

Kings and Prophets 13-05-10a

This is Friday, the 10th of May, 2013. We're continuing our study of Kings and Chronicles. We'll be resuming in 1 Kings, chapter 15, and 2 Chronicles, chapter 11, the latter part of the chapter, which are sort of located in the same time frame.

Let's take a moment to dedicate our time and our concentration to the Lord, and then we'll begin. Father, thank you for sustaining us through another week with your grace, your faithfulness, your blessings of provision and protection and education as you weave the circumstances of our lives together in a way that enables us to grow and to apply and to learn in the process more of your character and more by way of preparation for spending our eternal future with you. We thank you for this portion of your Word and the truth that it contains.

We ask your blessing on us as we study it together. May each one find information and truth that is pertinent and meaningful and will make a difference, will be helpful, will be something that the Holy Spirit can use to encourage us and to convict us and to make us ready and fruitful in the work that you have assigned to each one of us. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, in our study of this period in Israel's history, the time of kings and prophets, we have come to the divided kingdom. We have Jeroboam up in the north.

We have Rehoboam down in the south. We saw over the last few weeks this episode where the man of God goes up to condemn the vile practices that Jeroboam is pursuing up in the northern kingdom. And we kind of left Rehoboam back at the ranch.

He had done the conversation with people and talked about how his little finger was going to be bigger than his father's waist and disregarded the wise counsel of his elders. And that was what caused the split in the first place, or at least precipitated it. But we've been looking at the northern kingdom.

We want to kind of backtrack just a little bit and see what's been going on down south. So, if you turn in your Bible to 1 Kings chapter 14, this, of course, immediately follows the episode we saw of the man of God going up and prophesying against the altar, and we saw the outcome of that. And we're going to continue just a little bit with Jeroboam.

But we're going to come back to that and we're going to flip over to 2 Chronicles chapter 11. So you can kind of stick something in the place where we're going to pick up with Jeroboam up in the north. But we want to backtrack and find out what's going on down south.

And so we've already covered what the first portion of chapter 11 of 2 Chronicles covers. Jeroboam came to Jerusalem, assembled from the house of Judah and Benjamin, 180,000 chosen warriors. He was going to go fight northern Israel.

And so instead he just dwelt in Jerusalem, verse 5, built up the cities for defense in Judah. He

built up Bethlehem, Ethan, Tekoa, Beth, Zer, Soko, Adullam, Gath, Meresheth, Zeph, and the rest of these towns. In verse 10, you see Ajalon listed.

And we talked about Shishak, and I brought you that picture several weeks ago down at Luxor at the Temple of Karnak, the big wall relief of Shishak's northern campaign, and all of those little cartouches listing the cities of Israel that he went up and attacked. And one of the big discrepancies that people like to point out is they say, well, how come of all of these cities that are listed, Jerusalem is not there? In fact, hardly any of the cities of Judah are listed. The only one that you find as a current city in Judah that is on the list at the temple from Shishak's or Shoshenk's campaign is Ajalon.

It's really the only one that's listed. They say there must be some displacement, the Bible's wrong or history's wrong or the chronology's wrong or something. Well, remember, Rehoboam paid off Shishak.

Remember, sent him the gold shields, replaced him with bronze, paid him off. And remember, he sent back that message and said, I'm going to come down there and whatever I see that you like, I'm going to take. And Rehoboam said, okay.

Well, it worked in the sense that Shishak accepted the tribute or the bribe or whatever you want to call it and continued further north. And his campaign was largely against the northern kingdom because Jeroboam tried to fight him. And so those are the cities that are listed as having been conquered.

And probably only Ajalon offered any resistance out of Judah and it got taken. And that may have been an example city. Maybe Shishak came up and smashed them and then told Rehoboam, look, I'm going to come down and do the same to you.

We don't know exactly the details. But it shouldn't be a surprise that we do not find Jerusalem or any of the other cities of Judah on that cartouche list down in Egypt because he bypassed that and spent all of his time up north. And it's possible to reconstruct a lot of that path, and they have done so by looking at a combination of the topographical list that's given and some of the other historical records that they have.

