

Kings and Prophets 14-12-05a

This is Friday, the 5th of December, 2014. We are back in our study of Kings and Prophets. We find ourselves with a double blessing in the sense that we have information in both 2 Kings chapter 14 and 2 Chronicles chapters 24 and 25.

We're looking at the 2 Chronicles reign of Amaziah, the son of baby Joash, and we'll be moving into the reign of his son as well. You thought we wrapped it up last time, 2 weeks ago, but we have a little bit more to cover. These 2, this father-son combination, are linked much more closely than it may at first appear.

There are some wonderful observations that lead to applications for us as we look in detail at these accounts. Let's begin, as we always do, by taking a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, ask His blessing on our fellowship and on our study. Father, we thank You for this day.

We thank You for the privilege of assembly in Your name, in the name of the Lord Jesus, to be built up and encouraged to be blessed and hopefully to be a blessing as we spend time with one another. We pray that as we look at this portion of Your Word this evening, that God the Holy Spirit will be our teacher and will help us to understand it, to see its pertinence and its meaningful application in our personal operation, that as we think and as we do, we'll be fully informed as to where we fit in Your purpose, in Your plan. We pray that as we study this evening and as we seek to put these things into application, that the Lord Jesus will be glorified in all that we say and do.

And we pray it in His name. Amen. The reign of Amaziah is something that is more or less summarized in 2 Kings 14.

You remember the banging of the arrows and the three victories over the Syrians that was really a part of the last prophetic ministry of Elisha. And after this we saw that the story kind of takes a sad turn down in Judah. In the second reign, and I'm at the beginning of 2 Kings 14, in the second year of Joash the son of Jehoahaz king of Israel, Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah became king.

He was 25 years old when he became king and he reigned 29 years in Jerusalem. When you look at the next chapter, chapter 15, and this is after what we saw in verses 21 and 22, the death of Amaziah, the son of Jehoash actually verses 18-22. Remember he went off to Lachish and got killed.

They brought him back and buried him. He kind of had the same fate as his father in terms of being a victim of assassination. Then there's this interval about Jeroboam that we'll return to later, but we want to finish up this story in Judah.

But notice that in the 27th year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah king of Judah became king. He was 16 years old when he became king and he reigned 52 years in

Jerusalem. That's a total of 68 years in the royal office.

Here's the thing, there is a very interesting rather significant co-regency involved here. You remember the operation where Amaziah decided to go attack Israel and he said, look you don't want to do this. The thistle said marry my daughter.

You remember that whole thing? We'll review it. But Amaziah the son of Jehoash the difficulty here is that he was captured in that conflict with the north, with king Jehoash up in the north. In the absence of their captive king, the people in the south had to do something.

Turn over to 2 Chronicles chapter 24. Amaziah was 25 years old when he became king. This is the son of baby Jehoash.

Jehoash is assassinated. He comes to the throne. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord but not with a loyal heart.

Circle that phrase. This is the theme of tonight's study. He did what was right but not with a loyal heart.

I almost missed this change. This is one of the changes that takes place at this point in the narrative in Chronicles. Previously kings are compared with, they followed after the Lord but not like his father David.

Not like the faithful king that went before. But now instead of being compared to a king he followed but not with a loyal heart. This is formal obedience.

This is overt obedience. But it is not heartfelt obedience grounded in faith. This is formulaic.

Now there is a heritage in this nation, in this country where even when large portions of our population were not necessarily Christian in the sense of professing belief in the Lord Jesus, they did adopt or follow the general Judeo-Christian ethic as we like to say. This is a similar thing. You follow the form but it is not out of a loyal heart.

You see the parallel? There are people who live a relatively moral life and they say, well look I'm a good person. I think if there is a God, I don't know if there is or not, but if there is I think he will probably move me in with the majority of good people. I'm not a criminal.

I don't just run around being mean and ornery. There are lots of people who like me. I like myself.

So I think on balance I'll probably just kind of go with the average and probably be fine. This is the following but not from a loyal heart. It sort of works but not when it comes to God.

It sort of works on the earthly level in the same way that there is an echo of God's presence or there is an echo of God's power. There is an echo of blessing that comes from following those values. But when it is not from a loyal heart, it really falls apart.

