

Kings and Prophets 14-06-20b

We pick up our study in 2 Chronicles chapter 21. This is paralleled in 2 Kings 8 verses 16-24, but all of that material with a few little minor phrases accepted is contained here, so we're following the story in its fuller form. It is likely that the author of this portion of Chronicles had the King's account as one of several sources and incorporated it into this, so we have it as a fuller record.

So, in verse 16, the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines and the Arabians who were near the Ethiopians. If you look, there, as I said, is really a chiastic structure here. Beginning in verse 5, Jehoram was 32 years old when he became king and he reigned 8 years in Jerusalem.

That's a chronological note, which is frequent in the Kings and Chronicles. If you look down at verse 20, it tells us again, he was 32 years old when he became king, he reigned in Jerusalem 8 years, and to no one's sorrow departed. Boy, what an epitaph.

Put that on your grave marker. Born 1957, died 20XX, to no one's sorrow. But that's sort of a bracket.

It's unusual to have this information repeated, so let's take that as our outside bracket, verse 5 and verse 20. Inside that, we have, in verse 6, Jehoram walking in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done. He had the daughter of Ahab as wife.

He did evil in the sight of the Lord. What was the evil? We actually had that given to us up in verse 4, where at the outset he slew all of his brothers. These apparently godly men, men evidently better than himself, and he was worried that any one of them could become king in his stead.

Well, if you look just shy of verse 20, in verses 17-19, what happens after the Lord stirs up the Philistines, the Arabians, and the Ethiopians, they came up to Judah and invaded it, verse 17, carried away all the possessions that were found in the king's house, carried away his sons, carried away his wives, plural, so that there was not a son left to him except Jehoahaz, or Ahaziah, as he will soon be known, the youngest of his sons. Why the youngest? Well, it is as though saved yet so as by fire, skin of the teeth, only the youngest son, the easiest one to hide and move perhaps, although actually I think he's going to be not a child, he's going to be in his forties when he comes to the throne, but he's the youngest. And you wonder, well, how old was Jehoram? If his youngest son is 42, he's probably in his sixties perhaps, but he had to wait and wait and wait for the throne, because Jehoshaphat just kept living and living and living, and apparently he got frustrated at the delay.

After all this, the Lord struck him, verse 18, in his intestines with an incurable disease. I mentioned this a couple of weeks ago, but I'll say it again. Do not think that God simply stands back and waits for the passive effects of sin to do their work on us.

There is a school of thought that says God is all love and all grace, and just by standing back, he just lets sin and evil take its course. It doesn't say God allowed the disease, it says God struck, it's active. Be advised, as they say rather superfluously throughout the military.

Why would you say be advised? If you're going to tell somebody something, just tell them. Don't say be advised and then tell them. How could they not be advised? If you tell them what you're about to tell them, then they are advised.

So does it gain more weight if you say be advised? There's just no point being an English major in the military in my view. But God will actively chastise us. Whom the Lord loveth, he stands back and waits for the consequences of your bad decisions to strike? No.

Whom the Lord loves, he chastens and he scourges, he spans, he whips with a rod every son whom he receives. If you're a child of God, you can expect the rod of correction. It is applied in love, it is applied with a productive purpose, it is applied for our good and our benefit just like any good parent does.

But it is applied. God swings it. He doesn't wait for one to fall on you.

God cares enough about us to actively chastise us. It's a part of his plan and it is for our good. And even if we end up being taken out in judgment, it is in the overall interest of his people and it is in the overall interest in this age of the body of Christ and of the forward progress of God's plan and purpose that if you're not rolling with the plan of God, then the plan of God is going to roll over you.

And that's just how it is. You can either fall on the rock or the rock can fall on you. That's what scripture says.

In this case, God struck him in his intestines with an incurable disease. Now, most diseases in the ancient world are incurable. What does this really connote here? This is more in the realm of untreatable in the sense that there was no palliative, no relief that could be offered.

There are some conditions, if you've got a skin condition, you can put a salve on it or if you've got boils, you can scrape them with a shard like Job did. There's some treatment, there's some palliative measure. This is untreatable.