From Shishak's topographical list, it looks like the kingdom of Israel and the Negev of Judah were the main objectives of his expedition. And so he went up the coastal highway to Gaza. Remember, we have even today the Gaza Strip.

And then over to Giza or Makeda. And then he sent some raids into the Negev to protect his flank and his rear there. And then the main body of the army seems to have gone on to Megiddo and then up through Ajalon and up Beit Horon Ridge to Gibeon.

And at Gibeon, that's where he seems to have gotten the tribute from Rehoboam. And so he didn't turn south and east to destroy Judah. Instead, he continued further up north.

And Rehoboam averted the catastrophe for Jerusalem. And so the rest of the campaign was up in Ephraim and Manasseh through the Jezreel Valley and down toward Beth Shean and the Transjordan. And so this may testify to the success of Rehoboam's strategy.

It cost him dearly in prestige and money and accoutrements of the temple and so on. But that's how he apparently kept from being destroyed. So God, by this means, in effect, humbles Rehoboam, which is something he needs, keeps him from attacking the north.

Shishak is going to go up and attack the north, so that they're going to be judged, so to speak, by an external agent rather than their own brethren having a civil war at that time. Now, as you get to the latter part of chapter 11 here, look at verse 13. We're in 2 Chronicles chapter 11, verses 13 and following.

So after the fortification of the southern kingdom and before Shishak comes up, that's going to be in chapter 12 here in Chronicles. So we've backed up a little bit. This is before Shishak comes up.

This little inclusio. From all the territories, the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel took their stand with Rehoboam. For the Levites left their common lands and their possessions and came to Judah and Jerusalem.

This is all the Levites that were up in the north. They saw the kind of rain that Jeroboam was perpetrating up there, and they left and came south to Judah and Jerusalem. For Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them from serving as priests to the Lord.

And Jeroboam appointed for himself priests for the high places, for the demons and the calf idols which he had made. That's what we saw in our study the last few weeks. And after the Levites left, those from all the tribes of Israel, such as set their heart to seek the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord God of their fathers.

Now this is very significant. Why is the north so bereft of any spiritual life and health at all? Because at the time of the dividing of the kingdom, those in the north, those from those ten tribes who still loved the Lord and wanted to worship him, packed up, left their ancestral lands and became pilgrims down in the land of Judah. So there were those up there who still loved God and didn't want to live under the reign of Jeroboam, and they left and went south so that they could be near Jerusalem and continue to worship God.

And this is why there are going to be so few later on. Now, just think ahead. Let's draw on your general biblical knowledge here.

Who's probably the most famous prophet in the books of the kings? Who's the one that John the Baptist patterns after? Elijah, right? Is Elijah a prophet in Judah, or is he a prophet in the northern kingdom? He's up in the north, right? King Ahab. Remember Ahab, Jezebel, and that sort of thing? And what does God tell him when he says, I'm the only one left? How many people does God say he's got up there? 7,000 that have not bowed the knee? But out of the

entire ten northern tribes, that's all you've got left up there in those later days? That's going to be a generation or two hence. But that's how many of the people left and went south that had any inkling of care for the Lord.

So this is where it tells us that they left the north and came down south. So even though Rehoboam was off to a shaky start, these people sort of helped to carry him. This was the salt preserving the kingdom.

All of this concentration of faithful believers. And remember, God sort of blesses the southern kingdom in spite of itself. And certainly in spite of Rehoboam.

And this is the reason, because in those early years, they followed in the ways of David and the early years of Solomon. Then look at verse 18. Rehoboam took for himself as wife Mahalath, the daughter of Jeremoth, the son of David.

Now this Jeremoth, if you look at the genealogies in Chronicles and so on, you don't find him listed anywhere. You've got the sons of David. Who are they? You've got Absalom, Amnon, Adonijah, Solomon, and these other guys.

You don't ever see this guy listed anywhere but here. So who do you think his mother was? Wife or concubine? Must have been some lesser light that was in David's extended family there, because he's not listed as the son of David anywhere else. Mahalath is the daughter of Jeremoth and Abihael, the daughter of Elia, the son of Jesse.

