

1. I've been praying on and off for the last few weeks over what book to start next. The answer has not been very blunt, but I believe God wants me to take on 1st and 2nd Kings. My initial reaction was "Hey God, I just finished Ecclesiastes, and now you want me to focus on King Solomon again for awhile? I believe God then responded with, "Remember all those prayers you made about Me being in charge of your life? Well, am I or am I not?" OK then, 1st and 2nd Kings it is.
 - a) All right, you may be called to teach 1st and 2nd Kings but why should I bother to follow along with these studies? If I had to pick the one reason to study these books, just based on what I have learned so far, it is the danger of being too much like the world around us. Let me put this idea another way: God has called Christians to separate themselves from the world. What exactly does that mean? What are we to do or not do? Yes of course it is about avoiding sin and trusting God with our lives. That's a start. Even with that obvious statement made, there is still this world we have to live in. How do we live life differently from non-Christians around us in order to make a difference for God? What exactly does God want me to do with my life anyway? Those are the types of issues "Kings" teaches.
 - b) Even if that argument doesn't entice you and even if you don't care that this is part of the bible I ask you to follow along for no other reason than to learn how it is God desires us to live in order to make a difference for Him. No that idea of living differently is not the title of this lesson it's just the theme of this book. As to the lesson title, we'll get to that in a bit.
2. In order to explain further what it is that God wants us to learn from these books, I should give a little background about what we call "1st and 2nd Kings".
 - a) First of all there is no special separation between the two books. They were split into two just because it was too big to combine them in one scroll. Know that Jewish and Christian scholars agree that they are God inspired. Remember bible "books" were first organized in scrolls. "Kings" was simply too large of a scroll to combine them as one volume.
 - b) In fact, 1st and 2nd Samuel, 1st and 2nd Kings in the original Greek translation of the Old Testament were called 1st through 4th Kings. That's because the 1st Samuel scroll focused on the first King of Israel (Saul) as a central character. 2nd Samuel is about David when he reigned next as king. 1st and 2nd Kings then covers a 400-year period of time that begins with David's son Solomon, and ends with a descendent of that same family line who was the last king of that nation. It ends when it was conquered and scattered. Israel wasn't an independent nation again until the 1948, which was about 1,500 years later. If you want a proof of God's existence, consider that no nation in world history has ever been defeated, scattered and came back together to form a nation, except for Israel, who did it twice: once after the end of the reign of those kings after 70 years in captivity, (although then not as a sovereign independent nation) and again in 1948 as an independent nation.
 - c) And what does all of that have to do with these books? For starters, it shows us how Israel as a nation went from great power and wealth to a conquered group. Even with that bit of ancient history stated, one does not study the bible to learn ancient history. One studies one's bible to understand how God wants us to live out our lives. This four hundred year section of history teaches us how Israel wanted to be like everyone else around them and that put them in the "penalty box" for collectively turning from God as a nation. What we are to learn from this book is how not to live like the world around us, so that God doesn't have to punish us either individually or collectively (as a church body or as say a nation) in order to draw us back to him. In other words, God loves us too much to leave us alone. If we do turn our lives over to Him and then over time turn from Him, because He loves us He does what He has to in order to draw us back to Him in the first place.
 - d) Author? Unknown. Tradition says "Jeremiah", but we don't know who put this together.

3. At this point, I should also say a few words about "time" during this four hundred year period.
 - a) Many bible scholars are fascinated by how time was marked during this period. To keep it simple, it is difficult to show exactly how time was calculated. After Solomon died, the nation of Israel split into two nations. Each nation had a slightly different way of marking the beginning and ending of time of say, a king's reign. One can read a lot of books on the topic of calculating time in this era. To keep it simple for us, just know that the marking of time in this era is a little more complicated than first meets the eye.
 - i) For example, as we go through Kings, get used to phrases like, "In the fourteenth year of this king of the Northern kingdom called Israel, that king started to reign in the Southern kingdom called Judah". Just realize there are bible scholars who spent a lot of time figuring out the dates of these reigns. Personally, I have a hard enough time just keeping all the kings' names straight, let alone the dates that each of them lived. To keep it simple, just realize that this whole period covered about 400 years that occurred from about 1,000 BC to 600 BC. Yes that is rough estimate, but I'm more concerned with learning what God wants us to know about the lives of these kings than I am about the exact dates that each of them ruled.
4. Let me finish my "who, what, when and why's" of 1st and 2nd Kings, and then I can discuss the first few chapters of this book. To state the obvious, the books are about the kings of Israel. The main capital of Israel is in Jerusalem, so that is the "where". It is Chapter 12 of 1st Kings when the split into two nations occurs. One set of kings, the descendants of David, stay in Jerusalem while we read of another set of kings who live in the northern part of Israel with that capital being in a city called Samaria. More on that when we get to these chapters.
