

Kings and Prophets 13-06-14b

We pick up our study now of King Asa, or as I learned it in Sunday school, Good King Asa, in the 16th chapter of 2 Chronicles. We finish chapter 15 noting that he has diminished a bit from his early good start in the first 10 years because in Israel, the high places were not removed. We had a good question on the break, why does it say Israel and not Judah? And there's a two-fold reply, and it could be either or, or both.

One is that especially as you read the Book of Chronicles, which we have reflected as First and Second Chronicles in our English Bible, remember that this is very similar to the situation in the American Civil War of the 1860s. The Southern Kingdom is, and this is a very loose analogy, and don't accuse me of anything for favoring the Yankees, but the North considered itself to be the original country and the South in our nation seceded, right? South of the Mason-Dixon line, they seceded, they left. So Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States, sought to bring everything back together.

Well, when you look at the division of the 12 tribes of Israel, when you look at the division of David and Solomon's kingdom, the guys who left are the 10 Northern tribes. They're sort of analogous to the South. So especially in the Book of Chronicles, which is the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah, they look at themselves as Israel, and the North, Ephraim, are the ones that left.

So often you will see the term Israel used in Chronicles, and they're talking about Judah. And this is just another reminder that the Bible doesn't always deal in technical terms and precise definitions in the way that we in the modern West might prefer it to do. So we have to pay a little bit of attention.

Secondly, in this context, remember that there has been fresh territory conquered. There is new real estate under Asa's rule, and he doesn't treat it with the same diligence that he did the kingdom that he inherited from his father and that he took away from his grandmother. So it's a looser policy.

And it could be that these areas that surround Judah weren't fully expunged. Be that as it may, there was no war until the 35th year of the reign of Asa. And then right along, there's no chapter divisions in the original, in the 36th year of the reign of Asa, Baasha, king of Israel, came up against Judah and built Ramah.

We know this story, but we have hit a thorny crux here, because if you take a look, what year of Asa's reign is there no war? You say, well, there's no war for the first 10 years. And then he had this big conflagration. But you remember back here, it said that in the 10th year, the Ethiopians came up and so on.

And it came all the way up to the 15th year. If you look in verse 10, chapter 15, verse 10, they gathered together in Jerusalem in the third month in the 15th year of the reign of Asa, offered to the Lord the bowls and made this big, noisy, trumpet-blown covenant, right? 15th year. Now

we've suddenly jumped 20 years into the future.

Well, keep your finger here and turn back to 1 Kings chapter 16, verse 8. In the 26th year of Asa, king of Judah, Elah, the son of Baasha became king over Israel. Whoa. I thought in the 36th year of the reign of Asa, Baasha came up against Judah.

Now he is one lively corpse. If he's coming up against Judah, you know, 10 years after he died. So how do we reconcile this? 26th year of Asa, Baasha is dead and Elah, Baasha's son, comes to the throne of the Northern kingdom.

26th year. Over in Chronicles, very clearly, and in more than one verse, it says there was no war until the 35th year of the reign of Asa. In the 36th year, Baasha came up against.

So what's going on here? Well, it's not a quick fix. There are two schools of thought. I will give you both of them and then tell you which one I suspect is the better.

I'll give you the one I don't suspect is better first. The first idea, and this has been suggested all the way back, if you read Kylan Dalich, the commentary on the Old Testament, a very great 100 plus year old classic commentary. This is what they say, that these years are measured.

And the word here, when it says in the reign of, or year of, that it is the year of the kingdom of Asa. In other words, this is 35 and 36 years measured from when the kingdom first split, which fixes the problem. That gets it down to the 15th and 16th years of Asa because the kingdom had been split for 20 years when Asa comes to the throne.

So the 35th and 36th years are the 15th and 16th years of the rule of Asa. It's the 35th and 36th years of the divided kingdom in total and that is measured from that point. That sort of works.

The problem is this is the only place where that sort of measurement seems to have been used. Everywhere else, they are regnal years, in the eighth year of King so-and-so, in the fourth year of King so-and-so, second year of King so-and-so, and we've had it elsewhere. For example, verse 25, 1 Kings, Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the second year of Asa, king of Judah and so on.

That's a regnal year type of notation. And it could be that in the very earliest records of Solomon and Rehoboam and Abijah, and down to the time of Asa, they were still keeping track of years based on when the kingdom split. They said, well, this is year one of the kingdom of Judah with Rehoboam and then Abijah and then Asa.

But then they broke off and they said, well, we really need to start doing it king by king. That's one possible solution. And there's a linguistic argument for that as well.

