
1KINGS 2: 1 Now the days of David drew near that he should die; and he commanded Solomon his son, saying,

David leaves his dying charge with Solomon, relative to his own personal conduct, 1Kgs 2:1-4; to Joab, 1Kgs 2:5, 1Kgs 2:6; to Barzillai, 1Kgs 2:7; to Shimei, 1Kgs 2:8, 1Kgs 2:9. He dies, and Solomon is established in the kingdom, 1Kgs 2:10-12. Adonijah requests to have Abishag to wife, and is put to death by Solomon, 1Kgs 2:13-25. Abiathar the priest is banished to his estate at Anathoth, 1Kgs 2:26, 1Kgs 2:27. Joab, fearing for his life, flees to the horns of the altar, and is slain there by Benaiah, 1Kgs 2:28-34. Benaiah is made captain of the host in his stead, 1Kgs 2:35. Shimei is ordered to confine himself to Jerusalem, and never leave it on pain of death, 1Kgs 2:36-38. After three years he follows some of his runaway servants to Gath, and thereby forfeits his life, 1Kgs 2:39, 1Kgs 2:40. Solomon sends for him, upbraids him, and commands him to be slain by Benaiah, 1Kgs 2:41-46.

1KINGS 2: 2 "I am going the way of all the earth. You be strong therefore, and show yourself a man;

Verse 2

I go the way of all the earth - I am dying. All the inhabitants of the earth must come to the dust. In life, some follow one occupation, some another; but all must, sooner or later, come to the grave. Death is no respecter of persons; he visits the palace of the king as well as the cottage of the peasant.

Pallida mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas,

Regumque turres. -

Hor. Odar. lib. i., od. iv., ver. 13. "With equal pace, impartial fate

Knocks at the palace as the cottage gate."

Francis. - Sed omnes una manet nox,

Et calcanda semel via lethi. -

Ib. od. xxviii., ver. 15. "One dreary night for all mankind remains,

And once we all must tread the shadowy plains."

Ibid.

There is no respect to age or youth more than to station or external circumstance: -

Mixta senum ac juvenum densantur funera: nullum

Saeva caput Proserpina fugit.

Ib. od. xxviii., ver. 19.

Thus age and youth promiscuous crowd the tomb;

No mortal head can shun the impending doom."

Ibid.

And it is not merely man that is subjected to this necessity; all that have in them the breath of life must lose it; it is the way of all the earth, both of men and inferior animals. - *Terrestria quando Mortales animas vivunt sortita, neque ulla est Aut parvo aut magno lethi fuga.*

Vive memor quam sis aevi brevis.

Hor. Sat. l. ii., s. vi., ver. 93. "All that tread the earth are subject to mortality; neither great nor small can avoid death.

Live therefore conscious that your time is short."

It is painful to the pride of the great and mighty that, however decorated their tombs may be, they must undergo the same dissolution and corruption with the vulgar dead; for the grave is the house appointed for all living: man is born to die.

Omnium idem exitus est, sed et idem domicilium. "For all have the same end, and are huddled together in the same narrow house."

Here emperors, kings, statesmen, warriors, heroes, and butchers of all kinds, with peasants and beggars, meet; however various their routes, they terminate in the same point. This and all other kindred sentiments on the subject are well expressed in that excellent little poem of Mr. Blair, entitled "The Grave," which opens with the following lines: -

While some affect the sun, and some the shade; Some flee the city, some the hermitage; Their aims as various as the roads they take In journeying through life; the task be mine To paint the gloomy horrors of the tomb, The appointed place of rendezvous, where all These travelers meet.

Show thyself a man - Act like a rational being, and not like a brute; and remember, that he acts most like a man who is most devoted to his Good.

1KINGS 2: 3 and keep the instruction of the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, according to that which is written in the law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do, and wherever you turn yourself.

Verse 3

Keep the charge of the Lord - Keep what God has given thee to keep.

1. Walk in his ways. Not in thine own, nor in the ways of a wicked, perishing world.
2. Keep his statutes. Consider all his appointments to be holy, just, and good; receive them as such, and conscientiously observe them.
3. Keep his commandments. Whatever he has bidden thee to do, perform; what he has forbidden thee to do, omit.
4. Keep his judgments. What he has determined to be right, is essentially and inherently right; what he has determined to be wrong or evil, is inherently and essentially so. A thing is not good because

God has commanded it; a thing is not evil because he has forbidden it. He has commanded the good, because it is in its own nature good and useful; he has forbidden the evil, because it is in its own nature bad and hurtful. Keep therefore his judgments.

