FIRST KINGS

Chapter 1

*Adonijah Sets Himself Up as King*

**When King David was old and well advanced in years, he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him. 2 So his servants said to him, “Let us look for a young virgin to attend the king and take care of him. She can lie beside him so that our lord the king may keep warm.” 3 Then they searched throughout Israel for a beautiful girl and found Abishag, a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. 4 The girl was very beautiful; she took care of the king and waited on him, but the king had no intimate relations with her. 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 interfered with him by asking, “Why do you behave as you do?” He was also very handsome and was born next after Absalom.) 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. 9 Adonijah then sacrificed sheep, cattle and fattened calves at the Stone of Zoheleth near En Rogel. He invited all his brothers, the king’s sons, and all the men of Judah who were royal officials, 10 but he did not invite Nathan the prophet or Benaiah or the special guard or his brother Solomon. 11 Then Nathan asked Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother, “Have you not heard that Adonijah, the son of Haggith, has become king without our lord David’s knowing 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 confirm what you have said.” 15 So Bathsheba went to see the aged king in his room, where Abishag the Shunammite was attending him. 16 Bathsheba bowed low and knelt before the king. “What is it you want?” the king asked. 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 fathers, I and my son Solomon will be treated as criminals.” 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. 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?”**

**1:1–12:24** The narrative of the Solomonic era is an exquisite example of literary inversion, in this case consisting of nine sections. The first and last are parallel, as well as the second and eighth, etc.—and the fifth section, which occupies the central position in the structure, is the longest of the nine and describes Solomon’s building projects (see Introduction: Outline).

**1:1** *advanced in years.* 2Sa 5:4 indicates that David died at about 70 years of age (cf. 1Ki 2:11). (CSB)

**1:3** *Shunammite.* Abishag came from Shunem (2Ki 4:8; Jos 19:18; 1Sa 28:4), located near the plain of Jezreel in the tribal territory of Issachar. (CSB)

**1:4** *had no intimate relations with her.* Significant in connection with Adonijah’s request to be given Abishag as his wife after the death of David (see notes on 2:17, 22). (CSB)

**1:5** *Adonijah.* The fourth son of David (see 2Sa 3:4), who was at this time approximately 35 years of age. It is likely that he was the oldest surviving son of David (see note on 2Sa 13:28; see also 2Sa 18:14). (CSB)

*put himself forward.* A unilateral attempt to usurp the throne, bypassing King David’s right to designate his own successor (Adonijah must at least have known that his father favored Solomon; see v. 10). If successful, it would have thwarted God’s and David’s choice of Solomon (see vv. 13, 17, 30; 1Ch 22:9–10; see also note on 2Sa 12:25). (CSB)

*fifty men to run ahead of him.* Adonijah here follows the example of Absalom before him (see note on 2Sa 15:1). (CSB)

**1:6** *never interfered.* David appears to have been consistently negligent in disciplining his sons (see notes on 2Sa 13:21; 14:33). (CSB)

*very handsome.* Attractive physical appearance was an important asset to an aspirant to the throne (see 1Sa 9:2; 16:12; 2Sa 14:25). (CSB)

**1:7** *Joab son of Zeruiah.* See notes on 1Sa 26:6; 2Sa 2:13; 19:13; 20:10, 23. Joab’s alignment with Adonijah may have been motivated by a struggle for power with Benaiah (see v. 8; 2Sa 8:18; 20:23; 23:20–23). Joab held his position more by his standing with the army than by the favor and confidence of David (see 2:5–6). (CSB)

*Abiathar the priest.* See note on 2Sa 8:17. (CSB)

**1:8** *Zadok the priest.* See note on 2Sa 8:17. (CSB)

*Benaiah son of Jehoiada.* See note on 2Sa 23:20. (CSB)

*Nathan the prophet.* See 2Sa 12:1–25. (CSB)

*Shimei.* Not the Shimei of 2:8, 46; 2Sa 16:5–8; perhaps the same as Shimei son of Ela (4:18). *Rei.* See NIV text note. There is no other OT reference to Rei if taken as a proper name. (CSB)

*David’s special guard.* See 2Sa 23:8–39. (CSB)

**1:9** *Adonijah then sacrificed.* Here also (see note on v. 5) Adonijah followed the example of Absalom (see 2Sa 15:7–12). (CSB)

*En Rogel.* Means “the spring of Rogel”; located just south of Jerusalem in the Kidron Valley. Apparently the site of a spring had some kind of symbolic significance for the business at hand (see v. 33 and note). (CSB)

**1:11** *Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother.* The queen mother held an important and influential position in the royal court (see 2:19; 15:13; 2Ki 10:13; 2Ch 15:16). (CSB)

*has become king.* Although the preceding narrative does not relate the actual proclamation of Adonijah’s kingship, it can be assumed (see v. 25; 2:15; cf. 2Sa 15:10). (CSB)

**1:12** *save your own life and the life of your son Solomon.* It was common in the ancient Near East for a usurper to liquidate all potential claimants to the throne in an attempt to secure his own position (see 15:29; 2Ki 10:11; 11:1). (CSB)