What can they do? If you've got an intestinal problem, what, you give them something to drink or something to eat? Anything that goes in is just going to aggravate it and make it worse. Anything. And apparently even your alcohol-derived medicines apparently just set this on fire rather than giving him any kind of anesthetic.

It's untreatable. You can't mitigate its pain and its misery. Because it is of the Lord and in this case, there is no softening the judgment.

Then it happened in the course of time, not only does he have all of this going on, after the end

of two years, his intestines came out because of his sickness. So he died in severe pain and I would say this wasn't any fun for his servants. And those attempting to care for him and having to clean up after him, this would have been gruesome even by ancient world standards.

People were used to some gruesome stuff. They slaughtered their own food. They went to battle with swords and axes and spears and arrows.

They saw a lot of gruesomeness. But even by ancient Near Eastern standards, this was an ugly, ugly death. Why? Ask yourself the question.

God sent this on a king of Judah, a son of David. Why? From those to whom much is given, much is required. Jehoshaphat sent ministers throughout the nation with the word of God.

This guy is Jehoshaphat's son. Grew up in the household. Had every opportunity to follow in his father's footsteps.

Had every opportunity to benefit from his father's upbringing and advice. And evidently rejected every bit of it. Married badly, shall we say.

And God holds him accountable for what he was given and what he squandered. And he loses it all. Don't think that the blessings and privileges and opportunities that God gives are irrevocable and irreversible.

God gave the land to Israel and God ended up taking it away. God established his presence in Israel and he ended up taking it away. He was not mourned.

Nobody was sorry to see him go. And while he was buried in the city of David, he was not buried with his fathers. Even the people around him recognized that he did not deserve that honor.

And the disposition, and this is just a little side note. You can take it for what it's worth. But in Israel, the disposition of your remains was significant.

I just attended a funeral this past week. And there is no, in this age, if you do what you do before the Lord, it doesn't matter. You can be buried at sea.

You can be cremated. You can have your corpse embalmed and stuck in a box and buried. Things in this age are largely what we make them by our attitude, just as in life.

You can mow the lawn or you can mow the lawn as under the Lord. You can engage in and undertake any effort and do it just like an unbeliever. Or you can do it in the light of the fact that you are a spiritual creation and a child of God and are living this life to honor and please Him.

Same thing in death. Same thing in the disposition of our remains. And I just note in passing that the Bible makes an issue many times out of the disposition of someone's remains.

So it at least can be a final message, either from God to us or from us to our fellow human beings and certainly our fellow believers. And that's as much as I'm going to say. Not a thing in the world wrong.

The big issue, I think, is cremation. A lot of people get a little nervous about cremation. We do what we do as under the Lord.

And there is no right or wrong, just as there is no right or wrong of do you sit in pews or on couches? Do you have a building or do you meet in a house? What instruments do you play? What songs do you sing? What form does your worship take? Worship is what we make it. Our assembly is what we make it. And you can come to any assembly and it's nothing.

It's meaningless. This or any other. Because it is what we choose it to be in the light of what we know of God's word.

And fellowship can be meaningful or fellowship can be meaningless. Bible class and Bible study can be meaningful or meaningless. Anything and everything in our lives has meaning and significance insofar as it is connected in our hearts with God and our relationship to him through Christ.

That is the only way anything in this life has significance. And without that, nothing has significance. But it is interesting, don't you think, that the bones of Joseph are very symbolic and are a message long after his death to his people.

And as I have visited the graves of some of my ancestors, now we have a lot more than graves and corpses. Now we have photographs. Now we have memorabilia.

Now we have writings and even recordings of people that have preceded us in the ever nearing transfer from this life to the next. And there's a memorial there. And what do you leave behind as a testimony to those who come after? And most significantly, usually, it's our relatives and those who are younger than us, who are going to be here after we're gone.

When they look back and say, oh, well, I had an ancestor or an uncle or a cousin or somebody. And here's what is known of them. Here's what they stood for.

Here's what they believed. I was relating at a memorial service just yesterday that the first of our Hull ancestors to be photographed was David Hull, born in 1811. And somewhere in the mid-1800s, in the early days of photography, he and his wife were photographed.

