

1 Kings 1

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Preacher: John McIntosh

[0 : 00] Would you turn with me for a short time this evening to the chapter we read, 1 Kings chapter 1. And to the attempted taking over of the throne by Adonijah.

But before proceeding I want to say a word specially to the young people, to the boys and girls. First of all, it's really good to see so many of you here this evening.

And I want you to listen carefully because while that was a long chapter there's I think a lot of important information in it. Now I want to say something which, and I'm sure you've heard it before and I'm sure you all know it, but it's important to remind ourselves of these things and that's this. There's nothing in the Bible but what is useful to us spiritually. You know you were thinking that was a really exciting story.

Perhaps that's what you were thinking and if that's what we hadn't divided into two, it would have been even more exciting. You know this attempt to take over the crown by Adonijah and the way in which it didn't work out the way Adonijah was hoping.

[1 : 14] And there's all sorts of stories in the Old Testament and in the New Testament too, which are really exciting and interesting. But it's not just to be exciting and interesting that they're there.

They're there to be helpful. Remember when Jesus told the parables? It wasn't just nice little stories he was telling the people who he was listening to. He told them for a purpose. Remember, you weren't hearing the sermon this morning, but in the sermon I referred to the parable that Jesus told about the Pharisee and the publican.

It was not just to say about talking about this proud man and this humble man who had gone to the temple to worship. Jesus was making a very serious point about people who thought that they were better than others spiritually.

Now, even in a chapter like this, with all the ins and outs of what was happening, it's there for a purpose. It's there to instruct us. It's there to help us.

It's there to tell us something that God wants us all to know. So when you read the stories in the Bible, it doesn't matter what you're reading about, who you're reading about, Moses or David or Joshua or one of the prophets, it doesn't matter.

[2 : 24] Always think, what is this story here telling me? That God wants me to know and wants me to act on. Because remember, a number of times Jesus said, it's not just hearing what's in the Bible that counts, that pleases God, it's actually doing what the Bible says.

And what I'm wanting to do this evening is to look at this chapter and see what the Bible is saying to us through, what God is saying to us through the events in this chapter at the beginning of 1 Kings. Now, these events took place probably in 970 BC. Dates sometimes feel a little bit flexible. Might have been three or four or five years either way, but 970 BC is a fair enough date. And what actually is happening here is that the kingdom of Israel, which remember includes Israel and Judah, is really threatened.

It's really under threat. And it's under threat for a number of reasons. First of all, it's under threat because David seems decrepit.

[3 : 36] David is a very old man, not as weak and unable to act as it seems right at the beginning of the chapter he is, because at verse 28 he suddenly comes to life, like the old David in the demand of decision and action.

But the kingdom is under threat because on the one hand, there's old David, no longer much strength, not able really to be aware of what's happening in his kingdom.

There's this man, Adonijah, one of David's sons. Now, Adonijah is everything that David is not, at this point. He has ambition.

Verse 5. Now, Adonijah, his mother was Haggith, put himself forward and said, I will be king. Adonijah has style. Now, second part of that verse, verse 5.

So he got chariots and horses ready with 50 men to run ahead of him. So he's got style. He, as if you like, got image too. Verse 6.

[4 : 42] He was also very handsome. And there's an interesting reference, he was born next after Absalom. And remember, Absalom was the best looking of all David's sons.

And he's got position. Adonijah was born next after Absalom. Next in line. And he's got support. Adonijah conferred with some of the most important people in the kingdom.

Joab, the son of Zeruijah, the commander of the army. Abiath the priest. And lots of other people too. So he's got military support.

He's got religious support. Everything seems to be going for Adonijah. And at one level, all this is put as just plain straightforward matter of fact.

But, you need to look more carefully. Often in scripture, here's something for the young people, often you've got to think about what the Bible is saying, not just to read it and read it and say, ah, I understand.

[5 : 45] Sometimes you need to think, what is the Bible really saying here? And this is what you've got to do here. Because the writer is actually putting up re-sign saying, ah-ah, Adonijah isn't all only positive.

He's saying, you've got to think about Adonijah and think negatively about Adonijah too. Adonijah's fine looks, reminds the people who read this, of Absalom in 2 Samuel chapter 14.

