

June 6

1 Kings 22, 2 Kings 1, 2 Chronicles 19-20

Hey, I'm Dave Irwin. Thanks for joining me for the Project 4:4 Daily Accelerator for June 6. Today we're covering 1 Kings 22, 2 Kings 1, and 2 Chronicles 19-20.

Following King Solomon, the nation of Israel is divided politically. As time passes and various kings reign in Israel and Judah, we see that the two kingdoms diverge more and more in their spiritual climate. Today's readings highlight this very well.

The kings and nation of Judah follow one path. Jehoshaphat is continuing the line of David as king of Judah and his legacy is that of following after the LORD. We see this in today's readings in three main ways. First, it says in 2 Chronicles 19 that Jehoshaphat toured his lands and "turned [the people] back to the LORD." His father Asa had also lead Judah to follow after the LORD, but God's people may have slipped into their bad habit of turning away and embracing the false gods of the people around them. Whatever the case, Jehoshaphat leads his people to follow after the LORD. Secondly, he reinstitutes a judicial system much like the one that Moses established. In doing so, Jehoshaphat instructs the judges to exercise their authority fairly and with the understanding that they serve God, not man. These are clearly principles that honor God. Lastly, Jehoshaphat shows utter dependence and trust in God when Judah is invaded by neighboring nations. Upon hearing of the advancing army, Jehoshaphat's first reaction is to call his people to fast and pray for God's direction. 2 Chronicles 20 records his prayer as he calls on God for help. The closing words of his prayer are a powerful example to us: "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you." The result of Jehoshaphat's strategy? God did *all* of the fighting for Judah and the advancing army totally annihilated itself! All that the people of Judah had to do was take up the plunder left by the defeated armies (which took three days!!).

Jehoshaphat was not a perfect king. Twice, he was reprimanded for making alliances with the evil kings of Israel. But overall, he led his people with humility before God and kept their hearts following after the LORD.

Following a very different path is the nation of Israel and its kings. We know that king Ahab was the worst of them. Today we read about two of his successors, Ahaziah and Joram (Jehoram).

1 Kings 22 tells us that Ahaziah followed the example of Ahab and did evil in God's eyes. He served and worshipped Baal rather than the LORD. He stays true to his heart when he is injured and turns to Baal-Zebub for help. In one of my favorite Old Testament moments, God sends Elijah to intercept Ahaziah's messengers and tell them that Ahaziah will die because he turned to Baal rather than the LORD. Ahaziah is a little perturbed by Elijah's interference and sends soldiers to take him into custody. Twice Elijah calls down fire from heaven to consume the soldiers rather than go with them. That's just crazy! I wonder if this account was in Jesus' disciples mind when they asked if He wanted them to call down fire from heaven to consume a Samaritan village who had rejected Him (Luke 9). When the third party of soldiers comes, their captain shows great humility and begs Elijah not to

harm him and his men and God tells Elijah to go with them. In the end, Ahaziah hears God's judgment for himself and his life ends just as God decreed.

For a lot of people, accounts like this one in the Bible are troubling. Why would God do something like this? While God doesn't owe us an explanation for His actions and I don't presume to speak for Him in this, I can think of at least one reason God would do something this extreme. The northern kingdom of Israel had traveled well down a path that was leading them further and further away from their God. They were being led by a succession of kings who were rooting the nation deeper and deeper into idol worship. In this reality, it is doubtful that more tame actions would capture His people's attention and draw them back to the LORD. In this sense, we again see God's heart to call people to Himself and the fact that He will go to extreme measures to do so.

Ahaziah has no sons, so his brother Joram becomes king (note: his full name is Jehoram, but the Bible translators use Joram as a way to help us differentiate between this king and a later king of Judah by the same name.). We will learn more of Joram's reign in the coming days. All that we really learn today is that he did evil in the eyes of the LORD, but not as bad as his father Ahab. Joram did do away with the Baal worship, but he continued the sin of Jeroboam who led the people in an idolatrous form of worship of the LORD by erecting golden calves and appointing priests to conduct the worship (1 Kings 13).

Judah was on a path following God. Israel followed a path away from God. We have the benefit of hindsight, but I wonder if the kings of Israel recognized that the path they were on was leading them away from the LORD? It gives us all reason to pause and consider where our paths are leading us.

Thanks for joining me today!