

Kings and Prophets 14-07-11b

We pick up our study now in the forward progress of the kings and prophets in the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. And the difficulties that Jehoram had in 2 Kings chapter 8, which ultimately are going to lead to the coming of Jehu, I just wanted to point out a couple of things here and we're going to also see this over in Chronicles. But it seems like an awfully graphic death for Jehoram.

It's an 8-year reign, it doesn't seem like he could do a whole lot of evil in that time, and yet, and being a king of Judah, you wouldn't think that things would be so severe. But this whole incident, and let's turn over to 2 Chronicles now where we have the parallel in Judah, 2 Chronicles chapter 21, this intestines thing has just really gotten me curious. He could have just said he was judged by God or he had a disease and he died, but we have quite a bit of graphic information here and I'm just wondering why.

But the letter from Elijah is at the center of sort of a chiastic structure, as I mentioned last time, and it says, because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father or in the ways of Asa, king of Judah. And what we find is that in the subsequent sentences and paragraphs here, many of the accomplishments, many of the positive developments that took place in the reign of Asa and in the reign of Jehoshaphat are undone in Jehoram's reign. And he had a choice, and there's a real strong emphasis here.

He had antecedents who set a good example. He could have followed that path. He chose instead to marry badly, to rule badly, to choose very unwisely and in an evil way, and he begins upon the death of his father by murdering all of his brothers.

And notice, instead of simply, we talked about how God uses death, and the last thing I'll say about death that I covered in the first session tonight is this, that I tried to suggest that death isn't always the universal bad thing that we as human beings tend to dread and to see in a negative light. But just remember that the greatest blessing of all, the greatest thing that has ever happened in human history, came to us through death. It was the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross that brought about the greatest blessings known to mankind, fulfilling all of God's promises, securing all of the blessings for time and eternity that we enjoy, that people of every age have enjoyed, the resolution of sin.

And this came about not through Jesus living a sinless life, but bearing our sins in his body on the tree and dying. So we want to be sure to put death in perspective. Like so many things, it depends on context.

What is the context of a death? In this case, Joram is going to suffer a very ugly death, and he is told in verse 15 of 2 Chronicles 21 in this letter from Elijah, you will become very sick with a disease of your guts. There's not a real good way to translate this Hebrew word, except, the closest I can get to it is either inward parts or innards. This is the same word that was spoken to

Rebecca, the wife of Isaac.

Two nations are in your womb. You know, Jacob and Esau are in there. There are two in your womb.

Well, in the womb, the word womb is the same as the word here. It just means, you know, they weren't a bunch of physiologists and zoologists and biologists there. They could tell a little bit the difference between kidneys and intestines and stuff.

But when they referred to the inward parts, it's just your innards. And the word basically means your inward parts. When David is brushing aside the insults of one of Saul's kin, hurling insults at him from the cliff, you remember that? And he says, look, I've just been deposed by someone who came from my own body.

Well, the word body there is this word. He came from my innards, so to speak. So if Absalom has deposed me, why should I care about this guy? You know, I've got a lot of worse things to worry about than what this guy says.

Anyway, it's just innards. So many people have speculated this could have been colitis or chronic diarrhea or dysentery or something like that. I think it was probably some form of cancer in the abdomen.

Something awful was going on in there of literally biblical proportions. But there's an interesting note here in verse 18. After all this, the Lord struck him.

The Lord struck him. There are people that try to argue that God just leaves the consequences of sin to chasten and to discipline. And that people are just, when they choose sin, the sin itself is its own reward.

There's a guy on the web that preaches this. I've seen him several times make this case. And he's just off the mark, way off the mark.

Look at passages like this. It doesn't say the Lord waited for his profligate life and his evil deeds to catch up with him. The Lord struck him.

The Lord smote him with this internal disease. God gave him this disease. God didn't stop his heart.

God didn't have, you know, Hazeel come and smother him with a wet rag. He's going to have a drawn out death. And I ask myself, why? Well, part of it's in the details here.

The Lord struck him in his innards with an incurable disease. And it happened in the course of time after the end of two years. In Hebrew, this says two days.

But evidently, this lasted a lot longer. Because it says an incurable disease back up in verse 18, which implies that it was a protracted malady. But I think the two years is... I mean, they just

put that in because two days didn't make any sense to them.