And this is the key. I just ask you to circle that or pay close attention. Take note of it because you're going to see this unfold in the more detailed account in Chronicles having to do with the 10 Eliphs in the Valley of Salt episode that was just mentioned in a verse over in Kings.

But let me begin by clarifying the nature of the relationship between Amaziah and Azariah. Amaziah the father and Azariah slash Uzziah the son that we're going to see tonight. These two kings.

We've already covered Amaziah in brief two weeks ago. We're going to review him in a bit more detail and see the interrelationship with his son tonight. Now we saw in 2 Kings 14.2, Amaziah was 25 years old when he became king.

He reigned 29 years in Jerusalem. So how old is he when he finally kicks off? He's 25 when he begins. He reigns a year shy of 30, so he'd be 54, right? Those of you that are in your early 50s, you can relate.

Those of us that aren't, wish we could relate. But he puts the best years of his life, so to speak, supposedly you would think, in ruling the southern kingdom of Judah. However, that's not actually what happened.

He is assigned a reign of 29 years, but when we look at 2 Kings 15.1 and it talks about the reign of Azariah slash Uzziah, it says he came to the throne in the 27th year of Jeroboam. Well, Jeroboam is on the throne for 41 years. So his death happens 14 years after the death of Amaziah.

In other words, Amaziah dies in Jeroboam's 27th year. This sounds like a lot of math, and it is, and if you're not following it, don't sweat it. Here's the upshot.

Uzziah slash Azariah came to the throne in the 5th year of his father. His father had only actually been king in Judah for 5 years. Why? Because in his 5th year, he foolishly went up there and attacked Israel.

Jehoash of Israel, if you remember 2 Chronicles 25.23, Jehoash, the king of Israel, captured Amaziah, king of Judah, the son of Jehoash, the son of Jehoaz, at Beth Shemesh. He brought him to Jerusalem, broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, 400 cubits, and then apparently hauled him off. He brought him there, had him watch the destruction of the city, and then hauled him away.

This is why there are two odd notes about Amaziah. The first is, we have this in verse 25 of that same chapter, 2 Chronicles 25.25, Amaziah, the son of Jehoash, king of Judah, lived 15 years after the death of Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel. Have you ever seen a note like that in Kings or Chronicles? This king lived so long after the death of this other king? This is unique in all of Kings and Chronicles.

Nowhere does it say, this king outlived that king by this many years, except here. The reason is,

I think, Jehoash in the north had captured Amaziah and held him until his death. So, Jehoash had a new lease on life.

It's kind of like the cities of refuge, until the death of the high priest, and then you're released. Well, the death of his captor, he apparently got sent back after Jehoash in the north died. But for a big chunk of his reign, he's gone.

This is why we also have the statement in both 2 Chronicles 25 and 2 Chronicles 25 26. I'm sorry, 2 Chronicles 26 verse 1. See where it says, now all the people of Judah took Uzziah, this is Azariah, the son of the captured king. The people of Judah took Uzziah, who was 16 years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah.

This is also unique. When a king dies, it doesn't say, and all the people came and made his son king. They made his son king because they had to have somebody to sit on the throne while the king is incarcerated.

So, what this tells us is that there was a long co-regency, if you will. This is basically a reign in absentia for Amaziah, and his son is effectively the king. So, you have sort of a double king.

You've got a king at home, and you've got a king away. You've got a king on the throne, and you've got a king that's captive elsewhere. And this persists for 24 years.

24 years out of the 52 year reign of Uzziah, just under half of it was filling in for his absentee father. There was kind of a similar situation in the latter days of Daniel. If you remember the Mene, Mene, take Upharsin, and you've got Belshazzar.

And he says, if you can interpret the writing, I can make you third in the kingdom. Why does he say that? Because Belshazzar is only second in the kingdom, because his father Nabopolassar is, it actually might be his uncle, it's either his uncle or his father. Nabopolassar is off someplace fighting and trying to build up the empire, and he is sitting on the throne in the king's stead.

So, he can only offer Daniel to be second to himself, and that's why he says, I will make you third in the kingdom. And for a long time, they said Belshazzar never even existed. They couldn't find him in the king lists of the Babylonians.