5. Keep his testimonies. Bear witness to all to which he has borne witness. His testimonies are true; there is no deceit or falsity in them. His testimonies refer also to future good things and good times; they are the signifiers of coming blessedness: as such, respect them.

That thou mayest prosper - If thou hast God's approbation, thou wilt have God's blessing. If thy ways please him, he will not withhold from thee any manner of thing that is good.

1KINGS 2: 4 That the LORD may establish his word which he spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you,' he said, 'a man on the throne of Israel.'

Verse 4

That the Lord may continue his word - The prosperity which God has promised to grant to my family will depend on their faithfulness to the good they receive; if they live to God, they shall sit for ever on the throne of Israel. But alas! they did not; and God's justice cut off the entail made by his mercy.

1KINGS 2: 5 "Moreover you know also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, even what he did to the two captains of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner, and to Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war on his sash that was about his waist, and in his shoes that were on his feet.

Verse 5

Thou knowest - what Joab - did to me - He did every thing bad and dishonorable in itself, in the murder of Abner and Amasa, and indeed in the death of the profligate Absalom.

Shed the blood of war - upon his girdle - and in his shoes - He stabbed them while he pretended to embrace them, so that their blood gushed out on his girdle, and fell into his shoes! This was a most abominable aggravation of his crimes.

1KINGS 2: 6 Do therefore according to your wisdom, and don't let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace.

Verse 6

Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace - It would have been an insult to justice not to have taken the life of Joab. David was culpable in delaying it so long; but probably the circumstances of his government would not admit of his doing it sooner. According to the law of God, Joab, having

murdered Abner and Amasa, should die. And had not David commanded Solomon to perform this act of justice, he could not have died in the approbation of his Maker.

1KINGS 2: 7 But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those who eat at your table; for so they came to me when I fled from Absalom your brother.

Verse 7

But show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai - See the notes on 2Sam 19:31 (note), etc.

1KINGS 2: 8 "Behold, there is with you Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite, of Bahurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim; but he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him by the LORD, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.'

Verse 8

Thou hast with thee Shimei - See on 2Sam 16:5 (note), etc., and the notes on 2Sam 19:18-23 (note).

1KINGS 2: 9 Now therefore don't hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man; and you will know what you ought to do to him, and you shall bring his gray head down to Sheol with blood."

Verse 9

Hold him not guiltless - Do not consider him as an innocent man, though I have sworn to him that I would not put him to death by the sword; yet as thou art a wise man, and knowest how to treat such persons, treat him as he deserves; only as I have sworn to him, and he is an aged man, let him not die a violent death; bring not down his hoary head to the grave with blood. So Solomon understood David, and so I think David should be understood; for the negative particle אֵל lo, in the former clause, hold him Not guiltless, should be repeated in this latter clause, though not expressed, his hoary head bring thou Not down; instances of which frequently occur in the Hebrew Bible. See Dr. Kennicott's note at the end of this chapter, 1Kgs 2:46 (note).

1KINGS 2: 10 David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

Verse 10

David slept with his fathers - His life was a life of remarkable providences, of much piety, and of great public usefulness. In general he lived well, and it is most evident that he died well; and as a king, a general, a poet, a father, and a friend, he has had few equals, and no superior, from his own time to the present day. But I shall reserve a more particular consideration of his character till I come

to the book of Psalms, in which that character, with all its lights and shades, is exhibited by his own masterly hand. And it is from this composition alone that we can know David, and the maxims by which he was governed in public and private life.

Was buried in the city of David - And Solomon, says Josephus, deposited immense treasures with him, in the grave, where they continued unmolested for thirteen hundred years, till Hyrcanus, the high priest, being besieged by Antiochus, opened the sepulcher, and took thence three thousand talents, part of which he gave to Antiochus, to raise the siege. It is added that, many years afterwards, Herod the Great ransacked this tomb and got considerable riches. Little credit is due to this account, though we know that was customary in ancient times to deposit with the more illustrious dead, gold, silver, and precious stones. That the tomb of David existed in the days of the apostles, we learn from Act 2:29, where St. Peter, addressing the Jews, says, Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David; that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. St. Jerome speaks of it as existing in his time, and modern travelers pretend that it is still in existence. But both monks and Mohammedans have long united to impose on Christian pilgrims; and there is scarcely any dependence to be placed on any of their relations; absurdity and self-contradiction are their principal characteristics.