But it makes sense to me. And I would change it back to days for this reason. He suffered along with this all through the end of his reign.

And it got progressively worse. But it took him two days to die. His intestines started coming out.

And he was alive with this condition for two days. Now, why would we want to go into these gross details? I'll offer you a thought on this. Time and numbers, as we have seen, are usually significant in the Bible.

And this two-day period reminds me of Hosea 6, verse 2. After two days, will He revive us? In the third day, He will raise us up? It was after two days when the Lord Jesus had been in the heart of the earth. Two days. Not one day.

Not just Saturday. Friday and Saturday. Early in the morning on the third day.

After two days. So, when you're in the plan and purpose of God in a positive way, what happens after two days? You rise. What happens to this guy after two days? He dies.

And his two days were a living death after which there is no victory. There is no recovery. There is no repentance.

By the way, he had two days of this condition for it to turn him to God. God even honors deathbed repentance. We will see this in the not-too-distant future.

Sorry, King, you're about to die. Turn your face to the wall. Wow, look, 15 more years.

Not in this case. Over the course of a protracted, ugly, painful process of dying, two whole days it took him while his innards were coming out of his body, and even that did not turn him. Now, still, I ask myself, why do we have this very detailed, close-up, graphic account? I have purposely kind of waited until now to talk about this particular king's name.

We usually say, you know, here's what the name means, Azariah, the Lord is my help, and so on. Well, here's Jehoram, which has been shortened in both kingdoms, by the way, to Joram. Both of these guys are complete and utter rascals.

And oddly enough, especially in the north, Jehoram comes from an evil family. And I wonder, why are they using these divine patronymic, these divine elements in the names of their children? And I think this is kind of like, you know, violent people wearing crosses. I think it was traditional, they thought it was cool.

A lot of people name a child without really thinking about the significance of the name. Maybe it's just for somebody, and they don't think about the meaning anymore. Because obviously Ahab and his house didn't give two hoots in a rain barrel about the God of Israel, and yet so

many of the people in that family have El or Yah as a part of their name.

Well, that's the case here with Jehoram. What does Jehoram mean? You know what the Yeho, the YH part means, right? So that leaves Ram, R-M. This doesn't have an aleph or an ayin or anything in it, it's Resh-Mam.

Ram means high and lifted up. So as Jehoram, this is the Lord is high, the Lord is lifted up. And I think it's not without significance that in both of these individuals, their name is often shortened to just Yoram, which reduces the divine name, takes the divine element and subtracts from it.

They don't just call him Ram. You remember Ram in Amenadab? There was some guys way back. But it's just Yoram.

But the Jehovah portion, the Yahweh portion has been corrupted, has been reduced. And that's symbolic, I think. It's suggestive at least of the fact that these guys are not elevating the Lord, they're elevating themselves.

Now, lest you think that I'm being presumptuous here, I want to show you something as things go forward into chapter 22. So you see Jehoram, God stirs up against him the spirit of the Philistines and the Arabians. And all of these peoples have been subdued under Asa and under Jehoshaphat.

All of that is undone. Libna was subject under those kings. Now it's in revolt again.

And the difficulties that he has are just undue. Edom, same way. Edom was subject in earlier days and now they're back in open revolt.

And then he has this incurable disease and it takes him two days in this ugly death and he never turns around. So he dies in severe pain. People made no burning for him like the burning for his fathers.

He was 32 years old when he became king, reigned in Jerusalem eight years. Part of that, of course, was co-regency with Jehoshaphat. And to no one's sorrow he departed.

They did bury him in the city of David. Now we come to chapter 22, 2 Chronicles 22. Then the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his place.

For the raiders who came with the Arabians in the camp had killed all the older sons. There's this thin remnant line from David. It's down to this one son.

If this son had been killed they would have really had to start looking for cousins and distant relatives. But he's got one royal son and that's Ahaziah. And he's 42 years old, or 22, and I think it's 22.

He's the youngest son, 2 Kings 8.26. And we have some other corruptions in this particular

chapter that we're going to see as it goes forward. Ahaziah, let's say, was 22 years old when he became king and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri.

It actually says daughter of Omri, but Omri. But this is kind of like Jesus, the throne of his father, David. It can mean any lineal descendancy.

