

Kings and Prophets 13-07-05a

This is Friday, July the 5th, 2013. We continue our study of Kings and Prophets. We'll be picking up in 1 Kings chapter 15.

We'll follow our usual custom and spend just a moment at the outset to go to the Lord in prayer. It's an opportunity to focus our concentration and ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship together. Father, what a wonderful promise you have given us, that it is not by might nor by power sourced in ourselves that we are asked to live life before you, but it is by the provision you have made in your Spirit and through your Word.

We thank you for this opportunity to experience both as God the Holy Spirit becomes our teacher and enables us to enter into divine truth that is supernatural in its nature and in its effect on us. We thank you that through the Word we can be washed and renewed. We can be enabled not only to understand, but also to apply and bear fruit in faith that pleases you and reflects glory for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray that as we spend this time together that each one will find helpful and meaningful truths in this passage, that together we can grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior and be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

1 Kings chapter 15. We have been in Chronicles now the past few weeks tracing the succession of kings in Judah. And so we started with Rehoboam, and following Rehoboam we had Abijam, and from Abijam we went to Asa.

In the meantime there has been, and then from Asa to Jehoshaphat, in the meantime there's been quite a carousel of kingly occupants of the throne in the north. I have distributed copies of a chart, and there are many such charts. You can find one online.

There might be one in your Bible. This is one that comes from a book by a gentleman that I actually know. His daughter was a student of mine years ago, and he was later my professor at Dallas Seminary, and he recently was a guest speaker at the Criswell College.

So I've bumped into him from time to time. He's a very fine scholar. His name is Dr. Wayne House, H. Wayne House, and he put together a book of Bible charts years and years ago.

I mean, like back in the 1980s, I think. And this is from that book, but any such chart will do. But this picks up in the 900s B.C. and shows the kings of Judah and Israel side by side.

And for those of you that are joining us either out of time or out of place, there is a copy of this on the website. It will be easier to get to later than it may be at the moment. But find any good chart.

If your computer is there, you can pull one up on Google and just say, you know, kings, northern, southern Israel chart or some such thing. All we want to see is the reign, as you see

on the one I distributed. Here's Rehoboam and then the short two-year reign of Abijam, followed by the reign of Asa, the very long 41-year reign of Asa, and then down to Jehoshaphat.

And you've basically got those four kings. And in the northern kingdom, you have Jeroboam. Then we're going to see Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, and Ahab.

There is significantly greater instability in the north, as we're going to see, picking up our study, looking now at the northern kingdom, beginning in 1 Kings 15, verse 23. After Asa's account is completed, his might, all that he did, the cities which he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles? We looked at the Book of Chronicles. We saw the career of Asa there.

Asa rested with his fathers, and Jehoshaphat, his son, reigned in his place. Now the author of Kings switches to the northern kingdom. Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, became king over Israel in the second year of Asa, king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years.

And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin. Now, what do you think about that verse? Look it over, especially the last part of it. He, talking about Nadab, did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin, this is of course the sin of Jeroboam, by which he had made Israel sin.

Is there any part of that verse that raises any question at all in your mind? The very last phrase waves a little flag in my mind. Can somebody make you sin? It says that Jeroboam made the northern kingdom of Israel to sin. He made them sin.

So if they get judged, can they say, but Lord, it's not my fault, King Jeroboam made me sin. What do you think about this? Is this possible? Can you lay the blame on someone else and say, you know, the devil made me do it, my brother made me do it, my sister made me do it, my friend made, some external, the government made me do it, the government caused me to sin, my superior, the authority over me, it's all their fault. And that would be the specific case here, wouldn't it? He's the king, and the Bible says he made Israel to sin.

So how are we to take this, to understand it? Well, if you turn back, just by way of quick review, a couple of pages to the account of the reign of Jeroboam, go back to chapter 12 and verse 25, Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim and dwelt there. So this is his capital city. So a little Bible trivia question, what was the first capital city of the northern kingdom? It wouldn't be Samaria, would it? It's Shechem.

Shechem is just like, what's the first capital city of the United States of America? It's a good question, isn't it? The first capital of the northern kingdom of Israel is Shechem. This is where Jeroboam, he fortifies it, he builds it up, and he dwells there. And Jeroboam said in his heart, now the kingdom may return to the house of David.