1KINGS 2: 11 The days that David reigned over Israel were forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and he reigned thirty-three years in Jerusalem.

1KINGS 2: 12 Solomon sat on the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was firmly established.

1KINGS 2: 13 Then Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. She said, "Do you come peaceably?" He said, "Peaceably.

1KINGS 2: 14 He said moreover, I have something to tell you." She said, "Say on."

1KINGS 2: 15 He said, "You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign. However the kingdom is turned around, and has become my brother's; for it was his from the LORD.

Verse 15

Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine - It certainly was his by the right of primogeniture, and it was his by the voice of the people, and the consent of the high priest. But there was a right paramount to all these, the right of God; it was his kingdom; the kings were his lieutenants, and he had a right to give the crown to whomsoever he pleased, and he was pleased to give it to Solomon.

1KINGS 2: 16 Now I ask one petition of you. Don't deny me." She said to him, "Say on."

1KINGS 2: 17 He said, "Please speak to Solomon the king (for he will not tell you 'no'), that he give me Abishag the Shunammite as wife."

Verse 17

That he give me Abishag - to wife - He cheerfully gives up all right to the kingdom, and only desires to have this young woman, who, though she had been his father's wife or concubine, was still in a state of virginity. Some think that Joab and Abiathar had advised Adonijah to make this application, not doubting, if he got Abishag, that the popular tide would again turn in his favor, and that Solomon, whom they did not like, might soon be deposed; and that it was on this account that Solomon was so severe. But there is little evidence to support these conjectures. It does not appear that Adonijah by desiring to have Abishag had any thought of the kingdom, or of maintaining any right to it, though Solomon appears to have understood him in this sense. But without farther evidence, this was a flimsy pretext to imbrue his hands in a brother's blood. The fable of the wolf and lamb is here very applicable, and the old English proverb not less so: It is an easy thing to find a staff to beat a dog with. We readily find an excuse for whatever we are determined to do. He who attempts to varnish over this conduct of Solomon by either state necessity or a Divine command, is an enemy, in my mind, to the cause of God and truth. See on 1Kgs 2:25 (note).

1KINGS 2: 18 Bathsheba said, "Alright. I will speak for you to the king."

1KINGS 2: 19 Bathsheba therefore went to king Solomon, to speak to him for Adonijah. The king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself to her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a throne to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand.

1KINGS 2: 20 Then she said, "I ask one small petition of you; don't deny me." The king said to her, "Ask on, my mother; for I will not deny you."

1KINGS 2: 21 She said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as wife."

1KINGS 2: 22 King Solomon answered his mother, "Why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also; for he is my elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah."

1KINGS 2: 23 Then king Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, "God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah has not spoken this word against his own life."

1KINGS 2: 24 Now therefore as the LORD lives, who has established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house, as he promised, surely Adonijah shall be put to death this day."

1KINGS 2: 25 King Solomon sent by Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell on him, so that he died.

Verse 25

Solomon sent - Benaiah - and he fell upon him that he died. - Benaiah seems to have been the public state executioner, and yet he was generalissimo of all the forces. See him employed in a similar work, 1Kgs 2:34 (note), 1Kgs 2:46 (note). I suppose him to have been such another general as Suwarrow, butcher-general of the Turks and Poles to the late Empress Catharine of Russia: like mistress, like man. But they have long since been called to an impartial tribunal.

That this was an act of cruelty towards Adonijah, needs no proof. He is suspected, condemned, and slain, without a hearing. Calmet vindicates all this by various assumptions, and lays down a doctrine that is calculated for the meridian of Fez or Morocco; hear him: Un prince, dans ses jugemens, ne peut pas toujours suivre les regles de la plus parfaite morale; la politique, et le bien de l'etat,

obligent souvent a des choses opposees aux conseils de l'evangile; "A prince in his judgments cannot always follow the rules of the most perfect morality; policy and the good of the state often require things to be done which are contrary to the counsels of the Gospel." What a diabolic maxim is this! And is this indeed the way that French kings ruled and ministers decreed judgment? Then we need not wonder at a revolution in that state, nor of the scourge that desolated the land. O England! magnify God for your constitution, your constitutional king, and the laws according to which he reigns.

1KINGS 2: 26 To Abiathar the priest the king said, "Go to Anathoth, to your own fields; for you are worthy of death. But I will not at this time put you to death, because you bore the ark of the Lord the LORD before David my father, and because you were afflicted in all in which my father was afflicted."