 - a) It is also important to state that in effect, Kings is about the "fall" of Israel. The two books being with the fall (decline) of King David in age. The book ends with the fall of Israel as a kingdom. The combined book is about an unfulfilled promise made to David that a son of his would rule the world forever. If the bible did end with kings, then this would be a sad story indeed. The book teaches of the decline of Israel as a whole nation because they wanted to be like the world around them and not have God rule over their lives. That is a reason why the Messiah did not come during the time of these kings. The lesson for us as we study the kings is to remind ourselves how not to be like the world around us.
 - b) To summarize this whole book as it applies to us, we as Christians may state that we want Jesus to rule over us, but if we start slipping into living like the world around us, God in effect says to us, "You don't want Me to rule over your life right now? I'll get out of your way and watch the consequences take place until you ask Me to return to our lives." That is the pattern that happens over and over again in this book as a reminder to us that God wants to always be in charge of our lives. Just like the Israelites who refused to turn from their idols over those centuries to turn back to God, so we can be rejected by Him because we refuse to turn to Him with our lives. That is the tragedy of this book and the reminder to us to stick close to Him with our lives. On that convicting note, I'm ready to talk about the first two chapters themselves.
5. My title for this lesson is "God's will and decisions". Chapters 1 and 2 are all about the transition of power from King David to King Solomon. David is in the final days of his life and is a part of these chapters. Solomon is a young man, probably 16 years old when he became the next king.
 - a) Chapter 1 tells the story of Solomon's half brother who tries to assume the role of king and goes against God's will for that nation.
 - b) The point of these chapters is not to learn well, what happened to David or what became of specific minor characters in 2nd Samuel. The point is to learn about God's will for our own lives as we study the characters that are part of this transition section of the book.
 - c) I call it "God's will and decisions" as this chapter is full of examples of how to determine His will for our lives and not live like the world around us, the main theme of the book.

6. Chapter 1, Verse 1: When King David was very old, he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him.² So his attendants said to him, "Let us look for a young virgin to serve the king and take care of him. She can lie beside him so that our lord the king may keep warm."
 - a) To begin 1st Kings, remember that this is in effect a continuing story that did start back in 1st Samuel. The books of "Samuel" and "Kings" cover the history of all the kings of Israel from the first to the last one who ruled before all the residents of that land were removed from that area or were physically destroyed. The first two chapters of this book focus on the transition in power from King David to one of his sons named Solomon.
 - b) The first four verses discuss King David as an old man who had a physical ailment at this age that made it difficult for him to keep warm at night. Today we might solve that issue with say an electric blanket. Back then for a person with financial means, an attendant to the king would take care of him. Think of this "young virgin" as a nurse who's job it was to take care of the aging king and even to sleep next to him to keep him warm. There was nothing sexual about this. It was just a girl brought in to help David keep warm.
 - c) The reason these verses are here is that this young woman will become a key figure in the transfer of power between David and Solomon. The half brother of Solomon who wanted to take over throne later desired this girl to be his wife. However, I'm getting ahead of my self in the story, so let's read onward.
7. Verse 3: Then they searched throughout Israel for a beautiful young woman and found Abishag, a Shunammite, and brought her to the king.⁴ The woman was very beautiful; she took care of the king and waited on him, but the king had no sexual relations with her.
 - a) In these verses we discover the winner of the "who will be the king's nurse" contest, and we learn her name is Abishag. It may help to know that it was common practice to only have one name with one's "last name" being one's place of origin. The text says that this girl was from Shunammite (a town in Israel), she was beautiful, and that she took care of the king in his old age, and finally that King David never had sexual relations with her.
 - b) Back in 2nd Samuel 11, David had one of the most famous sexual affairs in human history with Bathsheba. David had her husband killed to hide that affair. To summarize much of 2nd Samuel after that, God in effect said to David, "I'm not going to require your death for committing this sin, but by the time I'm through with you (David), you'll wish I had taken your life". David had one son that raped his half sister. David had another son that killed the half-brother who committed that sin. This other son rebelled against David to cause a civil war and this other son of David died in that war.
 - i) My point here is that if David wanted a good reason not to sleep with this young girl, all he had to do is recall his life over probably the last 20 years and that would be the incentive to do the right thing here. The point for us to learn is that God will still love us when we mess up, but He also may allow punishments in our lives to remind us to do His will. In other words, God loves us too much to leave us alone and let us get away with sins. That will be the constant lesson to remember as we go through 1st and 2nd Kings.