He 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, for they were his counselors after the death of his father, to his destruction. And again, this speaks more of a 22 year old.

You think about Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, and how he took counsel because he was young. He also followed their advice and went with Joram, the son of Ahab, king of Israel, to war against Ahaziel, king of Syria, at Ramoth Gilead, and the Syrians wounded Joram. Now, this is where it gets interesting, and at least it's interesting to me.

What does the Ram portion of the name mean? High and lifted up. And who should be high and lifted up, but who is high and lifted up instead? Who is going to be lifted up? Who's number one? Thou shalt have no other gods before me. What was the first sin in heaven? I will raise my throne above the stars of God.

I will be like the most high. This lifting up of self is the original sin. And it is the lie that once you get there, you're going to be happier than if you are serving God.

Well, I want you to look here at verse 5. He followed their advice and went with Jehoram, who in the parallel in 2 Kings is spelled Joram as well. Both of these guys have their names shortened. So you might just circle that, where it says he went with Jehoram.

Just circle the Ram portion of the name there. Because Ahaziah is walking in the ways of his father, and in the ways of his mother, and in the ways of all of his ancestors. He's just as bad as his father, Jehoram, was.

And he hooks up with Jehoram in the north in a war against Hazael. We know who Hazael is. And he is the king of what? Not in Hebrew.

In Hebrew, he is the king of Aram. Aram. Aram.

This is where we get the Aramean language. In Hebrew, this is Hazael, king of Aram. And it's a variation of name right there.

He is the king of Aram. And the reason that you'd say, well, that's just a happenstance. Let's accept that.

As you keep going through this passage, it says, where did they fight? Ramoth, Gilead. Ramoth. This is more than one Ram.

This is Ramoth. R-M with a plural suffix. Ramoth, Gilead.

And the Syrians, you know what the word for Syrians is here? Rameem. Rameem. Not even Arameem, it's just the Rameem.

So we're starting to get an awful lot of this Ram stuff sort of piling one on another. Then he returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds which he had received at where? Ramah. Ramah.

Against Hazael, king of Aram. I mean, I don't think there's any other place in Scripture where you've got the same syllable repeated as many times in a shorter space in as many different ways as you have Ram in these few verses. It's just everywhere.

When you read it in Hebrew, it just starts kind of bonking you in the forehead. It's like Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram. Who do you elevate? Who do you lift up? Who do you promote? Who is the most high? Why is it that this family is suffering such devastation? The sons of Jehoshaphat are slaughtered.

The sons of Jehoram are slaughtered, all except this character. He's about to die. You saw the nasty death that Jehoram suffered.

And he goes down to see Jehoram who is sick. But his going to Joram, his going to Yoram, was God's occasion for Ahaziah's downfall. Now notice, by the way, just up in passing there in verse 6, it says, In Azariah the son of Jehoram, king of Judah, went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab.

This is Ahaziah. It says Azariah. It's Ahaziah.

There's two different families of manuscripts, and it just so happens that the Masoretic text had a mistake, a scribal error here, and it's been copied all the way down, and the new King James even preserves it here. But it doesn't make any sense whatsoever because the subsequent context makes it clear that all the way through this is Ahaziah. So in verse 6 when it says Azariah, it should say Ahaziah.

The Septuagint says Ahaziah. The Syriac Peshitta says Ahaziah. Every other text known to man, there's just a partial group of Hebrew manuscripts that have this mistake.

And why they carried it into the new King James, I don't know. If you have a New American Standard or any other modern translation, all of these say Ahaziah, as it should. When he arrived, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu, the son of Nimshi, whom the Lord had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab.

Now, what does Jehu mean? What does his name mean? It looks like just the divine name itself. But they're pretty sure this is a shortened form of Yahuhu. Hu in Hebrew means he.

H-U means he. I've told you before there's a little memory aid. Who is he? He is she.

That's how it works in Hebrew. So Hu means he. The Lord is he.

He is the Lord. There's only one Lord and he is it. So there is a reminder.

If you're going to raise yourself up instead of raising the Lord up, remember he is the Lord. There's a reason he's called the Lord. And he is going to assert that.

Now, Jehu is the son of whom? He is the son of Nimshi. Nimshi has the idea of deliverance. There's going to be deliverance from the evil house of Ahab for the southern kingdom through Jehu.

