


## BRILLIANCE TO STUPIDITY 02

### *A Battle For The Throne*

1 Kings 1:1–53


The story of the life of King Solomon begins on the heels of a tragedy. In 2 Samuel 12, Nathan the prophet confronts David on his sin with Bathsheba. King David, who had everything, saw a woman and took her to be his wife. He didn't care that she was another man's wife; he just simply wanted her. The result of that adulterous relationship was a child.

When Nathan confronted David, David repented of his sin before the Lord. Yet, we even know this to be true, even when we repent, there are usually consequences to our sins. The consequence for David and Bathsheba was that their child died. Tragic. Horrific. Terrible.

 *2 Samuel 12:24–25 → “Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her, and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. And the Lord loved him and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.”*

Most historians place David to be about 52 years old at the time when Solomon is born. We know that he sinned greatly, but his response to his sin is what he is even more known for. God calls him a man after His own heart. King David is the greatest king the nation of Israel had known (granted, there was only King Saul before him). He was a great warrior. He protected the name of the Lord against all the enemies of God. It was to David that God promised in 2 Samuel 7 that one of his heirs would sit on the throne for all eternity.

Now fast-forward about 18 years and it appears as though the end is near for King David. This is how the book of 1 Kings begins . . .

 *1 Kings 1:1–4 [read]*

Let me see if I can explain this without getting in trouble. ☺ The legacy of King David is at stake. This account might seem somewhat strange to us, but there is a purpose behind this story. David was old and advanced in years. He was about 70 years old at this time. And he couldn't get warm, no matter how many clothes they put on him. And so, the decision by his servants was to get him warm through an ancient medical practice.

It was not uncommon for someone to be warmed through the body heat of another person. If you are married, you might know this. Maybe you are the one who is hot and tells your spouse to scoot over because they are just giving off too much heat.

Is this what is going on here? Well, maybe. But I think it is actually something more than this. You see, while this might have been an ancient medical practice, it was also common in the ancient world for a king to be judged on his ability to rule and lead based on his sexual vitality. I believe the servants were trying to determine whether the rule of King David was about over or not. I primarily say this because if this has nothing to do with sexuality and is only about getting warm, then it would make no sense for them to conduct a Miss Israel Contest to find a beautiful young woman.

But they did put the word out and conducted a search for a beautiful young woman all throughout the territory of Israel. The thought of the advisors for King David was that this young woman would serve the king and attend to his needs. But also according to vs. 2, that she might lie down in his arms (which literally means his bosom). The purpose was so that he might get warm. They wanted a beautiful woman to lie down with the King to put to test his sexual vitality, to determine if his rule was about over.

The winner of the contest is Abishag the Shunammite. Not much is known about her, although, she will come back up again in chapter 2. The conclusion of the matter is found in vs. 4, when we are told that the young woman serves the king and attends to him, but the King knew her not. That means, he did not know her sexually. The unique test that they gave to King David proved that he was truly on his deathbed.

This brings up a great point for us to consider. Even the greatest king to ever live died. Solomon will say at the end of his life, in the book of Ecclesiastes, that death has no favorites. It gets the rich and the poor. It gets the famous and the nobodies. It will get you and me. You will come to an end of your life someday. No matter what you have accomplished in your past, this is a look at your future—old, advanced in age, cold, and can't get warm in bed.

There is a picture here that we just can't help but see. In contrast to the frailty of King David is another King who is actually one of his extended family . . . Jesus Christ! In First Timothy 1:17, the Apostle Paul remarks that Jesus is the King of the ages and that he is immortal.

Christian, what does that mean to your life that the King in which you serve will never come to a point in His life that He is on His deathbed, old of age, advanced in years, and cold. There will never be an end to the rule of King Jesus. How incredible is that? His rule will continue forever and ever. There will never be a serious threat to His throne for He will never give it up. It means He can be trusted and that we can rely on Him in all things.

What this initially tells us is that even though King David was this amazing ruler and fighter, his life was about to come to an end. And obviously people became aware of the test that the servants conducted.

After hearing about the failed test and realizing that his father's rule was just about over, Adonijah steps forward to say that he wants to be king. Adonijah was the 4<sup>th</sup> son that was born to David. Amnon was the oldest son. In 2 Samuel 13, we are told that he lusted after his half-sister, Tamar, and raped her. Tamar's brother, Absalom, then killed Amnon because of that sin against Tamar. So he's out of the picture.