And it's the only photograph of him in existence anywhere. And for a long time, they didn't even know it was him. They thought it was his son because the son looked like him.

But it's him. And he's sitting there. We know very little about what he thought or what he did.

I know some of his geographical movements. I know who his sons were and his daughters and so on. I see his name in the census rolls in the 1800s.

But in the photograph, he's sitting there staring straight into the camera. And other than his wife, the only other thing in the photograph is the Bible open on his lap. And even at a distance of over 150 years, my great-great-great-grandfather says, Not only am I a believer, but in this rare occasion where I'm having my photograph taken, I want anybody who sees it to know my priority.

And it makes a difference. So, these things have the significance that we assign them in our hearts before the Lord. So, when it tells us that because of his evil, his burial was ignominious.

And he is one of the first to not be buried in the tomb of the kings. He's buried in the city of David, but he's outcast. He's not with David and Solomon and his father Jehoshaphat and the other faithful kings.

Even the semi-faithful kings. He's not even counted worthy to be among them. And I think it suggests that even in eternity, even in the resurrection, there is going to be a separation of those who egregiously overlook and ignore and even repudiate their birthright and their heritage in the Lord.

And even in the kingdom of the Father, there are those who are in the city and there are those who are outside. There are those who have the right to the tree of life and those who don't. Have to wait for somebody to bring them just the leaves.

There are those who enjoy the close-up vision of the Lamb on the throne and the crystal river of life flowing from below it. And there are others who are on a distant shore of that river looking at the glow over the horizon of that city that is built for square. It makes a difference.

God is not kidding. About the importance of His plan and His word and the necessity for us as His children, as those who are in Christ, to avail ourselves of these divinely granted opportunities. It makes a difference now and it will make a difference forevermore.

And we cannot be reminded of that too often. Well, in terms of the chiastic structure, you can see that the slaughter of His brothers and the other evils that He perpetrated in verse 6 and 7, the consequences of those are detailed in verses 17 through 19. Be sure your sins will find you out.

He thought by doing these things, He was securing His throne. What He did was secure His destruction and His outcast status. God is not mocked.

Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Sooner or later. Well, within that, we look at verses 8 through 11.

The Lord did not destroy the house of David because of the covenant that He had made with David. And this one son is preserved. But, in Jehoram's days, Edom, verse 8, revolted against Judah's authority and made a king over themselves.

Jehoram went out with his officers and his chariots with him, and he rose by night and attacked the Edomites who had surrounded him. In other words, this is a desperate gamble to try to escape. This is not a wonderful, well-planned strategy.

He goes out, he gets surrounded, realizes he's surrounded and about to be annihilated. And his only recourse is to try to break out of the ring of destruction in which he sits. And so he attacks, and he escapes.

But Edom remains in revolt against Judah's authority to this day. And at that time, Libna also revolts against his rule because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers. That's verses 8 through 11, the rebellion of Edom, the rebellion of Libna.

Well, inside verses 17 through 19, on the other side of this, you have verses 16 and 17, where the Lord stirs up the Philistines and the Arabians, down by the Ethiopians, who come up against Judah and invade it and carry off all the possessions. So you see the parallelism. We've got these concentric parentheses zeroing in at the center.

And what is in the middle between verses 8 through 11, Edom and Libna, and verses 16 through 17, the Philistines and the Arabs? What's in the middle? It's verses 12 through 15. What is verses 12 through 15? A letter came from Elijah. Thus says the Lord God.

Everything else points at, this is the word of the Lord. Notice, the prophet doesn't come. A messenger from the prophet does not come.

This is a letter. This is the most distant and remote. The word of the Lord comes from heaven through some sort of intermediate agency to Elijah.

Elijah writes it down and conveys it by mail to the king. And somebody is going to read the letter to the king. He's sitting there with his gut spilling out.

Well, not yet, but he will. He's going to get the message that that's what's going to happen to him. And it's going to be read to him.

It's the most remote form of communication available. If it isn't this, it's nothing. God doesn't come to him in a dream.

There's not a man of God or a son of the prophets. It's a letter. And it tells you the distance that he has put between himself and God.