 - c) Meanwhile, we're just getting started in this "transition of power" section of this book.
8. Verse 5: Now Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith, put himself forward and said, "I will be king." So he got chariots and horses ready, with fifty men to run ahead of him.⁶ (His father had never rebuked him by asking, "Why do you behave as you do?" He was also very handsome and was born next after Absalom.)
 - a) Here is where the plot thickens. King David had multiple wives. While the bible clearly teaches that Israelite kings were not to multiple wives for themselves (See Deuteronomy 17:17), David did anyway as other kings in that area did that practice. We don't read of God saying anything to David about that practice, but in effect, David learned why the hard way, by watching the actions between all his children play out in these books.

- b) Which leads back to these verses: In 2nd Samuel, we had a civil war between David and his oldest son Absalom. In that war he lost and died. Then David came back to Jerusalem to resume power as the king of Israel. The next oldest living son now figured, "Hey since Absalom is dead, I'm due to be king one day". This next oldest living son (half brother of Absalom) decided since David was dying, it was time to go declare himself to be the king.
 - c) These verses mention the fact that prince Adonijah took 50 men with him to go make this announcement. Verse 6 mentions that he was the second (living) son. Remember that the big theme of this book is about not living the way the world wants us to live. When kings died for other nations around Israel, the oldest living son would just be king. That is still practiced today in England for example, even though that king is a figurehead.
 - i) My point is even though that is the way the "world" does it, that's not the way that God calls Christians to live. God says in effect, "ask Me and let My will be done".
 - ii) To state the obvious, as we'll discover, it was God's will for Solomon to be king. In order for that to occur, David will have to step up to the plate one more time just to prevent another civil war between these brothers and for God's will to be done.
 - iii) The text also mentions the fact that David never said anything to Adonijah about his behavior. What is implied is that the king's guards were aware of Adonijah's behavior but David in effect "let it go". One of David's great faults that we read of in 2nd Samuel was that he had a hands-off style of being a father, probably out of fear of God's punishment based on his sexual affair. Whatever the reason, David made a lot of mistakes as a parent due to his lack of discipline of his children. The consequences of not disciplining Adonijah are coming up in this chapter.
 - d) Finally, Verse 6 also mentions that Adonijah was handsome. I think that comment is there just to show that people were interested in following this potential new king because he's good looking. Unfortunately in life, we often ignore God's will for our lives, because to be honest the choices in front of us "look good". I could go on, but you get the idea.
9. Verse 7: Adonijah conferred with Joab son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest, and they gave him their support.⁸ But Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei and Rei and David's special guard did not join Adonijah.
- a) Here in these verses we get a bunch of new names to learn. Some of these people were in 2nd Samuel. If you are not familiar with that book, let me make it simple: Joining the plot to make Adonijah the king was the head general of the army and a top priest of Israel.
 - b) Among those who stood with David over this potential civil war in the next transition of power, was another (unrelated) priest, some other top officials, a prominent prophet from 2nd Samuel named Nathan and "the palace guards". Back in the story of David's affair, it was the prophet Nathan who told David how God would punish him for that sin.
 - c) To keep it simple, just know that there were some prominent people were on both sides of this potential civil war. We will discover over the course of this lesson what is the price of those who want to turn from God's will. We'll also discover that God had somehow made it clear to King David that Solomon is to be the next king and that is why this revolt is an issue. Again the issue for us is about living for God's will or living like the world around us. The world expects the oldest son to be the next king. Just as God had other plans for the nation of Israel so God may have other desires for us to live out our lives.
10. Verse 9: Adonijah then sacrificed sheep, cattle and fattened calves at the Stone of Zohelath near En Rogel. He invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officials of Judah,¹⁰ but he did not invite Nathan the prophet or Benaiah or the special guard or his brother Solomon.
- a) Meanwhile, back at the rebellion, the point is made here that Adonijah didn't invite to his "coronation" those key people who were loyal to his half-brother Solomon. These verses here also mention where this false coronation took place. It's time for a little geography about En Rogel: This is a water spring that is a water source for Jerusalem. Ok, so what?

- b) The "so what", is Jerusalem has a second water spring and that is where the real ceremony is going to take place. It's a cute play on words as one source of water represents what the world wants as king while another (better I assume) source of water represents what it is that God desires for our lives. Now that I've given you that bit of bible trivia, we can get back to this story of the struggle in the transition of power from David to Solomon.