Next in line is Kileab, which is presumed to be dead because he disappears from the biblical narrative. All that is said about him is that he was the 2<sup>nd</sup> born son to David. The 3<sup>rd</sup> born son was Absalom, who killed Amnon. He also is the one who tried to take over the Kingdom from David in 2 Samuel 18 and was killed during the revolt. This leaves us with Adonijah. Next in line. And he is more than willing to step forward to be king.

Vs. 5 drips with pride. He exalts himself and says, "I will be king." He even goes so far as to create his own entourage. Notice if you will, that he creates for himself chariots and horsemen and 50 men to run in front of him. What are those men to do? They were to be announcers that someone special is about to come.

This reminds me of just a couple weeks ago at the death of Whitney Houston, her ex-husband, Bobby Brown, showed up at the funeral but didn't go in because he was told there was not enough room in the 2<sup>nd</sup> row for his entire entourage. Really?

There is obviously far more that is needed to be king than the prideful statement of "I will be king" and creating an entourage. His lust for power and greed are not the ingredients of godly leadership of God's people. I think one of the most interesting parts of this story is that Adonijah's name actually means, "The Lord is Master." He is acting as if He is the master, not the Lord.

He is saying "King Me. Look to Me. I want to be ruler." We know that this is not a problem that is only true of Adonijah. It was the story of Adam & Eve in the garden when they took the fruit because they bought the lie of Satan that in the moment they ate it they would be like God! It is the story of all of humanity who longs to do things for themselves, to put their own life as the priority in all things. It is the story of Diotrophes in 3<sup>rd</sup> John 9, who John says, "likes to put himself first."

Can you imagine that being written about you in the Scriptures for everyone to read? Of course not. We would be humiliated. We would hate it. But if we are honest with ourselves, there is a bit of the spirit of Adonijah in each one of us. We have in our sinful flesh this desire that people be impressed with us. In order to do that, we often create and move conversations with people to focus on what we have done or who we know.

Have you ever been in that conversation with someone who obviously just wants to talk about their accomplishments in life? It is like you are on a job interview while your grabbing a burger. They list out all the famous people they know, all the great things they have done in life and you are just like, “it would be cool if you were at least interested in my life to some degree.”

The desire for people to be impressed with us is found even in the little things of life, like the clothes we wear or our hair style (I just chose to go simple). As if some label make you that much cooler than someone else. It is sad when we care more about what people think of us than who we truly are before our God.

And this lust for power is seen in the people that Adonijah chooses to be with him. In vs. 7, we are told that he conferred with Joab & Abiathar and that they followed him and helped him.

*Joab*—He was famously known as the commander of Israel’s army. For much of his life, he was David’s right hand man. But when Absalom tried to overthrow David, it was Absalom that quieted the revolt and actually killed Absalom. Even though that was a very loyal move, it devastated David. Joab did not like the fact that David mourned over his son being killed. It was not long after this that David made a decree that Amasa was to replace Joab as the commander of the army of Israel (2 Samuel 19:13).

*Abiathar*—He was a priest who was an equal with Zadok, who was also a priest. But in time, Zadok was elevated to the High Priest over Abiathar.

For Joab & Abiathar, joining Adonijah was a power play. They were both on the outside of the power and authority and this was their attempt to get back in. This is politics 101. Never underestimate the power of your jealousy and where it will lead you. It will lead you to make decisions that make absolutely no sense and we will see later, that this decision cost them their lives. There was no way they were going to win this one, but they thought they could.

As Adonijah makes a claim to the throne, he decides to throw his own coronation ceremony. Can you imagine that? It sort of reminds me of the movie, *The Apostle*, where Robert Duval baptizes himself as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Really? He goes just outside of Jerusalem to En-Rogel (only several hundred yards outside of the city). He sacrificed sheep, oxen, and cattle. He invites all of his brothers, the king’s sons and all the royal officials of Judah. This was a real party that he is throwing for his own glory.

As we are told about this party, we are also told about who was not invited or not involved in the self-proclaimed coronation ceremony. In vs. 8, we are told that Zadok the priest did not follow. As I mentioned, he was the High Priest at the time. Benaiah, also didn’t follow this rogue want-to-be king. He was the captain of the King’s bodyguard (think the head of the secret service).