He's the king of Judah. This is the one that God... How far is he from the temple? How far is he from the Ark of the Covenant and the presence of God, the priests of God, the prophets of God, the sons of the prophets? And he gets a letter from Elijah in retirement off in the boonies somewhere? At a safe and unknown location? Living well away? Thus says the Lord God of your father, David. It doesn't say the Lord your God.

Thus says the Lord God of your father, David. God won't even touch him with a 10-foot pole.

Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father.

See what he's convicted of? He's in his 60s now. He lived with Jehoshaphat all the way up until just a few months before this letter arrives. Jehoshaphat has had this man's entire lifetime investing in him, trying to impress these divine priorities on him.

And he has ignored it and been bullheaded and stiff-necked just like the people of Judah. And because of that, he is going to suffer personal discipline. His family is going to suffer the judgment of God.

And the nation is going to suffer these incursions. And as you look at these brackets, the outside brackets, this is the personal judgment for slaying his brethren. And, of course, this is what we do.

You know, you can commit murder in your heart. Hatred, gossip, maligning, judging. We wound one another.

And we will suffer judgment for that, and rightly so, when we know better. Within that, his responsibility to the kingdom and to his family has been abrogated, has been ignored, has been dropped off the list of priorities. And the nation is going to suffer.

So, Edom and Lebanon on one side, the Philistines and the Arabs on the other are going to cause the nation to suffer. And the reason for it is right in the bullseye, right in the center. Thus says the Lord God, who doesn't claim you, but claims your father David.

And the only reason you're not utterly wiped out is that God made a promise to David. And you're just a sickly, twisted offshoot. And the only reason any one of your offspring is going to live is because he, in turn, is related to David.

And it's a relationship to David, despite his relationship to you, that's going to keep him from being killed. When we talk about cursing by association. You have walked in the ways of the kings of Israel.

You have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem play the harlot like the harlotry of the house of Ahab. You've turned Judah into northern Israel. You have turned your throne into the throne of Ahab.

And also killed your brothers, those of your father's household, who were better than yourself. Behold, the Lord will strike your people with a serious affliction. He will strike your children, your wives, and all your possessions.

And, verse 15, he will strike you. See how it comes out? It starts with the people. Comes into the family and the possessions.

And then zeroes in on Jehoram himself. You will become very sick with the disease of your intestines until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness day by day. Day by day.

How many days, how many day by days has he had to respond to the faithful administration of his father, faithful teaching and distribution of the word of God? He is without excuse. And guess who else is without excuse? Me. And you.

And even this judgment reflects the faithfulness of God, the love of God for his people, because this guy is a cancer that has to be removed from Judah before Judah is utterly wiped out. So he, at the age of 32, his son, I'm sorry, he's 32 when he became king, he reigned in Jerusalem eight years and to no one's sorrow departed. Why did I say he was 60? I'm thinking of his father.

But they buried him in the city of David, but not in the tomb of the kings. Then the inhabitants, this is chapter 22, verse 1, So Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram, king of Judah, reigned. Ahaziah was 42 years old when he became king and he reigned one year in Jerusalem.

This, as you see in your text note, should be, there's a bit of a chronological problem here. If his father was 32, how could he be 42 when he came to reign? He only reigns a year. His mother's name is Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri.

He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother advised him to do wickedly. Therefore he did evil in the sight of the Lord, like the house of Ahab. They were his counselors after the death of his father.

Be aware when Athaliah comes down, she brings a retinue with her. She drags down a lot of the court that had belonged. What do you think happened to all the people that thrived in the days of Ahab and Jezebel when Ahab and Jezebel were both gone? Well, they had to go somewhere and some of them came with Athaliah down.

So she's got a posse, she's got a group with her. These counselors wheedle Ahaziah and you just see the movement of the Lord from the front of his name to the back of his name to where you figure it could just as easily drop off. And this is going to be significant in the days to come because even though God promised that David would always have a son to sit on his throne, you remember the three generation curse? And this particular branch of the Davidic line is so rotten that after two God cuts it off and there's nobody, there's no son of David sitting on the throne for several years after Ahaziah's death.

We'll look at this in more detail next time, but think about what the throne of Judah, just as the throne of Israel, signifies to us. It is a well-worn path for us that as goes the nation in the Old Testament, so goes the soul, the heart, the life of the Christian in this dispensation. And the throne, the seat of government, is our decider, our reasoning.

