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Securing the Kingdom I Kings 2:1-46

Intro: The primary question that was the focus of our study of **ch1** was “Who has the kingdom?” King David was not long for this earth and in the minds of some; the issue was still very much in doubt. Adonijah made a play for the throne by way of an aggressive campaign of self-promotion despite David already having publicly declared that the Lord had chosen Solomon to succeed him on the throne. Adonijah wasn’t alone in his attempt. He was joined by 2 of David’s most trusted advisors: Joab (commander of the army) and Abiathar (High Priest). When David was informed of this attempted coup, he moved quickly to forestall it and immediately appointed Solomon as king of Israel.

As we move into **ch2**, the question that forms the overarching theme is this: how can the kingdom be secured, or be established? To be sure, no kingdom can be established through passive measures. It requires pro-active measures.

If Yahweh’s kingdom, which now is also Solomon’s kingdom, is going to be made secure, active and vigilant policies will have to be implemented and followed. This is no time for coronation parties or extensive building projects. The kingdom has just gone through a major political upheaval and a young, inexperienced monarch now leads the nation. Now is the time for Solomon to be vigilant and secure his position in the kingdom. How will he do this? Our text tells us this will be accomplished in mainly 2 ways...

1-4 – The primary and most important way that Solomon can secure his kingdom is by obeying the Covenant Law. David was a great man, the greatest king of Israel (2nd only to the Messiah) and yet he knew he was still just a man and that he shared a common destiny with all the earth. Knowing that his time was drawing near, David gives a final charge to Solomon concerning the things that matter the most. We don’t know exactly how old Solomon was at this time but he’s a young man who’d lived a sheltered life so he admonishes him to be strong and prove yourself a man.

How is he to do that? David’s answer is very interesting. Solomon is to show both manhood and strength by walking in Yahweh’s ways! That would

sound strange to the average person's ears because society's current definition of manhood involves being successful, whether in business, sports, politics...life. Our modern concept of a manly man is nowhere near what David's idea was. In his mind, a real man followed the commandments of the Lord and loved His judgments and testimonies. This should give us a clue as to what the Lord Himself thinks a real man ought to be like. If you think about it, Adam was created to not only have fellowship with God but to love and obey Him as well. Anything less than that is less manly than God intended us to be. Now, no man is capable of achieving that by his own efforts but God has made a way and it is our responsibility as men to pursue that way with all our strength.

What Solomon needed to understand about Yahweh's ways is that, first of all, they are clear. They have been clearly spelled out in His laws (statutes), commands, rules (judgments) and admonitions (testimonies). All these terms are used to reflect totality; to emphasize that *all* of God's Word is to be kept! Also, Yahweh's ways are available. They were written down in the Law of Moses and disseminated to Israel from the very beginning. Finally, Yahweh's ways are also beneficial. The means to Solomon's success will be linked to his acknowledgement of and adherence to the Word of God. In fact, if Solomon and all the other royal descendants of the Davidic dynasty will give whole-hearted obedience to Yahweh's word then Yahweh will make sure that His promise to David (v4) remains in effect. The point is obvious: obedience to the Law is the required condition for promise-enjoyment.

Here we have side-by-side, God's promise to David and the Law of Moses. These 2 may seem at odds with each other but there is no conflict between them; they're perfectly compatible. Contained within the original promise to David (II Sam 7:14-15) is the implication that the unfaithfulness or disobedience of Solomon or any Davidic king wouldn't cancel God's promise to David, but it assumes that there will be no enjoyment of the blessedness of that promise unless a king remains faithful. David's saying that obedience is the internal means of securing the kingdom.

This same spiritual principle is taught in the NT. The person who hears Jesus' words and does them is like a wise man who builds his house on a rock. The storms of life will beat against him but he will not fall (Mt 7:24-25). Some tend to believe that their ministry activity is a valid substitute for obedience to Jesus' words. They rely on all the church services they've

attended or participated in, all the effort they have extended to the cause of Christ but none of that will hold water in the last days. So, whether it's a Davidic king or a disciple of Jesus, true stability in life only comes through obedience to the clear Word of God that we have always possessed.

5-12 – Paul says in **Acts 13:36** that David served his own generation by the will of God but it's also clear that David was concerned about Solomon and the next generation. David had his enemies and some of them were in his own household and inner circle and he wanted to be certain that the new king didn't inherit any old problems. David knew there were perils lurking and he warned Solomon to act immediately and deal with 2 dangerous men. The 1st was Joab, the commander of Israel's army. He was fiercely loyal to David, but not strongly obedient. Joab had stood by David through many difficult trials but there were times when he asserted his own will and he was guilty of murdering innocent men. If Solomon wanted to establish his reign in justice, he must start by bringing justice to Joab.

