

I



I Kings I

Introduction 1:1–27

Some time has elapsed between the events of the closing chapters of 2 Samuel and the opening scene of 1 Kings. The feeble old David we meet here is a pale shadow of the heroic king we know from 2 Samuel. We need to keep in mind that this is not just a biography of David. The fate of the people of God is at stake, for, as we discover, David has still done nothing regarding his succession, and it is potentially disastrous that his subjects should find themselves without effective leadership. David is passive throughout much of this narrative—a passivity that the writer is suggesting is not entirely due to feebleness, but to culpable indecisiveness. The situation prompts other officials and family members to take steps to redress the leadership vacuum. We would be wrong, however, to read the account simply as a piece of political propaganda to bolster Solomon's claim to the throne. We look to the subtleties of character portrayal, plot and dialogue to reveal something of God's big-picture purposes and relationship with his people.

1:1. *Now King David was old and advanced in years. Even when they covered him with blankets, he could not get warm.*

Within the space of four verses of chapter 1, we are reminded that David is the ‘king’ no fewer than six times; it is as though we need reminding. He is not merely ‘old’, he is ‘advanced in years’ (literally ‘days’), a pathetic figure shivering in his bed. From 2 Samuel 5:4 we can deduce that he must be somewhere near seventy years old by this time. The same phrase ‘old and advanced in years’ was used of Abraham (Gen. 24:1) immediately following his purchase of a plot of ground from one of the original inhabitants, a first instalment of the promised land, of which David’s purchase of the temple site at the end of 2 Samuel (24:18–25) is the final payment.¹ It sets up a subtle introduction to an important theme of the following chapters.

1:2. *So his subordinates said to him, ‘A young virgin ought to be found for my lord the king, to wait on the king, and be his companion; she should lie in your embrace, so that my lord the king may be warm.’*

The strategy of David’s courtiers in seeking an attractive ‘young virgin’ to attend to his every need, including that of sleeping partner to keep his body warm, highlights his failing prowess. The fact that we are told that she is a ‘virgin’ brings into focus the sexual potential of the situation. While the word itself does not necessarily mean *virgo intacta*, it presumably does in this context. Will there be another heir to further complicate the already complicated succession that has been the subject of much of 2 Samuel? Such a woman is to ‘wait on’ (literally ‘stand before’) him, to ‘be his companion’ and to ‘lie in his embrace’. The expression to ‘stand before’ the king, besides its literal meaning, refers to one’s loyal

service (*cf.* 1:28; 12:6; 17:1). The chapter will raise the issue of who the genuinely loyal subjects of King David are. The word ‘companion’ (from the root *sakan*, sometimes translated ‘nurse’) is more broadly ‘to be of service’. The woman is to ‘lie in [David’s] embrace’, words which call to mind Nathan’s parable of the poor man’s mistreated lamb (2 Sam. 12:3), and hence Bathsheba (to whom the parable relates), whom this ‘virgin’ is now to replace.²

1:3. *So they searched for an attractive girl throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king.*

Abishag from the obscure village of Shunem in the Jezreel Valley wins the beauty contest. The point is that no effort is spared in the quest to revive the failing David’s zest for life and the performance of his royal duty. The words ‘brought her to the king’ raise our expectations of sexual activity (*cf.* Gen. 2:22; 24:67).

1:4. *The girl was very attractive. She became the king’s attendant and served him, but the king did not have sex with her.*

It is not that David does not notice Abishag’s beauty, for by their position, the words ‘the girl was very attractive’ suggest that this is David’s evaluation of his sleeping partner. The fact that David ‘did not have sex with’ (literally ‘know’) Abishag as she snuggled up to him is not to be interpreted as a comment on David’s moral restraint, but as a manifestation of the fact that David had become un-‘knowing’, uncaring and impotent to act with regard to all that was happening around him.

1:5. *Now Adonijah son of Haggith had leadership aspirations, saying, ‘I am*

going to be king.' He got ready for himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run ahead of him.