As well, Nathan the prophet did not come and even in vs. 10, we are told that he specifically was not invited. He was at the time, the true prophet in Israel. We are also told that Shimei and Rei and the Mighty Men of David were not following Adonijah and they were not invited to be part of the party.

And then at the end of vs. 10, we should take special note that Solomon wasn't invited. All of the brothers were invited except Solomon. Intentionally not being invited to this sort of party was the acknowledgment that he was the enemy. The implication, which we will see even from the lips of Solomon's mother, is that if Adonijah does indeed become king, Solomon is a dead man!

There was one other person who was not part of this ceremony. Who do you think should be part of the coronation of the next King? How about the current King? The implication certainly is that he was not invited, as he didn't know what was going on. But even more than that, and here is a great word to all of you parents and children, in vs. 6, we are told that David never at any time displeased Adonijah.

For all the great things we talk about David, one thing is for sure; he was not a great father to all his children. When it says that he never displeased him by asking him "why have you done this," it means that he never pressed him or confronted him on his sin. Parents, we are supposed to do this. We are supposed to correct. We are supposed to stay involved in the life of our child and keep them accountable and responsible for their actions. When we do this, we help them see their sin, and more importantly, we help them see their need for a Savior.

Parents—while I think it is cool that you are your child's "friend", you are much more than that. You are their "authority." And some of you are probably so concerned about losing a relationship with your child that you fail to point out in their life when they go wayward from the ways of Christ. At that point, you are failing, and might I add, you are probably contributing to the selfish desires of their heart that wants them to be king or queen in all things. The only way to point them to Jesus is to help them realize they are not on the throne.

I am not saying you are mean or rude to your children. But they certainly should know that you are in charge. We have a saying in our family. I will tell them that I am in charge of them. And they will quickly point out that God is in charge of me. ☺ Right. To the children, one commentator put it like this:

*"Children need to understand this as well. If your parents make you angry sometimes, it is probably because they love you enough to discipline you. If they ask, 'Why did you do this?' or 'Where have you been?' do not shut them out. Do not decide to do whatever you please. And do not say that it is none of their business. It is their business. It is their business because it is your business, and it happens to be their business to help you do your business with*

*God. Otherwise, you will grow up to be like Adonijah, living for your own pleasure, perhaps, but never receiving the blessing of God. If you crown yourself the king, or the queen, eventually your life will turn out to be a royal disappointment!”<sup>1</sup>*

And in our story, we have a problem. Adonijah has made a play at the throne. What will happen? The next section finds itself broken down into three different speeches. The first speech we have is Nathan to Bathsheba . . .

📖 *1 Kings 1:11–14 [read]*

This was a life and death issue for Solomon and Bathsheba. Nathan knows that Bathsheba has more access to the king than he does, so he coordinates this plan where she would go to the king and talk to him about what is happening and then after she does that, he would enter and confirm everything that she has said. And she does it. This leads to the second speech, which is Bathsheba talking to David.

📖 *1 Kings 1:15–21 [read]*

There are some who view what Nathan and Bathsheba are doing here as the manipulation of an old man in his old age. They make this claim based upon their claim that David had told them that Solomon would be made king. Many point out that we have no biblical record of David telling Bathsheba that he was going to make Solomon king. But we have something greater. When David was probably in his late 60’s and nearing the end of his life, he wanted to build a house for the Lord. God tells him no, but gives him some very specific instruction on what is going to happen . . .

📖 *1 Chronicles 22:9–10* → *“Then he called for Solomon his son and charged him to build a house for the Lord, the God of Israel. David said to Solomon, ‘My son, I had it in my heart to build a house to the name of the Lord my God. But the word of the Lord came to me saying, ‘You have shed much blood and have waged great wars. You shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed so much blood before me on the earth. Behold, a son shall be born to you who shall be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his surrounding enemies. For his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. He shall build a house for my name. He shall be my son, and I will be his father, and I will establish his royal throne in Israel forever.’”*

This happened several years before David is old and about to die. This means, Solomon knew he was to be king. It also brings to light why Adonijah didn’t invite Solomon to his party. And it definitely brings to light the actions of Nathan & Bathsheba. They believed the promises of God and were acting as

---

<sup>1</sup> Ryken, Philip Graham. *Reformed Expository Commentary: 1 Kings*. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2011), 14.

if the promises of God meant something in their life. We might do well to learn and follow in their example. The promises of God should indeed move us to action, don't you think? There are some things in the Bible that God has promised and instead of fighting for its truth, we try to circumvent it. Let me just give one example since it has everything to do with the spirit of Adonijah.