So this is a cousin. There's wives that made half-brothers, and pretty soon you get into sort of a cousin category, and this looks somewhat incestuous. But what is he doing? What is Rehoboam doing by taking this wife? He's trying to consolidate his claim on the throne by uniting the house of David behind him and the house of Jesse.

You marry to get the loyalty of the family of the bride. Of course, this didn't work so well with the Caesars. They were constantly stabbing one another and killing each other's children and stuff.

But in Israel, there was a little bit more of a sense of family and of responsibility to preserve your own folks. So, after he took Maakah, the granddaughter of... She bore him children, Jeush, Shemariah, and Zaham. After her, he took Maakah, the granddaughter of Absalom.

Remember, Absalom is from a different strain of the Davidic line. And this is interesting also, because Absalom had, I think, three sons and a daughter. And the three sons apparently died in their youth.

Remember when Absalom sets up a pillar and says, this is going to have to be my memorial because I don't have any sons? But elsewhere, he's got three sons listed. But apparently, they died without issue. And so, how this granddaughter of Absalom comes into being is something of a question.

But again, what is he doing? He's marrying people in the family, long-standing tradition, loyalty, preservation of the line, consolidation of power. Now, Rehoboam loved Maakah, the granddaughter of Absalom, more than all his wives and his concubines, for he took 18 wives and 60 concubines. Of course, he's just a pale shadow of Solomon, his father.

But he's working on it. You know, he's young. He figures he can... But of course, Solomon had the entire kingdom to support himself.

And now, Rehoboam's only got the two tribes. It's a greatly scaled-down operation. So, he's got to scale down the whole harem thing as well.

You know, running bankrupt. So, he's got 18 wives and 60 concubines, and he begot 28 sons and 60 daughters. You kind of wonder about that.

More than twice as many daughters as sons. And even then, if you've got 28 sons, who's going to be the next king? You know, is it whichever wife got married first? Is it which one is the oldest? Well, he's going to decide. Rehoboam appointed Abijah.

This is Abiyah in Hebrew. Remember what AB means? Ab. Remember in the New Testament, it says we cry out in our spirit, Abba, Father.

That's the Aramaic, Abba. And even today, people in Israel, they call their father Abba, which means like daddy or pop or whatever. So, Av is father.

Avi is my father. And Yah, of course, is an abbreviation of Yahweh or Adonai, which is the Lord. So, Adonai, Yah, the Lord is Yahweh.

Here, Avi, Yah. Yahweh is my father, or words to that effect. But that's what he named him.

Abijah, we'll call him. The son of Maacah appoints him as his chief to be leader among his brothers, for he intended to make him king. There's some precedent for this.

David appointed Solomon, who was not the oldest. And here's Rehoboam now appointing his successor. He dealt wisely and dispersed some of his sons throughout all the territories of Judah and Benjamin to every fortified city and gave them provisions in abundance.

He also sought wives for them. Again, what is he doing? Loyal family members. This has been a long tradition in the Middle East.

You remember, well, some of you remember when Saddam Hussein was leader in Iraq and he had sons and uncles and cousins and his trusted officers a lot of times were family members because there's a lot of backstabbing and coup-making over there and so you want somebody in your own family. So this is a little vignette, a little window into the situation down in the south. The early years of Rehoboam, even though he kind of starts off with a bad mistake and gets his kingdom split, it seems to kind of wake him up and for the first three years he does pretty well.

He gets an influx of faithful people from up north and the Levites who wanted to serve God. So there's blessing and God assuages the Shishak problem, lets him buy him off with the gold and whatnot, and so Shishak goes on up north. That's what you have in chapter 12 of 2 Chronicles, if you look at that.

Same basic story, but the author of Chronicles adds a little bit of commentary. So look at verse 7. When the Lord saw that they, the leaders of Israel and the king, humbled themselves, and this is Rehoboam, they have humbled themselves, therefore I will not destroy them. I will grant them some deliverance.

My wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. That's verse 7. Nevertheless, they will be his servants that they may distinguish my service from the service of the kingdoms of the nations. So it's going to cost them, but this is sort of a milder form of judgment.

Now, what do we observe in this? God doesn't immediately come down on Rehoboam with both feet and drive him off the throne or destroy his kingdom. What does God do? Gives him a milder rebuke, a milder judgment, a less severe discipline. Why? Two reasons.