11. Verse 11: Then Nathan asked Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, "Have you not heard that Adonijah, the son of Haggith, has become king, and our lord David knows nothing about it? ¹² Now then, let me advise you how you can save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. ¹³ Go in to King David and say to him, 'My lord the king, did you not swear to me your servant: "Surely Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne"? Why then has Adonijah become king?' ¹⁴ While you are still there talking to the king, I will come in and add my word to what you have said."
- a) Here we switch scenes from the "first (fake) coronation back to the King's palace. In this scene the prophet Nathan is giving advice to Bathsheba, who is still one of King David's wives after all these years and the mother of Solomon. It would probably help to give a little more background here: When David had the affair with Bathsheba, David had her current husband killed to cover the affair. David then marries her. God announces that part of the punishment will be the death of the child that came from that affair. After the baby dies, David says that he will see the baby again in heaven one day, as it was not the baby's fault for the affair. (From 2nd Samuel Chapter 12). Some unknown time after that, Bathsheba gets pregnant again and that is Solomon. Here comes the "so what"?
- i) Apparently sometime in the past (see Verse 13 above) David promised Bathsheba that Solomon would be the next king of Israel. Why he made that promise to her is not known, but it will become obvious that it is God's will for that nation. Now we have this potential civil war because another son of David through a different mother is declaring himself to be the king. Apparently, this other son who did the rebellion was aware of this promise, as Bathsheba and Solomon weren't invited to the (fake) coronation of Solomon's half brother.
- b) What is implied in Nathan's speech in these verses is because they were not invited to the coronation ceremony is they could be on trial before "King Adonijah" as a traitor for not coming to his ceremony. Therefore, Nathan the prophet, who wants God's will to be done and accepts the idea that Solomon should be king approaches Bathsheba and says, plans how they are to each approach King David separately to bring up this issue.
- i) At this point I need to quickly talk about another Old Testament law: It is the law that by two witnesses a thing is established. It is a court of law rule. The idea of this law is in effect if you want witnesses to prove a fact to be true, then there has to be two people whose stories agree completely. (See Deuteronomy 19:15.)
- ii) The point as it relates to this story is that both Nathan the prophet, and Bathsheba who is one of David's wives are to approach David separately to tell him the same story about David's son Adonijah, who again is not the son of Bathsheba.
- c) For those of you who like "palace intrigue" stories, this one should satisfy you well.
12. Verse 15: So Bathsheba went to see the aged king in his room, where Abishag the Shunammite was attending him. ¹⁶ Bathsheba bowed down, prostrating herself before the king. "What is it you want?" the king asked.
- a) Speaking of "back at the palace", we find the aging King David (who is about 70 years old at this time) being taken care of by Abishag, his nurse. Now Bathsheba enters this room and bows down to the king as a sign of respect.
- b) Understand that David is not senile. He knows it is Bathsheba and asks what she wants.
- c) Before we move on with the story, remember that David had multiple wives. Each could approach the king, but still they had to respect Him as the king over the nation.

13. Verse 17: She said to him, "My lord, you yourself swore to me your servant by the LORD your God: 'Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne.'¹⁸ But now Adonijah has become king, and you, my lord the king, do not know about it.¹⁹ He has sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep, and has invited all the king's sons, Abiathar the priest and Joab the commander of the army, but he has not invited Solomon your servant.²⁰ My lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to learn from you who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.²¹ Otherwise, as soon as my lord the king is laid to rest with his ancestors, I and my son Solomon will be treated as criminals."
- a) The first question I had as I read this was when did David promise that of all his children that Solomon would be the king? The short answer is we don't know. If one reads in 1st Chronicles (22:5), the story is told how Solomon is to be the next king, but there is no bible record of David publicly announcing before this point that he is to be the next king. What is suspected is that Solomon's half brother Adonijah was aware of this fact and that's why he ran away to go anoint himself as the next king. He didn't want to perform this ritual in David's presence. Because Solomon and his mother Bathsheba were not invited the two of them legitimately feared for their own lives. It was common practice in that culture to kill rivals to a throne. Besides if Adonijah had to go set himself as king behind David's back, I suspect he'd kill Solomon if he had the chance later.
 - b) Here in these verses, Bathsheba is telling King David who is part of this rebellion. The key people with Adonijah are Joab, the head army general and Abithar who is a top priest.
 - i) My point is even to the end of David's life, he had to deal with those who rebelled against his leadership. This was not a bunch of nobodies declaring Adonijah as the next king. These were two respected leaders in that country.
 - ii) The issue for David of course, is will he lead or not. He's still the king and until he dies he is in charge of that country. The related issue for us of course is the concept that until God says to us in effect, "It's time to come to heaven", we still need to be obedience to what He calls us to do with our life.