All those people running before him, reminds you of what Absalom had done. Being tall and good-looking and decisive, also is intended to remind the reader about Saul.

Have a look at 1 Samuel chapters 9 and 10 when you go home. Very strong parallel here between Saul and Adonijah. And remember David's oldest brother, Eliab.

Remember, Samuel the prophet went to anoint the successor to Saul. And the Lord told him that the successor, the next king, was going to come from this family.

[7 : 05] And he went down and the sons of David's father were all called together. And Samuel sees the first one, the eldest, Eliab, and he's tall and good-looking.

And Samuel says, surely this must even happen. And he wasn't. And he went through the whole family until finally, young David, probably just a teenager, at that point.

Not that much older than some of you young people. And he came and was looking after the sheep. And the Lord said to Samuel, that's the man. Anoint him.

So you see, when you actually think about, carefully about what the Scripture is saying, there's always things which aren't necessary, or very often things which aren't necessary on the surface.

All these royals, or potential royals, were all physically impressive.

but they arise as disasters, or they were rejected by God. And I think, really, there's a further hint as well. If you look at 2 Samuel, chapter 13, Adonijah's, shall we say, light view of discipline, his determination to do his own thing, placed him in the same category as Amnon, who was such a disaster.

[8 : 25] So Adonijah, if you like, is low on brains, and he's low on restraint, although his glands tend to run away with him.

So, what can we make of all this? Well, I think there's a number of things which we need to highlight. First of all, the Kingdom of God, or shall we say, the Church of God, frequently passes through perilous moments.

The Old Testament, there were all sorts of perilous moments like this. The death of Joseph, what was going to happen to the children of Israel, that was one. The death of Moses, that was another potential disaster area.

It wasn't, of course, because Joshua replaced Joseph at the Lord's command. Burial of Joshua, that was a real crisis, because very shortly after Joshua died, Israel sunk into the worship of the Baals. So, that's the way it was with the children of Israel. That's the way it so often is with the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the way it so often is with congregations of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[9 : 39] Now, we really have to think about the situation that we're in. Think about the context. We are living in a society which is, shall we say, morally, pretty much in decline.

Now, we're in a society where morals seem to be all relative. It doesn't matter really about absolute truth or absolute morality.

If you like the experience, then do it. That's really what so much in our society, so many people in our own society, what they've been told, what they say, and how they act.

And we're living in a world which where there's all sorts of moral and ethical upheaval. you only have to really listen to one lot of television news or read one daily newspaper and you see it. Go to war about Iraq or Afghanistan. What about Darfur where hundreds of thousands of people are being persecuted and many, many of them dying? And because it's too difficult, the international community says, well, we can't do anything about that.

[10:40] So, that's the sort of world we're living in. And the world is around the Church looking for inconsistencies, looking for blunders, and behind the world in general there's the devil himself.

And what you can be absolutely sure about with the devil is that he's got that crowbar of his that he can put it like this, and if there's any clacks in the Church, you can rely on the devil to be putting the crowbar in and trying to get things further apart and break up the unity and establishment of Christ's Church.

That's the situation we're in. It's not that dissimilar, I would suggest, to the sort of situation that the Kingdom of Israel was in, as David was in decline in his last years and things, there's Abhinijah wanting to push himself forward and wanting to seize power.

Church is often in situations like that, in crises like that, on the edge of disaster apparently, and what happens? Well, the hand of God takes it through.

And can I say really that the central argument of this chapter, I think, is that the Lord maintains his Kingdom in all its perilous moments. And I think, in all honesty, you can apply that also to a congregational situation and to your congregational situation.

[11:56] The whole Church knows about your congregational situation, how long you've been vacant, the disappointments that you've had, and so on. But let me say this, the key thing, first of all, that I think has to be underlined and must be in the forefront of all your minds, is that you put your trust in the Lord because he will take his people through.

He will take his people through just like he took his Kingdom through here in 1 Kings chapter 1. I think there's a second thing too, and it's something which ties in with something that's in the New Testament as well.

And the question is this, who really is qualified for leadership in this Kingdom of Israel that we have depicted here. Now, the writer of 1 Kings sees Adonijah as unqualified for leadership for one fairly clear reason.

