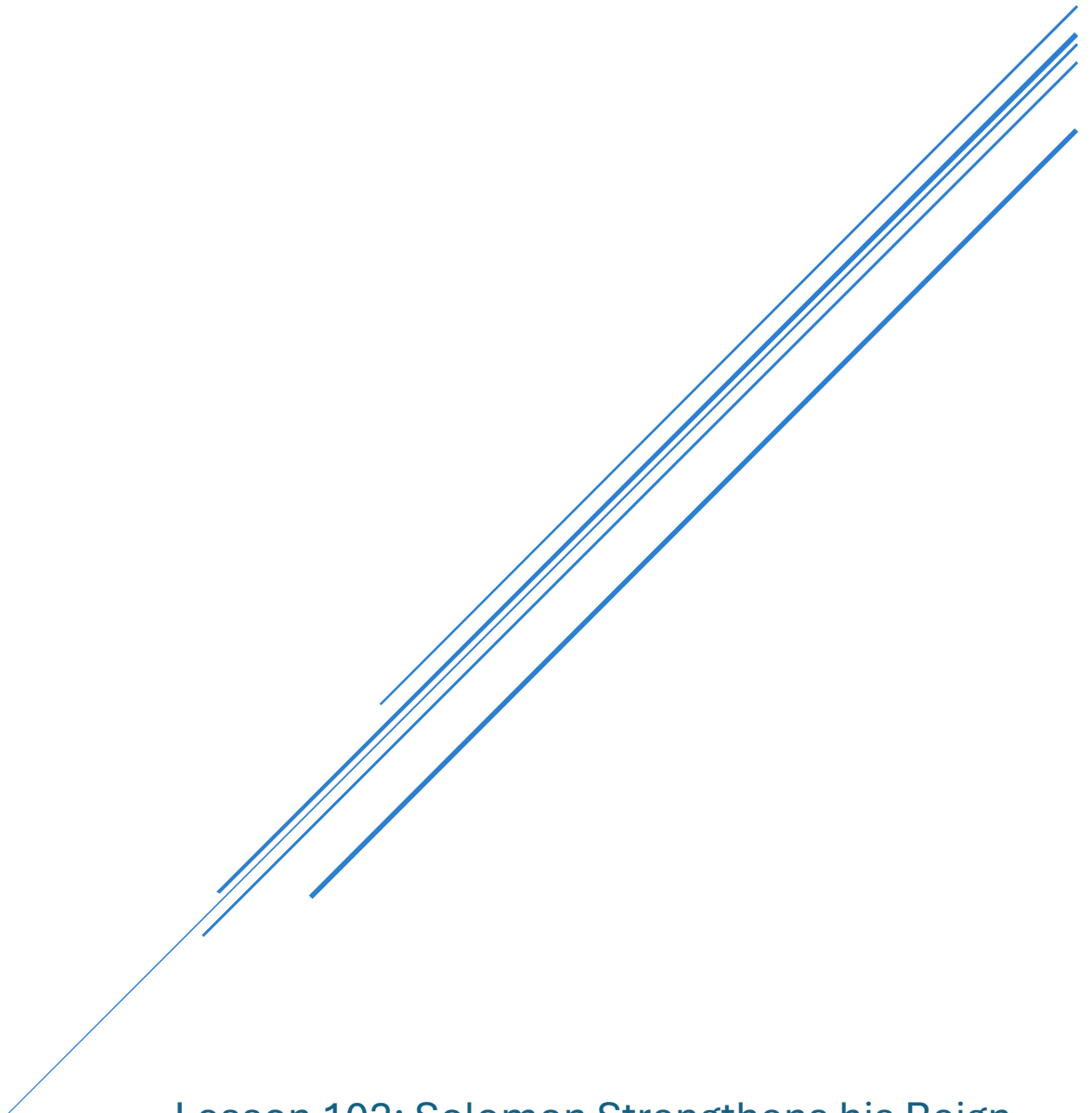


THE KINGDOM, THE BIBLE, & US

Understanding the Bible's story, Jesus' importance, & our place in God's kingdom plan



Lesson 102: Solomon Strengthens his Reign
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Introduction

In our last lesson we explored the actions of Adonijah, one of David's sons, who may have technically been next in line for the throne. He took matters in his own hands and presumed the throne. Some of David's key men such as Joab (military commander) and Abiathar (chief priest) followed Adonijah. Nathan the prophet and Bathsheba quickly plotted a plan to get David to declare Solomon his co-regent (co-king).

Solomon was the one the Lord had chosen to be king next, but Adonijah tried to thwart that plan. It was common for kings as they aged to declare one of their sons to be a co-king. The son could begin taking over key parts of the government so that when his father died, there was a seamless transition of power. David did this with Solomon.

In this lesson we will see some of David's final words to Solomon, David's death, and Solomon's quick actions to solidify his kingdom reign.