 - c) Meanwhile, it's time for Nathan the prophet to be the "second witness" to the king.
14. Verse 22: While she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet arrived.²³ And they told the king, "Nathan the prophet is here." So he went before the king and bowed with his face to the ground.
- a) What is implied but not stated until Verse 28, is that Bathsheba left the room. This gives a chance for Nathan to verify the story without Bathsheba present. These verses are Nathan being presented to the king in his "sickly state" with the nurse present.
15. Verse 24: Nathan said, "Have you, my lord the king, declared that Adonijah shall be king after you, and that he will sit on your throne?²⁵ Today he has gone down and sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep. He has invited all the king's sons, the commanders of the army and Abiathar the priest. Right now they are eating and drinking with him and saying, 'Long live King Adonijah!' ²⁶ But me your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon he did not invite.²⁷ Is this something my lord the king has done without letting his servants know who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?"
- a) John's loose and quick translation: "Your highness, I remember you telling me that after you die, Solomon will be the next king. Remember that? Well, right now your other son is publicly declaring himself the king. What makes it worse is that he purposely did not invite Solomon or Beniaiah (commander of the palace guards) or the other (near the top) priest Zadok who is also loyal to Solomon. Your highness, if you don't do something to stop this right now, Solomon, Bathsheba and those other people will die and whether you like it or not, Adonijah will be the king." Therefore act quick or God's will won't be done.
 - b) The point is getting God's will done often takes tough action, even for "old man" David.

16. Verse 28: Then King David said, "Call in Bathsheba." So she came into the king's presence and stood before him. ²⁹ The king then took an oath: "As surely as the LORD lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble, ³⁰ I will surely carry out today what I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place."
- a) At this point, David calls Bathsheba back in the room. Give David credit for taking action here. What was normal practice was to wait for a king to die before a new one was put in place. Notice David here says in effect, "I made an oath to God that Solomon would be king and I'm not going to wait another day."
 - b) I could show you other places in the bible that imply that David did make this promise. The important point here is that David did swear in God's name this will happen and now David is saying in effect, "I can't wait another day. Another son of mine is trying to take over the kingdom. I've already been through one rebellion by a son, and I won't have a second one take place. Let me end this right now and let's start the coronation."
 - c) While all of this palace intrigue makes an interesting story, the important question to ask is always, what does this have to do with my life? In other words, why should any of us care about this ancient history? The answer has nothing to do with these actual events. It has to do with God's will and making oaths. Most of us are aware by now that Jesus doesn't encourage us to make oaths (based on Matthew 5:33). However, if we do make an oath, especially when we invoke God's name, He expects us to keep it, for no other reason than our public witness to Him is now on the line.
 - d) Since David is also aware he is near the end of his life, and he is also aware that it was God's will for Solomon to take over, now is a good as time as any.
 - e) I want to approach this story from one more angle before I move on. Many years earlier, the prophet Nathan revealed to David that a son (descendant) of his would be the long awaited Messiah (king) who would rule the world from Jerusalem. Now consider that Solomon's name means in effect, "Man of peace" or "God will bring peace".
 - i) What is implied is that a reason David wanted Solomon to be the next king is that David is looking forward to the day of "eternal peace" of the Messiah. By having Solomon be the king, it is David's way of hoping this is the eternal peace that all of us desire to have not only in our own lives but for the world.
 - ii) To state the obvious, Solomon is not the promised Messiah. However, I believe this is David's way of saying, "Come on God, let's get the show on the road". Of course God works on His timing, but we can have peace in our lives not only by trusting that God will guide us, but also trusting in Jesus promise that He will return one day and rule the world from Jerusalem as the long promised Messiah of Israel. I could go into a whole lecture here about bible predictions that explain all of that, but it's time to return to the palace.
17. Verse 31: Then Bathsheba bowed low with her face to the ground and, kneeling before the king, said, "May my lord King David live forever!"
- a) Let's take a moment to remember who Bathsheba was. She was the one who had an affair with David. That affair led to all sorts of troubles for the rest of David's life. Bathsheba herself also suffered as she lost the baby that came from that affair. For what it is worth, think she is a pretty smart girl and 1st Chronicles gives her credit for raising Solomon well.
 - i) My point here is simply that she stayed loyal to the king after all of these years in spite of the fact she was one of many wives. She truly loved David, faults and all, and despite the bad way that the relationship started, her son would become the next king of Israel. It is God's way of saying to us, "Yes I forgive you of your sins, (assuming we confess them) and we may have to suffer the consequences for them but I still want to bless your life based on your trust in Me." We see that here.
