
Day 131 – May 11

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

Solomon Becomes King

Readings: 1 Kings 1:1-53; 2 Samuel 23:1-7; 1 Kings 2:1-12; 1 Chronicles 29:23-25; 28-30

Reflections:

- In David's old age we again see an expression of God's grace. David's health is failing and he can not keep himself warm. The gift of a beautiful young woman to lie beside him at night was no doubt a combination of incredible grace and the disregarding of social sensitivities. Here we see God ignore what people think is appropriate to actually care for the needs of his servant David. Here again God does not appear to care about appearance. He is interested in the substance, what the true needs are of David, not what may look appropriate or not.
- Adonijah's attempt to steal the throne again reveals David's character as a man who is humble and soft before God had a downside. He was also too soft and abdicating when it came to his children. Key verse: "His father (that being David) had never interfered with him by asking, "Why do you behave as you do?" He was also very handsome and was born next after Absalom." Adonijah had some natural characteristics that would have made him an attractive option as a future king but his heart was not right before God. David's failure to truly discipline him allowed his own pride and desire for power to lead him to try to grab the throne covertly.
- This story continues the theme of revealing how no king, no matter how good at the beginning of their reign or how noble their character, is able to be an adequate king for the nation. David again is shown as too soft and abdicating. Even as a man after God's own heart, we see that David falls short of possessing the kind of character needed to be a king that brings salvation to Israel.
- Nathan and Bathsheba step up to the challenge and end up prompting David to anoint Solomon to be the next king of Israel. It is interesting to note how once Nathan was confronting David on his affair with Bathsheba but now the two are working together to help further God's purposes. Here we see that God is a God of redemption. Bathsheba is not labeled for the rest of her life as the woman who caused David to fall. She is now someone honored as the mother of Solomon. She will be honored in Matthew's genealogy as a descendent of the Messiah Jesus. Even in our brokenness and sin, God can further his will and purpose. This can give us deep confidence in God and his ability

to work through our strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures to complete his will.

- David anoints Solomon and Adonijah shows his true colors. He runs and hides in the tabernacle clinging to the horns of the altar as one scared to death. He knows within himself that he is not the rightful heir and he clings to the altar in a desperate hope for mercy. If you want mercy, clinging to the altar is a good place to hide. Solomon shows his wisdom and understanding of mercy and allows Adonijah to return home as a free and forgiven man.
- In David's parting words, we see something fascinating. David had shown mercy to Shimei for cursing him. But as David is ready to die and depart, he points out to Solomon that his oath was that he would not put him to death for Shimei calling down curses on David. David now commands Solomon to kill Shimei for David's oath does not apply to Solomon. This is fascinating. First, David's mercy in the moment was not ultimately an expression of forgiveness. What is just David being soft again? What is clear is that David does not offer us a perfect example of enemy love as we will see with Jesus. David still harbored this event in his heart and before he dies he still wants revenge. Again, as we look at David, here at the end of his life we are reminded he is far from perfect. Just as we will see with Solomon, the great kings of Israel start out apparently as good and gifted leaders but in the end their strengths become their downfall. The Law can't change the people of Israel. Having a tabernacle or temple cannot change their hearts. Having a king can't change them. This careful walk through of what doesn't work is all to set the stage for God's ultimate revelation of how he wants to save humanity: God's messiah or true king who will reveal a grace that completely blows us away and the power of God's spirit to change us from the inside out. We won't need a holy law or a holy king or a holy ritual. God will be our friend and will change our hearts.
- As Solomon now sits on the throne, we have the last and greatest king of Israel. Saul, who had the alpha male personality and stood head and shoulders above the rest ended up being a demonized mad man. David, who was humble and broken before God, ended up being a murderer, adulterer and someone unable to truly stand up for truth and justice in his own family. Absalom, who had a true heart for justice for the hurt and vulnerable, ended up being a son of rebellion and anger that brought judgment on himself and his followers. Now we have Solomon. Will his great wisdom enable him to rule with true justice and righteousness? You would think so by how his kingship begins: "The Lord highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him royal splendor such as no king over Israel ever had before."