I need to point out that the books of 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Chronicles, and 1 & 2 Kings have significant portions that overlap and cover the same events. I am mostly sticking with 1 Kings for the next few lessons. I will draw attention to parts of the Chronicles where they add helpful details. This is good to know because if you read these books on their own, you may find yourself confused because the stories seem to jump around back and forth and may not appear to follow a smooth chronological accounting.

I have found this chart helpful to see the chronological ordering of these books. Mind you that this chart is not perfect because we do not know for certain the specific chronological placement of some of these stories. Nonetheless, I think this chart is one of the best I have seen. You can use to help you read the Samules, Kings, and Chronicles in as much of an order of events as possible.

<https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/chart-13-02/>

David's Final Charge to Solomon

1 Kings 2:1-9

As David's time drew near, he gave his son some final parting words and commands to help him do well as the king over God's people. In verse 3 he directly charges Solomon to do his duty by walking in the ways of God, keeping His statutes and commandments, "according to what is written in the Law of Moses, so that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn..." This sounds similar to Gods charge to Joshua as he was taking over the lead of Israel (Joshua 1).

Furthermore, in verse 4 David says Solomon must be careful to follow the Lord's Word and obey the Law so God will fulfill what He promised David that if David's sons follow God, then David will never lack a son on the throne.

What kind of example do you think David set for Solomon?

In verses 5 through 9 David gives Solomon final charge concerning two of his enemies: Joab and Shimei. Joab was David's top military commander for nearly all of his reign. Joab was also David's nephew. However, we have seen that Joab was a violent man of bloodshed. Joab had killed people to retain his position as David's top commander. Joab also killed David's son Absalom during the coup.

David specifically points out that Joab is to be held accountable for his murders of two men, Abner and Amasa. Abner was Saul's top military commander and after Saul's death, Abner helped Ish-Bosheth, Saul's son, reign over Israel as a competing king to David's rise to the throne. There was a civil war between David's force as Abner's. However, Abner defected to David and agreed to help David take Ish-Bosheth's portion of the kingdom.

David made a covenant of peace with Abner, and they joined forces. 2 Samuel 3:26-30 records that Joab went out to meet Abner, without David's knowledge. When Joab took Abner to the side privately as if to deliver a special message from David, Joab stabbed Abner in the stomach, and he bled out to death. Joab did this as an act of revenge because Abner killed Joab's brother, Asahel, in battle.

Amasa was the commander of Absalom's forces when he revolted against David. Amasa was a mighty man and held considerable influence in Judah. David knew that for him to restore his divided kingdom after the coup, he would need Absalom's military to join his side. In 2 Samuel 19:13, David made a peace treaty with Amasa. He offered him Joab's job. David wanted to demote Joab for his previous disobedience and bloodshed, while making Amasa the top commander of Israel's armed forces.

However, 2 Samuel 20:10-12 records that Joab tricked Amasa by convincing him he held no grudge. Joab went to greet Amasa but secretly with his off-hand, thrust a sword into Amasa's stomach and disemboweled him. Amasa bled out and died in the street. Joab violated David's peace treaty and murdered this man to keep his position. David said to Solomon in 1 Kings 2:6 that he should act with wisdom and do what he thinks is best to Joab, but not to let his old age end in peace.

Next, David warned Solomon about the man Shimei. Shimei is a man from Benjamin, and Saul's relative, who came out to meet David as he was fleeing from Absalom. Shimei cursed David and said God was judging David for his bloodshed against the house of Saul (2 Samuel 16:5-14). After Absalom was killed and David was restored to his throne, Shimei met David again and apologized for his bad behavior (2 Samuel 19:16-23). David swore to Shimei that he would not harm him for his harsh words against David.

David charges Solomon to not leave Shimei unpunished, but to act according to his wisdom.

Why do you think David specifically brought up Joab and Shimei to Solomon before his death?

David Dies

1 Kings 2:10-12

David died and was buried in the City of David, Jerusalem. David's summary reign over Israel was 40 years. He reigned in Hebron for 7 years and from Jerusalem for 33 years. Solomon now official sits on the throne as the king over Israel.

How would you describe the man David was and his reign as king?

Solomon's First Actions as King

Adonijah Executed

1 Kings 2:13-25

Adonijah secretly met with Bathsheba and resolved to make peace with Solomon since he recognizes it was the Lord's will that Solomon be king. However, he has only one request. He wants Bathsheba to go to Solomon and ask that Abishag be given to him as a wife. Abishag was the virgin nurse who took care of David on his death bed.

Why do you think Adonijah wants her for himself?

Bathsheba meets with Solomon, and she requests a favor. Solomon agrees to give her anything she asks for. She said in verse 21 she wants Abishag be given to Adonijah as wife. However, king Solomon is not pleased at all with this request. Solomon snaps back at his mother that she might as well have asked for the kingdom to be given over to him while she is at it (v. 22). He mentions David's other enemies as if implying

Bathsheba was asking for a favor for all of the enemies of her husband and his father. Solomon knew that Adonijah had put Bathsheba up to this.