And in all honesty, in our present day, present political situation in our country, I suggest that there are parallels. Lust for power and position are not to be seen as leadership qualities for God's people.

that's not the way it is. It's often been the case in the Church of Christ that disastrous things have happened because individuals have had an over esteem of themselves.

[13:24] And this is not aimed at you as a congregation in any way particularly at all. I'm making a general point here. John had the problem, faced the problem in the New Testament, third letter of John, verses 9 to 10, where John talks about a man called Diotrephes who loves to be first.

There have been problems caused in churches down through the centuries by people who love to be first. You know, the people who should be, who are qualified for leadership in the church are those who don't want to be first.

That's what I think Scripture says. If you look at 1 Timothy chapter 3, Paul's qualifications for elders and for deacons and for that matter for their wives, are almost totally stressed godliness, not giftedness, and character rather than skills.

And can I suggest that's something we should always be thinking about? We should be careful about it first of all for ourselves because one of the most basic sins as I think we all know is the sin of pride.

We all tend to think that we are better than we really are. Even in our prayers, isn't it the case that sometimes we find ourselves making excuses for our slip-ups and for our sins?

[14:47] Excusing ourselves and we should be making an absolutely free and frank confession. If you find yourself praying to the Lord, forgive me for this sin, because Lord, I couldn't help it or because the temptation was so strong or because I didn't have any other alternative or if you find yourself making any excuse for yourself as you pray, confessing your sins, stop.

Confess your sin freely and frankly and be like David who says it was mine. It was all mine. That I think is something that is very important.

You know, here's something for the young people. I was reading, this was a couple of years ago I read this. There was a split in the church in America. It became a split in the denomination apparently.

And people were really worried why it had happened. And you know apparently what they traced it back to? At a congregational lunch, a wee boy who was sitting beside an elder had more ham in his sandwich than the elder did.

That was what the official denominational investigation found. was the thing that was the thing they traced it back to. And that sounds improbable, I know, but it's such small, small things which can cause so many problems in churches and oftentimes it's because people are putting themselves first or regarding themselves as having greater value than others.

[16:17] I think that's a second lesson if you like from Adonijah. The writer for the first king sees Adonijah as unqualified for leadership because he lusts for power.

That's something our politicians should think about as well. And Paul certainly sees people putting themselves forward as not a qualification for office.

But that doesn't mean to say that you must say no, no, I've got no skills, I can do nothing in the church because the next thing I want to say makes that perfectly clear that you shouldn't see that. The Lord has given his people gifts.

Every single Christian believer has gifts of some sort. You young people, if you're trusting in the Lord Jesus, if you're relying on him to take you from your sins, there's things that you can do in the church.

Think about it and pray about it. No, it might only be something like taking a bowl of sugar rum to the older people perhaps who aren't able to walk around and get it themselves. That may be something you can do.

[17:21] There's always something that every single Christian believer has been given by God to enable them to do in the church. So the first thing then that we need to note is that God's kingdom may be threatened but God will take them through.

They must trust in him, not in their own strength. Can I suggest probably that the first ten verses really are making that sort of point when they're put in context with the rest.

Then after verse eleven there's a change. And verses eleven to twenty-seven are about the servants who support the kingdom. First of all, Nathan.

Nathan the prophet. Remember, Nathan the prophet is the man who went, I'm sure the young people probably remember about this, remember when David sinned and committed adultery without Bathsheba and went and got her husband killed.

And then Nathan the prophet went and told a parable if you like about the wee lamb. The rich man, remember, he had huge herd. But late at night a friend came and he wanted to make him a meal.

[18:32] What does he do? He goes next door and he takes, he presumably steals the wee pet lamb of the next door neighbour. and gives the friend who derives that.

David was outraged. And he said, tell me who he is and I'll have him executed. And Nathan the prophet, remember this was a brave, brave thing to do, said, you're the man.

That was Nathan. Here's Nathan again. Nathan decides that something has to be done. And he comes up with this plan. Bathsheba, he gets to go to David, and then just after Bathsheba is told David what's happening, Nathan himself arrives.

So here you've got, here's David shivering and vegetating, I suppose we could say, and Adonijah decides to present Israel with a petter confflit, he's taken over the throne, too late for anybody to do anything, too late for David to change his mind or anything like that.

