

Kings and Prophets 13-09-20a

This is Friday, the 20th of September, 2013. We're studying the Kings and Prophets by way of First Kings and Second Chronicles. We will continue tonight picking up at the death of Ahab and look at a couple of things in the Southern Kingdom.

We're going to do a bit of a comparison. This sets up some really salient or important or pertinent or interesting, interesting is really overworked word. So I'm giving you all these other better synonyms.

But some intriguing things to look at as we compare the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms, as we compare the Prophets, Elijah and Elisha, as we compare the kings in particular, and the course of their reigns in the Northern and Southern Kingdom. This is a rare occasion where we're going to end up with the king in the North and the South having the same name at the same time, which is confusing if you're a seminary student trying to memorize who did what when. But we'll take a moment to dedicate our time and our hearts to God and to the study of His Word and to ask for God's Holy Spirit to superintend.

Then we will begin. Father, you bring us through the days and the weeks and the years of our lives with your grace and your provision and the weaving together of circumstances and relationships and provisions and blessings, challenges and opportunities. We thank you for those that you have brought to us this week.

We thank you for the truth of your Word that resides in our souls and enables us to possess the wisdom to navigate these circumstances, to make decisions, to take actions that are pleasing in your sight when we remember our identity in Christ, when we remember the real reason why we are here. We thank you for this passage of Scripture. We thank you for the truth that it contains.

We thank you for the meaning and the significance that it has for us. We pray that as we look at it together, we'll have not only a historical understanding and even a theological understanding, but also a practical realization of how we can think and live in the light of this portion of your Word. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen. The place to which we have come chronologically now in the study of 1 Kings, as we come to the end of the book and get ready to cross the Rubicon into 2 Kings, is where we arrived and then backed up a few weeks ago, looking at the temporary alliance between Ahab and Jehoshaphat for the purpose of retaking cities that were to have been returned, but were not. We saw the consulting of the prophet and his prediction that things would not be well.

Micaiah warning Ahab, we have been through that. We came up to the point where Ahab dies in battle, then we backed up a little bit to catch up the southern kingdom and to bring us up to Jehoshaphat. You find that notation, which we looked at somewhat in 2 Chronicles, also in 1 Kings, chapter 22, verse 41.

Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab, king of Israel. If you look in the preceding context, you have already seen the death of Ahab, before that you had the intrigue of Jezebel and Naboth's vineyard and so on. And at the risk of leaving a lacuna in the study, we are not really going to go into great detail, in fact very little detail at all, on chapter 21.

Naboth and his vineyard is really a study unto itself, but we may address that as a special sometime. There is a reason why there is a whole chapter devoted to what might seem to be a minor incident. There are sweeping events taking place on the international stage here.

There are great spiritual issues in both the northern and southern kingdoms, and yet the account at this point zooms in on this one episode where the pettiness and the acquisitiveness and the lack of balance on the part of King Ahab is really evidenced and illustrated, and the influence of Jezebel on Ahab and her machinations as a manipulator and true power in the palace are revealed. But we are looking at the kings and prophets, particularly as it advances the history of the northern and southern kingdoms, and while there is a great deal of insight and some wonderful value in that passage, I am basically going to skip it for now, because we are now caught up with both of our kings, with the death of Ahab, as predicted, and we are at the transition point between the ministry of Elijah and the ministry of Elisha, which is rapidly beginning to fill our field of view, and you see this of course in the first few chapters of 2 Kings, that very detailed transfer of the prophetic baton. But there is something else we want to look at that is going to help us set this in context, and that is to see what is taking place in the palace.

So as I said, in 1 Kings 22, verse 41, you have the notice of Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, becoming king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab. He was 35 years old when he became king. He reigned 25 years in Jerusalem.

So he basically reigns until he is 60. His mother's name was Azuba, the daughter of Shilhi. He walked in all the ways of his father Asa, which is a good thing.

Asa was one of the good kings in Judah. Jehoshaphat is another good king. He did not turn aside from them, doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away, for the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places. Also, Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. Now, everybody likes to put their two hands in the air and rock gently back and forth and sing, give peace a chance.

