

# What has been happening in the south?

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 28 February 2016

Preacher: Philip Wells

[0:00] So let's turn to 1 Kings chapter 22. Of George Albert Purser it was said, a man of sterling character and something, I lost what it said.

What does it say after that? A what leader? A wise and loving leader. So somebody thought that sufficiently to write that down on that stone and put the stone up there for generations to see.

What will they say about you when you go? What would you like people to say? What do you think people could honestly say?

What would God like said about each of us? So forget the flattery. What's the reality that God sees? And indeed, what will God say? Because God will have a word over the lives of each of us. What will he say? Of Tabitha it was said, and this is in God's word, she was always doing good and helping the poor.

[1:32] That's a great thing to be said of this woman. She was always doing good and helping the poor. That would be great to be said about us when we're gone, wouldn't it? Of Jesus it was said, he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil because God was with him.

Even Jesus has a word said about him and his life in scripture. Of course it's not simple and straightforward.

Paul the apostle says this, So Paul was conscious that even for himself, there were things that he, you could say he did achieve that, that was the sort of man that he was.

But he would say, well actually I'm conscious always of an inner conflict. That the work of the spirit within me is moving me and changing me in this way.

But it's not without a contrary work, a contrary pressure from the sinful nature. And we don't escape the sinful nature until we go to glory.

[2:54] But Paul could say, there is such a thing as a life which produces fruit. And he says the fruit of the spirit is love and joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

No, it's not fruits. It's one fruit with multiple flavors. One thing that is produced. Well what would, what would, what will be said about us?

Perhaps this is a difficult question, it's a bit easier to say what they said about Jehoshaphat. It's what we're going to look at. 1 Kings 22, 41 to 50. What did they say about him? We actually have it written down what they said about him.

And as we look at it, we reflect upon it. I think we've got two lines of thought that we should be conscious of.

He was a human being. He was just like us. This king. He was 35 years old when he began to reign. So actually he would be old enough to go to the young adults group, wouldn't he?

[4:12] Oh, young enough to go to the young adults group. He was a king. And he had all that responsibility at the age of 35. He was like us.

He was not, he had sin to be forgiven. But he also had the possibility of, in an Old Testament sense, producing the fruit of the spirit.

Of being a man of faith. A man of spiritual life. A man in whom the character of Christ could be developed.

And the New Testament says that for Christian people, that character must be developed. There must be a Christianness about the life of somebody who says they're a believer.

And the classic text is Hebrews 12, 14, which talks about being holy. So this evening we're going to sing, I choose to be holy.

[5:15] That's a big thing to say. But it's absolutely necessary that we have holiness. Because it says, holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

So if somebody claims they're a Christian, but is as unholy as anybody in the world, that is a false claim. Holiness, Hebrews 12, 14.

Pursue holiness without which no one will see the Lord. That's not the same thing as being perfect. But it is something, it's not nothing.

Now the other aspect of King Jehoshaphat was he was unlike us. He was in a special place. He was a king. And he had responsibilities that we don't have.

And he had a position that we don't have. He was actually the Messiah for his people in those days. He was the anointed leader. The anointed one. He had the responsibility of leading the nation.

[6:21] And he's not a private person, an individual like we are. He's the sort of head of that nation in the way that Jesus is the head of his church. And the Bible will assess him in that connection.

So sometimes the Bible looks back to King David and says, well, he was a good head of the nation. He had the right heart. He was not perfect. But his heart was in the right place.

And he served the Lord, although imperfectly. And the end of this chain of thought is that of all the kings that we read about, we need the king.

The king about whom no apologies have to be made. No reservations have to be entered. But the king who, in his own merit, in his own perfection, can save his people.

And he doesn't need a savior himself. So we've got two lines here. One that points to us and says he's imperfect like you. And another line, which leads us to Jesus. There is, thankfully, there is a king about whom there's no reservations.

[7:42] There is a redeemer. There is someone who can rightly be said king of kings and lord of lords. There is someone who, when he offered his life, offered an unblemished sacrifice.

And that was good enough to bring all the rest of us sinners in on his coattails, as it were. So, we're going to look at these few verses this morning.

And I'll do a little bit of geography, because some of the geography comes into this. There's the area of concern. You remember that it's split into northern kingdom and southern kingdom.

So the northern kingdom's up there. And we looked at all the horrible goings-on, which we'll mention in a moment. The southern kingdom, where the capital Jerusalem, is sort of there. And we also need to know where Moab is, that sort of area, and Edom is this sort of area.

That just turns out to be helpful. And the place that's Ezion-Geber, I hadn't realized, or I'd forgotten where it was. It's down there. And it's by the side of the sea, so you can have ships that go from there.