The 2nd dangerous man was Shimei. He was a Benjamite and a relative of Saul who wanted to see Saul's line restored to the throne. He had come out to curse David when he was fleeing for his life from Absalom. To curse the king was a violation of the law David accepted this unkind and unlawful treatment as an act of discipline from the Lord. Later, when David was restored to the throne, Shimei humbled himself before the king and David forgave him. But David knew that there was always a pro-Saul sentiment in the northern tribes so he warned Solomon to keep this guy under a watchful eye.

David was also concerned that Solomon would show justice to those who helped David in a time of great need. When David was fleeing Jerusalem, Barzillai came to his aid and provided food and rest for David and all his people with him. At the time, David had wanted to reward Barzillai by granting him a place at David's table. This was the modern equivalent of a pension. The beneficiary received a regular royal allowance of food and clothing along with a house and land to support himself and his family. But, Barzillai was old and wanted to die at his own home so he asked David to give the honor to one of his sons. Now David instructs Solomon to care for all of Barzillai sons.

David then dies, as all men do, but Solomon was already king so there was no need for any official ceremonies. The new king had his agenda all laid

out: deal with Joab, deal with Shimei, reward the sons of Barzillai and build the temple. If it only were that easy! Solomon's first major crisis would come from a troubling sibling – old Adonijah!

13-46 – Here we have the external means of securing the kingdom: by eliminating the kingdom's enemies. Here, Solomon carries out the advice of David in **5-9** and head's will roll. There's execution after execution but it begins with Adonijah making another play for the throne. He had been granted clemency from Solomon in ch1 if he kept his nose clear and his self out of trouble but that seems to have been an unrealistic goal for him. His actions here give the lie to his submission in ch1 and his own mouth gives evidence to the depth of his rebellion (**15**). It appears that he suffered from delusions of grandeur, still believing there was widespread support for him as king even though he acknowledges that the kingdom was granted to Solomon by the Lord! If he knew this was true, why did he attempt to try to seize the crown for himself?

Adonijah approaches Bathsheba, the queen mother, with his request because he rightly assumes she will have great influence with her son. One might wonder why Bathsheba would agree to assist Adonijah at all since her life and that of Solomon's were threatened by him not that long ago. Bathsheba was not so naïve to think all was well that ended well. In fact, it's likely she suspected another plot against Solomon's position because she knew that possession of a king's wife or concubine was evidence of possession of the kingdom. It's also likely that Adonijah wanted more than Abishag's beauty. By taking Abishag as his wife, Adonijah could claim to be co-regent with Solomon. Bathsheba would certainly be aware of this and would use this request to expose Adonijah's scheme to Solomon for handling.

Of course, Solomon immediately recognized the request for what it was – another devious move for the throne. More than that, Solomon now had reason to believe that the original band of malcontents: Adonijah, Joab and Abiathar were still united in gaining control of the kingdom. By asking for Abishag, Adonijah signed his own death warrant and Benaiah was tasked with taking the traitor's life. Was this a harsh response from Solomon? Was it possible that Adonijah really loved Abishag? If Adonijah's request wasn't sinister, it certainly was stupid. If he had any sense at all, he should've known Solomon would see this as a direct threat to his God-given position.

Solomon acted according to the terms of parole granted to Adonijah in ch1. He made a wicked treasonous request and it rightly cost him his life.

Solomon didn't stop there. He also defrocked Abiathar the priest and sent him into forced retirement. He actually did deserve death because he supported Adonijah as the next king, in defiance of the will of God and King David. This was treason against God and the King of Israel. Yet, Solomon showed mercy and wisdom to Abiathar. Mercy was shown in sparing his life in light of his past standing as chief priest and supporter of David. Wisdom was shown in exiling him and telling him, "I will not put you to death at this time." He let him know he could still be executed at any time. By removing Abiathar from the priesthood, Solomon unintentionally fulfilled the promise of judgment against the house of Eli ([1 Sam 2:27-36](#)), made some 100 yrs before Solomon assumed the throne.

Joab had been around the royal court long enough to be able to get reliable information about court activity in a timely manner. When he heard of Adonijah's execution and Abiathar's exile, he rightly perceived that he was next on the hit list. He had also supported Adonijah in his treasonous attempt at the throne; now he imitates Adonijah's play for refuge by taking hold of the horns of the altar. This altar was stationed inside the tabernacle that David had built to house the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem. In ancient times, it was almost a universal custom to find sanctuary at a holy altar but in Israel, by law, only those who were guilty of manslaughter could do this and claim the right of a trial but Joab was guilty of murder and disloyalty to King David and King Solomon.