But this was a bad thing. Making peace, there's a reason why God split the kingdom. It helped to quarantine or to isolate or to contain the evil that had come into the ranks of Israel.

It gave the faithful believers a place to go and a place to live. It gave a place where God could provide good leadership, as we will see tonight. That partition was a provision.

It looks like a bad thing. It seems like a bad thing. But there are times when what looks bad to us is actually God's provision.

And what looked like a curse, God turns to blessing because the people in Judah are relieved from the burdens of evil kings up in the north. So a point of application is we want to be cautious when we see a downturn, whether it's in our external situation, in our national, state, community circumstances. Sometimes it seems like, well, this is a bad thing.

The old ways have disappeared. There's a division. There's a split.

There's a parting of the ways here in our relationships. Maybe we've had longstanding friendships, even longstanding close-knit things within our own family, and something happens and there is a rift. There is a division like this kingdom.

But we're going to see tonight what a difference that seeming negative development makes. It makes a huge difference, and God uses it to bless people. And to convict people.

People in the north, this is why we have this miraculous prophetic ministry going on in Israel, because God basically pounds away at the hard heads and hard hearts of people through the ministry of Micaiah, Elijah, Elisha, and other prophets up there. Where in the south, there is a different, more productive and fruitful, quiet ministry of teaching, growth, maturity, reflecting of the glory of God, laying the groundwork and the bulwark for generation after generation that will dwell in Judah and will eventuate in the Messiah himself. So God takes the long view.

God sees the end from the beginning. And all you have to do is think about taking a child to the doctor for their shots or to get a repair, get some stitches, or have a dead tooth pulled. This is my personal experience.

I was horrified that I would be taken to strangers and strapped into a chair and have my tooth pulled out. It was extremely scary and uncomfortable, but it was a good thing. I didn't know it was a good thing.

It seemed to me like everything was bad, but it was a good thing. You don't want a piece of dead tooth hanging out there in the front of your mouth. You want to get it out of the way so that the real one can come in.

I've got great ones now. It might not have happened if that other thing had gotten in there and infected my dentition in some way. But we have a short view.

We have a childlike view. We have a small, myopic, limited grasp of what's going on. And when things start looking bad, we think, well, this has got to change.

This needs fixing. When in fact, God can work in and through it with his long view. And what we need to do is be patient, relax, trust, be watchful, be vigilant, be prayerful.

This is what the people down in Judah are doing. And we'll see it tonight. But up in the north,

it's a different story.

Two different programs. God divides the people up so that he can implement the best program for each one. It's judgment and demonstrations of power and calls for return and repentance in the north.

In the south, it is teaching. It is building in. It is sowing the seed and growing the crops and re-sowing the seeds and building up that spiritual vitality that is going to carry the southern kingdom well past the demise of the northern kingdom in 721 into, through and out of captivity.

And they will still be a people and still be present in the days when the Messiah is to come. So Jehoshaphat is a good king. He's got some shortfalls and these are going to be elucidated a bit more in the parallel account in Chronicles.

But the rest of the Acts of Jehoshaphat, verse 45, the might that he showed and how he made war, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? The rest of the, notice 46, the rest of the perverted persons, and if you look at your New King James text note down there, it says, Kadesh, that is one practicing sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals. What's the word for holy in Hebrew? Kadosh, Q-A-D-O-S-H. What's the word for perverted person and sodomite? Kadesh, Q-A-D-E-S-H.

And in a consonantal text, those things look very similar, but these are Kadesh. There's a thin line between righteousness and unrighteousness. There's a thin line between holiness and perversion, and one can become the other in the negative direction if we're not vigilant.

But these perverted persons who remained in the days of his father Asa, he banished from the land. So this is another sort of a feather in his cap. He improved on, he didn't get everything out, but he did get these people out of the land.

And by the way, this is a good thing for the sodomites and perverted persons to be banished. Notice he did not slay them. He didn't have them all taken down by the brook and slain.

They were banished. They were driven forth. You want to live that kind of life, do it somewhere else.

There was then no king in Edom, only a deputy of the king. Jehoshaphat made merchant ships. This is a real interesting episode, and I don't want to bog down covering it, but just read this quickly.