And Kyle, of Kyle and Dalish fame, he prefers that view. Actually, Kyle has a different view and I prefer this view. These numbers, if they're spelled out in Hebrew, there's no way you can get them confused.

Shalisha bears no reference to Shishah. You can't really get them confused. It couldn't be a minor scribal mistake.

However, and this is where it gets fun. If you're starting to drift away, pay attention now, because this is a cool thing. Not in your Aramaic square script, but in the old Hebrew script.

Many times they would reflect numbers using single letters. So Aleph would be one, Bet would be two, Gimel would be three, Dalet would be four, and so on. And then for the tens digit, they would also use single letters.

And if that's the way these reigns were first written down, then if you're going to say ten, Yod is ten. Look, Aleph, Bet, Gimel, Dalet, He, Wa, Zayin, Chet, Tet, and then Yod becomes ten. Kaf is 20, because you can go back and add 20 plus Aleph to get 21, 20 plus Bet to get 22, and that.

So Yod is ten. Kaf is 20, Lamed is 30, Mame is 40, and so on. So let's say you want to write the number 15, like the 15th year of King Asa.

What would you do? You would say Yod-He. Right? Yod-He. That's going to be ten plus five.

What if you were going to write 35? That's going to be Lamed plus He. Right? Yod is ten, Kaf is 20. It helps if you know the Hebrew alphabet.

But Yod is ten, Kaf is 20, Lamed is 30. J, Yod, K, Kaf, L, it's J-K-L, right? Yod, Kaf, Lamed. So the difference between 15 and 35 is the difference between Yod-He and Lamed-He.

Now, in the square Aramaic script, you know what a Yod looks like? It looks like a little apostrophe. You know, one Yod or one Tittle will not pass from the law. A little tiny apostrophe mark.

Lamed is a great big camel-looking thing. It looks like an ostrich. It's got a big tall neck with a hook on it, a beak.

It comes down. It's got a straight back. It curves around.

It's got a little tail down. There's no way you could confuse a Yod and a Lamed in the Aramaic square script. However, in the old Hebrew alphabet, if you've got a piece of paper, what you can do is make a backward checkmark.

You know, a checkmark is usually a little thing going southeast and a big thing going northeast, right? Well, do it backwards. It's like the first half of a W. Make the first half of a W and stop, okay? What you're looking at, that shape, backward checkmark, that is Yod in the old Hebrew script. Now, up at the top of your backward checkmark, make it like a little tiny backward F. Little tick mark and another little tick mark.

That's Lamed. Yod, backward checkmark. Lamed, backward checkmark with two little tiny protrusions at the left top.

Very easy to confuse on a worn manuscript, Lamed and Yod. So what should have said in the 15th year comes out the 35th year. And once you change that one, you need to say, oh, well, somebody made an obvious mistake here and the other one was corrected to match.

This is what I think happened. So if somebody in one of these skeptic Bible, oh, look, here's a big error in the scripture. Look, mistakes happen.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels. It is resolvable. I don't know which of those solutions is correct.

Either one works just by the way the years line up being exactly 20 years after the division of the kingdom. That helps it. But I personally favor because working with text on a daily basis, I know how easy it is to create a typo that much easier when it's handwritten on leather.

So this gets my vote. You got a Yod, plus it's just cool looking at the old Hebrew script. I'm telling you, Google sometime and say old Hebrew script and just look at the cool letters in that alphabet.

Then come over and look at my casting of the Hezekiah tunnel inscription, which is written in those letters. I can stare at that thing for just minutes on end because it's just so cool looking to see this is the alphabet that was used for the 10 commandments on the tablets of stone. This is the alphabet with which Moses wrote the law.

Moses wrote Genesis with these letters. He himself sat down with his Moses hand and his Moses pen and his Moses ink and wrote it sitting on his Moses chair behind his Moses beard. And he wrote with this alphabet.

I mean, it's how many things can you say? I'm looking at what Moses looked at. I'm looking at letters in the exact shape that Moses wrote. I just I don't know.

It's just transporting to me. And it's, you know, maybe maybe you just have to be bent in a certain way to appreciate that. But I just think it is so cool.

You look at that Hezekiah tunnel inscription. King Hezekiah of Bible fame laid eyes on that very inscription. My eyes are looking at an inscription that King Hezekiah looked at that was done in his day while he was walking around in his kingly robes in his palace.

That inscription was there. And I'm looking at it. It's not just any old oil lamp that was dug up somewhere in Israel.