That's what Adonijah is going to do. And actually it's really crafty what Adonijah is doing. he doesn't invite Nathan and he doesn't invite the captain of David's bodyguard Benaiah and his officers and he doesn't invite Solomon to the meal because in accordance with the practice of the time, and it's still practice in the Middle East apparently, if you don't eat with the person, if you don't invite them to eat with you, you don't necessarily have to bother about keeping them alive.

[20:01] If Nathan and Benaiah and the officers and Solomon had been at that meal that Adonijah threw, he couldn't have had them executed afterwards because that would have been an appalling cultural crime.

So he doesn't have them. So you can see Adonijah's getting things set up so that he can have these potential opponents executed, keep them out of the way.

And Nathan's role is crucial. It's Nathan who stands in the gap again. One non-royal servant makes the difference and preserves the kingdom.

It was Nathan who did it. It was Nathan. Now what's the text, what's our chapter telling us here? Well, it's not saying to everybody, become my Nathan, you know, who goes and confronts the authorities, puts them on the spot, that sort of thing.

But I think it's he saying that one service in Christ's kingdom has real dignity and that one can never tell how crucial the labour, the work, the commitment of one servant may be.

[21 : 20] Now that's important. That's important not just in the great wide things of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, that's important in congregational life too.

Every one of you here who are believers, you do not know what your particular small service you may be wanting to say, how important it might be.

You do not know. But there's one underlying principle and it's this. if we have a Lord who remembers cuts of water given in his name, as Jesus says in Mark chapter 9, a Lord who remembers that is not going to think likely of whatever faithful service we can render him, whether it's great or small.

And can I suggest that when a congregation has a vacancy, that's something that should be remembered. I'm not saying this applies to you, but there are congregations up and down the land, throughout the whole world, who go to sleep when there's a vacancy.

And they in effect say, we don't have a minister, we can't do anything. That's not the way it is. Israel was without an effective ruler. And Nathan, by what he did, saved the kingdom, humanly speaking.

[22 : 47] So I want to emphasize really at a time like this to encourage you to bear in mind that all you people who belong to this congregation, you have a role.

Christ's people always can serve him. And we all have an obligation to seek to be understanding, to be discerning what it is.

I think one of the things which is really, I'll say this again, I think I was going to say it later, but I'll say it here. One of the things which is really quite striking is that the vast majority of this chapter is to do with people doing things for the kingdom.

The Lord's in control, the Lord maintains his kingdom through the difficult crises. things. But he does it through people who are active and who are committed and who do things.

The Lord defends his church through servants who support his church. The Lord extends his church through people who are working at this great task of evangelism.

[24 : 05] And there's no holiday from evangelism. we all must be seeking to witness as effectively as we can all the time. We all need to be thinking about how we can strengthen the fellowship of our congregation all the time.

Those of you who are students, you're called, those of you who are Christian believers, you're called on all the time to be thinking about who you can lead to Christ, how you can give a better witness to those who you are studying with and living with.

That's the way it is for all God's people. And you know, that's one of the things which I think distinguishes a congregation going nowhere from a congregation going in the right direction and making advances in the work of the kingdom.

It's full of people. A congregation which is making advances is full of people who are supporting and serving the Lord's cause, his kingdom, through the life and witness of their congregation.

That's verses 11 and 27. Our attention is drawn to the servants who support. And it's not just Nathan. It's the other ones as well that are mentioned.

[25 : 17] And can I sort of make a third point? Because verses 28 to 40, I think, focus on the zeal of those servants which saves the kingdom. It's zeal which serves the kingdom.

Commitment if you want, but I think zeal is a stronger word. enthusiasm also comes into it. You know, when David enters, sorry, when Bathsheba enters in verse 16, in Hebrew, David only gets out two syllables.

You know, what it actually says, what is it that you want, that's really reading a lot more into what David says than it's actually in the text. Literally, he says, what to you?

I suppose probably, I think possibly the best translation of that is that David manages to say, it's you. It's really, he's incapable of doing anything. Look at David in verse 28.