Look at this. This is a story told backwards. These next couple of verses, it's told in reverse.

This is the last thing first. So, Jehoshaphat made merchant ships to go to Ophir for gold, but they never sailed, for the ships were wrecked at Eze and Geber. There is a port city there today by a different name.

But Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, said to Jehoshaphat, let my servants go with your servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not. Now, Ahaziah didn't say this after the ships sunk at Eze and Geber.

There's no gold on them. It's not like they're diving. This story is told backwards.

He built a treasure fleet. He was going to go trade for gold, take some of the exports of the land, go to Ophir and get gold to build up the treasury. It's a time of prosperity.

So they're going to build up the reserves. He's going to go get gold. He builds a treasure fleet.

Well, when Ahaziah finds out about it, he says, hey, we want to go too. And it is a realization on the part of Jehoshaphat that when he made peace with the northern kingdom, now he's beginning to find out what the motivation was for that peace. It is peace for the purpose of exploitation.

Ahaziah wants to exploit the fact that they're not hostile and at odds now. And what's he going to do? He's going to go in there and embezzle or some other kind of way, get a hold of this gold from Ophir. He says, let me put my men on the ships.

These ships are going to go get the gold. When they come back, what do you think the men of Ahaziah are going to do? Celebrate and offer sacrifices to the Lord and share and share alike. They're probably going to hijack this shipment.

I mean, Ahaziah, he's Ahab and Jezebel squared. He's one of the most evil kings that ever walked. God's going to have to cut his reign short just to keep everything from, you know, completely corrupting up there.

So if you've got, Ahaziah says, oh, let me put some of my men on your ships. Jehoshaphat wisely says, we're friends, but we're not that good of friends. We're at peace.

But no, you're not putting your pirates on board our ships. But then the fleet never sails anyway. Apparently God sunk it with a storm in Ezekiel and Gabriel before it ever left.

But the thing is tainted from the beginning. Then Jehoshaphat, but we just have this weird little annotation in there. Why is that even there? Well, it, it shows you that Jehoshaphat had awakened, particularly after the Micaiah incident, after the death of Ahab, that this whole, he learned something.

Apparently it appears that he learned that his initial, his initial desire for peace and maybe reunification was misguided. And so he has pulled in the welcome mat. He has set up the security and he's not going to let these guys partake.

And in a way it was a blessing because if he had allowed the men on the ships and they had gotten killed in the Harbor, this could have been a provocation for war. Uh, you know, why weren't my men rescued? They, this, it was a deliverance. By sticking to principle, there is a

deliverance.

The Northern kingdom guys wind up being glad that their men weren't on the ships because they sank. And so no hard feelings. So in a way God works for preservation.

Turn over to second Chronicles chapter 20, second Chronicles chapter 20. You remember, we just saw this little brief notice that there wasn't a King in Edom, only a Regent. Remember seeing that? We just read it right before the ships at Ezean gave her.

There's a little cryptic note. There was no, well, here's what's going on with that. After the battle with Ahab and all of that in chapter 19, Jehoshaphat returned safely and, uh, Jehu, the son of Hanani, the seer went out to meet him.

This is 19 too. Said to King Jehoshaphat, should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Therefore the wrath of the Lord is upon you. If you're one that marks their Bible, I would circle that verse.

We are so browbeaten and so conditioned into political correctness and into tolerance and into acceptance. And don't say anything bad. Don't, you know, you, you don't want to be accused of being, having any sort of prejudice.

And I think I already gave my little three minute spiel on prejudice. Prejudice, uh, is a good thing. Why? What does prejudice mean? Judas, not J U D A S J U D I C E judicial judging ahead of time.

We judge ahead of time. If there is a lightning storm, I judge ahead of time that it's not a good idea to go golfing. If based on my past experience, uh, I am allergic to a food, I don't say, well, I've never tried this particular plate of this food.

Why don't I just try it? I don't want to judge ahead of time. We, we live, we are built to, uh, operate based on our past experiences. When we have a uniformly good experience with a store, we tend to go back there or a vendor or a provider of services or a provider of goods.

We judge that this is a, a trustworthy place. They've always been fair in the past. I think they will be fair this time.