And because Ahaziah is caught hiding in Samaria, Jehu kills him. He buries him because he's the son of Jehoshaphat who sought the Lord with all his heart. The house of Ahaziah had no one to assume power over the kingdom.

This is like the death of Alexander or the death of certain other kings in history that had no lineal successor. Well, this brings us to verse 10. Now, when Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs of the house of Judah.

Now, who are the royal heirs related to in this generation? Who do they belong to? They belong to Joram and they belong to Ahaziah. These are cousins, nephews, sons, grandsons, whatever they may be. Athaliah wipes all of them out.

What does Athaliah mean? This is from an unused root in Hebrew, athal. You can tell what the last part is. And again, ia, how do you get athaliah out of these evil households? But athal means, and they're not sure because they have to look at Arabic, but it means to rise, to rise up, to grow large, to become great.

In Arabic, it's adal. I think it changes to a D. And they use it for corpulence, for people that have grown large in sort of the kavod sense. It's used as a nickname for chubby people.

They call them adal. Hey, you're adal. Well, you're a little on the chunky side.

But it means to grow great and hence to elevate, to be glorious, to lift up. In other words, Athaliah has got a name on the feminine side that is very close to Jehoram. It has the same idea that the Lord should be lifted up, but she's not living up to her name, in the same way that Ahaziah and Jehoram didn't live up to the name that they had inherited from their father David and Solomon and Asa and Jehoshaphat.

They had an inherited name that they didn't live up to. And instead of living up and elevating the Lord, they lifted up and elevated themselves. And so this Ram idea, okay, who's lifted up? If you're lifted up and it's not the Lord being lifted up, you're going to be brought down.

You're going to be chopped down. You're going to be brought to the ground. And the point of application here, I think, for us is, what name do we inherit in the spiritual sense? What name are we called by? We're called by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We belong to Him. So there is an obvious need for us to honor that name and to lift Him up and glorify Him in what we do. If we're not doing that, by default, if we are not lifting up the Lord, we are, in fact, lifting up ourselves.

And this is the extreme example. This is the man gathering sticks on the Sabbath, who is stoned to death for so doing. Many greater and more egregious violations of the law will take place, but that one was punished symbolically.

Here is a very potent example of people who were supposed to lift up the Lord as rulers and leaders in both kingdoms instead, and very blatantly and flagrantly lifting themselves up. And God makes an example out of both households by chopping them down, wiping them out, showing what is inside them, forcing it out into the open over the course of two days. The cancerous rottenness that is within comes out in this time of death.

It is a two-day death. The Lord Jesus Christ spent two whole days in the heart of the earth bearing the penalty for our sins, so that when He rises on the third day, we can be raised with Him to new life. Raised with Him.

Not raised on our own. Not raising ourselves. But in Him.

If you want to be raised up, don't waste your time like these silly people trying to raise yourself up. Be in Christ. He is high and lifted up beyond all things.

God has made everything His footstool. God has put all things under His feet. If we are in Him, one of the great Ephesians in-Him blessings is we are raised with Him, buried with Him in baptism, raised with Him in sanctification and new life.

If you want to be Ram, do it in the Lord Jesus. Well, that's a wonderful little theological thought, but in practical terms, how does it work? Let this mind be in you, which also was in Christ Jesus, putting the interests of others ahead of our own. If you are kneeling down, washing feet, you are not high and lifted up.

If you are serving, the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. If we don't find this mindset within ourselves, we want to cultivate it. How do you cultivate it? You can't just decide to have it.

I'm going to go forth from here, and I'm going to have a servant heart, and I'm going to be submissive, and I'm going to be the last. Later, if God chooses to elevate me, that will be great, but I want to be humble. God resists the proud.

God gives grace to the humble. I'm just going to be humble. You can't just decide to be humble.

This is why David prays and says, Create in me a clean heart, O God. Create in me a clean heart. How is this heart created? It's by doing what we're doing right now, taking in the Word of God, and then now and later, thinking about it, processing it, applying it, operating with our faith in

it, in decisions, in actions.

Well, I have a choice here. Which choice am I going to make? These kings had a choice. Ahaziah had a choice.

Joram had a choice. North and South Joram had a choice. Jehu had a choice.

