

OLD TESTAMENT BIBLICAL LITERACY

Lesson 27

2 Kings – Part Two

THE HISTORY OF THE MONARCHY OF JUDAH (a/k/a Money, Sex, And Power vs. The Heart for God)

I. BACKGROUND

We have given the background for I and II Kings in the previous lessons. Those histories will not be repeated here. This background focuses on two items: Judah prophecies and the historical context.

A. *Judah Prophecies*

This is a good time to refresh the Biblical flow of who God's chosen people are and what they are chosen to do. Back in the Garden of Eden, God made man and woman to live in harmony and relationship with God. Once mankind sinned, the harmony and relationship was destroyed. Rather than leave mankind to the hell that is part and parcel of existence without God, God chose to sacrifice himself for our sins and a restoration of fellowship with Him. This sacrifice did not occur at the time of the sin, but was to occur later.

God prophesied about the coming sacrifice when He pronounced the curses during the expulsion from the garden. God stated that from woman would come one who would crush Satan's head though not without a price (Satan would strike his heel) Gen. 3:15. This prophesy of a savior for humanity was further enunciated and specified through Abraham, where God explained that humanity would receive the blessing through Abraham's offspring (Gen. 12:3). Of Abraham's two sons, the prophesy specified that Isaac's offspring would bear the savior. In fact, after Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, we get a prophetic glimpse that the true sacrifice of a son would be from God, not Abraham or any other human. (Gen. 22:8 "God himself will provide the lamb....")

Isaac has twin boys, Esau and Jacob. God chooses Jacob as the lineage for the Savior (Gen. 28:14). Jacob's name is changed to Israel and his twelve sons become the twelve Israelite tribes. These

are the chosen people. They are chosen to be the Messiah's lineage with all that it entails.

Why bring this up now? Because of the twelve sons/tribes that issued forth from Jacob, the savior was prophesied to come from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:8-10). Judah is the tribe of David and Solomon. Judah is the focus point of the promised Messiah. From Judah, David himself is a further focus point for the coming Messiah. Accordingly, his long succession of prophesy forms one of the background points for our analysis of the monarchy of Judah.

B. *Historical Context*

Saul was the first king of a united Israel. David was Israel's second king. David's son, Solomon reigned as the third and final king over an united Israel. After Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became king. It was under Rehoboam that the ten Northern tribes rebelled forming the northern country of "Israel" with its capital city Samaria. Rehoboam and his successors continued to rule the southern country of "Judah" with its capital city Jerusalem.

In this class, we have covered the history of the northern kingdom from this time until its destruction in 722 B.C. In an effort to give a historical framework for the southern kingdom of Judah, we will briefly go back into I Kings and look at the monarchy, beginning with Rehoboam.

II. JUDAH'S MONARCHY

As we examine Judah's monarchy through the lens of I and II Kings, we see the sinful intoxicant that money, sex, and power have upon the kings. Those kings that succumb, bring all measure of harm to themselves and the people. Those kings that choose a heart set on God instead, see the hand of God protecting them and the people. It is a simple truth, but one shown over and over again.

A. *Rehoboam (I Kings 12 and 14)*

Solomon's son (David's grandson), Rehoboam, reigns for 17 years from 930 to 913 B.C. Rehoboam's intoxication with power led to the division of Israel as a nation. During his reign, Judah did evil before Yahweh, with idolatrous worship on high places, with sacred

stones and Asherah poles. Judah had male shrine prostitutes and engaged in other detestable practices. The people suffered from an invasion by the Egyptian pharaoh Shishak. Also, there was continual warfare (skirmishes) between Judah and Israel.

B. *Abijah (I Kings 15)*

After the death of Rehoboam, his son (Solomon's grandson), Abijah, became king of Judah. Abijah reigned for just three years, from 913 to 910 B.C. Like his father Rehoboam, Abijah and the people did evil before Yahweh and war persisted with Israel. I Kings is clear that destruction of Abijah's and Rehoboam's line did not occur because of God's prophetic promises concerning David.