This is a thing that actually existed that's mentioned in the Bible. It's just seems to diminish the distance in the ages. So anyway, that's another reason I like this solution.

It just you're looking at that that great alphabet. We'll probably all know this alphabet. I fully expect that we're going to get to see the original manuscript of Genesis and we'll be able to read it if we if we're faithful.

I think, you know, partaking of the hidden manna. If you don't know the old script and somebody hands you Moses original, would you be able to read it? No, it's going to be hidden. But if by virtue of your faith and patience, one of the rewards that you get is to partake of the hidden manna, you're going to wake up in the kingdom of God, in the kingdom of the Lord, knowing how to read the ancient Hebrew script and understanding the ancient Hebrew tongue.

And you'll have the privilege of talking to people for whom that's a native language. That this is my speculation on just a hint or a shadow or a reflection of some of the blessings God's going to give us in the resurrection. If we care enough, if we're interested, how fantastic would it be to be able to talk to these guys that actually walked out of Egypt in their language to read the manuscripts that were written at first hand? You don't think God doesn't have a copy? Of course he does.

You don't think the tablets of the law, there's not a copy you can view, but it's not going to do any good if it looks like hand scratch. So you know two letters already. Just learn the other 20 and you'll be all set.

It's the Alephbeit. It's the Alephbeit in Hebrew. And you already know Yod and Lamed.

It's duck soup from there. Aleph is real easy. It's a cow's head.

I mentioned that a week or two ago. It's an A laying on its side in the old script. But I digress.

Anyway, if you notice that there is a year discrepancy between Kings and Chronicles, now you know why, how and what the probable solution is. So back to the text. We are in 2 Chronicles.

We're at chapter 16. And I'm going to amend this text in verse 19 of the previous chapter and verse 1 of this chapter to say 15th and 16th. This comports with everything else we know.

So in the 16th year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah and built Ramah. Asa brought silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the Lord. Now we have a little bit different perspective on this, do we not? In Kings, here's poor Asa up against it with the northern tribes reinforcing Ramah.

And he's got to try to warm up the relationship with Syria. So he looks around and he gets the gold and silver out of the temple because that's what he gathered together, the things dedicated to the Lord. And he's going to send this over to the king of Syria.

And we think, well, that must've been all he had. Maybe the treasuries were exhausted, maybe Abijah wasted a bunch of it. So he had to go to this stuff in the temple.

So we'd have something to give to the king. What did we just read? What just happened with the Ethiopians and the vast, amazing, incredible spoilage that he has gathered? Out of all of that spoiled, he can't find anything to send the Syrian king? A, B, hasn't God recently given him this most stupendously supernatural victory against an incredibly huge force that greatly

outnumbered him? God was with him. He's the army of the Lord.

They blew trumpets. They made covenants. They shouted.

They sang. They danced. They ran their fingers through the gold, mine, all mine, all mine.

They had all of this stuff. And so now here's a threat of a city being reinforced. And what does Asa do? Let me get the gold and silver out of God's temple and send to the Syrian king.

What happened to your spoil? What happened to the vast amounts of stuff that you got beating the Ethiopians? You're going to rob God's temple to placate a heathen king and bribe him to be on your side, buy him away from his current treaty, bribe him out of loyalty to Baasha with the stuff. You collected this stuff and sent it down to the temple because you recognized that it belonged to the Lord. Now you're walking right in and taking it out of the temple of the Lord and sending it to a heathen king.

Does this have any sort of symbolic currency at all for us? We thought from the king's account, well, you know, he's, he stored up resources and now he can use them in a time of need. This isn't a time of need. It's a time of abundance.

Doesn't it remind you a little bit of the story that Nathan the prophet tells David? There was a poor man that had one lamb and there was a rich guy that had vast flocks and a visitor came to the rich man and he was looking around for something to cook for the visitor. And so he took the poor man's lamb and slaughtered it instead of taking one of his own. And David says, well, this guy's a boor and a cad and a terrible guy.

Where is he? We need to bring him to justice. Nathan says, well, it's you. You have all of these wives, you get all of the access to the king and you take Uriah's wife and you kill Uriah over it.

Same sort of thing here. There's starting to be some tarnish and starting to be some flakiness around the edges of Asa's obedience. Now, remember though, the scripture says, and scripture cannot be broken, his heart was for the Lord all his days.

So here's my question for us tonight. Here's a king that has statedly and repeatedly been affirmed in scripture as having a heart that is for God. And yet he is making these missteps.