Well, he wasn't a king, he was a regent. He was a replacement guy, and he wasn't on the formal king list. And then later, they dug up some documentation showing how that all took place.

But it was one of those naysayer, oh, your Bible is wrong, this king never existed. Then eventually, archeology caught up with the Bible and discovered that it was right all along. I say all of that to say this, there is a real strangeness down in Judah as a result of the hubris.

Now, why is it that Amaziah, the first king, the father king, gets captured and goes and attacks the north? Remember, he just said, I'm going to go up there and attack these guys. I had a big victory in Edom, and now I'm going to go attack Israel. It just seems very impulsive.

Well, we get the details in Chronicles. So let's take a look at this in 2 Chronicles 25. Amaziah, this is the father now, the son of Joash.

He was 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned 29 years in Jerusalem, but not really, because he's going to be gone for quite a good chunk of that. He gives his mother's name. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a loyal heart.

Not with a loyal heart, that is key. Now, it happened as soon as the kingdom was established for him, he executed his servants who had murdered his father, the king. He did not execute their children, but did as it is written in the law in the book of Moses.

This is in Deuteronomy, the children don't suffer for the father's sins. This is formal obedience to the law. And initially you might think, wow, here's a guy that's really paying attention to the letter of the law.

He's not using his kingly authority in an abusive way. He's operating within the constraints that God set for him. You think, wow, he's going to be a good guy.

However, keep reading. Verse 5, Amaziah gathered Judah together and set over them captains of elephs and captains of hundreds, according to their father's houses throughout all Judah and Benjamin. And he numbered them from twenty years old and above, and found them to be three hundred elephs of choice men.

These numbers are pretty difficult if you try to take them at face value. We're just going to go with eleph as a formal fighting unit. These are anywhere from a platoon to a company size.

I, as you well know, do not believe that these literally contained a thousand men. The numbers are just ridiculous many places in scripture. Eleph just means a fighting unit.

This is a pre-scientific age. They said, look, here's a band. It's an eleph.

It's a company. It's a force capable of its own independent operation and command. So he has three hundred of these units.

This would be like three hundred companies. A very substantial force. How many men did Gideon get whittled down to when he did the lamps and pitchers? How many? The many or by few.

Remember? The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. He got down to three hundred. That was what he had left.

He started out with ten elephs, I think, and he got down to three hundred. They had him drink at the brook and some of them knelt down and others laughed like dogs and sent them home. Anybody that doesn't want to stay, go.

And then based on the way they drank, he ended up with three hundred. Jonathan and his

armor bearer. The many or by few.

The battle is the Lord's. One of you can put to flight a thousand. So he's got a goodly force here.

He's got three hundred elephs. This is a nice strong army to go take on the Edomites. However, he doesn't think it's enough.

He doesn't summon the man of God to say, will the Lord bless us if we go take up an issue with Edom? Instead he says, I need a bigger army. My strength will be in numbers. Because he's not serving with a loyal heart.

So what does he do? He hires a hundred elephs from the northern kingdom. A hundred elephs from the north. Mighty men of valor from Israel for one hundred talents of silver.

I've got the money. I will buy the strength to ensure that we have success. Success will be based on numbers that I have bought.

A man of God came to him, unasked apparently, saying O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the Lord is not with Israel. Not with any of the children of Ephraim. You remember the sins of Jeroboam and the string of bad kings up there.

There's not a Davidic king on the throne. They are worshipping the golden calf in Dan and Bethel. This is where Elisha has been laboring trying to call the people back to God with practically no success at all.

God is not with Israel. This is the message of the man of God. But if you insist on going, then be gone.

And be strong as you think you can be in battle. But God will make you fall before the enemy. For God has power to help and to overthrow.

If you take these Israelites with you, you're going to be overthrown. If you don't take them, you will succeed. So now we have an act of forming the people of Israel.

And the Lord is going to give you much more than this. You're going to have to have a normal obedience. Amaziah said to the man of God, but what shall we do about the hundred talents which I have given to the troops of Israel? The man of God answered, the Lord is able to give you much more than this.