If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord of Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their Lord, Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they will kill me and go

back to Rehoboam king of Judah. Their heart will turn back to their Lord, Rehoboam. It doesn't say their Lord, the God of Israel.

He's not worried about them going down to Jerusalem and reaffirming and building up their faith in God. He knows they're a bunch of rascals. But he's afraid that while they're down there, Rehoboam is going to recruit them back to the good side.

Instead of the dark side. Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, it is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt.

He set one up in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. This thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. He made shrines on the high places, made priests from every class of people who were not of the sons of Levi.

He ordained a feast on the 15th day of the eighth month, like the feast in Judah, offered sacrifices on his altar, Bethel, calves that he had made, he installed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. He made offerings on the altar at Bethel on the 15th day of the eighth month. In the month which he had devised in his own heart, he ordained a feast for the children of Israel and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense.

He made a substitute religion. Now, would you say that he is making Israel to sin? Well, he made a proclamation and said, here's a feast, here's an altar, here are sacrifices, and here are some priests. Did he pass a law saying thou shalt not leave the northern kingdom and go to the south and worship? What did he really do? When it says he made Israel to sin, what did he actually do? He created an excuse and an opportunity, didn't he? It's too far for you to go down there.

It's an excuse. It's a rationale, a rationalization. And he provided an opportunity by building this entire alternate worship system.

What people do with that excuse and that opportunity is still their responsibility, isn't it? He did not decree that the border between the two kingdoms was closed. He did not decree that they could not go down to Jerusalem and worship. He just made a more convenient alternative, provided a handy excuse and a proximate opportunity.

So are they responsible for sinning by participating in this form of worship? Yes, they are. Is he responsible for providing the excuse and the opportunity and the encouragement? Yes. So did they cause themselves to sin? Yes.

Did he cause them to sin? Yes. But in that sense, they cannot excuse themselves. They don't have an extenuating or mitigating circumstance.

Well, but the king made it so easy to sin. Now, can you imagine personal and current applications for this observation? Does the Internet and cable television provide convenient

ways for people to sin? Can you view what amounts to pornography right there in your living room or what is in fact pornography on your computer? Can you commit sins of other natures through media, such as getting into disputes about words and distractions where you spend time that ought to be a part of stewardship to work, to family, to spiritual life, but instead you recommit that time to endless excursions on the Internet or endless amounts of television viewing? I'm just picking on TV and the Internet because they're convenient targets and they're everywhere. But do you see the parallel? These things are provided to us.

They make it very easy to sin. And they even give us an excuse. Well, how am I supposed to keep up with the news if I don't read the Google homepage? I mean, Yahoo, when I pull it up, right there are these clickable links, one link, and here I am reading some prurient or distracting or time-consuming material.

And then the next thing you know, here's another link and another link and another link. And the first thing you know, you've been spending two, three, four hours by yourself surfing the Internet. And here's your family.

Here's your job. Here's your personal responsibilities. Here's your time of meditation and prayer and reflection and fellowship with God that has been replaced.

Nothing necessarily intrinsically wrong with entertainment on television or information and resources on the Internet. But we have to be so careful that we control those things and they do not control us. That we are not misled, misguided, wrongly motivated and drawn away from our spiritual priorities, which include our duty to our family, our duty to our employer or our educational requirements, whatever it may be, our duty to God first and foremost to dedicate our thoughts and our hearts to Him.

There's a very simple test. We saw Dr. Hawkins offer the three questions. Can I thank God for it? Can I do it in Jesus' name? Does it reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus? But even more clearly and fundamentally, can I engage in this and at the same time present myself a living sacrifice to God, holy, acceptable, well-pleasing in His sight? You can't blame convenience and you can't blame a nearby opportunity.

Yes, Jeroboam caused Israel to sin, but Israel were willing to sin, willing to avail themselves and they didn't have to. They were not compelled. This wasn't compulsory.

It was optional, but it was such an enticing option. Wow, we can save the expense. You know, it always costs us so many shekels to go all the way down there to Jerusalem and try to find a place to stay.

And you know those guys down at the temple, they're always taking advantage of us on the exchange rate and when we try to get a sacrificial animal, on and on and on and on. How much more convenient? I'll think of God in my heart while I'm looking at this golden calf. And there's rationalization.

