

Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 12, Part 2, 1 Kings 14-15, Part 2

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The next section of this beginnings and endings section, chapters 14 and 15, is the story of the Southern King. Now, we've seen the story of the Northern King and where his practices are going to lead the nation unless there's a change. Now, here in chapter 14:21 through 15:8, we see the Southern Kings, Rehoboam and his son.

We saw Jeroboam and his son, now we see Rehoboam, the Southern King, and his son, Abijah. Now, it's interesting to compare kings and chronicles, and the differing descriptions we find of some of these kings in the two sets of perspectives on Israel's history. Chronicles gives Rehoboam a somewhat better description than kings does.

The primary reason for that is, Rehoboam, in comparison to Jeroboam, honored the temple in Jerusalem, he honored the priests and the Levites, and that is the key interpretive factor in the book of Chronicles. Chronicles was written about 400 BC, about 150 years more or less, after Israel had returned from the Babylonian exile. They're in terrific difficulties.

They're trying to figure out, who are we now? We thought we knew what this kingdom of God thing was all about. It meant you had a Davidic king on the throne, you were an independent nation-state, and you had a strong army to guarantee it. Now, we don't have any of those.

We don't have a Davidic king on the throne. We've got a Persian governor. We're not an independent nation-state.

We're a backwater in the great Persian empire. We don't have an army. We're not permitted to have an army.

So, how in the world can we be the kingdom of God? And the writer or writers of Chronicles says, wait a minute. Was it the kingdom that gave us the worship of God, or did the worship of God give us the kingdom? It was the worship of God. And therefore, if we don't have a king, if we don't have an army, if we don't have independence, we can still have what made us the people of God.

We can still have His worship. So, Chronicles regularly evaluates the kings based on their attitude toward the temple, toward the priesthood, and toward the Levites. If it was good, then they tended to say he was a good king.

If not, do not. Now, remember, Kings is looking at it from a different perspective, and this is awfully important.

People say, well, the two books, Kings and Chronicles, are different, so one is right and the other is wrong. No. Both look at the same historical events but from different perspectives and ask different questions.

Kings is saying, did this guy worship idols? Did this guy promote pagan worship? Did this guy promote the oppression of the poor? He was a bad king. Did this guy not make idols? Did this guy not promote pagan worship? Did this guy promote the care of the poor? Aha, he's a good king. So, two different questions.

So, on the basis of Kings' questions, Rehoboam has some serious issues, excuse me, the writer of Kings has some serious issues with Rehoboam. notice what it says in verse 22: Judah did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Hmm, not Rehoboam did evil.

I think that's interesting. I think, I think the writer of Kings is cutting Rehoboam a little slack, as they say. No, he himself didn't do these things, but I think he's saying that he didn't prevent his people from doing it.

Judah did evil in the eyes of the Lord. By the sins they committed, they stirred up his jealous anger more than those who were before them had done. They set up high places for themselves, sacred stones, and here it is again, Asherah poles on every high hill, under every spreading tree.

There were even male prostitutes in the land, and the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before them. So, yes, Chronicles' position, he defended the temple, he sought to promote the temple worship, he sought to promote the priests and the Levites, but Kings, he didn't stop the people from doing what they began to do. Now again, where did all this start? Solomon built these shrines for his wives around the city so that they could worship their pagan gods.

So, from the point of view of Kings, did Rehoboam stamp that stuff out? Did he stop what Solomon tragically began to bring into motion? No, he did not. So again, this speaks to me, okay, okay, I'm not participating in sin, I'm not doing these things that are forbidden, I'm doing good things, but I'm not doing these things that are forbidden. So, what about my influence? What about my impact on those around me or on those for whom I bear a responsibility? It's one thing to be a good person, and it's one thing to be following the Lord, but it's another thing to be utilizing your influence in helpful, constructive ways.

And it seems very clear that Rehoboam was not doing that. Now it's interesting then that the major historic event for Rehoboam was the coming of the king of Egypt, the Pharaoh Shishak. Shishak might have been the brother of Solomon's wife or the nephew.

How interesting that the story of Solomon, who built the temple, begins with him marrying a Pharaoh's daughter. And then, in one way, the conclusion of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, is an Egyptian Pharaoh came and sacked the temple. Again, actions have consequences.