It's wonderful to find a mechanic we judge ahead of time. Uh, nothing wrong with that. Why has prejudice suddenly become a negative word? Oh, well, you're prejudiced.

Well, everybody is prejudiced. Prejudice in the bad sense is if it is an unjust judgment, if the judgment, if you prejudge with a negative consequence to someone else on a faulty basis, but nobody wants to say that mouthful of words. So they just say, well, prejudice, prejudice is a bad thing.

No, prejudice is a good thing. I am prejudiced toward things that reflect faithfulness, reliability, integrity, character. And I am prejudiced against things that reflect laziness, uh, double dealing,

falsehood, traitorous and betraying behavior.

Uh, I prejudge that I don't walk into the room like a naive, bumbling, uh, person with no memory and fail to learn from the past to not have prejudice is to fail to learn from the past. But prejudice in the sense that it is used today means you are wrongly judging, judging by false criteria, uh, in an unfair way with negative consequences to someone else. For whatever reason, if you judge wrongly to benefit the person, they don't call that prejudice.

Uh, it's only if you, if they feel like they've, they're suffering, but should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Now, how do you identify the wicked and those who hate the Lord? Well, you've got to figure that out. You have to judge it. You have to judge who hates the Lord and you have to judge who is wicked.

You can't say, well, the fact that they've done in the past doesn't mean they're going to do it today. No, you, you prejudge and you do not exercise love toward the wicked or toward those who hate the Lord. This is the reason that Jehoshaphat is now under the wrath of God.

God is angry with Jehoshaphat because now does he have emotional gooey love for the people of the Northern kingdom? Ahab? No. What does love mean in this biblical sense? Same thing. It means in Jacob, if I loved, he saw, have I hated? This is a policy of benefiting, cooperating, seeking to join with.

Uh, nevertheless, good things are found in you in that you have removed the wooden images from the land and have prepared your heart to seek God. This is the wonderful remedy. When we mess up, God is gracious and God is merciful.

He can be gracious and he can be merciful. Why? Good things are found in you. You have been obedient.

You have in other areas, eschewed evil and driven it out and gotten rid of it. You've, you've removed it and you have prepared your heart to seek God. We saw that phrase prepared the heart once before.

Prepare your heart to seek the Lord. Seeking the Lord requires preparation. You don't just say, well, today I think I'll seek the Lord.

You've got to prepare. How do we prepare our heart to seek the Lord ahead of time? We acknowledge our transgressions and our faults and our sins and let the cleansing grace of God through the blood of Jesus Christ, remove those things so that we can be forgiven and restored. We expose ourselves.

We regularly listen to the teaching of the word of God. We regularly review and reflect upon and meditate on the things that we learn. That prepares our heart.

By the way, reflecting on scripture is not seeking the Lord. It is preparation to seek the Lord.

The Lord is not the text.

The Lord is not the concepts of the Bible. God is a person. I can read about Theodore Roosevelt.

I'm listening to a really great book right now. I just started a fresh book, already finished 1491, 1493. Now I'm on this other great book, learning about a particular phase of Theodore Roosevelt's life, but that's not Theodore Roosevelt.

If I were going to seek him, I've got to wait for the resurrection. Shake his hand, get introduced, have rapport and exchange of ideas and of conversation and establish and build and cultivate a relationship. That's seeking a person.

You can read about someone. You know, now online dating is a big thing. So people post a profile.

I love, you know, sunsets and walks on the beach and fluffy puppies. And, uh, you know, I love to laugh and I want to meet somebody that makes me laugh and that will, you know, wouldn't hurt if they're rich and, uh, et cetera, et cetera, about. So you post a profile.

Hi there. I also like walks on the beach and sunsets. And what else did you say? Yeah, dogs.

And yeah, I've got money. And so this is about me. Well, the two, the two written profiles don't meet and date, right? The actual people meet and come to find out, you know, it may be somewhat different than the idealized version.

Sometimes we don't even know ourselves very well, but just, just be aware when it says preparing your heart to seek the Lord, the preparation is the spirit of God present and active. The preparation is cleansing and forgiveness of our sins. The preparation is exposure to the word of God and having it actively circulating in our hearts.