1KINGS 2: 27 So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, that he might fulfil the LORD's word, which he spoke concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

Verse 27

So Solomon thrust out Abiathar - This was for having taken part before with Adonijah, but by it a remarkable prophecy was fulfilled; see 1 Samuel 2:13-35 (note), and the notes there. God had told Eli that the priesthood should depart from his house; Abiathar was the last of the descendants of Ithamar, of which family was Eli the high priest. Zadok, who was made priest in the stead of Abiathar, was of the family of Eliezer; and by this change the priesthood reverted to its ancient channel. Abiathar deserved this degradation; he supported Adonijah in his unnatural assumption of the royal dignity, even during the life of his father. This was the head and front of his offending.

1KINGS 2: 28 The news came to Joab; for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he didn't turn after Absalom. Joab fled to the Tent of the LORD, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.

Verse 28

Tidings came to Joab - He heard that Adonijah had been slain and Abiathar banished, and probably he had heard of David's dying charge to Solomon. Fearing therefore for his personal safety, he takes refuge at the tabernacle, as claiming Divine protection, and desiring to have his case decided by God alone; or perhaps a spark of remorse is now kindled; and, knowing that he must die, he wishes to die in the house of God, as it were under the shadow, that he might receive the mercy of the Almighty.

1KINGS 2: 29 It was told king Solomon, "Joab has fled to the Tent of the LORD, and behold, he is by the altar." Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, "Go, fall on him."

1KINGS 2: 30 Benaiah came to the Tent of the LORD, and said to him, "Thus says the king, 'Come out!'" He said, "No; but I will die here." Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, "Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me."

 Verse 30

Nay; but I will die here - The altars were so sacred among all the people, that, in general, even the vilest wretch found safety, if he once reached the altar. This led to many abuses, and the perversion of public justice; and at last it became a maxim that the guilty should be punished, should they even have taken refuge at the altars. God decreed that the presumptuous murderer who had taken refuge at the altar should be dragged thence, and put to death; see Exo 21:14. The heathens had the same kind of ordinance; hence Euripides: - Εγω γαρ ὅστις μη δικαιος ὢν ἀνὴρ βωμὸν προσίζει, τὸν νομὸν χαιρῆν ἐών, Πρὸς τὴν δικὴν ἀγοιμ' αὐν, αὐ τρεσσας θεοῦς· Κακὸν γὰρ ἀνδρὰ χρεὶ κακῶς πασχῆν αἰεὶ.

Euripid. Frag. 42. Edit. Musg. "If an unrighteous man, availing himself of the law, should claim the protection of the altar, I would drag him to justice, nor fear the wrath of the gods; for it is necessary that every wicked man should suffer for his crimes."

1KINGS 2: 31 The king said to him, "Do as he has said, and fall on him, and bury him; that you may take away the blood, which Joab shed without cause, from me and from my father's house.

1KINGS 2: 32 The LORD will return his blood on his own head, because he fell on two men more righteous and better than he, and killed them with the sword, and my father David didn't know it: Abner the son of Ner, captain of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the army of Judah.

1KINGS 2: 33 So shall their blood return on the head of Joab, and on the head of his seed forever. But to David, and to his seed, and to his house, and to his throne, there shall be peace forever from the LORD."

1KINGS 2: 34 Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell on him, and killed him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness.

Verse 34

So Benaiah - went up - and slew him - It appears he slew him at the very altar. Joab must have been both old and infirm at this time, and now he bleeds for Abner, he bleeds for Amasa, and he bleeds for Uriah. The two former he murdered; of the blood of the latter he was not innocent; yet he had done the state much service, and they knew it. But he was a murderer, and vengeance would not suffer such to live.

1KINGS 2: 35 The king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his place over the army; and the king put Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar.

1KINGS 2: 36 The king sent and called for Shimei, and said to him, "Build yourself a house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and don't go out from there anywhere.

Verse 36

Build thee a house - Thus he gave him the whole city for a prison, and this certainly could have reduced him to no hardships.

1KINGS 2: 37 For on the day you go out, and pass over the brook Kidron, know for certain that you shall surely die: your blood shall be on your own head.”

Verse 37

Thy blood shall be upon thine own head - Thou knowest what to expect; if thou disobey my orders thou shalt certainly be slain, and then thou shalt be considered as a self-murderer; thou alone shalt be answerable for thy own death. Solomon knew that Shimei was a seditious man, and he chose to keep him under his own eye; for such a man at large, in favorable circumstances, might do much evil. His bitter revilings of David were a sufficient proof.