Does it remind you of anybody? Who was the man after God's own heart that committed adultery and murder and numbered the people and brought a plague down that killed thousands? Who was that? King David. But does scripture ever say that his heart turned away from the Lord? Here's what occurs to me in looking at this. You can have a heart that is for the Lord.

And when you look at your heart, you say, well, my heart's for the Lord. I'm not looking anywhere else for my God or my security or my divine guidance or in time of need. I always turn to the Lord.

I've never had any doubt that he's there. I love him. I know he loves me.

I'm looking forward to the eternal future. My heart is right where it's supposed to be. When you look at Asa, the thing that starts to emerge is having a heart for the Lord isn't enough by itself.

That doesn't fully pass the test. If you have a heart for the Lord, you've got to follow through with obedience. Somebody can love you dearly.

They can love you more than they love anybody else on this earth. But that doesn't necessarily mean that they will get up and do things that reflect that love. That's a separate thing.

They haven't fallen out of love. They haven't gotten some other child that they love more. They haven't gotten a different set of parents that they love more.

They haven't gotten some other friend that they love more. A friend loveth at all times. You're in their heart.

But the practical side, the outworking side, the expression side, Simon Peter, do you love me? Lord, you know that I love you. Okay, good. Just checking.

Is that what the Lord said? If you love me, feed my sheep. Simon says, Lord, you know I love you. But that love in and of itself, that heart in and of itself wasn't enough to ensure obedience and proper function in a time of pressure.

Did Peter ever stop loving the Lord Jesus? Did he ever stop having a heart for the Lord Jesus? If that's the case, how did he deny him three times? There's something else. It takes more than just a heart for the Lord. You've got to have a mind and a soul and your strength committed to the Lord.

That's why the great commandment doesn't just say thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. What is the great commandment? We just had it in our Joshua Code book a couple of weeks ago. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with what? All your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.

Why are soul, strength, and mind added in? Because heart alone is not enough. Asa is a classic case in point. Scripture says repeatedly the guy's had a heart for the Lord, never strayed, was loyal to the Lord all the days of his life in his heart.

But look at his horrible malfunctions here. He took God's stuff out of God's temple and sent it to a heathen king to bribe the guy instead of saying, you know that thing we did where we cried out to the Lord and said, Lord, we know that the victory is yours and these guys are really attacking you. And you know, amen brother, sound the trumpet, blow the horn, shout the oath and the commitment.

What happened to all of that? Oh, they're building a city up north. What can I do? Let me buy a friend. You know, you said that who wants to be a millionaire and he could phone a friend.

Well, this is buy a friend. Take God's stuff and buy a friend. So what's going to happen? You go down and look at verse 7. At that time, Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, notice none of this is in Kings.

It's in Chronicles. Hanani comes to Asa and says to him, because you have relied on the king of Syria and have not relied on the Lord, your God, notice he has a heart for him, but he's not relying on him. How is this even possible? Can you love God and have a heart for God, but not rely on him? Of course you can look at Asa, look at David, look at countless other examples of failure in the scripture.

There's never any disloyalty. There's never any rebellion or departure from God. It's a failure to function.

Heart alone is not enough. Don't look at yourself and say, well, I've got a heart for God. That by itself is not enough.

You have not, you have relied on the king of Syria and have not relied on the Lord, your God. Therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand. Instead of allies, they were supposed to be subjugated.

Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the Lord, he delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to him. Asa is a man whose heart is loyal to the Lord.

God's eyes are running to and fro looking for these loyal people to show himself strong on their behalf. In this you have done foolishly. Asa meets the first qualification.

He's a heart loyal to the Lord. The Lord looks at him and wants to be strong on his behalf, but Asa fails the test. Why? Along with having a heart that is loyal, it must be a relying heart, a depending heart.

This is where I look for my answers. This is where I look for my guidance. This is where I find out what I am supposed to do and what I am not supposed to do.

I look to God. No question of his love for God, loyalty to God, but he fails dismally. And because of this, he is going to have trouble.

He has an escaped enemy that is going to come back to bite him all the rest of his days as king. And not just him, but the people around him because he's the king and his decisions affect a lot of other people. All of us, our decisions don't just affect us, they affect others.

God delivered the Lubeem and the Ethiopians into your hand. In this you have done foolishly. Therefore, from now on you shall have wars.

Remember that first 10 years where God gave him rest and he was able to do so much? God

says you're not getting any more rest. Since you're having trouble with application, you're going to have nothing but crises requiring application all the rest of your days. Started well, took a left turn, now he's in trouble.