A. He humbles himself. Remember 2 Chronicles 7.14? What does it say? You should know it by now. If my people were called by my name, they'll humble themselves and pray and seek my face.

Remember? What does it say they did? Shemaiah came in verse 5 to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah because of Shishak. You've forsaken me, says the Lord, therefore I have left you in the hand of Shishak. The leaders of Israel, this is Judah actually, and the king humbled themselves.

And they said the Lord is righteous. He's got a point. And God immediately weakens the judgment and ratchets back on the discipline.

Now this is a constant characteristic of God. How many times has He pronounced a judgment? You see people change their mind, appeal to God, humble themselves, and God says okay, I will hold off. I will mitigate.

I will minimize. I will draw back. Because God is anxious for us to turn.

He is anxious for us to learn. He is anxious for us to return. They have humbled themselves, therefore I will not destroy them.

I'll grant them some deliverance. And you get the idea that to the extent that there is humility, to the extent that there is repentance, to the extent that there is change of mind, to the extent that there is a renewal of dedication, to that extent God will reverse judgment and discipline and bring about blessing. The problem with these guys is they always end up being sort of a flash in the pan.

It's a momentary, wow this is painful, let me turn, but they can't maintain any consistency. And you know things are going to go badly for Rehoboam later on, but in these early times, because of so many believers and all of that good influence, Rehoboam seems to be kind of a go along guy. He looks for somebody to go along with.

He goes along with his advisors, the young bucks. He says, well I'll go along with them. And then he goes along, he just wants to accommodate Shishak and buy him off.

The only time he gets ready to go to battle is against the wrong people, and God has to tell him, don't go fight your own brethren. This is from the Lord, that the kingdom splits. So in verse 9, Shishak came up against Jerusalem, took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, the treasures of the king's house, took away everything.

He carried away the gold shields which Solomon had made. Rehoboam made bronze shields in their place, committed them to the hands of the captains of the guards which guarded the doorway of the king's house. Whenever the king entered the house of the Lord, the guard would go and bring them out and they would take them back into the guard room.

So they're just for show. Keep them locked up. Look at verse 12.

When he humbled himself, the wrath of the Lord turned from him, so as not to destroy him completely, and things also went well in Judah. Thus, King Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem and reigned. Rehoboam was 41 years old when he became king and he reigned 17 years in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there.

His mother's name was Naamah and Ammonitess. Where do the Ammonites come from? Quick, quick. Moab and Ammon are the sons of Lot and the women who bore them were Lot's daughters.

So they are both his children and his grandchildren at the same time. I don't know if they called him daddy or grandpa or maybe he just switched off. Maybe on even days he was daddy and on odd days he was grandpa.

Weird. Rehoboam is going to fade out. Look at verse 14.

He did evil because he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord. Why did he do evil? There's a reason. Did not prepare his heart to seek.

If there's anything to circle in this chapter, that's it. Everything in our lives, everything, the present, the immediate future and the forever long-term future rests upon whether or not we prepare our hearts to seek the Lord. Notice it doesn't say that he sought the Lord or didn't seek the Lord.

What comes before the seeking? Prepare your heart to seek the Lord. What do you have to do

to your heart so that you can seek the Lord? You don't just say, oh wow, things are going really bad. I better seek the Lord.

Oh Lord, things are going bad. Sure could use some help down here. What is it that he failed to do? Prepare his heart to seek.

If you're going to seek, especially in our age, we're church-age believers, right? What happens in our hearts? What goes on in our souls? What does Jesus say to the church in Revelation 3 in verse 20? Behold, I stand at the door and knock. Now, what happens every week when somebody hosts Bible class? You know people are coming to your house. All of us have hosted at one time or another.

What happens when we know everybody's coming over to the house? What do we do? We prepare the house to receive the guests. It's a labor of love. It's sacrificial toward self and beneficial toward others.