But don't think that you have now met God and you're done. That is the preparation. Now seek God, pray, converse, listen to what God says, respond to what God says, faith and obedience, active implementation of those things.

Now we are seeking God. Now we are walking with God. We are walking in the light.

He is dwelling with us. Christ has knocked at the door. We have opened it and he has come in and we are supping with him and he with us.

But there's a really common shortfall where we think that the preparation is it. It's like going and getting all dressed up, putting on your game face and everything, but never answering the doorbell for your date. I'm prepared.

Well, that was fun. You never meet the person. Preparation is one thing, doing it is another.

You have prepared your heart to seek God. What does Jehoshaphat need to do now? He's

prepared his heart. Now he needs to seek God.

And because he hasn't been seeking God, he has made these mistakes. He has gone up to the north, which he shouldn't have done. He has loved the wicked or actually he's loved those who hate the Lord and helped the wicked.

So Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem. He went out again among the people from Beersheba to the mountains of Ephraim, brought them back to the Lord God of their fathers. Now, you can't bring somebody back to a place where you aren't already.

He has sought and found the Lord, and now he is actively look at this. He's a king. He's like a he could be a politician.

He could be a diplomat. He could be an administrator. He could be a lot of things.

But look at what he is doing. He is following in the footsteps of his father, David, in that he is shepherding the people, which is part of the job of the king of Judah is to shepherd the people. What is he doing? This is a spiritual agenda.

This is a bring the people back to God mission. And you don't find that in a constitution or in a set of laws. This is his heart to cultivate renewal and revival among the people.

He set judges in the land throughout all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, and said to the judges, take heed to what you're doing for you to not judge for man, but for the Lord who is with you in the judgment. Wouldn't that be great if every opening trial, every opening courtroom, somebody reminded the judge that this is what he's doing? You know, it's not going to happen in our time, but now, therefore, let the fear of the Lord be upon you. Take care and do it for there is no iniquity with the Lord, our God, no partiality.

And Oh, by the way, no taking of bribes, little reminder for the, for the judge there, we're over in Jerusalem for the judgment of the Lord and for controversies, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites and priests and some of the chief fathers of Israel when they returned to Jerusalem. And he commanded them saying, thus, you shall act in the fear of the Lord faithfully and with a loyal heart. Whatever case comes to you from your brethren who dwell in their cities, bloodshed, offenses against the law, commandments, statutes, ordinances, warn them lest they trespass against the Lord and wrath come upon you and your brethren.

Do this and you will not be guilty. Do this and the verdict is not guilty. Take notice.

Amariah, the chief priest is over you in all matters of the Lord. Zebediah, the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah for all the King's matters, the Levites will be officials before you behave courageously and the Lord will be with the good. He not only has a religious, a spiritual agenda, but he has a system.

He attacks this systematically. He establishes authority. He establishes accountability.

There is structure. This is in some ways more detailed even than what we hear in the administration of David and of Solomon. We have a lot of names and offices and things, but this is policy.

This is what they are encouraged to do on a daily basis. Remember, what's our, what's our application paradigm when we study the Old Testament, the nation in the Old Testament is sort of a picture of the individual believer in the new, right? This, this kingdom of Judah is a domain that we can look to as an example for our own hearts. What should we be doing? What should govern our decisions and our adjudications? How can we be prejudiced in a good way, in a, in a righteous way, in a way that is pleasing to God, we need structure.

We need policy. We need consistency. We need to discern what area various decisions fall into and then judge accordingly.

This requires some concentration. This requires some active thought. It is easy to Bob like a cork on the sea of circumstance.

That's not what these men are called to do. Is it? They are to take charge. They are to actively prosecute righteousness and justice, actively pursue it, actively encourage it and bring it about in the fear of the Lord.

And that's what we should do. Well, this brings us to chapter 20, which is our destination. And you'll notice the first verse there, we've got Moab and Ammon.

We had that note over in Kings about Edom, Edom, Moab, and Ammon, the unholy trinity of nations on the borders of Judah. And this is where the next set of activities are going to take place. And we'll see it when we come back from the break.