C. *Asa (I Kings 15)*

After Abijah's death, Solomon's great-grandson, Asa, reigns over Judah. Asa did right before Yahweh. He expelled the male shrine prostitutes, got rid of the idols and even deposed his grandmother as Queen Mother because she had constructed an Asherah pole to worship the goddess Asherah. Asa's heart was fully committed to Yahweh, although he was not always perfect in his practice! Asa also warred with Israel. At one point, Asa bought help in that warring effort from the King of Aram. Aram was north of Israel, and when the king of Aram was on Judah's side, Israel was not in any condition to make southern incursions upon Judah. Israel had to keep its army ready for invasions from Aram in the north. Asa reigned a long 41 years, from 910 to 869 B.C.

D. *Jehoshaphat (I Kings 22)*

Once Asa died, he was succeeded by his 35 year old son Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat had co-reigned with Asa from 872 to 869 B.C. Jehoshaphat's entire reign stretched 25 years, from 872 to 848 B.C. To put this into context, Jehoshaphat was a contemporary of Ahab in Israel (of Ahab and Jezebel vs. Elijah fame).

Like his father, Jehoshaphat followed the ways of Yahweh and his heart was right before God. Jehoshaphat is the first king of Judah to be at peace with Israel. In fact, he was the king that joined with Ahab in fighting the Arameans from whom his father had bought peace years before. It was Jehoshaphat who insisted that a word

from Yahweh be sought before he and Ahab went into battle...much to Ahab's chagrin. Not everything Jehoshaphat touched was wonderful. His naval attempts were a wreck.

Jehoshaphat also joined with Ahab's son and successor King Joram in battling Mesha, king of Moab (II Kings 3). Joram was a pagan like his father. The northern prophet Elisha works in the battle effort, but not because of Joram. Elisha states, "As surely as Yahweh Almighty lives, whom I serve, if I did not have respect for the presence of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, I would not look at you or even notice you." (verse 14). The battle goes well for Israel and Judah and Moab is repulsed.

Mesha had some of his victorious events inscribed on a stone that archaeologists uncovered in the late 1800's. The stone, called the Mesha stone, contains an account of the wars between Israel and the Moabites. The stone includes a description of Mesha's capture of the Israeli city of Nebo:

And Chemosh [Mesha's god] said to me, "Go, take Nebo from Israel!" So I went by night and fought against it from the break of dawn until noon, taking it and slaying all, 7,000 men, boys, women, girls, and maidservants, for I had devoted them to destruction for the god Ashtar-Chemosh. And I took from them there the . . . of Yahweh, dragging them before Chemosh. (Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, p.320).

A picture of the Mesha Stone (or "Moabite Stone") is below:



This is one of the few mentions of the name of Israel's God, Yahweh, outside of the Bible.

E. *Jehoram (II Kings 8)*

Jehoshaphat's closeness with Ahab was ultimately not a good thing. His son Jehoram married a daughter of Ahab. Ultimately, Jehoram succeeded his father Jehoshaphat to the throne of Judah. They co-reigned for a year, with Jehoram's reign totaling eight years from 848 to 841 B.C.

Somehow, the wily influences of Ahab's daughter on Jehoram led to his abdication of Yahweh's worship in favor of the pagan worship of Israel. During this time, Edom successfully through off the control that Judah had exercised over it. Libnah successfully revolted against Judah as well.

F. *Ahaziah (II Kings 8 - 9)*

After Jehoram, his son Ahaziah takes the throne for a quick year (841 B.C.). Ahaziah was not only of the line of Judah but was a

grandson to Ahab as well. Much like his father, he did evil in the eyes of Yahweh following the pagan practices of Ahab and Israel. This 22 year old fellow got caught up helping his uncle King Joram of Israel in fighting the Arameans. This reign occurred at the time of Jehu's coup in Israel. In Jehu's bloodletting and cleansing of the house of Ahab, Jehu killed both Ahaziah and his uncle Joram.

G. *Athaliah and Joash (II Kings 11)*

After Ahaziah is killed, something wicked and goofy happens in Judah. Ahaziah's MOTHER (Athaliah) decides to wipe out all the rest of the royal family so she can rule over Judah. Aside from being a pretty evil family move, this act threatens to destroy the family of the promised Messiah. Of course, God's word cannot be so easily overcome and while the royal murders are occurring, the one year old son of the king along with his nursemaid are hidden in the temple for six years while Athaliah rules the land (841 – 835 B.C.). The temple priest Jehoida sees to the boy's (Joash) rearing.

When Joash was seven, the priest Jehoida had him brought out publicly with a coronation that had the people shouting "Long live the king." When Athaliah hears these shouts, she has the audacity to yell "Treason! Treason!" The folks side with the boy king Joash and Athaliah is put to death.