“Then King Solomon swore by the Lord, saying, ‘May God do so to me and more so, if Adonijah has not spoken this word against his own life! Now then, as the Lord lives, who has established me and set me on the throne of David my father, and has made me a house just as He promised, Adonijah certainly shall be put to death today!’” (vv. 23-24).

Why do you think Solomon responded so harshly over this request?

It is possible that Adonijah requested for Abishag because it was his last effort at having something from David as the king. Perhaps Adonijah wanted Abishag purely out of spite to show that he at least had married David’s nurse. Whatever his reasons were, Solomon perceived it as a threat from Adonijah and as if the request was a direct assault on his reign.

Solomon gave orders to Benaiah, the commander of David’s personal guard, to execute Adonijah. Benaiah did so and Adonijah was killed. This move also did away with who might have been one of Solomon’s biggest detractors.

Abiathar Dismissed from the Priesthood

1 Kings 2:26-27

Next, Solomon removed Abiathar from serving as chief priest. He told Abiathar he needed to return home to his own land. Solomon said he deserved to die but he would not kill him since over his tenure he had been at times an ally to David and served well in some ways. Abiathar was an ally to David when he was on the run from Saul. Abiathar also spied for David when Absalom revolted and sent David fleeing. However, Abiathar had a serious lapse in judgment when he decided to follow Joab and join Adonijah’s camp against Solomon’s right to reign (1 Kings 1:7). This also finally fulfilled the word of God against the house of Eli that he would have no remaining family member serve in the priesthood (1 Samuel 2:27-36).

Joab Executed

1 Kings 2:28-35

Joab heard that David had died, and Solomon was official the sole king in Israel. He feared for his life since he had allied himself with Adonijah against Solomon. Joab fled to the tent where the Ark was kept and the altar. He took hold of the horns of the altar.

Why do you think Joab fled to the altar of God and grabbed it?

Solomon ordered Benaiah to execute Joab. When Benaiah ordered Joab to come out from the Tent of God, Joab refused saying he would die there at the altar. Benaiah sent word to Solomon said they had his approval to execute him even while he holds on to the altar of God. Solomon's reasoning in verses 31-33 is worth looking at in detail.

Solomon felt obligated to execute Joab because it would exonerate David's household from the wicked bloodshed of Joab. It is as if Solomon thought that by harboring Joab alive, he would make David's household become complicit in Joab's wicked bloodshed. This was an act on Solomon's part of purging blood guilt out of Israel due to Joab.

Solomon said Joab had shed blood without justification and that the Lord would return blood on his own head because he murdered two men, "more righteous and better than he." Furthermore, Joab did this without David's knowledge and it brought a stain on David's kingdom.

Benaiah followed orders and executed Joab while he was in the tent of God at the altar.

Do you think Solomon was justified to execute Joab?

1 Kings 2:35 says Solomon placed Benaiah as commander over the armed forces in Joab's place. He was one of David's closest confidants and commander over David's personal guard. Solomon also made Zadok the high priest in place of Abiathar. With these moves Solomon solidified his kingdom by placing a commander in office who was loyal and godly. He also strengthened the priesthood by placing Zadok in charge, a godly man who would restore honor to it.

Shimei Executed

1 Kings 1:36-46

After this, Solomon sent for Shimei, the man who had cursed David while he was fleeing Absalom. Solomon agreed to harm Shimei per David's agreement. However, Solomon told him to live as an exile in a certain part of Jerusalem in his own place. If Shimei ever left that part of the territory and crossed the brook at Kidron, then Solomon will consider the agreement void and execute him. Shimei agreed to the terms.

Do you think Solomon's terms were fair?

At the end of three years, Shimei had two servants run away. When they were reported to him that they were in Gath, Shimei saddled his donkey and went out for them.

Solomon heard that Shimei had crossed the territory in violation of the agreement. Therefore, Solomon sent messengers to Shimei and had him brought before him. He reminded him that he had violated the covenant and now his blood was on his own head. Solomon commanded Benaiah to execute him.

Solomon's Kingdom Established

1 Kings 2:36b

The chapter ends with, "And the kingdom was established in the hands of Solomon." While these actions may sound harsh to some, they were in fact actions in keeping with the Law and with the oaths Solomon had agreed to. In a sense, Solomon was purging evil and guilty bloodshed from his land.

What the author also shows us is that young, inexperienced Solomon was proving himself to be a wise, shrewd, fair, and careful king. He had within his first three years solidified his kingdom reign. He is no longer to be seen as the young son of David and Bathsheba, now he is the king over all Israel. David had his place, but he has died, and the show goes on. Solomon is now the main guy and the story shifts from this point in 1 Kings to focus on Solomon's reign.

Conclusion

God was with Solomon even from the start of his reign. We are not even to the famous story yet where God grants him to be the wisest person, yet Solomon already shows he has wisdom. God's king was David, now God's king is Solomon. Solomon will carry Israel into the next era of glory. It will be a time of peace and expansion, but as we will see, Solomon is also not perfect.

Israel will find safety and security in Solomon, but he is not the Savior they long for. Even Solomon will need a Savior.