Verse 28, then David says, call in Bathsheba. And on it goes from there. The man who could, the king who could only get out two syllables in verse 16 by 28, he's full of energy, calls for Bathsheba. [26 : 23] He reaffirms his oath to her in verses 29 and 30. He calls for Zadok and Nathan and Maniah in verse 32. He gives detailed orders for the coronation of Solomon verses 33 to 35 and it's all done, everybody who's involved in it works, acts with vigor and decisiveness.

That's really what comes over. So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, the Maya son of Jehoiada, the Carathites and the Pelathites, swept down and put Solomon and King David's mule, escorted into Gihon, Zadok the priest takes the horn of oil and they sound the trumpet and all the people shout and it's a mushroom, doesn't it?

Because the Lord's people, David first of all, then his servants, they're all acting with zeal. And you see, we all know, as David knew too, that God was the one who would establish his dynasty, that God was the one who through the outworking of his power was going to bring him the great saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah to Israel.

But here in 1 Kings chapter 1, what is being emphasised is the importance of human responsibility. And from that human responsibility comes assurance that God is with his people.

God had promised David a kingdom and a dynasty, and David realised, in verse 28, that he didn't dare to be apathetic.

[27 : 57] The faith of the kingdom stirred David to action. Now then, what is it that stirs us? What is it that stirs me?

What is it that stirs you? So many people in the Christian church these days, they seem to be more stirred by their house or their car or their football team or whatever it is.

But that's not the way it should be. Can I draw your attention, for example, to the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer? Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Is that not stir us? It should. Surely it should. Every time we think of those words and hear them, there should be something that wells up within us. And we should say that's what I want to be committed to.

The extension of God's kingdom, respect for his name, his will being done, and we're living in a society where that's scary case, isn't it? It's really quite desperate.

[29 : 04] There are perfect places in the whole world where the Lord prays, you can see it happening in a way that sadly we guess we do. Can I draw your attention to that?

It's really, really interesting I think what's happening here. Adonijah's quest for the throne is met by Nathan's vigilance, and it's countered by the orders of a revived David.

Isn't it interesting that while the overall point I think is that God cares for his kingdom and maintains it as he does for his people, all of them. There's little reference to actual divine intervention here.

What we have are people shouldering their responsibilities. Now I think it is sometimes the case, perhaps even it's often the case, that the Lord seems to be letting things take their course.

You know, we're not seeing dramatic divine intervention very much, are we? Sometimes you read about marvellous instances of it, but on the whole, you don't hear much about it, and we don't experience much, perhaps.

[30 : 20] Or is that even a lack of showing a lack of faith to face things like that? But I would suggest to you that God often seems to allow things to take their course, to tell us that we must act and shoulder our responsibilities.

Jesus is calling us to be zealous in the work of his kingdom. He's calling you all and the people of every congregation to be zealous in the life and work of the congregation because that's part of the life and work of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have to ask myself that daily. Surely we all, I think, have to ask ourselves daily. Are we really zealous? Are we really committed? Are we really enthusiastic about the work of the kingdom?

What happens in 1 Kings chapter 1, I would suggest, calls us all to that. And one last thing, and I must mention it quickly. Verses 41 to 53.

what Adonijah does. And can I suggest here for the point that's being made, superficial submission won't save.

[31 : 37] Adonijah makes a superficial submission to save himself. But it's not a real one, and it's not a glad one, and it's not really an internal one at all.

He's going through the motions. Because not that much later in 1 Kings you find that Adonijah is scheming again. He wants to marry Abishag, and what he was trying to do was to get himself back into a position of claiming the throne from Solomon, because of the various complicated customs of that part of the Middle East in those days.

That's the case, this submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. Superficial submission doesn't save. You know, you young people, can I say something particularly to you at the moment?

It's great that you're in church, really very encouraging to the parents and to the rest of the congregation. people. But can I ask you a really important question?

Do you want to be here? Because if you want to be here, ah, that's the great thing. Young people wanting to be in church than just being taken along by their parents.

[33 : 04] And I'm not suggesting that any of you don't want to be here. I hope you all want to be here. because one of the great things that the Lord takes notice of is his covenant children.

People who have, young people who have been brought up by believing parents who want them to be in church so that they can hear about the Lord Jesus and the way to heaven. And if you want to be here, that means you'll be listening to what's being said and praying about what you hear.

But if you go to church kicking and screaming, you can't really expect the blessing, can you?