David's son Adonijah makes an appearance.³ The mention of his mother's name, Haggith, is in line with the writer's practice of mentioning the names of the mothers of successive Judean kings. We are expecting a narrative about succession and perhaps about the role of the women in the power play. The fact that Haggith's name occurs three times in the opening two chapters (when once might have been sufficient) may also draw attention to her name, which is probably to be connected with the word *hag* ('festival'), so perhaps 'Party Girl', a foil for Bathsheba (see below on 1:13). The word translated 'had leadership aspirations' is a reflexive verb from a root meaning 'lift up' (so, 'he exalted himself') or perhaps here better understood as denominative in force, formed from the cognate noun *nasi*, 'leader'. The only occurrence of the noun in the singular in 1 Kings is at 11:34, where Yahweh commits himself to uphold Solomon as the leader of a united Israel for his lifetime. The word 'saying' could also be 'thinking' (providing Adonijah's inner motivation for what follows), though the context suggests that he did give voice to his ambitions. His 'I' is emphatic. While Adonijah was David's fourth and now presumably eldest surviving son (there is no mention of Kileab after 2 Sam. 3:3), there is no protocol that would make him the automatic heir to David's throne, and patriarchal precedents might suggest otherwise (Gen. 25:23). There is nothing wrong with the desire to lead *per se*, though character must match desire. Adonijah gathers support and acquires some of the trappings of kingship, 'a chariot and horses ...', and stages an event that is designed to pre-empt any possible move on Solomon's part. The word for 'chariot' is customarily (following LXX) rendered as a plural in English versions; the word *rekeb* can

be either a singular (as 1 Kings 22:35) or a collective (as 1 Kings 9:19). The context here suggests not so much a military coup as pomp and posturing, for which a single chariot for Adonijah would seem more likely; cf. Absalom's similar grandstanding in 2 Samuel 15:1, where the cognate word *merkabah* ('chariot') is more clearly singular. The word *parash* can refer either to 'horses' or 'horsemen' ('charioteers'). While the LXX has 'horsemen', it may be a better contrast with David's mule (1:33) to read 'horses' here, though of course in this context the one implies the other. The whole entourage with the escort of 'fifty men' is suggestive of a military formation.

1:6. His father had never at any time corrected him by asking, 'Why are you behaving like this?' He was also a very handsome man, and he was born next after Absalom.

David's lack of a firm hand on his sons is not just a comment on his declining years, but has been the pattern all along, and ironically, that of Samuel before him and Eli before him (1 Sam. 2:12, 22–25; 8:3–5). David's brilliant success at the national level has not been matched by the quality of his leadership within the family. For leadership among the people of God, there ought to be a demonstrable leadership within the home (1 Tim. 3:4; Titus 1:6; 2:5). Adonijah no doubt assumes that David, true to form, will not curb his ambitions. Adonijah may have been aware of some preference on David's part for Solomon, but perhaps believes that he can get away with his actions at this stage of David's life. The mention of Adonijah's good looks sounds a note of alarm, for that is also what we are told concerning Absalom (2 Sam. 14:25), and before him Saul (1 Sam. 9:2); for neither of these did their good looks prove to be the needed leadership qualification, for God does

not look on outward appearance, but on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). The mention of Adonijah's older brother Absalom reminds us of the disastrous episode when that favoured son, beginning with similar manoeuvres involving chariot and horses and fifty men, rebelled against his father David and met an ugly death (2 Sam. 15–18).⁴

1:7. He had a meeting with Joab son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest, and they supported Adonijah.

For Adonijah's 'meeting' cf. 2 Samuel 3:17. Adonijah's support group included his cousin Joab (1 Chron. 2:16), who was David's ruthless military commander, and to this point fiercely loyal to David. The other key supporter of Adonijah was Abiathar, one of the priests of Nob who escaped and sought protection in David's service after Saul's massacre there (1 Sam. 22:20). This group is Judean (southern) in its sympathies and associated with the early period of David's reign at Hebron.