We spend time, we spend energy, we buy cleaners, we prepare snacks, we arrange seating. We really want to do the best we can to receive God's people to come and hear God's word, right? How much more would you do if it wasn't Bible class, but the angel Gabriel came and said, the Lord is coming to your house tomorrow at this time? What would you do to the house to get ready for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? What kind of preparation would you go through for the Lord of glory to come in? Man, I can't even begin to think. Should I, I don't know, olives or tilapia? I know the Lord likes fish, you know, and that's what's in the Sea of Galilee.

Honeycomb or some kind of a snack? What sort of a beverage would I offer Him? Does He want wine or does He want water? Is He going to turn the water into wine? I don't know. How would you get ready? How neat would you make your house? I don't think I'd want Major's little dog hair clumps floating across the floor or cats spit up here and there or ungathered newspapers. Wouldn't you just knock? I probably wouldn't get a wink of sleep.

Listen, what was this man's failure? Rehoboam. Grandson of King David. Son of Solomon.

What was his failure? He did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord. What should we do to prepare our hearts so that when we seek the Lord and we hear that knock on the door and we go to open the door and He comes in, what kind of a heart is He coming into? You know, they talk about let Jesus come into your heart as a metaphor for salvation. No, no, no, no, no.

Jesus coming into your heart is His residence after you're saved. This is the ongoing presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember what He said in John.

I've quoted it a hundred times. The one who loves me has my words and keeps them. I and my Father will come in and make our home with Him.

Right? What kind of preparation are we going to make? Are we seeking for the Lord Jesus and God the Father? You get all three members of the Trinity. We've already got the indwelling and

filling of the Spirit available to us, right? And with preparation, with seeking, how do we prepare? What is the preparation? This is practical now. This is not pie in the sky by and by.

This isn't inheritance in heaven. This is right now as we speak today. What preparation can you and I make so that we don't make this Rehoboam classic mistake? Classic faux pas.

What can we do? What is the preparation in practical terms? What can you do right now in the next 24 hours so that we don't make this mistake? What did Jesus say? John 14, John 15. The one who has my words and keeps them. Two steps.

You can have the words and not keep them, right? You can try to keep the words, but if you haven't got the words, there's no way to keep them because you don't know what they are. Somebody else is telling you what the Word of God is and it could be wrong. Get the ghost.

Pray. Speak in tongues. Get baptized.

Evangelize people. Knock on doors. Give money.

Sow into my ministry and I'll send you a resource. And all this kind of thing. Has my words and keeps them.

Jesus says that person who has my words and lives in their light, keeps them, guards them, treasures them, reverences them, preserves them, treats them as important and significant, as making a difference. How many times today did you stop? How many times today did I stop and analyze what's going on in the light of God's Word? Is my conversation honoring in God's sight? Is my use of time honoring in God's sight? Am I living in the light of His Word and keeping His Word? Am I doing what I do as unto the Lord and not unto men? Am I trying to live in a way that is pleasing in His sight as I carry on these assigned tasks? I have assignments in my work. I have assignments in my family.

I have assignments as a pastor. I have assignments in all different kinds of areas. High and low.

You have an assignment if you own a pet. God has given us guardianship and stewardship over animals. And if you take one of those animals, that's God's creature and you have now got a stewardship before God as to how you treat that animal.

Feed it as unto the Lord. Walk it as unto the Lord. Clean up after it as unto the Lord.

Groom it. Make sure it's healthy. Take whatever steps.

Make it comfortable. Make sure it's safe. Listen, it sounds superfluous, but listen, as unto the Lord.

Everything as unto the Lord. The One who has my words and keeps them. Is there any part of life to which God's Word does not apply? Recreation? Entertainment? It's all use of time, right? Redeem the time because the days are evil.

If you don't redeem the time, what's the time going to be? If we're not redeemed, if people are not redeemed, what happens to them? Destroyed in the lake of fire, right? Utter condemnation. The days are inherently evil. The seconds and minutes and hours are inherently evil.

Redeem the time. Buy the time back. How do we do that? We've got to convert the evil of time.

Look at me. Look at anybody that's getting older. Time is evil.

Look at what it does to you. Shrivels you up. Wrinkles you up.

All your stuff starts failing. You're like an old car, only an old car you can bolt a new part on. Not so this.