📖 *1 Peter 5:5–7* → “. . . God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”

Instead of fighting for that promise that God will exalt us in His time; instead of casting all of our anxieties on him, knowing that he cares for us; instead of humbling ourselves—we tend to take control of our situations in a spirit of pride.

Back to the story, when Bathsheba enters humbly into David's chambers, she informs him of things that he doesn't know. In vs. 20, she appeals to his royal sense of duty when she says that “the eyes of all Israel are on you.” It is like the faithful wife that says, “You need to step up and be a man in this and make a final decision.”

At the end of her conversation with him, she reminds him what is going to happen to her and Solomon if he doesn't step in and do something. They will be counted as offenders, meaning enemies, meaning death. It is only as she is finishing that now Nathan makes his way into the room and we find our third speech, this time Nathan talking to David.

📖 *1 Kings 1:22–27* [read]

Nathan simply asks one main question of David: “Have you said Adonijah shall reign after me and he shall sit on my throne?” This obviously incites some action on David's part.

📖 *1 Kings 1:28–31* [read]


I find it somewhat interesting that when Bathsheba enters the first time, he can barely get a word out in vs. 16—“what do you desire?” But when he calls her in the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, after hearing about the events of Adonijah, he is moved to radical and decisive action. What changed David from having no energy to passion? It was the last final thought about what was going to happen to the kingdom when he was gone.

It made me think this past week, what stirs my energy? I know for me, my energy was stirred this past week because pitchers and catchers reported to spring training. I love baseball. I just can't get enough of it. If you didn't know, I am a huge Cubs fan. I go so far as to have a flag with a big W on it, a

Cubs tradition is to fly this flag after ever win & I hang it outside of my house after every win. That's a fan (as well, being a Cubs fan is why I have earned the right to mock Cleveland sports because while you suffer from 60 years of ineptitude, I suffer from 100+ years). I saw pictures of guys warming up at spring training this week. And it is that time of the year when I hope. I hope that maybe this could be our year. I am easily stirred to emotion through Cubs baseball, but also other sports. I love my kids sports. I loved watching KU beat Missouri yesterday in college basketball.

I am moved through many things. But it made me think this past week: I wonder sometimes if what stirs us to action actually reveals the real love in our life. Am I or Should I or Could I be stirred to action for the defense of the name of Jesus and His Kingdom? If not, maybe that reveals more about me than I want to think it does. And maybe it reveals more about you as well.


So, what is David going to do about it? He makes the promise to Bathsheba that he is going to make sure Solomon becomes king that day. Bathsheba bows once again in humility to her husband and king. Then the plan gets put in motion.

 *1 Kings 1:32–35 [read]*

The plan is that Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah (a friend of the King) would escort Solomon down to Gihon, which was the major water source for Jerusalem, located on the lower slope of the eastern side of the city as it descends into the Kidron Valley.

To get down there, Solomon was to ride the royal mule, which doesn't sound like much to those of you who like to play donkey basketball. But it actually was a symbol of the royal office. Once they are down there, the priest and the prophet were to anoint him with oil. Because of the location of this event, it would have been in view of all the city of Jerusalem. They were then to blow loud trumpets and then escort him back up to the city to sit on the royal throne.

Adonijah's self-coronation was private according to his own will. Solomon's was public not according to his own will. In fact, have you noticed that Solomon has done nothing throughout this entire story. And I want you to think about this: He is 18 years old at this point. And nowhere in this account do we see him pushing his agenda. He is being ushered into the kingship through several God-fearing men and women. And the response to this plan?

 *1 Kings 1:36–37 [read]*

Amen! While Benaiah listened to the words of his king, he saw the hand of His sovereign God behind it. The men did exactly what David had told them to do and the outcome was truly amazing.

📖 *1 Kings 1:38–40 [read]*

The rejoicing was so great that the earth was split by the noise. Imagine that? As I read that, I couldn't help but to think about being at a stadium when something amazing happens. The crowd erupts and it is just ecstatic. Now, imagine that you were not at the stadium, but just a half-mile away at your own party when all of a sudden you hear the stadium erupt. You know something amazing is happening, but not sure what it is.