Now, we can say here, well, this is more coincidental, and I would not fight with that. Perhaps it is a coincidence, but I think it's a remarkable coincidence. And the writer of Kings, I think, is clearly making that point.

You made a deal with these people, and one day, they took their deal back. Yes, yes, actions have consequences. I wonder why, again, Bible study principle.

Why does the Bible make the points it makes? I wonder why it makes as much of a point of, well, okay, Shishak took the gold shields. So, Rehoboam made some bronze shields. So, every time he went into the Lord's temple, the guards could carry these bronze shields.

Afterwards they returned them to the guardroom. I wonder what that's about. I wonder why the biblical writer has been inspired to make a point of that.

Since the Bible doesn't tell us what that point is, we have to be a little careful. But I wonder if, in fact, here again, is form. What do you do when a king goes into the temple? Well, guards and shields go along with them.

Oops, we lost our gold shields. So, let's spend a lot of money and make bronze shields. Forms, forms.

Paul says it, they have the form of godliness, but lack the power thereof. Now I have to tell you, I love traditional worship, but at the same time, I understand that the form is not necessarily the message. And we've always, it seems to me, got to be careful.

Yes, we humans, we need symbols. We need ways of representing our spiritual understandings. That's not bad, that's good.

But the question is, when do the symbols become more important than the reality? When do the symbols stop conveying reality and become reality themselves? Is that what's going on here? I don't know. But I do think it's very interesting that of all the things that are said, Shishak came and sacked the temple. He took those gold shields.

So, Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them. Was that the most important thing he could do? I wonder. So Rehoboam dies.

Again, we're going to see this form that we've seen before. A king is typically introduced. If you look back at verse 21, Rehoboam, son of Solomon, was king in Judah.

He was 41 years old when he became king. He reigned 17 years in Jerusalem, the city the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, in which to put his name. His mother's name was Naamah.

She was an Ammonite. That's interesting, isn't it? His mother was a pagan. One of those girls for whom Solomon had built a pagan shrine.

But that's the typical introduction to a king that we're going to see right through the rest of the 1 and 2 Kings. And then there's a typical closing. And we see that here in verse 29.

As for the other events of Rehoboam's reign and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Rehoboam rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the city of David. His mother's name was Naamah.

She was an Ammonite, and Abijah, his son, succeeded him as king. Those are typical beginning and ending formulas.

So, in chapter 15, we have his successor. In the 18th year of the reign of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, Abijah became king of Judah. Interestingly, the meaning of that name is my father is Yahweh.

Wow, that sounds good. He reigned in Jerusalem for three years. His mother's name was Maka, daughter of Abishalom.

Chronicles says Absalom. It's tempting to think, hmm, is there a connection here? He's marrying in the family. However, if you think about it, there's a generation missing.

He'd have to be at least the grandfather of Maacah. And here, King says Abishalom. Maybe it's not the Absalom we know from the Bible or from David's genealogy, but it's interesting.

But here it comes. He committed all the sins his father had done before him. His heart was not, and this is the NIV, and it says his heart was not fully devoted.

What the Hebrew says is his heart wasn't complete for God. King James says perfect. His heart was not perfectly God's.

Now, I'd like to ask you to look at verse three and look at the connection, I think, between the two parts. Why did he commit all the sins his father had done before him? Because his heart was divided. Yeah, part of his heart was for God.

He didn't make a bull idol like Jeroboam did. Part of his heart was for God, but part of it was for something else, for himself, for his way. And the result is he committed all these sins.

I think the strongest argument for giving your life wholly to God without a rival, without a limit, is that you will be then enabled to live a life pleasing to God. Try to live a life pleasing to God with a divided heart, and you're going to be frustrated because there's going to be a fifth column in you that is fighting everything that one part of you wants. So nevertheless, this is verse four. For David's sake, the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son to succeed him and making Jerusalem strong.

God's going to keep his promise. But now, again, let's talk about beginnings and endings. Yes, there's going to be a Davidic king on the throne of Judah, at least.

Yes, yes, it's going to happen unless Judah persistently and finally turns away from God. Yes, it has to happen. There's going to be a Davidic king on the throne unless we have a choice.

So, bad consequences—mm-hmm—they're going to happen unless you repent and turn away. Good consequences—yes, the pattern has been set. The machine is in motion.

It's going to happen, unless, what about you? What's the pattern? What's going to happen?