1:8. But Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and David's own troops did not align themselves with Adonijah.

The mention of another group who did not support Adonijah hints that there may be another claimant to the throne. This group includes Zadok the priest, who is sometimes thought to be of Jebusite origin (though 1 Chron. 6:1–8 and Ezra 7:2–5 provide an Aaronic ancestry).⁵ He shared priestly responsibilities at David's court with Abiathar and his son Ahimelech (2 Sam. 8:17; 15:24). Benaiah son of Jehoiada was renowned for his bravery and became captain of David's bodyguard, the Kerethites (or Cherethites) and Pelethites (2 Sam. 8:18; 23:20–23). 'Nathan the prophet' announced God's covenant with David concerning his dynasty (2 Sam. 7)

and confronted David over his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah (2 Sam. 11–12). He had a role in the tutelage of Solomon (2 Sam. 12:25). Shimei is presumably the same one who as a supporter of Saul opposed David at the time of Absalom's revolt (2 Sam. 16:5–13), though he was later granted amnesty (2 Sam. 19:16–23). Rei is unknown and there are variant textual traditions at this point. Lucian reads 'Shimei and his friends' (Hebrew *re'ayw*), while Josephus has 'Shimei the friend of David' (*Antiquities* 14:4). The LXX supports reading Rei as a proper name. David's own warriors, that is, his personal bodyguard, presumably the Kerethites and Pelethites mentioned in 1:38, are a significant absence from Adonijah's support group. Several, at least, of those named are associated with the period of David's career after he established his capital in Jerusalem as king of all Israel.

1:9. *Adonijah sacrificed sheep, cattle and steers by the stone Zoheleth, which is beside En Rogel, and invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officials of Judah.*

A sacrifice (ritual slaughter) could mark any official celebration, including significant royal events (*cf.* 2 Sam. 15:7–12).⁶ This one is ambiguous in its intent. Are these coronation festivities? It seems unlikely that Adonijah would feel the need actually to have himself formally declared king at this juncture and in this manner (though that is how others will choose to interpret the events). Adonijah may have a co-regency rather than a coup against David in mind at this stage of David's life and, considering David's apparent indifference, must presume he can get away with staking a claim on this, or at least the right of succession. It is a piece of political theatre, a power play to shore up his position as the heir apparent. 'The stone Zoheleth', 'Serpent's Stone', is otherwise unknown

in Scripture. It was probably a sacred site associated with the pre-Israelite kings of Jerusalem. The mention of this obscure place is probably because of the appropriateness of the name from the writer's point of view, if, as we shall see, Solomon is cast in the role of a new Adam (see also on 1:33). En Rogel is a spring located near the junction of the Kidron and Hinnom valleys, just south of Jerusalem, and the second most important source of water for the town. It is perhaps chosen as the venue for Adonijah's party because, according to Josephus (*Antiquities* 7:347), it is within the grounds of the royal estate.

The fact that 'all the royal officials' who are invited are from Judah draws attention to the fact that David's family are from this tribe, and the awareness of tribal allegiances is still very much a part of the fabric of Israelite society (especially, it seems, among Adonijah and his supporters), despite the superimposition of the monarchy and the efforts of David to keep tribal rivalries in check.

1:10. *But Nathan the prophet, Benaiah, the warriors and his brother Solomon he did not invite.*

Adonijah, it would seem, already has an inkling of where allegiances lie in what he perceives will be the struggle for the throne. This is the first mention of Solomon since the announcement of his birth (2 Sam. 12:24). It is as though his existence has been kept under wraps for this dramatic hour. The ensuing rivalry between the two brothers is a foreshadowing of the split that will engulf the kingdom within a generation.⁷

1:11. *So Nathan said to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, 'Haven't you heard that Adonijah son of Haggith has become king without our lord David's knowledge?'*