 - ii) Stop and consider that despite Bathsheba's sin, she was still part of the "royal line" by which Jesus the Messiah would come into the world.

- b) So when she says the king "live forever", is she being literal? No in the sense she knows that the king (and her) are getting up there in years and we must all face God to be judged one day. This was a common greeting given to kings. It was a sign of respect to say that she trusts in David's wisdom. Let's face it, David's descendants ruled over part of Israel for the next four hundred years (more or less), so she got that wish to be true. Plus one of David's descendants is the Messiah, who will rule forever. My point is although she's just giving a simple greeting, she is also giving a prophecy about the long term truth of what will happen to billions of people who trust in Jesus as one who rules over our lives now and will one day literally rule over the world as we know it.
 - c) With that said, once again, time to get back to the palace.
18. Verse 32: King David said, "Call in Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet and Benaiah son of Jehoiada." When they came before the king, ³³ he said to them: "Take your lord's servants with you and set Solomon my son on my own mule and take him down to Gihon. ³⁴ There have Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel. Blow the trumpet and shout, 'Long live King Solomon!' ³⁵ Then you are to go up with him, and he is to come and sit on my throne and reign in my place. I have appointed him ruler over Israel and Judah."
- a) Like I said earlier, David is not wasting any more time and is going to make today the day that Solomon officially becomes the king. Remember that a bunch of leaders in Israel did go along with the rebellion, but there were others at the palace.
 - b) A few quick notes on the minor characters being mentioned here. What's a little confusing to understand is that there were sort of "two high priests" at that time in Israel. Both were sort of in charge. Think of the one who left with Adonijah as the last living descendant of Eli (from the early chapters of 1st Samuel). When Samuel was a prophet, a prediction was made that one day no descendant of Eli would still be a priest. That is about to happen as this last living descendant of Eli joined the rebellion. The other "top priest" was Zadok, who was also publicly recognized as the high priest. I suspect that Zadok was respected as the top priest while the guy with Adonijah was not thought of as well, but who knows.
 - i) Nathan the prophet also joined the parade. Because he was a regular trusted aid to David for many years, I suspect he was well known.
 - ii) The point is both of these men would be recognized as part of David's team and would give support to Solomon as being the legitimate next king.
 - c) If that is not enough, Solomon was to ride on the king's mule. I actually got a nice little education about mules that I never knew before. Bare with me as it is a cute story: If you didn't know a mule is a cross between a horse and a donkey. The bible forbids Israelites from crossbreeding animals (See Leviticus 19:19), so they imported mules to legally get around that law. Think of Solomon riding on this "fancy import" and not just any horse or donkey that was part of the king's stable. Now you know.
 - d) Meanwhile Solomon was to be paraded around town with Nathan blowing a trumpet. Then Solomon is to go sit on the king's chair. Bottom line is this is a big public ceremony so that the whole town and eventually the whole country would know Solomon is king.
 - e) This leads me back to getting God's will done. There is an old Christian saying that goes, "Without God, we can't. Without us, God won't." That means that God chooses to work through people to get His will done. Often for us that means taking footsteps.
 - i) Let me give a simple example. God made it clear to me that He wanted me to start teaching First Kings. He wasn't going to type it for me, but I still had to write it by myself and do some research so I can teach important facts about mules."
 - ii) The point of this chapter is about God's will getting done and working through a king (or anyone for that matter) for His will to get done. The point for you and me is the greatest purpose one can have for one's life is to use it for God's glory. It is to ask Him, "what do You want me to do today" and then go do it.

19. Verse 36: Benaiah son of Jehoiada answered the king, "Amen! May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, so declare it. ³⁷ As the LORD was with my lord the king, so may he be with Solomon to make his throne even greater than the throne of my lord King David!"
 - a) If you haven't figured it out by now, this chapter has a bunch of minor characters whose names you'll probably forget soon after reading it. One of them is Benaiah, who it is best to think of as being in charge of the "royal guard" assigned to protect David.
 - b) The point is the guy in charge of protecting the king was publicly declaring his loyalty to Solomon just as he was loyal to David. It is another way of getting the general public to accept Solomon as the next king.
20. Verse 38: So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, the Kerethites and the Pelethites went down and put Solomon on King David's mule and escorted him to Gihon. ³⁹Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, "Long live King Solomon!" ⁴⁰ And all the people went up after him, playing flutes and rejoicing greatly, so that the ground shook with the sound.