[8:54] And it mentions that because this route was open to people from Judah, that they could actually get to Ezion-Geber and set out with ships, which is mentioned briefly.

And for what it's worth, I'll just remind you of the succession of kings. We had this diagram that gets increasingly complicated.

The northern kings. That's going to come down here, the northern kings. We had Omri. And we had his son Ahab, who married Jezebel, who brought in Baal worship.

There's a little picture of Baal. And they have children, Athaliah, Ahaziah, and Joram. And they all figure in subsequent history.

Athaliah, there's a picture of her, got married to one of the southern kings. And the other two children took over the throne one by one.

[10:03] Ahaziah, who tried to catch Elijah, and his brother Joram, or Jehoram. And then they came to a sticky end. But you notice the connections.

The daughter of Ahab, and then the two sons. And that gets mentioned later as well. And for the northern kingdom, I'd just like you to know that the clock is ticking.

They have about 160 more years, and then disaster. And there will be no more northern kingdom at all. So they're headed on a path to disaster.

Let's do the southern kingdom. The southern kingdom is much more wholesome. We had Asa, who reigned for 41 years. And it's said of him he did the right thing, with the exception that he bribed Ben-Hadad.

We have Jehoshaphat, who reigns for 25 years. There's him. And he did the right thing, with some exceptions as well. His son is Jehoram, or Joram.

[11:08] And he marries, and this is a big mistake for him. He marries Ahab's daughter, and brings in all the Baal worship that seems to belong to this family.

And it's said of him that he did as Ahab did. Not good. And then Ahab, where am I? His son Ahaziah reigns for one year.

And the Bible says his grandmother was Athaliah. So that's, she's awful. He did as Ahab did. And that kingdom also has actually got a limited lifespan.

They've got longer, but they're on a downward path too. Two hundred and sixty years left, and thirteen kings to come. In the New Testament it says, by the law is the knowledge of sin.

And I'd like to suggest this is one of the ways in which that verse works out. This is Israel with her law. And it's not an experiment as much as a demonstration.

[12:23] A demonstration of what human beings can do. What humanity is capable of. Given the law, which says what's the right thing to do.

Given that sort of knowledge of God. And if you cook that up for two hundred, three hundred, four hundred years. What do you end up with? Well sadly, you end up with sin and decline.

And it sort of demonstrates the weakness of humanity. And it says, look, this proves that we need something different.

I mean, there's not nothing wrong with the law. But we need something more than that. Which is why the New Covenant comes in so fantastically and says, you're not under law.

This is the realm of the spirit. That every believer is not just equipped with the knowledge of what's the right thing to do. But with an inner dynamic of the spirit to do the right thing.

[13:20] Anyway, let's move on. And Jehu comes in at the end. He's quite a character. So let's look at Jehoshaphat this morning.

And we'll just quickly run through the verses. Then we'll go back over them in more detail. So there's a picture of Jehoshaphat. Which I'm sure you realized. He's described quite sparingly in 1 Kings.

In 2 Chronicles he gets several chapters to himself. So we'll do the Kings version of it. But bear in mind that another writer has given us much more detail.

So it says, Jehoshaphat, son of Asa, become king of Judah in the fourth year of Ahab, king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was 35 years old when he became king. And he reigned in Jerusalem for 25 years.

His mother's name was Azuba, daughter of Shilhai. So it's worth noticing the importance of the mother in the spiritual development of these people that are recorded here.

[14:20] And so this I think is recorded with approval. His mother's name was Azuba, daughter of Shilhai. In everything he... He walked in the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them.

So there's two uses of the word straying or departing. He did not depart from the ways of Asa. So good for him. His father Asa was a solid man who trusted in the Lord and walked with the Lord.

And he does not depart from that. So good for him. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. But there is something that didn't depart, which is the high places.

So the same word there is removed. The high places did not depart. Come to that in a moment. It says the people sacrificed... Offered sacrifices and burnt incense there.

So that's not so good. And it says he was at peace with the king of Israel. So it's just mentioned as a fact. But the linkage seems to say this is not a good fact.

[15:30] This is something that we're not so happy with. It says, As the other achievements of Jehoshaphat's reign, the things he achieved, the things he built and did, and his wars, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah?

You have to look somewhere else for that bit. I'll tell you some other things he did. Verse 46, He rid the land of the remainder of the male shrine prostitutes who remained there even after the reign of

his father Asa.

So these shrine prostitutes is a long translation. It actually says holy ones. So these were men who were referred to sort of euphemistically as holy ones.

But they weren't holy at all. They were the very opposite of holy. So they were, we presume, men who somehow involved sex in worship.