Is Nathan exaggerating with his assertion that ‘Adonijah son of Haggith has become king’? Or, in the confusion of the fast-moving events of the day, has he been misinformed as to what Adonijah has actually done? At the very least, his words are prophetically true to Adonijah’s real intention of staking his claim to the throne; and, if not challenged, the popular support he might generate in this time of a leadership vacuum might prove fatal for any alternative plans Nathan might have unless he moves quickly. The mention of Haggith again reminds us that the position of queen mother, an influential if not official position in the court, is at stake as well as that of king.⁸ The powerful and active role Bathsheba is called upon to play is a counterpoise to the passive role she has in 2 Samuel 11–12. David’s lack of knowledge of events echoes his lack of ‘knowledge’ of Abishag in 1:4.

1:12. *‘Well, let me give you some advice, to save your own life and your son Solomon’s.’*

These are tense times, and any perception that there is a rival to the throne will almost inevitably lead to bloodshed once one of the rivals is established in power. Nathan appeals first to Bathsheba’s sense of her own preservation, then that of her son, in order that she should go along with his plan.

1:13. *‘Go in to King David, and say to him, “My lord the king, didn’t you make a pledge to your servant, saying, ‘Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king and sit on my throne’? So how come Adonijah has become king?’”*

The words ‘go in’, literally ‘go and come’, subtly serve to shift the point of view from Nathan to that of David’s bedroom so that we are put into the position of David himself as he hears the news

Bathsheba is to bring. The existence of such a ‘pledge’ regarding Solomon is otherwise unknown. While it is possible that David had at some point, perhaps because of his love for Bathsheba, given such an undertaking, it is also possible that Nathan and Bathsheba are colluding to plant a memory in David’s failing mind. Our only previous indications of Nathan’s character (e.g. his being prepared to stand up to David over the murder of Uriah) may suggest that he is a man of integrity, though he is prepared now at least to contrive the timing of his arrival in David’s room. It may be part of the narrative artistry of the writer to keep the situation ambiguous. Reference to David’s (at least alleged) ‘pledge’ plays on one possible meaning of Bathsheba’s name, ‘Daughter of Pledge’, and so she is set in deliberate contrast to Haggith (see on 1:5). The presence of the women in the story, and their names, highlight the different destinies of their two sons. The word for ‘pledge’ sounds like the word for ‘seven’ and this reinforces the fact that the word ‘pledge’ occurs seven times in the narrative of Solomon’s accession (1:13, 17, 29, 30; 2:8, 23, 42).⁹ Nathan encourages Bathsheba to give the impression that she believes David must be aware of and approving of Adonijah’s actions. Israelite kings, like many other monarchs, sat on a ‘throne’ or ceremonial chair as a symbol of their rule. This throne is unlike any other, in that Yahweh’s rule is exercised through it (1 Chron. 29:23). The question of who will sit on David’s throne is voiced seven times between 1:13 and 1:35. The penchant of the writer of Kings for sevenfold repetitions of key words suggests we are to be on the lookout for any creational theme (based on the seven-day creation story of Genesis 1–2). Here it is the new Adam theme: who will be the new king under God in God’s realm? Observe the skilful chiasmic pattern of the sequence of subjects and prepositional phrases:

- A. Solomon ... on my throne (13)
- B. Solomon ... on my throne (17)
- C. Who? ... on the throne of my lord the king (20)
- D. Adonijah!? ... on my throne (24)
- C'. Who? ... on the throne of my lord the king (27)
- B'. Solomon ... on my throne (30)
- A'. Solomon ... on my throne (35)

Adonijah is the central figure of the pattern, but the assertion of his kingship in 1:24 is ironic, or in the form of a question (see below). This is bracketed by two interrogative ‘Who?’s and outflanked by the fourfold reference to Solomon. Solomon is obviously a key figure for the writer, who spends eleven chapters covering his accession and reign.