Leave them paid. Say thanks. You've go back home, therefore their anger was greatly aroused against Judah and they returned home in great anger." The damage is already done.

He is not serving as king with a loyal heart. He makes a bad move hiring these guys. It would be a disastrous move to take them with him into battle.

He avoids that, but he doesn't avoid cursing. It's just going to take a different form because the

man of God had to come to him and warn him. This is probably for the benefit of the soldiers in Judah, the soldiers in the army.

The king is going to get credit for this battle, but it is God preserving the faithful men. Remember, there are still sons and grandsons from the days when they had good Bible classes in Judah. God is not going to have the army decimated at the hands of a stupid king and brought under a curse by association with godless men from the north.

God preserves the men of the army, but it isn't going to save this king from problems and it isn't going to save the southern kingdom from cursing by association with him. Amaziah discharges these troops and they keep the money, but they are still angry. Why? Because they are godless men.

They don't say, wow, we can split this hundred talents of silver and we don't even have to go into battle. This is great. Let's go home and party.

No. So, Amaziah strengthened himself and led his people. He went to the Valley of Salt and killed ten elephants of the people of Seir.

He also took captive another ten elephants alive. Notice, even with his three hundred elephants, look how far he's got them outnumbered. He kills ten elephants and he captures ten elephants.

He's got three hundred elephants. So why did he need the guys from the north? He didn't. It was just dumb.

But God isn't guiding his heart because he doesn't have a loyal heart. So the children of Israel took captive ten thousand alive. Verse 12, look at this, brought them to the top of the rock and cast them down from the top of the rock so that they were all dashed in pieces.

Have you ever, those of you that were old enough to remember Vietnam or you've seen images from the Vietnam War, do you remember the picture of a Vietnamese army guy shooting a guy in the head with a pistol? Do you remember when Elisha delivered the blinded army into the camp of the king of northern Israel? And he said, would you seriously slaughter somebody that's been delivered into your hand by God's power? And even the godless king in the north said, well, no, I wouldn't do that. But this is what Amaziah does. He heartlessly executes all of the captured by pushing them off a cliff.

And they're dashed to pieces on the rocks below. You can only imagine what this had to look like, these broken bodies. I've often wondered if archaeologists could find this specific site and if they would find a pile of human bone fragments and stuff down at the base of one of these cliffs where this battle took place.

But it's just shocking. This is what is in the heart of Amaziah. This is his heart.

And occasional formal acts of obedience cannot overcome this lack of direction and lack of

guidance and lack of connection to the God of his father David, to the God of the nation who is supposed to still be lifted up and worshipped in Judah. It's just shocking. So in the Valley of Salt, remember we just had a note, he killed 10,000 in the Valley of Salt.

We didn't get the rest of this over in Kings, but we're getting it here. Took them alive. They were all dashed in pieces.

As for the soldiers of the army which Amaziah had discharged so that they would not go with him to battle, they, while he's gone having this Pyrrhic victory over in Edom, what did they do? They raided the cities of Judah from Samaria to Beth Horon, killed 3,000 in them and took much spoil. They're sacking Judah. While Amaziah is gloating over the destruction of this fractional army in Edom, he's being sacked and raided by the guys that he ticked off by hiring and then firing them.

So it was so after Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, and notice the Bible calls it a slaughter, not victory over the Edomites, slaughter of the Edomites. He brought the gods of the people of Seir and set them up to be his gods. He kills 10 Eliphs, he captures and kills another 10 Eliphs.

How good are these gods? Well they're going to be mine. It seems irrational from our point of view, but it kind of makes sense that he's just got this self-destructive bent. There is a way that seems right to a man, but the ends are death.

So he takes the gods of this defeated army and they are his gods. He's bringing them back and he's going to bow down before them and burn incense to them. Therefore, the anger of the Lord was aroused against Amaziah and he sent him a prophet who said to him, Why have you sought the gods of the people which could not rescue their own people from your hand? So it was, as he talked with him, that the king said to him, Have we made you the king's counselor? Cease! Why should you be killed? Then the prophet ceased and said, I know that God has determined to destroy you because you have done this and have not heeded my advice.

This is the blindness that comes from the non-loyal heart. Even his obedience works against him. He didn't take those Israelite soldiers with him, but it works against him.

