1 Kings 1:1–7

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading

> *Now king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat. Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin... and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat. So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not. Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? And he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom. And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped him.*

Introduction — Kings and Chronicles

The book of Kings, sometimes called the Third Book of the Kings when Samuel and Kings are counted together, opens with the word now — Darby renders it and — marking continuity with what came before. This book brings us to the height of the kingdom's glory under Solomon and then to its drastic fall from chapter 12 onward. The difference between Kings and Chronicles is worth noting: Samuel and Kings lay before us the irresponsible side, including faults and sins that are not spared. Chronicles, by contrast, gives only as much of the failure as is absolutely necessary for a coherent account, because there the Spirit's

purpose is to set forth the grace of God in what He brings in. It takes both David and Solomon together to portray the coming and kingdom of the Lord Jesus: David the man of war, Solomon the prince of peace.

Abishag and the Virgin Daughter of Zion

Abishag the Shunammite is more than a historical detail. The concept of the virgin daughter of Zion runs through the Old Testament at critical junctures — in Zechariah 9 at the entry of the king into Jerusalem, among others — and speaks of God's thought about Jerusalem as the great center of His choice, the people who are to be His joy and delight under the reign of the Lord Jesus. The virgin character is inward: it speaks of devotion, of not having turned aside to another, of that which is holy before God — as the Apostle Paul would present the Corinthians as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2-4).

David could not get heat from external coverings. Heat is not conserved that way. What he needed was a source of heat from within — and this is found in Abishag. The kingly office is to pass now to Solomon, the type of the Prince of Peace, and what speaks of the virgin daughter of Zion ministers to the king in this transition. Later, when Adonijah asks for Abishag, it costs him his life — because what would the virgin daughter of Zion have to do with a usurper to the throne? Solomon recognised immediately what the claim amounted to. Adonijah had never judged himself, and it showed.

I Will Be King — The Character of Adonijah

Verse 5 gives us Adonijah's own word: *I will be king.* The flesh exalting itself. The man of sin in 2 Thessalonians 2 opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God. The willful king of Daniel who does according to his own will. Adonijah has the same antichrist character — taking the place that belonged to God's anointed, to the one God had already designated. He was following the

pattern of his brother Absalom: the same chariots, the same horsemen, the same fifty men to run before him. He had learned nothing from what happened to Absalom.

His father had never said to him, *Why hast thou done so?* That question should have been asked when Adonijah was small — it was the moment for a father to address what was coming out of the boy's heart. Never asked then, and never asked as he grew. A son who has not been grieved or restrained at any time will grieve his father in the end. Eli spoke to his sons, though God said he restrained them not. David did not even speak. The result is this chapter.

Two Men — Joab and Abiathar

Adonijah's two allies in verse 7 are revealing. Joab was David's general, a nephew of the king (Zeruiah was David's sister), a political operator who saw in David's weakness an opportunity to back the most likely successor and preserve his own position. He had blood on his hands — two men killed not in war — and that matter had never been rightly settled. Abiathar the priest had the natural claim to the high priesthood as the last survivor of his generation from the house of Eli — but Eli was from the line of Ithamar, and God's covenant of the everlasting priesthood had been given to Phinehas, son of Eleazar. Abiathar was of the wrong line. God had pronounced sentence on the house of Eli. The choice of these two men is the choice of the flesh: the politically useful and the religiously credentialed, with no reference to the mind of God.

When men attach themselves to a cause, they become attached to it. Joab thought he was connecting Adonijah to himself. In reality, the guilt of Adonijah's rebellion attached itself to those who helped him. Solomon was a wise man and he knew it. Neither walked away when things did not go Adonijah's way.

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