1:14. *‘Then while you are still there speaking with the king, I will come in after you and expand on what you are saying.’*

David’s neglect of affairs of state requires those around him to think tactically how to get his attention. The testimony of two apparently independent trustworthy witnesses might just do the trick. English versions have generally opted for ‘confirm’ rather than ‘expand on’ for the Hebrew piel of *male*, ‘fill’ (cf. LXX *pleroo*; Vulgate *complebo*). This is the only instance of the meaning ‘confirm’ given by BDB and KB. Nathan does in fact elaborate on the version he has advised Bathsheba to give (1:24–27). Of course, Nathan’s more extended version would also have the effect of verifying Bathsheba’s version of events.

1:15. *So Bathsheba came to the king in his room. The king was very old and Abishag the Shunammite was attending the king.*

We are reminded once more, and see through the eyes of Bathsheba, as she now approaches ‘the king’ in his bedroom, just how old and frail he is, and, with the mention again of Abishag the Shunammite, just how reliant on others he has become. This is not the last we hear of Abishag; see 2:17.

1:16. *Bathsheba bowed and acted with deference to the king, and the king said, ‘What do you want?’*

It is important that Bathsheba (and Nathan after her) display their loyalty to David, for, the way Nathan and Bathsheba present it, this situation is to take on the dimensions of rival loyalties to David or to Adonijah. Bathsheba ‘acted with deference’; the word refers to a physical act of abasement such as bowing, kneeling or prostration in the presence of a social superior to express humility and subservience. It may involve avoiding eye contact and looking towards the ground (1:23). The king’s words, ‘What do you want?’ (Hebrew *mah-lak*, literally ‘What to you?’), sound even more curt in Hebrew, as though David cannot muster the energy for any more conversation with his wife. They also sound rather like the Hebrew for ‘queen’ (*malkah*) and for ‘your king’ (*malka*), probably a deliberate irony on the part of the writer, as the subject matter will concern queen Bathsheba’s candidate for kingship.

1:17. *She said to him, ‘My lord, you made a pledge to your servant by Yahweh your God, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king and sit on my throne.’*

Bathsheba emphasizes her status as a loyal ‘servant’ of David’s. She subtly alters the message she was advised by Nathan to deliver, so she is portrayed as a character with some independence of mind. In

place of Nathan's suggested more subtle approach with the question, 'Didn't you make a pledge to your servant?' (1:13), Bathsheba utters a straight assertion that David has in fact made such a commitment ('you' is emphatic), strengthening it with a pledge formula, 'by Yahweh your God'. This is the first appearance of the divine name Yahweh in the book and we wonder if the name may have been taken in vain. If so, it does not augur well for the outcome of the events depicted at the outset. The 'pledge' will be picked up by the pledge of 1:29–30.

1:18. *'Instead of this, Adonijah has become king, though you, my lord the king, do not know it.'*

Bathsheba also modifies Nathan's suggested wording by not feigning the assumption of David's complicity in Adonijah's actions. She does go along with the line that Adonijah has already 'become king', and thus is to be seen as disloyal to David. The play on Adonijah's name in the words 'my lord' (*'adoni*) which is used of David in this chapter fourteen times (twice seven; see on 1:13) makes the point that the rivalry (at least as Bathsheba and Nathan portray it) is between Adonijah and David. Solomon is not an active participant. It is David who must act to retrieve the situation. Bathsheba calculates that David is more likely to be roused to action by learning that Adonijah has treated him with such disrespect in going behind his back.

1:19. *'He has sacrificed cattle, steers, and sheep in great numbers, and has invited all the king's sons, Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander of the army; but Solomon your servant he has not invited.'*

Bathsheba again alters Nathan's suggested wording, adding 'in

great numbers' to the description of the sacrifices (though Nathan will himself echo this in 1:25), and including a list of invitees to Adonijah's feast. The mention of Joab might be calculated to stir David, for as we learn at 2:5 David has not forgiven Joab for his murder of Abner and Amasa. The only one mentioned by Bathsheba as not on the invitation list is Solomon (the name is fronted in its clause), which brings him into focus as Bathsheba's real concern.