 - a) OK, back at the palace. We also have more minor characters mentioned again. We have Zadok, the "top priest" who was loyal to David. We have "Ben" the top guard in charge of protecting the king and we have the "palace guards" who are the Kerethites and the Pelethites. The good news is God is not going to quiz us in heaven one day, and say to us something like, "So you know your bible? Who were the palace guards for David?"
 - i) I believe the only question God will ask us when we get before Him is in effect, did you trust in Jesus as complete payment for your sins? Next we get the more difficult question of what have we done for God once we accepted that fact? That is how we are rewarded in heaven, by how we used our lives once we were saved.
 - ii) Since I'm on that topic, I should also add that rewards should not be our primary motivation to serve God, but out of gratitude for forgiving our sins. OK enough of that for now, let's get back to the palace.
 - b) The main point is this parade worked. Solomon was accepted by the locals as the next king despite the best effort of Solomon's half brother Adonijah who tried to pull off the same stunt with other leading men in that city. The point for you and me is about the efforts we make to get God's will done, will always in the end triumph over those who wish to honor themselves and not put God first in their life. Remember that Adonijah was the oldest living son of David and "by the world's standards" he should be the king.
 - c) Now of course, Adonijah is in big trouble, although he doesn't realize it yet.
21. Verse 41: Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they were finishing their feast. On hearing the sound of the trumpet, Joab asked, "What's the meaning of all the noise in the city?" ⁴² Even as he was speaking, Jonathan son of Abiathar the priest arrived. Adonijah said, "Come in. A worthy man like you must be bringing good news."
 - a) Here is Adonijah having his own party. Joab, who as an army general, would be sensitive to hearing a trumpet blast, notices the sound and asks the meaning. Remember that this group was celebrating at a water source for Jerusalem just outside the city. Before anyone can answer Joab's question about the trumpet, a messenger shows up to announce who is the new king. Verse 42 has this strange footnote that the messenger had a reputation for bringing good news. I suspect that is there, simply because Adonijah and his companions were in a good mood, drinking, and thinking about the things they would do now that he is the king of Israel.
 - b) To state the obvious, the party is about to come to a dramatic end in a matter of moments. The point for us is just because something seems obvious (Adonijah was the oldest living son and assumed he would be king). I'm speculating one reason why he declared himself the king this way was not he knew it wasn't his father's will. I suspect he also knew it was his father's will to make Solomon the king. With that said, let's get back to the party.

22. Verse "Not at all!" Jonathan answered. "Our lord King David has made Solomon king. ⁴⁴ The king has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, the Kerethites and the Pelethites, and they have put him on the king's mule, ⁴⁵ and Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king at Gihon. From there they have gone up cheering, and the city resounds with it. That's the noise you hear. ⁴⁶ Moreover, Solomon has taken his seat on the royal throne. ⁴⁷ Also, the royal officials have come to congratulate our lord King David, saying, 'May your God make Solomon's name more famous than yours and his throne greater than yours!' And the king bowed in worship on his bed ⁴⁸ and said, 'Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has allowed my eyes to see a successor on my throne today.' "
- a) Time to deliver to prince Adonijah the bad news: No you are not going to be king. Your brother Solomon has just been anointed by the other "head priest", a prophet, and all the palace guards. To make matters worse for Adonijah, Solomon has already taken a seat on the throne that David sat upon.
 - b) Consider this from Adonijah's standpoint: He knew he couldn't overthrow Solomon now because all of the palace guards were supporting Solomon. Even with Joab at his side, the palace guards are not with him. It would be practically impossible to convince the army to do follow Joab with King David ordering those guards to consider Solomon as the king.
 - c) Notice in Verse 48, the reference to "Praise be the Lord". This messenger accepted it as God's will and didn't even fear Adonijah and Joab to deliver the bad news. That's a good reminder that we have to be willing to take a stand for God, even if it to bring bad news.
 - d) Well, if you wanted to put a damper on a party, this would do it. This reminds me of an inside joke among my brothers as many years ago one of them said, "This party is dying". That catch phrase is now used whenever we believe it is time to leave a scene. Right now, I would say, Adonijah's party is over and it is time for everyone to flee for their lives.
 - e) It is interesting to consider that Bathsheba was worried that Adonijah would kill her and her son once he became king. Now the tables are turned and Adonijah and his party are going to flee for their own lives.