Joash rules with the heart of God and the guidance of God's priest. HE rebuilds the temple of Yahweh. He reconvenes the people in a covenant with Yahweh. He has the temple of Ba'al destroyed along with Ba'al's high priest. Other Biblical accounts tell us that after the death of the priest Jehoida, Joash turned from God (II Chronicles 24). Kings relates to us the difficulties Joash had with the Arameans during the time he was cold to Yahweh. Ultimately, Joash is assassinated after a 40 year reign (835 – 796 B.C.).

H. *Amaziah (II Kings 14)*

Joash has a 25 year old son who reigned after him for 29 years from 796 to 767 B.C. Amaziah sought to do right as King David had, although he failed to remove the High Places of worship. After securing the kingdom, Ahaziah's first order of business was to put to death the assassins of his father. Unlike most vengeance of the day,

Amaziah did NOT put the assassin's sons to death because of Amaziah's desire to follow Deut. 24:16 (Don't put sons to death for the sins of their fathers).

Amaziah successfully whips a bunch of Edomites in battle and must have felt pretty good about it because he then unwisely seeks to fight Israel to the north. Amaziah attacks and loses. He is not only routed, but a good bit of Jerusalem's wall is destroyed. Amaziah's son begins to reign as a 16 year old boy while Ahaziah still lived. Their reigns overlap for 25 years. Eventually, Amaziah is killed and Azariah has the throne to himself.

I. *Azariah (Uzziah) (II Kings 15)*

Azariah (also called Uzziah) did right in the eyes of God and reigned 52 years from 792 – 740 B.C. His mother was not the result of a power or lust marriage of a foreigner by the father, but she is noted as being from Jerusalem! We know from II Chronicles 26 that Azariah usurped the priestly role of burning incense, and as a result, God punished him with leprosy. With leprosy, Azariah was moved to a separate house and his son Jotham ruled for him the last ten years of his life (from 750 to 740 B.C.).

J. *Jotham (II Kings 15)*

Jotham was 25 when he began his reign. He did right in the eyes of Yahweh and reigned about 16 years from 750 to 735 B.C. Evidently, his son took over around 735, even though Jotham continued to live to 732 B.C. During Jotham's reign, the Arameans began to go up and attack Judah.

K. *Ahaz (II Kings 16)*

Ahaz, Jotham's son, began his reign around 735 B.C. at the age of 20. Ahaz reigns until 715 B.C. Ahaz did not follow the ways of Yahweh - not even close. He followed "the ways of the kings of Israel," (16:3) even sacrificing his son as a burnt offering. The Aramean army took lands away from Judah and attacked Jerusalem itself. These moves caused Ahaz to seek help from Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria. Ahaz sent booty to T-P who responded by attacking Damascus. Ahaz went to meet T-P in Damascus and found what Ahaz thought to be a really cool altar. Ahaz adopted this, having

plans and drawings sent back to Jerusalem for immediate construction, and other Assyrian pagan practices including divination.

It was while Ahaz was king that Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, and his successor Sargon finished off Israel as a nation in 722 B.C.

L. *Hezekiah (II Kings 18-20)*

Hezekiah is Ahaz's son. Hezekiah begins his reign at the age of 25. He reigns from 715 to 686 for a total of 29 years. Kings gives us a great bit of information about Hezekiah and his reign. Non-biblical history also gives us insight into these events.

Unlike his father Ahaz, Hezekiah has a burning heart for the Lord. Hezekiah destroys the pagan worship, destroys the false idols (including the serpent of Moses), and sets out worship of Yahweh for the people. Kings says "Hezekiah trusted in Yahweh, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. He held fast to Yahweh and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands Yahweh had given Moses. And Yahweh was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook." (18:5-7).

Hezekiah we'll study in depth next week.

III. POINTS FOR HOME

- A. Power and money and prestige and conjugal relations are powerful intoxicants that over power many, leaving them to dismiss God in favor of the local fad, the idea of the day, or whatever offers more money, power or sex.
- B. Don't leave Yahweh out of self sufficiency
- C. Don't leave for today's fad or anything else
- D. Get your heart right before Yahweh
- E. When God blesses you, keep your heart right before him
- F. Trust in Yahweh and hold fast to his commands