We order our priorities, we set our goals, we decide how to invest our time. That's what the king in Israel did. And if we make bad decisions in that regard, despite what the Word of God clearly communicates to us, we just ignore it, we go our own way, don't think there won't be consequences.

It is as though there are no other people on the planet. It is between us and the Lord. The Lord

Jesus Christ is our High Priest, but if we sin willfully, do you remember that, Hebrews chapter 10? I'm going to read it rather than trusting my memory.

If we sin willfully after we have received knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. That's 1026 of Hebrews. No longer a sacrifice.

Who administered the national sacrifices in Israel? Who offered the national sacrifices in Israel? The High Priest. Who's the High Priest for the little nations that you and I represent today? Who is the Melchizedekian High Priest? It's the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, the High Priest is not going to be offering the national sacrifices for us anymore, in the sense that the Lord Jesus Christ is not going to continue to intercede on our behalf.

He's going to join with His Father in declaring judgment on us. If we sin willfully after we receive the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. Now, this doesn't mean we lose our salvation.

Remember, the national sacrifices year by year were a measure of the nations standing before God. It was the ongoing... Why was it repeated year by year? Because it was the experiential relationship with God that was at issue. And experiential blessing will go away, and experiential judgment will come when our national offerings offered by the High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, cease.

There's no sacrifice for us if we sin willfully, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Jehoram is no longer God's son on the throne, as he called David. He doesn't claim him.

Now he's an adversary. What does Paul say in the New Testament? You can become an enemy of the cross. You can be fallen from grace in the experiential sense.

Fiery indignation devours the adversary. Anyone who rejected Moses' law died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment do you suppose will he be thought worthy, who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? Well, how much sorer punishment? Just look at the death of Jehoram.

That's how much sorer punishment. Thankfully, as Paul says, we are convinced of better things of you, brethren, things that accompany deliverance, salvation. There's no need for us to go down that road.

It reminds me of being in the service. I've said this many times. You look at the grievous penalties in the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

You disobey an order in combat, you can be shot. There's all kinds of remedies the military has that even civilian law does not allow. But there can be severe, severe consequences for

disobedience.

But I never worried about that. It didn't keep me awake at night. I didn't plan to be anywhere near that side of the regulations.

I was striving to do my very best and nearly everybody is. And that should be us in this age. This is something that we should only be aware of in the academic sense.

I don't want to be anywhere near the judgment side of God's character. I want to be in His fatherly blessing and care where He is pleased, where the Lord Jesus is going to come back and say, well done. And when we're striving for that on a daily basis, and how easy is it to do? All it takes is a choice.

The provision is abundant. The grace is immeasurable. The love of God, like the song says, has been written across the skies.

There's not enough ink in the oceans. If the oceans were ink, if every stalk was a quill, you couldn't write the love of God across the skies. You still couldn't express it.

That's what we have going for us. And if God be for us, who can be against us? Only us. So it's a caution.

It's a warning. It's a great example. And it helps us understand what happens to fellow believers who disregard the grace of God, who disregard the truth of God, disregard the Spirit of God, and seek to go their own way.

And we see grievous consequences, both in this life, and we're going to see them especially at the judgment seat of Christ. There will be tears. There will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth when that judgment comes.

I don't want to find myself in that group. None of us do. But that's why God puts these things in His Word to motivate us and to remind us that along with these great opportunities, failing the grace of God leaves horrendous consequences.

And it ought to stir us to love and good works. Well, we'll resume here next time. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You for how clearly You communicate to us the situation and our mission and how that mission can be accomplished. You have communicated to us clearly how it can be done. You have made provision for it.

We know that the Lord Jesus Christ succeeded and has given us an example of how to live in the light of Your Word and in the power of Your Spirit, both of which we have in abundance. And we pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these things on our hearts, convict us where we have failed, show us our secret faults, motivate us and encourage us to lay aside the weight and the sin that so easily besets us and to run with patience the race that is set before us so that we can

cross the finish line reflecting Your glory and being pleasing in Your sight. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.