And it was just appalling. And Jehoshaphat did get rid of them. So good for him. We're told that in Edom there was no king.

[16:43] There was a stand-in, a deputy, which presumably made access to that southern coast easier. And it tells us about the ships. Jehoshaphat built a fleet of trading ships to go to Ophir for gold, but they never set sail, for they were destroyed, they were wrecked at Ezion-Geber.

At that time, Ahaziah, son of Ahab, said to Jehoshaphat, that's the northern kingdom, Ahaziah, son of Ahab, one of the sons that I mentioned earlier, said, let my people stay with your men, but Jehoshaphat refused.

So he said no to that. Then Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the city of David, his father, and his son followed in his place.

His son followed him. So that's the story of Jehoshaphat. We'll just go through it a little bit at a time and comment on it. So you can do some ticks and crosses here, so this is filling, ticking the boxes. The departing bit. He did not depart from the ways of Asa. Tick or cross? Tick. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

[18:01] Tick or cross? Tick. But the high places did not depart. Tick or cross? Cross, I think.

People sacrificed incense there. So what do we make of this? It's sort of two ticks and one cross, isn't it? So I'd say, first of all, it's a great relief in this story to come across somebody who is a man of faith and obedience.

Because we've just, previously all these kings have been just rubbish, rubbish, rubbish. Did evil, did evil, did more evil, did yet more evil, did even more evil. So here's a king who's a wholesome man, a man of faith and obedience.

The word used is that he did right. Where does it say that? He did what was right, which means sort of straight upright.

So good, a good man. It's a great relief to find a king who is a man of faith and obedience. But, and there is the but, but the high places thing, he didn't manage to get a grip of.

[19:09] The high places thing is, I think to do with the people offering sacrifices, trying to approach God in a way that God says, God has not said, you can find me there, you can meet with me that way, and there are promises that if you go that way, you will meet me.

There were no such promises. It was the wrong way to try and meet God. And he didn't manage to stop people trying to meet God in that way. So we meet God according to his promises.

Because God doesn't have to meet us at all. But if we want to meet him, we meet him according to his promises. He says, if you want to find me, this is the way to go. And of course, nowadays, it isn't to do with geography or map making, heights and things.

It's Jesus. If you want to meet God, there is one way you go. That's to Jesus. The Jesus of the Bible. So, we say of Jehoshaphat, he did walk in obedience, but there were some areas of sin which were not conquered.

So I leave you to ponder that, because I've been thinking about this. How do we reflect on that? That's what it says, isn't it? He walked in obedience, but there were some areas which were not what they should have been.

[20:38] Let's do the next bit. He was at, in verse 34, Jehoshaphat was also at peace with the king of Israel.

So, do we want a tick or a cross for that? Cross, okay. And incidentally, his son, Joram, married Ahab and Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah.

This turns out to be a big mistake. Oh no, what have I done that for? I think that must be the wars. So the cross stands for the bit we've got to so far.

I'm just trying to assess this, as I'm sure you are. There's a good man, but there's a mistake here.

A bad judgment which actually affects the next generations because he fixed up to make peace with the northern kingdom, the Baal worshipping kingdom, and for the sake of that to bring the daughter of the king to marry his son, which in sort of politics terms seems a very wise and far-sighted move, but in spiritual terms is disastrous because it brings in Baal worship to the next generations and it has terrible effects.

[22:09] The wars. Now it's interesting that it is simply written with one sentence, the things he achieved and his military exploits.

In Chronicles, they give you quite a bit on this and how he prayed a fantastic prayer and the prayer was answered in a remarkable way.

And I'm a little bit puzzled by why doesn't one king tell us that? It just says, if you want to find out more, look elsewhere. But when I turned over to the 2 Chronicles, I was really impressed with the prayer that he prayed and the way he led his people in those situations.

But we're doing kings and kings just sort of passes over it and says, you need to look somewhere else. And let's come back to the peace thing.

He was also at peace with the king of Israel. So it's not a big criticism. It's just quietly mentioned but you pick up from the connection of it that it is a criticism.

[23:23] He made peace where he should not have done. Let's see if we can find the 2 Chronicles. I might be getting ahead of myself. Let me just see. I am, I am.

No, let's do it. 2 Chronicles 20. Do you want to have a look at that? 2 Chronicles 20.

You might like to look at verses 5 and onwards where you get Jehoshaphat standing up and praying a fantastic prayer which is answered in a remarkable way.

2 Chronicles 20. And then you look across at verse 28. Later Jehoshaphat king of Judah made an alliance with Ahaziah king of Israel who was guilty of wickedness.

