**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**1 KINGS-001. DAVID APPOINTING SOLOMON by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"28.* *Then king David answered and said, Call me Bath-sheba. And she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king. 29. And the king sware, and said, As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, 30. Even as I sware unto thee by the Lord God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day. 31. Then Bath-sheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever. 32. And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king. 33. The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon: 34. And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon. 35. Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah. 36. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, and said, Amen; the Lord God of my lord the king say so too. 37. As the Lord hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David. 38. So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon. 39. And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon.."*

*1 Kings 1:28-39*

The earlier part of this chapter must be taken into account in order to get the right view of this incident. David's eldest surviving son, Adonijah, had claimed the succession, and gathered his partisans to a feast. Nathan, alarmed at the prospect of such a successor, had arranged with Bathsheba that she should go to David and ask his public confirmation of his promise to her that Solomon should succeed him, and that then Nathan should seek an audience while she was with the king, and, as independently, should prefer the same request.

The plan was carried out, and here we see its results. The old king was roused to a flash of his ancient vigour, confirmed his oath to Bathsheba, and promptly cut the ground from under Adonijah's feet by sending for the three who had remained true to him--Nathan, Benaiah, and Zadok--and despatching them without a moment's delay to proclaim Solomon king, and then to bring him up to the palace and enthrone him. The swift execution of these decisive orders, and the burst of popular acclamation which welcomed Solomon's accession, shattered the nascent conspiracy, and its supporters scattered in haste, to preserve their lives. The story may be best dealt with, for our purpose, by taking this brief summary and trying to draw lessons from it.

**I.** It points anew the truth that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. As Absalom, so Adonijah, had been spoiled by David's over-indulgence (verse 6), and having never had his wishes checked, was now letting his unbridled wishes hurry him into rebellion. Nor was that fault of David's the only one which brought about the miserable squabbles round his deathbed, as to who should wear the crown which had not yet fallen from his head. Eastern monarchies are familiar with struggles for the crown between the sons of different mothers when their father dies. David had indulged in a multitude of wives, and his last days were darkened by the resulting intrigues of his sons. No doubt, too, Solomon was disliked by his brethren as the child of Bathsheba, and the shame of David's crime was an obstacle in his younger son's way. Thus, as ever, his evil deeds came home to roost, and the poisonous seed which he had sown grew up and waved, a bitter harvest, which he had to reap. Repentance and forgiveness did not neutralise the natural consequences of his sin. Nor will they do so for us. God often leaves them to be experienced, that the experience may make us hate the sins the more.

**II.** The sad defection to Adonijah of such tried friends as Joab and Abiathar has its lesson. The reason for Joab's treachery is plain. He had been steadily drifting away from David for years. His fierce temper could not brook the king's displeasure on account of his murders of Abner and Amasa, and his slaying of Absalom had made the breach irreparable. No doubt, David had made him feel that he loved and trusted him no longer; and his old comrade in many a fight, Benaiah, had stepped into the place which he had once filled. Professional rivalry had darkened into bitter bate. Joab commanded the native-born Israelites; Benaiah, the Cherethites and Pelethites, who are now generally regarded as foreign mercenaries. They were David's bodyguard, and were probably as heartily hated by Joab and the other Israelite soldiers as they were trusted by David. So there were reasons enough for Joab's abetting an insurrection which would again make him the foremost soldier. He wanted to be indispensable, and would prop the throne as long as its occupant looked only to him as its defender. Besides, he probably felt that he would have little chance of winning distinction in a kingdom which was to be a peaceful one.

Abiathar's motives are unexplained, but if we notice that he had been obliged to acquiesce in the irregular arrangement of putting the high-priest's office into commission, we can understand that he bore no goodwill to Zadok, his colleague, or to David for making the latter so. Self was at the bottom of these two renegades action. The fair fellowship, which had been made the closer because of dangers and privations faced together, crumbled away before the disintegrating influences of petty personal jealousies. When once self-regard gets in, it is like the trickle of water in the cracks of a rock, which freezes in winter and splits the hardest stone. No common action for a great cause is possible without the suppression of sidelong looks towards private advantage. Joab and Abiathar tarnished a life's devotion and broke sacred bonds, because they thought of themselves rather than of God's will. Surely they must have had some pangs as they sat at Adonijah's feast, when they thought of the decrepit old king lying in his chamber up on Zion, and remembered what he and they had come through together.