He gains a victory, as promised, but it works against him. Now, verse 17, Amaziah king of Judah asked advice and sent to Joash the son of Jehoahaz saying, Come, let us face one another in battle. Now he wants retribution for the raids and the spoil that took place and he thinks he's got a case.

This is his twisted idea of justice. So now we understand why the thistle wants to marry his daughter to the mighty oak or whatever that story was we saw last time. The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon saying, Give your daughter to my son as wife as a wild beast that was in Lebanon passed by and trampled the thistle.

And we know how the story goes from here. This is how he ends up captive all the days of

Jehoash king of Israel and it isn't going to be until his death that he will be released to go back down. But by this time, his son has been reigning for many, many years and so he is going to be sort of an honorary king, a figurehead king, a sort of a laughing stock king, shamed and disgraced and this is the penalty for the disloyal heart, the uncommitted heart, the superficial heeding, which as you can see doesn't last long.

He heeds the first man of God but he doesn't heed the second man of God. It just doesn't last. He gets wise in his own eyes and the point of application for us is, it's like Barney Fife used to say, you've got to nip it in the bud.

You have to start early in detecting, you know, lest there spring up in any of you an evil heart of faithlessness, an evil heart of unbelief. Examine yourself, see if you're in the faith. We have to find the beginnings of this attitude in the small areas of our lives.

Find it, out it, exterminate it and get rid of it because it will only grow and we become increasingly blind. Amaziah starts out being able to hear and being able to see but because he doesn't commit his heart, seeing he sees and does not perceive. Hearing he hears but he doesn't understand.

His heart is calloused over and things seem logical and seem reasonable and seem right to him that are absolutely, utterly absurd and result in his own destruction and he can't even see it coming. Our privilege, our heritage is to have the light of God shine on our path through His Word and through His Spirit and we don't want to give that away in the small things because we will ultimately lose it in the big things. Well, this explains now why when you get to chapter 25, verse 25, Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, lived 15 years after the death of Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, now the rest of the acts of Amaziah are they not written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel, after the time that Amaziah turned away from following the Lord, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, he fled to Lachish.

The idea was apparently when he came back they thought maybe this dingbat is going to try to usurp the throne from his son, dethrone Uzziah, Azariah, and so the king of Judah there was intrigue and conspiracy and so he gets assassinated to prevent him plotting against the throne. That would be one reason why this intrigue sprung up. But they killed him in Lachish and brought him with horses, with horses by the way, think back to Ahab, think back to Jezebel, think back to the chariot rolling back and forth.

Why doesn't that just say they brought him back? They brought him back with horses. If you rely on strength, you're going to ultimately be the victim of strength. He lives by the sword, perishes by the sword, Jesus said, and he tried to increase his strength in human terms, failed, tried to aggrandize himself by attacking Edom, failed, lost stuff that he had in his own country, ended up losing his own freedom, lost his throne, ultimately lost his life, and horses, which are a symbol of strength, remember the chariots and the horsemen of Israel, horses are horsemen of Israel, that's the strength, that's God's strength, God's protective wall of defense.

And he ends up, his dead corpse is dragged with horses back to Jerusalem and he's planted with his fathers in the city of Judah. This brings us now to chapter 26. Now we're going to see the son who has been reigning down in Judah looking at the example of his father.

You think, here's a golden opportunity to see a bad example and learn from it. So does Uzziah slash Azariah learn the lesson? The larger question is, we too are looking at these examples, as goes the nation in the Old Testament, this is the soul of the believer in the New Testament age, what is our king doing on the throne? Are we seeking to push through by marshalling human resources and human strength? Those things can be used. David fought battles with an army, his guys swung swords and rode in chariots, nothing wrong with those things, but they have to be subordinate to and organized under and operated by the Lord.

Loyal heart. The loyal heart comes first. We can be wonderful stewards of all kinds of things when we have a loyal heart.

Without a loyal heart, those things are going to swell and take up the field of view, we'll be blinded, we will be captured, we will be robbed, we will be destroyed. That's the message in chapter 25. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back in 26, we're going to see what a good student Uzziah slash Azariah is looking at his father's career.