not entirely disloyal to David.

Solomon expels him from being priest.

But even this seems a temporary banishment.

1 Kings 4:4 ⁴ Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was in command of the army; Zadok and Abiathar were priests;

Solomon, as God's appointed king, knows how to dispense mercy with his justice.

And what is more, the author breaks in and tells us that this banishment was a fulfillment of God's Word spoken to the prophet Eli long before.

²⁷ So
 Solomon expelled Abiathar
 from being priest to the LORD,
 thus fulfilling the word of the LORD
 that he had spoken
 concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

Woven throughout the entire narrative is this theme that God's Word is always fulfilled. It may be fulfilled in unexpected ways, but it is always fulfilled.

When God spoke through Eli, he spoke these words "those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me will be lightly esteemed." (I Samuel 2:30)

"And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever." (I Samuel 2:35)

We are to see in this that as God is building for Solomon a house, he is also ensuring that the priesthood would also be loyal to him.

Next, we come to Joab.

Maybe Joab will be like Abiathar. He too had served under David. In outward appearance, Joab seemed to care deeply for the kingdom of God. If you read the whole story in Samuel, you may even find yourself on the side of Joab.

But Solomon is able to see through to the heart of Joab. Joab's loyalty was not really to Yahweh, or to His appointed king. Joab was loyal to himself, and to the power of the kingdom on earth.

In the end, his pride and his jealousy brought him to kill two men more righteous than himself.

And he must be justly judged.

The way of his death is also poetic justice.

He takes hold of the horns of the altar. Joab appears to seek mercy, but he does not offer any sort of humble repentance. He simply knows that he has been beaten.

God's hand of justice falls upon Joab while he is holding onto the horns of the altar. How many people have outwardly claimed loyalty to Jesus, and profess with words a trust in Christ, but who really have never been redeemed?

It is right to search your heart as to whether you are truly repenting of your sin and submitting yourself to King Jesus. We are to do this every time we take communion. Because we do not want to come to the day of Judgment and have Jesus say, "I never knew you."

Sobering...

Finally, we come to Shimei.

He too is a wily character.

The true motivations of his heart are difficult to discern.

Was his profession of faith genuine?

Did he really repent of his previous jeering of king David?

Solomon puts Shimei on a sort of probation to discern his true colors.

As long as he remains in Jerusalem, his life will be spared.

But if he is to leave Jerusalem, his life will be forfeit.

It takes three years before Shimei leaves the city.

We are told that his servants for some unknown reason leave. And it appears that Shimei is only going to try to find them.

But the fact that they go to Gath should raise some questions.

Gath was the home of Goliath of the Philistines.

It is most probable that Shimei was in the process of devising a clever plot of sedition.

But we are not told of his true intentions. What we are told is that he purposely broke the promise he had made to never leave Jerusalem.

Solomon, as king, does not forget his word to Shimei.

Just judgment will be executed.

However you may personally feel about this situation, the author is clear.

Solomon is acting in accordance with the blessing of the LORD.

45 But
 King Solomon shall be blessed,
 and
 the throne of David shall be established before the LORD
 forever."

Then
 the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada,
 and
 he went out and struck him down,
 and he died.

So
the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

Conclusions and Applications:

1. God is continuing to establish his eternal kingdom because he will always be faithful to keep his promise to David.
 - a. No other power or person will be able to prevent this.
 - b. This promise is ultimately being fulfilled in the person of King Jesus.
2. Solomon's reign is a foreshadow of the Eternal reign of Jesus Christ.
3. One of the first acts of King Jesus will be to punish those who have rebelled against him while also rewarding those who have been loyal to him.
 - a. Solomon's punishments and rewards foreshadow Christ's punishments and rewards when He returns to establish His reign on earth.
4. Christ's distribution of punishments and rewards will be just. You will never fool Him.
 - a. Adonijah = We must surrender our own attempts at being king and learn submission to the only king.
 - b. Joab = loyalty to the kingdom is not the same thing as loyalty to the king.
 - c. Barzillai = Jesus will not forget your small acts of loyalty to Him now.
 - d. Abiathar = Jesus knows how to filter through our wrong acts and determine if our heart has been repentant.
 - e. Shimei = Jesus knows how to uncover our hidden rebellion and make clear our hypocrisy.

Wherever you find yourself today, your duty is clear.

You are to trust that your Sovereign God is "establishing the Kingdom of Jesus Christ."

You are to repent of any disloyalty that exists in your heart towards Jesus.

And you are to commit your heart to loyalty to Jesus Christ, knowing that when He returns He will be faithful to reward that loyalty.

We can be confident that God is even now establishing his Word. King Jesus has been strong and courageous. And He is even now righteous and wise in His rule.

All of the promises of God to David are firmly established in the reign of King Jesus.

His kingdom will know no end.

It is your privilege to bow to your King.

Amen.