**1:13** *did you not swear to me … ?* Although 2 Samuel does not record David’s oath concerning the succession of Solomon, it does suggest that Solomon was the son through whom the Lord’s promise to David for an eternal dynasty would be carried forward (see note on v. 5). (CSB)

**1:17** *you yourself swore to me … by the Lord your God.* An oath taken in the Lord’s name was inviolable (see Ex 20:7; Lev 19:12; Jos 9:15, 18, 20; Jdg 11:30, 35; Ecc 5:4–7). (CSB)

**1:21** *laid to rest with his fathers.* A conventional expression for death (see Ge 47:30; Dt 31:16). (CSB)

**1:24** Nathan approached David diplomatically by raising a question that revealed the dilemma. Either David had secretly encouraged Adonijah to claim the throne and thereby had broken his oath to Bathsheba and Solomon (see v. 27), or he had been betrayed by Adonijah. (CSB)

**1:25** *Long live King Adonijah!* An expression of recognition and acclamation of the new king (see 1Sa 10:24; 2Sa 16:16; 2Ki 11:12). (CSB)

*David Makes Solomon King*

**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.” 31 Then Bathsheba bowed low with her face to the ground and, kneeling before the king, said, “May my lord King David live forever!” 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.” 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!” 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. 39 Zadok 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. 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.” 43 “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.’ ” 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.’ ” 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.”**

**1:31** *May my lord King David live forever!* An expression of Bathsheba’s thanks in the stereotyped hyperbolic language of the court (see Ne 2:3; Da 2:4; 3:9; 5:10; 6:21). (CSB)

**1:33** *your lord’s servants.* Presumably including the Kerethites and Pelethites (see v. 38). (CSB)

*my own mule.* Although crossbreeding was forbidden in the Mosaic law (Lev 19:19), mules (perhaps imported; see Eze 27:14) were used in the time of David, at least as mounts for royalty (see 2Sa 13:29; 18:9). To ride on David’s own mule was a public proclamation that Solomon’s succession to the throne was sanctioned by David (see Ge 41:43 and first NIV text note; Est 6:7–8). (CSB)

*Gihon.* The site of a spring on the eastern slope of Mount Zion (see notes on v. 9; 2Sa 5:8). (CSB)

**1:34** *anoint him.* See notes on 1Sa 2:10; 9:16. (CSB)

*Blow the trumpet.* See 2Ki 9:13; 2Sa 15:10; 20:1. (CSB)

*Long live King Solomon!* See note on v. 25. (CSB)

**1:35** *Israel and Judah.* The distinction between Israel and Judah was rooted in the separate arrangements by which David became king over these two tribal units (see 2Sa 2:4; 5:3). (CSB)

**1:36** *Amen! May the Lord… so declare it.* See Jer 28:6. (CSB)

**1:37** *even greater.* Not a deprecation of David’s accomplishments, but an expression of total loyalty to David and Solomon. Benaiah shared David’s own desire for his chosen successor (see vv. 47–48). (CSB)

**1:38** *the Kerethites and the Pelethites.* See note on 2Sa 8:18. (CSB)

**1:39** *Zadok … anointed Solomon.* Kings chosen by God to rule over his people who were not in a line of dynastic succession were anointed by prophets (Saul, 1Sa 9:16; David, 1Sa 16:12; Jehu, 2Ki 9). Kings who assumed office in the line of dynastic succession were anointed by priests (Solomon, here; Joash, 2Ki 11:12). The distinction seems to be that the priest worked within the established order while the prophets introduced new divine initiatives. (CSB)

*horn of oil.* Perhaps containing the anointing oil described in Ex 30:22–33. (CSB)

*sacred tent.* The tent David had erected in Jerusalem to house the ark (see 2Sa 6:17) rather than the tabernacle at Gibeon (see 3:4 and note; 2Ch 1:3). (CSB)

**1:41** *heard it.* Although Gihon may not have been visible from En Rogel, the distance was not great and the sound would carry down the Kidron Valley. (CSB)

**1:42** *Jonathan son of Abiathar.* See 2Sa 17:17–21. (CSB)

**1:47** *more famous.* See note on v. 37. (CSB)

**1:48** *successor.* In Solomon’s succession to the throne David sees a fulfillment of the promise in 2Sa 7:12, 16. (CSB)

**1:49** *dispersed.* No one wanted to be identified with Adonijah’s abortive coup now that it appeared certain to fail. (CSB)

**1:50** *took hold of the horns of the altar.* The horns of the altar were vertical projections at each corner. The idea of seeking asylum at the altar was rooted in the Pentateuch (see Ex 21:13–14). The priest smeared the blood of the sacrifice on the horns of the altar (see Ex 29:12; Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34) during the sacrificial ritual. Adonijah thus seeks to place his own destiny under the protection of God. (CSB)

**1:52** *worthy man.* Who recognizes and submits to Solomon’s office and authority. *if evil is found in him.* If he shows evidence of continuing opposition to Solomon’s succession to the throne. (CSB)