Not without some horrendously expensive... And even then, it's biological. It only lasted for a time. They cremate you.

They find all kinds of metal parts in there. I'm not going to cremate me, by the way. No, listen.

I want my bones dressed in hope. I don't care what it costs. I don't care what it takes.

And by the way, anybody can do whatever they want in this regard. It's not a point of theology. It's a point of personal preference.

My personal preference is I want this frame to rot away the way God intended. I want to go slowly to dust in a box in the ground and just tell you all now, whoever's left, when I kick off, which could be sooner or later, no flames for this frame. I want as much of me left as possible to pop back up out of the ground and I'm going to be looking for anybody that did it any different.

But here's the point. Redeem the time. What does Rehoboam do wrong? Look at this.

He did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord. What can you do right? If you remember one thing, circle one thing out of this entire lesson, the key to success in this life and in the next is preparing our hearts to seek the Lord. Now, in the Marine Corps and in other lesser branches of the service, there are commands that are given to troops and possibly greater branches of the service if there hypothetically would be any.

But there are commands that are given, right? You say, right, right? And everybody's supposed to do a 90 degree pivot. You say, about, you get a 180 degree swivel out of that deal, right? There's a command of preparation. There's a command of execution.

If you're underway, by the right flank, by the left flank, and so on. Well, I can't blow the microphone if I do it like you should. There's a command of preparation, command of execution.

You prepare everybody. They know what's coming. Eyes.

You know the next command is going to be right because you're doing a passive review. Eyes. Command of preparation.

Right. Command of execution. Now, if I say eyes and I never say right, that's just, that's unthinkable.

It's confusion. What comes after the preparation? The execution. If you prepare your heart to seek the Lord, what's next? Say it out loud.

Seek the Lord. Prepare to seek the Lord. Seek the Lord.

Don't prepare to seek the Lord and then get distracted and here goes a butterfly and off, you know, walking the dogs, walking the dogs the day before yesterday and all these butterflies in the weeds. No concentration at all. Don't prepare your heart to seek the Lord and then never get around to seeking Him.

It's a two-step process. Both parts are essential. Don't seek the Lord without preparation but don't prepare and then fail to seek.

How many commands in Scripture do we have? Seek the Lord early. Seek Him while He may yet be found. Call upon Him while He is near.

You shall seek Me, you shall search Me, seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. Seek, seek, seek. Ask and it shall be given.

Seek and ye shall find. Just take that extra step of preparation before you want. So many people want to go seek the Lord in a time of crisis or a time of stress and they haven't done the preparation.

You want to really, oh Lord, come right on in and your house and your heart are a total mess. The Lord's not going to walk into a pigsty that's not prepared, that isn't clean, that hasn't been made ready. Jesus said, watch for you do not know what hour your Lord will come.

Be ready, be prepared. It's easier to just keep the place clean all the time than you can accept company any time. None of us do it but that's the ideal.

He did evil, why? People say, I don't know why I have such a problem with this ongoing sin. I have these patterns of recurring sin. I can't seem to get shed of it.

No matter how hard I try, I rededicate, I renew, I fall on my face before the Lord. Oh Lord, deliver me from this sin. I just can't ever seem to get any better.

I can't seem to get rid of these patterns of failure in my life. Why did Rehoboam have a pattern of failure in his life? He did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord, much less seek the Lord. And so his reign, out of a total of these 17 years in Jerusalem, only three of them were good years.

And then he's got 14 bad years. Three good years, 14 bad years. One, failure to learn from his mistakes.

Everybody makes mistakes, but he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord. And therefore he did evil. Acts of Rehoboam, first and last, written in the book of Shemaiah, the prophet, Ido the seer.

Genealogies, there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. Rehoboam rested with his fathers, was buried in the city of David, and Abijah his son reigned in his place.

Well, Jeroboam's got a son named Abijah also. There's so much name confusion that it reminds me of the generations after Cain and Seth, where there was sons on both sides that had the same names. We saw that when we did Genesis.

It's going to be the same in these king lists. We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see the Abijah son of Jeroboam.

And there's a parallel here. There's a comparison that is invited by having this same name. So let's pause and take our break.

We'll come back and take a look at that.