23. Verse 49: At this, all Adonijah's guests rose in alarm and dispersed. ⁵⁰ But Adonijah, in fear of Solomon, went and took hold of the horns of the altar. ⁵¹ Then Solomon was told, "Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon and is clinging to the horns of the altar. He says, 'Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.' "
- a) I was just thinking about the fact that I covered a lot of verses with relatively little more to say than what is the obvious. Some chapters are in the bible read well like a good drama and this is one of them. What is to be commented upon is how we apply this wonderful little bit of ancient history to our lives. The lesson is about how God's will gets done: We get a prince of Israel plotting against his family and in the end, he loses. We read of the one who was supposed to be king "accepting God's will". We also read of the heroics of Solomon's mother and a prophet in order for God's will to be done. Let us not forget that David, before the end of his life with another family rebellion about to happen, doesn't go away like he did in 2nd Samuel, but takes the lead to anoint Solomon as the next king.
 - b) My girls are not old enough to get married, but I do hope I live long enough that I do get to walk them both down the aisle. That is the closest I can describe to the feeling David is going through as he gets to see "man of peace" (a rough translation of Solomon's name) be anointed as the next king. In other words, David got the privilege of seeing the next in power take that reign and hopefully start the process toward the long promised Messiah that would rule the world from Israel. However, before all of that is to take place, we still need to read of the death of David himself and share his final words, which we will read in the next chapter of this book.
 - c) In the meantime, I still need to discuss a little about these verses. Picture an altar where animals are sacrificed. Adonijah in fear of his life, grabs hold of those horns for safety.

- d) To understand Adonijah is doing, one has to understand a little about that culture. In the world around Israel, to grab the horns used to tie animals down for sacrifice, it was a sign that one wanted refuge. The priests guarding that temple would protect that person. It is a little like many Roman Catholic churches today who will protect a person who runs into that church for safety.
 - e) Unfortunately, Judaism never offers that type of protection. As far as they are concerned, if a person is guilty of murder, they must stand trial. One cannot ask for sanctuary if one is accused of a crime. Here is another example of the worlds' way of doing things versus God's way of doing things. So is the Catholic church wrong for taking people in refuge if they enter that church? The answer is it depends how that priest handles that situation. If they counsel the person into standing trial, that is doing the right thing. If they just say a murderer for example, must live there forever and avoid facing trial, that is wrong.
 - f) So what is to happen to prince Adonijah? We'll discover the answer in the next chapter. Since I'm now on Page 11 of this study, I saved that story for the next lesson. The short version is Solomon gives him forgiveness for the moment, but when he does something else to cross Solomon, which he'll do in Chapter 2, he'll be a goner. Meanwhile, let us see how Solomon responds to Adonijah's request to let him live:
24. Verse 52: Solomon replied, "If he shows himself to be a worthy man, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground; but if evil is found in him, he will die." ⁵³ Then King Solomon sent men, and they brought him down from the altar. And Adonijah came and bowed down to King Solomon, and Solomon said, "Go to your home."
- a) In these set of verses, Solomon forgives him for rebelling against his father. Remember at this point David is still alive even though Solomon has been crowned the king. Since this is Solomon's half brother, he is giving his brother a second chance to redeem himself here. In the next chapter we will read how Adonijah plots again to overthrow Solomon and at that point Solomon says in effect, "I've had it with this guy, brother or not, off with his head". It didn't happen exactly that way, but as we'll read in the next chapter, Solomon did have his brother killed for plotting to overthrow him as the king.
 - b) However, I'm getting ahead of the story and I'll wait until the next lesson to explain the details there.
 - c) With that said, let me wrap this up by coming back to the title for a moment. It was "God's will and decisions". Solomon made the decision here to let his brother live despite the fact his brother literally tried to overthrow him as the next king and probably later Adonijah would have Solomon killed as a threat to his kingdom. So why did Solomon spare him here? It shows us how God has mercy on our sins but there is also a limit to His mercy.
 - i) Solomon's point is that if his brother was willing to repent of that sin, Solomon was willing to forgive him and move on. The problem as we'll discover in the next chapter is that Adonijah was not willing to "move on" and it cost him his life. I do suspect that because this rebellion didn't cost Adonijah anything, he was willing to try again, and that is a key point in the next chapter.
25. OK John, this is a cute story about palace politics. What should I get out of it? It is not to learn the history of Israelite politics. It is to understand how God wants us to apply His wisdom to our lives in order to make a difference for Him. I don't hold the view that we have to pray over every little decision we make. ("Hey God, should I brush my teeth this morning? ☺) With that said, we should seek His guidance for the decisions we make and be daily in His word to guide us so that we can use our lives to make a difference for Him. With that, let me close in prayer.
26. Let's pray: Father, as we study through the kings of Israel, help us to apply the wisdom that is found in this book for Your glory. Forgive us of our sins, help us to let go of our guilt and trust that You have forgiven us. Help us to live the way You want us to live and use our lives to make a difference for You. Help us not to live for this world and trust that You will work through our lives for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.