Oh, well, I'm going to look up a Bible class here in just a minute and I'm going to check on this Bible resource in just a minute. I just want to finish reading this salacious gossip about some Hollywood person that got a nose job or whatever worse. So again, when the Bible says, he did evil in the sight of the Lord, that first phrase helps us understand the last phrase.

Are we conscious of being in the sight of the Lord? The time we spend, the way we spend it, what we invest our mental energy in, because God is watching. He did evil in the sight of the Lord. He walked in the ways of His Father and in His sin, by which He made Israel sin, provided the means, motive and opportunity.

So this is Nadab. He reigned over Israel only two years. Why? Because in those two years, he already matched the sin level of his father Jeroboam.

But then in verse 27, Baasha the son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar conspired against him. Now, remind me, who is the tribe from which the kings of Israel are supposed to come? What tribe is that? It starts with J and ends with Udah. What tribe is Baasha from? Issachar? Get a list of the twelve sons of Jacob and see how far down you have to go to hit Issachar.

I get lost after about the first five or six, but Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, and somewhere down after that is Issachar. He's not anywhere in the top echelon. Baasha the son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar.

This is included for a reason. Totally illegitimate to have any pretensions to the throne. But he conspired against Nadab.

Baasha killed him at Gibbathon, which belongs to the Philistines, while Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbathon. So Nadab is attacking a Philistine city and Baasha killed him. Maybe he tried to make it look like a battle wound.

Got a Philistine arrow, stuck it in his chest. Oh, the Philistines got him. But didn't fool anybody.

Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa, king of Judah, and reigned in his place, took the throne. This is essentially sort of a military coup type of thing. And it was so when he became king that he killed all the house of Jeroboam.

This does not bode well when you claim the throne of ostensibly the people of God who have a covenant with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Where do you think God ranks in the calculations and the estimations of Baasha? Does he seriously think there is a God in Israel? Does he care that there is a covenant? Does he care that murder is wrong and that there is a tribe that is supposed to reign and rule? Does he care that there are standards that God holds kings and rulers to? He is oblivious to all of that. He evidently thinks that God isn't going to notice him doing these things.

It was so when he became king, he killed all the house of Jeroboam. He did not leave to Jeroboam anyone that breathed until he had destroyed him according to the word of the Lord

by which he had spoken by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite. And you remember that.

You remember the whole arm-withering episode and the broken altar. But this is God's will that the house of Jeroboam be utterly cut off. And it does happen in this way.

But this doesn't make Nadab holy, does it? It doesn't mean what he does is okay. It's sort of like these things must come, but woe to him by whom they come. It was necessary that the Lord Jesus die on the cross and it was necessary that he be betrayed into the hands of men.

But the man who did so isn't excused on that basis. Same thing here. But why does it happen? Because of the sins of Jeroboam which he had sinned and by which he had made Israel sin because of his provocation with which he had provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger.

If Baasha had thought at all about the divine presence and the divine oversight of his people, he might have taken a lesson from this. But of course he doesn't. Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, all that he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? And there was war between Asa and Baasha, king of Israel, all their days.

Now if you refer again to your chart, you notice that from 909 to 886, which is about 23 years, give or take. Let's see, 14 and 9 is 23. Baasha has a relatively long reign, longer even than Jeroboam.

And he's as illegitimate as you can get. Of course, Jeroboam was no peach. But in verse 33, in the third year of Asa, king of Judah, Baasha, the son of Ahijah, became king over all Israel in Terza.

Do you think it is any sort of accident that the prophet that predicted the doom of the house of Jeroboam is named Ahijah and the father of Baasha is also named Ahijah? He's not only the son of an Ahijah who was his biological father, but he's sort of the son of the prophecy of Ahijah in the sense that he fulfills it. He became king over all Israel in Terza and reigned 24 years. He did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin.

This is the third time we are reminded that Jeroboam made Israel to sin. Notice we have now another capital, Terza. We move into chapter 16.

The word of the Lord came to Jehu, the son of Hanani, against Baasha, saying, Inasmuch as I lifted you out of the dust and made you ruler over my people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have made my people Israel sin to provoke me to anger with their sins, surely I will take away the posterity of Baasha and the posterity of his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Baasha and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the fields. Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, what he did and his might, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Baasha rested with his fathers and was buried in Terza, then Elah his son reigned in his place.