📖 *1 Kings 1:41 [read]*

In literature, this is what is called *dramatic irony*. That is when the reader of the story (us) knows something the character in the story does NOT yet know. But he will soon find out.

📖 *1 Kings 1:42–48 [read]*

Talk about a party crusher! Jonathan, Abiathar's son arrives and explains the reason for all the commotion. I love it when Adonijah says, "yea, come on in, I am sure you bring good news." Well, actually I don't. David made Solomon king.

I also find it interesting that this young man, Jonathan, is crashing the coronation party for Adonijah and the only one that he calls king is David and Solomon. How do you think the people or Adonijah responded to this?

📖 *1 Kings 1:49–53 [read]*

I just have this picture in my mind that all the people there are like, "well, thanks for the food Adonijah, but we are out of here." And then they quietly sneak back into the city. They didn't want to be known as being associated with the coronation of Adonijah, that would mean death to them. It was every man for himself at this point.

Adonijah was scared to death at what just happened. What do you think he thinks is going to happen to him? He thinks he is about to die. In vs. 50, we are told that Adonijah took hold of the horns of the altar. In Exodus 21:12–14, we are told that this is something that a man could do to save his life if he had committed manslaughter. This really didn't apply to him at this point, but I think he was panicking. I think he knew he was probably going to be a dead man and couldn't think of anything else to do.

How does Solomon respond? With mercy. He says that nothing will happen to Adonijah if he proves himself to be a worthy man. The story at this point leaves us hanging as to what will happen to him. We will find out in just a few short weeks. But he comes down from the altar and in vs. 53, he leaves Solomon's presence by paying homage (probably meaning bowing down

before him). How different is that from the beginning of the story when he exalted himself to be king. We have been talking about it all the way through this chapter. But when we set ourselves up to be king, the timer is started. It will run out eventually, if not in this life, it certainly will after we die.


You see, while this is an interesting story about the battle for the throne in Jerusalem that took place probably about 960 B.C., it should remind us that there is a daily battle going on for the throne of our life. And there are basically two options. Either you can be on the throne or you can allow Jesus to be Your King.

Many people choose to keep themselves on the throne. Their life is lived for themselves. It's all about them.

**Illustration: American Theologian, Frank Sinatra—My Way**

- And now, the end is near, and so I face the final curtain. My friends, I'll say it clear; I'll state my case of which I'm certain. I've lived a life that's full - I've travelled each and every highway. And more, much more than this, I did it my way.
- Regrets? I've had a few, but then again, too few to mention. I did what I had to do and saw it through without exemption. I planned each charted course - Each careful step along the byway, and more, much more than this, I did it my way.
- Yes, there were times, I'm sure you knew, When I bit off more than I could chew, But through it all, when there was doubt, I ate it up and spit it out. I faced it all and I stood tall and did it my way.
- I've loved, I've laughed and cried, I've had my fill - my share of losing. But now, as tears subside, I find it all so amusing. To think I did all that, and may I say, not in a shy way - Oh no. Oh no, not me. I did it my way.
- For what is a man? What has he got? If not himself - Then he has naught. To say the things he truly feels and not the words of one who kneels. The record shows I took the blows and did it my way.

That's the spirit of Adonijah in your life in the battle for the throne of your life. Are you going to do it "your way?" Or you can do it "God's way." And let me just tell you, each of you will . . . let me emphasize this as much as I can . . . every one of us WILL EVENTUALLY DO IT GOD'S WAY!

 *Philippians 2:9-10* → "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Why will we bow our knee to Jesus? Why is Jesus so glorious? Well, do you see back in vs. 39 when the people were screaming, "Long Live King Solomon." It was the tradition of the times that the King would be protected

in all things. They never wanted to put the King in harms way. They wanted him to live on and on.

But Jesus, instead of being protected, Jesus gave up and came to this earth to die. I can just well imagine that the enemies of God were exalting that day when Jesus died. They were screaming, "The King is Dead." But three short days later, Jesus emerged from the grave with the anthem "Long Live King Jesus." It's an anthem that continues to this day! Long Live King Jesus. And it is an anthem that you will bow and declare at some point.

It is either now in salvation and worship or in eternity in condemnation and terror. My plea for you is to give up on your battle for the throne!