1KINGS 2: 38 Shimei said to the king, “The saying is good. As my lord the king has said, so will your servant do.” Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days.

1KINGS 2: 39 At the end of three years, two of the servants of Shimei ran away to Achish, son of Maacah, king of Gath. They told Shimei, saying, “Behold, your servants are in Gath.”

1KINGS 2: 40 Shimei arose, and saddled his donkey, and went to Gath to Achish, to seek his servants; and Shimei went, and brought his servants from Gath.

Verse 40

And Shimei - went to Gath - It is astonishing that with his eyes wide open he would thus run into the jaws of death.

1KINGS 2: 41 It was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and had come again.

1KINGS 2: 42 The king sent and called for Shimei, and said to him, “Didn’t I adjure you by the LORD, and warn you, saying, ‘Know for certain, that on the day you go out, and walk abroad any where, you shall surely die?’ You said to me, ‘The saying that I have heard is good.’

1KINGS 2: 43 Why then have you not kept the oath of the LORD, and the commandment that I have instructed you with?”

1KINGS 2: 44 The king said moreover to Shimei, “You know all the wickedness which your heart is privy to, that you did to David my father. Therefore the LORD shall return your wickedness on your own head.

1KINGS 2: 45 But king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD forever.”

Verse 45

King Solomon shall be blessed - He seems to think that, while such bad men remained unpunished, the nation could not prosper; that it was an act of justice which God required him to perform, in order to the establishment and perpetuity of his throne.

1KINGS 2: 46 So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he went out, and fell on him, so that he died. The kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

Verse 46

And the kingdom was established - He had neither foes within nor without. He was either dreaded or loved universally. His own subjects were affectionately bound to him, and the surrounding nations did not think proper to make him their enemy.

As there are serious doubts relative to the dying charge of David as it relates to Shimei, most believing that, in opposition to his own oath, David desired that Solomon should put him to death; I shall here insert Dr. Kennicott's criticism on this part of the text: - "David is here represented in our English version as finishing his life with giving a command to Solomon to kill Shimei, and to kill him on account of that very crime for which, as David here says, he had sworn to him by the Lord he would not put him to death. The behavior thus imputed to the king and prophet, and which would be justly censurable if true, should be examined very carefully as to the ground it stands upon; and when the passage is duly considered, I presume it will appear highly probable that an injury has been here done to this illustrious character. The point to which I now beg the reader's attention is this: That it is not uncommon in the Hebrew language to omit the negative in a second part of the sentence, and to consider it as repeated, when it has been once expressed, and is followed by the connecting particle. And thus on Isa 13:22 the late learned annotator says: 'The negative is repeated or referred to by the conjunction vau, as in many other places.' So also Isa 23:4. The necessity of so very considerable an alteration as inserting the particle Not, may be here confirmed by some other instances. Psa 1:5 : The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor (the Hebrew is And, signifying and not) sinners in the congregation of the righteous. Psa 9:18 : The needy shall not alway be forgotten, (and then the negative, understood as repeated by the conjunction, now dropped), the expectation of the poor shall (Not) perish for ever. Psa 38:1 : O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath; Neither (And, for and not) chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Psa 75:5 : Lift not up your horn on high, (and then the negative, understood as repeated by the conjunction, now dropped), speak (Not) with a stiff neck. Pro 24:12, (our version is this): Doth not he, that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth the soul, doth (Not) he know it? and shall (Not) he render to every man according to his works? And Pro 30:3 : I neither learned wisdom, Nor (And, for and not) have the knowledge of the holy. If then there are in fact many such instances, the question is, Whether the negative here, expressed in the former part of David's command, may not be understood as to be repeated in the latter part; and if this may be, a strong reason will be added why it should be, so interpreted. The passage will run thus: 'Behold, thou hast with thee Shimei, who cursed me - but I swore to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death by the sword. Now, therefore, hold him Not guiltless, (for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him), but bring Not down his hoar head to the grave with blood.' Now if the language itself will admit of this construction, the sense thus given to the sentence derives a very strong support from the context. For how did Solomon understand this charge? Did he kill Shimei in consequence of it? Certainly he did not; for

after he had immediately commanded Joab to be slain, in obedience to his father, he sends for Shimei, and knowing that Shimei ought to be well watched, confines him to a particular spot in Jerusalem for the remainder of his life; 1Kgs 2:36-42. See also Job 23:17; Job 30:20; Job 31:20." This is the best mode of interpreting this text.