**III.** We may note the pathetic picture of decaying old age which is seen in David. He was not very old in years, being about seventy, but he was a worn-out man. His early hardships had told on him, and now he lay in the inner chamber, the shadow of himself. His love for Bathsheba had died down, as would appear both from her demeanour before him, and from her ignorance of his intentions as to his successor. She was little or nothing to him now. He seems to have been torpidly unaware of what was going on. The noise of Adonijah's revels had not disturbed his quiet. He had not even taken the trouble to designate his successor, though the eyes of all Israel were upon him that he should tell who was to sit on his throne after him (v. 20). Such neglect was criminal in the circumstances, and brings out forcibly the weary indifference which had crept over him. Contrast that picture with the early days of swift energy and eager interest in all things. Is this half-comatose old man the David who flashed like a meteor and struck swift as a thunderbolt but a few years before? Yes, and a like collapse of power befalls us all, if life is prolonged. Those who most need the lesson will be least touched by it; but let not the young glory in their strength, for it soon fades away; and let them give the vigour of their early days to God, that, when the years come in which they shall say, I have no pleasure in them, they may be able, like David, to look back over a long life and say, with him, that the Lord hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity.

**IV.** We note the flash of fire which blazed up in the dying embers of David's life. The old lion could be roused yet, and could strike when roused. It took much to shake him out of his torpor. Nathan's plan of bringing the double influence of Bathsheba and himself to bear was successful beyond what he had hoped. All that they desired was a formal declaration of Solomon as successor. They knew that the king's name was still dear enough to all Israel to ensure that his wish would settle the succession; and they would have been content to have left the actual entrance of Solomon on office till after David's death, so sure were they that his word was still a spell. But the old king, shaking off his languor, as a lion does the drops from his mane, goes beyond their wishes, and strikes one decisive blow as with a great paw, and no second is needed. Without a moment's delay, he sends for the trusty three, and bids them act on the instant. So down to Gihon goes the procession, with the youthful prince seated on his father's mule, in token of his accession, the trusty bodyguard round him with Benaiah at their head, and the great prophet Nathan, side by side with the high-priest Zadok, representing the divine sanction of the solemn act.

It would take stronger men than the spoiled Adonijah and his revellers to upset anything which that determined company resolved to do. The lad is anointed with the holy oil which Zadok as high-priest had the right to bring forth from the temporary sanctuary. That signified and effected the communication from above of qualifications for the kingly office, and indicated divine appointment. Then out blared the trumpets, and the glad people shouted God save the king! What thoughts filled the young heart of Solomon as he stood silent there his vision in Gibeon may partly tell. But the distant roar of acclaim reached Adonijah and his gang as they sat at their too hasty banquet.

They had begun at the wrong end. The feast should have closed, not inaugurated, the dash for the crown. They who feast when they should fight are likely to end their mirth with sorrow. David's one stroke was enough. They were as sure as Nathan and Bathsheba had been that the declaration of his wish would carry all Israel with it, and so they saw that the game was up, and there was a rush for dear life. The empty banqueting-hall proclaimed the collapse of a rebellion which had no brains to guide it, and no reason to justify it. Let us learn that, though the race is not always to the swift, promptitude of action, when we are sure of God's will, is usually a condition of success. Life is too short, and the work to be done too pressing and great, to allow of dawdling. I made haste, and delayed not, but made haste to keep Thy commandments. Let us learn, too, from Adonijah's fiasco, to see the end of a thing before we commit ourselves to it, and to have the work done first before we think of the feast.

Nathan and Bathsheba and David all believed that God had willed Solomon's succeeding to the throne. No doubt, the reason for their belief was the divine word to David through Nathan (2 Samuel vii. 12), which designated a son not yet born as his successor, and therefore excluded Adonijah as well as Absalom. But, while they believed this, they did not therefore let Adonijah work his will, and leave God to carry out His purposes. Their belief animated their action. They knew what God willed, and therefore they worked strenuously to effect that will. We may bewilder our brains with speculations about the relation between God's sovereignty and man's freedom, but, when it comes to practical work, we have to put out the best and most that is in us to prevent God's will from being thwarted by rebellious men, and to ensure its being carried into effect through our efforts, for we are God's fellow-workers.