What choices do we make? That is going to determine who is lifted up in our lives, and look at the attitude that God has toward those who decide to lift themselves up instead of Him. Thou shalt have no other gods before me, higher than me, ahead of me. And we unconsciously slip into this when our priorities change and something else is more important.

Having a God before God, having an other God, that's a wrong set of priorities. We can easily say, well, I don't worship any god but God. But a different way to ask the question is, what are my priorities? Well, instead of telling ourselves what our priorities are, look at where you spend your time.

Where you spend your time, that's your priority. We don't have to spend a majority of our time on the Lord and the things of the Lord for the Lord to be first. But there has to be some time, and it needs to be quality time, and it needs to be time that conditions our use of all the rest of the time.

You know, when a company or any organization, military unit or whatever, is getting ready to do an operation, they start out by having a meeting. They sit down, get together, and make sure everybody understands the mission, the purpose, the strategy, the implementation of it. That meeting and that initial planning session is all important because it conditions and affects everything that happens afterward.

You don't say, well, the success of the mission depends on how much time we spend in the planning meeting. Right? Planning meeting can be very short and sweet, but if it's a good quality meeting and everybody gets the right information out of that, then the lengthy operation that can span days and weeks is going to be effective because that time was well spent. This is the priority of putting God first.

We don't have to take a lot of time, but we have to take time, and it's got to be quality time that conditions and affects and determines the use of all of our other time. You see the difference? It's not how much time you spend, it's the time you spend making sure that the time you spend honors the Lord. That's our mission.

That's how we Jehoram and not just Yoram, Myram, Yoram. That's not what we want. It's Yahweh, high and lifted up.

We make that decision every time we observe priorities, every time we pursue goals, every time we invest time. How is that time being spent? Is it in the light of time spent with the Lord in prayer, in reflection, in meditation, in study and understanding of His Word? Is it in prayer, in

expressing our heart of praise and submission and desire for service, asking and seeking and knocking? Is that the way the rest of our day is spent, is in the light of those sessions, or are we spending it without those sessions? Without those, you're going to get the result that every Chinese fire drill operation gets that has no planning, has no focus, has no goals set, has no milestones, has no organizational organizing principles, no plan, no priority, no assignments of responsibility. It just all goes crazy.

And that's exactly what our lives do when they are not lived in the light of the Word of God. So, this section is really compelling as a graphic illustration and a graphic demonstration of what life lived to its own purpose and lifting itself up turns into. It is slaughter of others.

It is evil perpetrated. It is the undoing of previous good things, the accomplishments of Asa and Jehoshaphat completely undone in Judah. All of it is undone.

It is as though it never happened. All of that teaching, all of that Bible class that went on in the Southern Kingdom, look at who's in charge. This is metaphorical for what will happen in our lives if we become complacent, if we stop the attention paid to watching and praying, being vigilant, being diligent, looking for and hastening the day of the Lord, living as though this is the last day, living as though this is the only day I have left, living as though this person that has a need, doing it to the least of these, the Lord's brethren, is doing it for Him.

How diligent would I be? How attentive would I be? How faithful would I be in the carrying out of this task if it was the Lord Jesus Christ I was doing it for instead of my family member or my associate or whoever it may be who is in the household of faith? If you have done it to the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me. If we live our lives that way and the things we do for each other are done as though we were doing it for the Lord Himself, do you know how transformative that is? To our attitude and our ability to be a blessing, that's putting the Lord, Ram, high and lifted up. It's so important to lift Him up that this person who is the least of His brethren is going to get the same treatment as the Lord Himself.

That's high and lifted up. Look at all of these Rams in here. And the Lord says, if you don't lift me up, then you're going to see how high and lifted up I really am.

And the Ramim are going to come and kick you from one side of your territory to the other. And that's what happens here. Well, I think it's really interesting as a grammatical sidelight into what's going on in this passage.

But we'll pick up here with the reign of Athaliah and Judah beginning in 2 Chronicles 22.10 next time. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for how powerfully it communicates to us, chastens us, rebukes and corrects and instructs us.

So that we can invest the time that You have allotted to us in a way that will produce 30-fold, 60-fold and 100-fold to Your glory and in Your service. We pray that these things will live and breathe in our souls, that we'll be motivated, that we'll see clearly the opportunities that You

give us to put them into application. We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, will be lifted up and glorified.

We pray it in His name. Amen.