1:20. *'So now then, my lord the king, all Israel is watching and waiting for you to tell them who is going to sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.'*

Bathsheba voices what must truly have been to the fore in many an Israelite conversation: who will succeed king David? While the wishes of the reigning monarch might not necessarily be respected, and numbers of troops could well end up deciding on the succession, the word of a king as respected as David should carry considerable weight. The word *'acharey* 'after' occurs ten times in this chapter (verses 6, 7, 13, 14, 17, 20, 27, 30, 35, 40) as a theme word for the succession (ten is used less frequently than seven as a thematic number). David must take the initiative if there is to be a smooth transfer of rule and continuity of the blessings of his reign.

1:21. *'When my lord the king lies with his ancestors, I and my son Solomon will be offenders.'*

Bathsheba gently brings the monologue around to the point. What will happen when David dies, or 'lies with his ancestors', a reference to death, based on the burial practice of the use of common family tombs (though David will not literally be buried with his ancestors at Bethlehem)? There is an echo of 2 Samuel

7:12, where the promise of a ‘son’ to succeed David is associated with this phrase. The word ‘lies’ is also here a further reminder of David’s current recumbent state, the only position we see him in throughout this chapter. Even the posture of sitting on David’s throne is something that another is envisaged as doing. Bathsheba and Solomon (note she puts herself first, perhaps in an appeal to such affection as David may still have for her) ‘will be offenders’ (Targum: ‘will be banished’) if David does not take some action. She does not elaborate on why this might be, but given the times, it would not be hard to imagine a situation, were Adonijah to be established as king, where charges of treachery, with whatever basis or lack of basis, would be brought against the main rival contender for his position, and Bathsheba could well be a target also. Her words, however, have another connotation to them. The word for ‘offenders’ is the word often translated ‘sinners’ (against God). In so speaking, Bathsheba sets up an ambiguity that the writer of Kings will exploit in his portrayal of Solomon in the subsequent chapters. If Solomon, as suggested above (1:9), is a new Adam, we have a hint that the outcome of any scrutiny he will be subjected to will not be favourable.

1:22. *While she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet came in.*

The Hebrew particle *hinneh* that begins this verse (sometimes translated ‘behold’) draws attention to the sudden perceptions of those in the room, so we see Nathan’s entry from their perspective. The reader, but not David, knows that this is a planned interruption. For him it is a coincidence. Though the reader is not made aware of this at this point in the narrative, Bathsheba presumably makes her exit, without having heard a word from

David in response to her news and her plea, as she needs to be summoned again in 1:28.

1:23. *They told the king, 'Here is Nathan the prophet.' When he came in before the king, he showed deference to the king, with his face towards the ground.*

Nathan is announced by unnamed court attendants who presumably regard the prophet as outranking Bathsheba in terms of his right to gain immediate access to the king. Like Bathsheba, he shows 'deference', bowing low as an indication of humility and respect for David. It is important for both Nathan and Bathsheba to convince David of their loyalty if their plan is to be effective.

1:24. *Nathan said, 'My lord the king, you have apparently said, "Adonijah is going to succeed me as king, and sit on my throne."'*

Nathan's words are closer to those he had prompted Bathsheba to say than those she actually said. There is an ambiguity as to whether Nathan is asking a question or making a statement (which the word 'apparently' in the translation attempts to capture). Nathan will not know that Bathsheba has departed somewhat from the script. The 'you' in 'you have apparently said' is emphatic. The point of the emphasis is that it is inconceivable that anyone other than David himself could have made the awaited declaration regarding succession (and surely Adonijah would not have been so disrespectful as to proceed without such a declaration!). This prepares the way for Nathan's claim to be aggrieved that he and other loyal advisers were kept in the dark about this important matter of state (1:27).