Solomon knew this custom was not used in Israel to protect a guilty man so he sent Benaiah in to execute justice on Joab where he stood. Now, even though Benaiah was a soldier, he belonged to a priestly family, so it was legal for him to enter the sacred precincts. He went in and executed Joab and then carried him out and buried him. Solomon then promoted Benaiah as commander of the army of Israel, a position that had just recently been vacated by Joab.

We must understand that in the case of Joab, Solomon wasn't acting out of anger or any revenge on behalf of David.

Solomon reveals that the death of Joab removed the stain of innocent blood that Joab had shed when he killed Abner and Amasa. The Bible teaches

that the shedding of innocent blood pollutes the land ([Num 35:30-34](#)) and the victim's blood cries out to God for vengeance ([Gen 4:10](#)). The cities of refuge in Israel were provided for people who had accidentally killed somebody but murderers like Joab weren't to be given any mercy. They were to be executed so that the innocent blood they shed would pollute the land no more. Saul's wicked treatment of the Gibeonites had polluted the land and caused trouble for David ([II Sam 21](#)) and Solomon didn't want that to happen during his reign.

Solomon began dealing with Shimei by placing him under house arrest. He ordered him to build a house in Jerusalem and stay there and not go anywhere. Again, this may seem harsh to us but as another potential threat to the throne, Solomon was being both merciful and generous to Shimei and he knew it! After seeing all these other enemies of the state dropping like flies around town, Shimei not only agreed with this arrangement, he was also grateful for it. Jerusalem wasn't a big city in those days and Solomon's men could keep a watchful eye on him.

Shimei stuck to his agreement for 3 yrs until 2 of his slaves ran off to Gath, some 25 miles away. Instead of sending another servant to retrieve them, he decided to go himself. Maybe he thought he had fulfilled the terms of the agreement or maybe he thought Solomon's men weren't watching. It's possible he was deliberately defying Solomon and pushing the limits to see what he would do. He soon found out. Solomon had extended mercy to Shimei and he abused it and took advantage of it. Whether it was a matter of neglect or even forgetfulness, it was still a criminal act to neglect or forget a royal covenant. His actions revealed that he had no more respect for Solomon and his royal authority than he did David. This scene ends like the others, with Benaiah executing Shimei as a traitor.

[I Chron 22:6-10](#) tells us that Solomon was to be a man of peace yet, he begins his reign by ordering the execution of 3 men. While that may seem counter-intuitive, we should realize that true peace must be based on righteousness, not on sentiment. James 3:17a says that the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable... The land was polluted by the innocent blood that Joab had shed and the land could only be cleansed by the execution of the murderer. Solomon was a man of peace and he achieved that peace by bringing about righteousness in the land.

Unlike Saul's kingdom and even David's kingdom, Solomon's kingdom was secured and established at an early date. The kingdom was secured through Solomon's adherence and obedience to the clear, available and beneficial Word of God. The kingdom was established only after the enemies of the kingdom had been eliminated. If the kingdom is to be made safe then the threats to the kingdom must be neutralized. That's what "establishing" the kingdom means and demands.

So, here in I Kings 2, that's the way it is. The security of the kingdom requires the elimination of its enemies. The kingdom must be preserved at all cost from those trying to destroy and undermine it. Solomon was quick to act, right to act and just in his actions. But, that's fine for Solomon but how does this apply to the NT church? What enemies are we to eliminate? In a spiritual sense, we should be as quick to pass righteous judgment and execute our arch-enemies as Solomon was; granted, we recognize our greatest enemies as those predominant sins and foul habits that steal our time, afflict our souls and threaten to destroy our testimonies for Jesus Christ.

In another sense, there's no reason to spiritualize the principle here because ch2 shares the same kingdom theology with the rest of Scripture, it just has a last days dimension to it ([Mt 13:40b-43a](#); [II Th 1:9-10](#)). Don't be lulled into a mindset of complacency by stories of a baby Jesus meek and mild. Be advised that the final Davidic king, the Lord Jesus Christ, will follow the same principle as Solomon in the ultimate establishment of His kingdom. Make no mistake, the kingdom of God is near, it's at hand – it exists in the hearts and lives of His followers but it is not fully established. That will only happen when ALL of His enemies have been removed, all threats have been neutralized. Since that **will** happen, then the only safety to be found is in submitting to the monarchy of Jesus today.

Do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If you do, you've already been the recipient of His great grace and mercy to the point that it should be evident in your life. If you refuse to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord then you will meet Him as a just, all-knowing, completely righteous Judge who will render to you exactly what you deserve, a just and eternal punishment. If you are wiser than Adonijah, then you will see the folly of continuing in that course of action. There is still time to repent and turn to Jesus for forgiveness and eternal salvation.

We may envy the sons of David because they had such a promise but we have a similar promise from God. Jesus said in [Mt 6:33](#), “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” God promises that if we will seek Him first, He will take care of the rest. 😊