Also the word of the Lord came to the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, against Baasha and his house because of all the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord in provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, being like the house of Jeroboam and because he killed them. So somewhat of an emphasis on this. Now, what did I point out about Baasha and his provenance? What tribe is he from? The tribe of Issachar.

Why is it that he does not have a posterity and doesn't have a continuance of his house on the throne of Israel? Does God say, because thou art from the tribe of Issachar, you can't reign because I already said Judah gets the scepter? What is the basis? Suppose he had been a completely different king. Suppose he had been like Jehoshaphat or like Asa in his good years and had really brought in reform and had sought to lead the people back to God. Do you think this prophecy would have been made on the basis that he wasn't from the right tribe? There is another point of application here.

It does not ultimately matter what hand of cards we are initially dealt, whether it is genetically, whether it is circumstantially, whether it is economically, whether it is socially, whether it is talent-wise, skill-wise, intelligence-wise. These things God can overcome, can turn cursing to blessing, can take what seems to weaken us and make us stronger. It all depends on our response to Him, on our obedience.

All of us can probably do this. If you think in your heart of hearts, play poker, keep an impassive face, but in your secret most thoughts you say, I've always been disappointed that I lack thus and so, or I have this flaw, I have this shortcoming, I don't seem to be able to do X, I'm always doing Y when I really want to be doing Z. We know what some of our imperfections are. We know what we are disappointed with in ourselves.

We think if only I looked different, if only I had a better personality, if only I was witty, if only I was clever, if only I was this, if only I had that. If I had been given a different beginning point in some way, I could have accomplished just no telling what all. Think of King Saul.

Think of Jeroboam. Think of Baasha. Because it isn't how you start, it is what your attitude toward God is.

If you have a heart for God, it doesn't matter what deficiencies, deficits, disqualifications, inelegancies, seeming impossibilities you start with. With God, all things are possible. God told Saul, I will make a house for you if you will be obedient, if you will be faithful, if you will live in the light of the law.

But he didn't. It would not have mattered what tribe he was from. God would have made some other theological point by making a dynasty out of the kings of Benjamin.

You go from the oldest brother, Reuben, and it ratchets down through Judah and ends all the way down at the tribe of Benjamin. God could have made a beautiful point from that. But Saul blew it.

He told Jeroboam. Jeroboam blew it. He tells all of us, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, that attitude of humility, of faithfulness, of obedience overcomes any starting objection.

How do you think Deborah got to be a prophet in Israel? Talk about disqualification, but she was placed at a time when God needed a woman prophet and she became one, a judge. There is no starting deficit that God cannot only overcome but turn to advantage. Remember the apostle Paul? In weakness, God's strength is made manifest.

When I am weak, then I am strong. But we have to be people of faith, people of obedience. We have to be teachable, i.e., humble, have humility.

But these guys turn opportunities into catastrophes by going their own way. We can do the very same thing. So take a lesson from these kings.

By the way, I was thinking about this earlier in the week. When we're looking at this study of kings and prophets, we think, well, it's history. These guys were in positions we'll never be in.

I'm never going to be potentially sitting on the throne of a kingdom, and so on. We have to be careful about those assumptions, don't we? Because overcomers will rule and reign with Christ. Where do we get practice for that? Our domain, the place over which we are suzerains, over which we are rulers, is the kingdom of our own soul.

You know, if a man cannot rule well his own household, how can he rule the house of God, Paul says. In the same way, before we are going to be qualified to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in the ages and the kingdoms that are to come, we have to first demonstrate that we can rule ourselves, that we can organize ourselves, that we can accurately evaluate and dispense justice ourselves. The kingdom over which we rule, the throne on which we sit, is our soul, our heart, our mind.

If we dedicate it to God and love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind, if we love our neighbor as ourself, who are the neighbors? These are the surrounding kingdoms. Do you want to have peace with the surrounding kingdoms as in the days of Solomon? Or do you want to have warfare and strife and contention, bitterness, competition? We are these kings now. And as we are going to see when we come back from the break, each of these kings illustrates for us a different kind of challenge, a different potential for failure, a different vulnerability that we can overcome and be impervious to through the grace of God and the resources that he provides to us in his word and through his spirit.

But let's pause here and take our break.