1:25. *For today he has gone down and has sacrificed cattle, steers and sheep in*

great numbers, and has invited all the king's sons, the commanders of the army, and Abiathar the priest, who are now eating and drinking in his presence, saying, 'Long live King Adonijah!'

The 'for' introduces Nathan's reasoning that David must have acquiesced in Adonijah's actions, as Nathan continues to amplify and reinforce Bathsheba's account with some details of Adonijah's celebrations and the invitees. The several repetitions of the word 'today' in the chapter contribute to the impression of rapidly moving events (1:30, 48, 51). The revellers have 'gone down' from the palace area higher up on the hill to the spring. Rather than mention Joab (*cf.* 1:19), Nathan speaks more generally of 'the commanders of the army', raising the stakes as though this could be a full-scale military coup. Joab was associated with 'the commanders of the army' in 2 Samuel 24:4, an episode David would rather forget. Nathan omits to mention the fact that David's own troops have remained loyal. Without knowing it, he echoes Bathsheba's words about the 'great numbers' of the sacrificial animals, adding to the impression that this must be a coronation celebration. The particle *hinnam* invites David to view the festivities in his mind's eye as though he were present, and so to gain a sense of immediacy and the urgency of the situation. This is what is taking place right now and calls for action before it is too late. Nathan allows himself the embellishment of the detail about the cry of 'long live King Adonijah'. While it is possible that whoever conveyed the news to Nathan about Adonijah's actions included this detail, it is more likely that Nathan is extrapolating it from what little information can be gleaned on this day of confusion and intrigue. He would not be wrong, however, to infer that it is the intention of those who have aligned themselves with Adonijah that he should (at least eventually) become king and it is feasible that in the festivity

such words were uttered, possibly proleptically, without necessarily intending it as a coup against David. Whether Adonijah does 'live' remains to be seen. The word 'long' is not strictly in the Hebrew but is added because of the English idiom here and at 1:34, 39.

1:26. *'But he did not invite me, your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon.'*

Nathan expands on Bathsheba's account of those excluded (she was only concerned with Solomon). Nathan mentions himself first, then 'Zadok the priest, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada', and finally Solomon, stressing the fact (by mentioning it with the first and last named) that these are loyal servants of the king. How could Adonijah's festivities have any legitimacy, and how could David have sanctioned them and leave out such important and devoted court officials?

1:27. *'Has this been authorised by my lord the king without letting your servants know who is to sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?'*

The form of question with Hebrew *'im* rather than the more frequent interrogative *ha-* implies a somewhat stronger expected negative response, an indication of Nathan's tone of indignation: 'It surely can't be the case, can it?' It would be expected that on such an important matter as the succession, David would not act alone, but confide in such trusted court officials as Nathan.

Application 1:1-27

In a healthy church we no longer operate with a principle of heredity; nor do dying or retiring leaders ordinarily appoint their successors. The issue of leadership among the people of

God is a vital one for the future of the Christian community, as it was for Israel in David's time. When those who have responsibility to lead effectively abdicate this responsibility, the church becomes aimless and moribund. It is a good thing to aspire to the responsibilities of leadership (1 Tim. 3:1) and to be willing to take on the sacrifices and self-giving involved in such a role. On the other hand, the church does not need those who simply love to push themselves forward for their own prestige (3 John 9), yet whose giftedness may not lie directly in the qualities laid down for shepherds of God's people (Luke 22:26; 1 Tim. 3:2–7; Titus 1:6–9).

While not all may be called to exercise leadership within the church, we may all potentially be called to lead at some level (in the home, in our work-places, and in our communities) and need to ensure that we fulfil our obligations faithfully and in reliance on God. This involves not allowing those under us (our children, our employees) to act irresponsibly without calling them to account.

Introduction 1:28–53

Perhaps David is not quite the senile invalid we first imagined, for the stratagem of Nathan and Bathsheba does rouse him to some action. The second half of chapter 1 resolves the issues introduced in the first half and gives effect to God's earlier commitment to David that it would be one of his offspring who would succeed him.