So Asa humbled himself before the Lord, tore his clothing, sand and sackcloth and ashes, and said, O Lord, far be it from you, I see my mistake. Give us strength now. Let us go forth and pursue these Syrians and wipe them out.

No, this is shoot the messenger time. Asa was angry with the seer. The message is from God, but Asa is angry with, you know, this is like hearing bad news over the telephone and so you start just beating the telephone into chips and flinders because you don't like what you just heard.

Bad telephone, smash, smash, smash. The seer is just a conduit to God. Who is he really angry with? He's angry with the word from the Lord, but of course he's going to take it out on the seer.

Put him in prison for he was enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed people at that time. Asa got really cranky and this spread beyond the seer.

Some of his other advisors probably came up and said, you know, O King, you remember that Ethiopian thing? I think, you know, he really had a point. Hanani had a point. Oh yeah? Well, you like his viewpoint, you can join him.

And he starts oppressing a lot of others. The acts of Asa, first and last, are indeed written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel and the 39th year of his reign, he has trouble from the 15th and 16th year all the way to the 41st year. That's a long time of trouble.

In the 39th year, Asa became diseased in his feet and his malady was severe. Most scholars have decided that he got gout. Have you ever seen the commercials for that gout medicine and they show what happens when you get gout? It's a buildup of some kind of acid or some kind of thing in your system and your joints get all corroded and it's awful.

I've known people that had gout and you suffer miserably and dismally, even in the modern day. They can't really do a lot about it and that's what he had. But he's diseased in his feet.

Now, why do you suppose of all of the things that could be following him, he would be diseased in his feet? Why wouldn't he be diseased in his heart? Why didn't he have heart disease? Why didn't he go blind? Why didn't he go deaf? Diseased in his feet. What do the feet represent in scripture? Your walk. His heart is fine, but it's not working out in his walk and God makes an emblem of him, makes a symbol of him.

At the end of his reign, he's not walking. He's hearting. He's being loyal, but look at his walk.

He's oppressing people. He's throwing out the seer. He no longer consults God on things.

And look at verse 14, they buried him in his own tomb, which he had made for himself in the city of David. They laid him in the bed, which was filled with spices and various ingredients prepared in a mixture of ointments. They made a very great burning for him.

There's this wonderful funeral and it's all kind of wonderful smells. It's too late. All the balms and the perfumes, you can't perfume away.

I've often wondered if his feet weren't so diseased that they were sort of gangrenous and they were trying to kind of cover up the smell. And the reason they had all these perfumes and flowers and ointments is like, wow, we could barely stand the king when he was alive. And now that he's dead, holy smokes, literally.

And so they keep making more and more smoke, trying to cover up the, they made a very great burning for him and, you know, maybe the smoke will blanch out the smell. Isn't it a shame he started out so well and he ends so badly. Don't let this be us.

Remember, Paul says, you were running well. Who hindered you to the Galatians? You were running well. You were, you had a good race going.

Who tripped you? What distracted you the last 10 feet of the race? Cold Gatorade, get your cold Gatorade. Oh yeah, that sounds good. We want to finish well.

It is better to start badly and finish well than it is to start well and finish badly or not at all. Your race is pointless if you don't finish and finish well. It is not how you begin.

It is how you end. We saw it in Ecclesiastes. It's not the tall spirit blowing the trumpet, shouting the oath.

Oh yes Lord. Where's the shouting and the trumpet blowing? There's a lot of smoke, fire, and burning at the end of Asa's career. Why? Foreshadowing a lot of wood, hay, and stubble.

Saved yet so as by fire. Trying to perfume the stench of death, the smell of disease, the lameness because he didn't maintain. He didn't follow through.

He had a great heart. What about the mind and the soul and the strength? Faded in the stretch. Well, we're going to see Asa's son jump in Jehoshaphat next time and this is going to be clearer skies, brighter rainbows, more fun, more gratifying, a positive example for a change.

Not many of these in the scriptures so when we see it we're going to really revel in it while we can because there's a lot of what I would call dismality in Kings and Chronicles. But chapter 17 coming up in 2 Chronicles is a shot in the arm so we'll see that next time. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for these powerful examples that resonate and remind us of the tremendous privileges and potentials and opportunities that you have given to us and the importance of availing ourselves of them, following through, being faithful to the end, having perseverance

and patience so that we can inherit the wonderful promises that are ours in Christ. We pray that as we pray and as we think on these things in the light of our own circumstances and our own lives that God the Holy Spirit will give us clarity and help us to not only understand but find the means of application so that we can truly live in a way that is pleasing to you and glorifies the Lord Jesus. We pray it in his name.

Amen.