And you get a prophetic word in verse 37. Because you have made an alliance with Ahaziah the Lord will destroy what you have made. So Chronicles is stronger on the positive this wonderful prayer but it's also stronger on the negative you should not have made this peace alliance.

[24:49] And I'm going to move that into the New Testament and say there are some areas where we should not make peace. peace. And the particular area is we should not make peace with sin.

We should not negotiate with sin. Sin is not our friend. Sin is our sworn enemy. in Romans 8 Paul says this is the way of the spirit.

This is the way of the spirit. You put to death the deeds of the body and if you do that you will live because those who are led by the spirit of the sons of God.

It's interesting isn't it? He's saying this is the way of the spirit that we fight against sin and we keep fighting against sin and we strangle it and put it to death and we don't make peace with it.

So it's a bit of a challenge for us isn't it? It's a rather sobering I don't know whether it's quite a wake up call but it's certainly a challenging word.

[25:57] He's quietly criticized for making peace and we are not to make peace with sin. In fact we're to be soldiers put on the whole armor of God that when the day of evil comes you may be able to stand your ground.

He says we've got to fight. It's in the nature of a Christian to be a soldier and keep the armor on and keep fighting. Let's look at the ships.

Whoops. Well as King records the ships Jehoshaphat built a fleet of trading ships to go for Ophir for gold which sounds like a shrewd financial move.

I mean if you had the opportunity to invest in gold you might think that was a shrewd opportunity.

But they never set sail because they were wrecked at Ezion Geber.

At that time Ahaziah son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat let my men sail with your men but Jehoshaphat refused. So on this occasion it was a joint venture was proposed and he said no.

[27:16] So there's the ships that get wrecked and the lack of opposition in Edom would have helped ship projects because of that bit of geography. And I think you'd have to try and harmonize the account in two chronicles and kings because both of them mention the ships but they tell the story from a different angle.

What about this matter of partnerships and partnerships of which God would say that is not on.

you'd be condemned for that sort of partnership. And if we bring it over into the New Testament in the New Testament the kingdom of God is not a political thing it's a spiritual thing and it seems to me that those strong words of condemnation for perverse spiritual partnerships could be picked up in things like 2 Corinthians 6 and you might like to turn to 2 Corinthians 6 and just have a look at the strong words that are used there about partnerships that God says this is not on you will be severely criticised for a partnership like this.

So 2 Corinthians 6 from verse 14 to 7 1 he says this do not be yoked together with unbelievers what do righteousness and wickedness have in common what fellowship can light have with darkness what harmony is there between Christ and Baal or Belial what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols for we are the temple of the living God as God has said I will live with them and walk among them and I will be their God and they will be my people therefore come out and be separate says the Lord and this is a quote from the Old Testament touch not the unclean thing I will receive you I will be a father to you you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord God says the Lord Almighty since we have these promises dear friends let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit perfecting holiness out of reverence for God so he says there are strong words for those who try to combine what God says can't be combined now what is it that is being criticised and of course preachers can have a field day with this because they can pick on any particular hobby horse they have and say that's the bit that

God is condemning so we have to really be careful what is it and we touched on this the other day I don't think for example he's saying don't be in business with somebody who's not a Christian because otherwise you'd just be having to live in a Christian bubble and I don't think he's talking about that I think one thing that we can be sure about if we go to 2 Corinthians 11 and I think Paul is talking about the same thing as he writes to the church in Corinth and he says what is the message that you are associating yourselves with and he talks in 2 Corinthians 11 verse 4 he says if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the one we preached or you receive a different spirit from the one you received or a different gospel from the one you accepted that's a problem so I certainly think that his target and these strong words are directed to if you have the gospel if you have Jesus if you have the

[31:40] Holy Spirit and you try to link that up undiscerning with a different Jesus a different gospel and therefore a different spirit he says that's ridiculous you can't do that and I think Paul in 2 Corinthians has in mind teachers that have come along and tried to mix up what Paul has said with what they're saying and he says in verse 13 listen to how strong this is such men are false apostles deceitful workmen masquerading as apostles of Christ and no wonder for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light so it's not surprising then if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness their end will be what their actions deserve so I think at least we could say that in the New Testament there are these really strong words about the folly of trying to mix up the gospel with something that is not the gospel and then this then raises all sorts of issues doesn't it how you apply that so if somebody doesn't agree with absolutely every point of you know that we've got right in inverted commas does that mean that we're entitled to call them false prophets and that we're entitled to call them servants of

Satan and entitled to denounce them and I don't think that would be quite right because not all points of doctrine are equally vital but some are vital and some are non negotiable so I put this is my take on this that as a church we have a set of sentences that we've agreed to when we joined the fellowship of independent evangelical churches which will say something like this that we believe in God as sovereign creator that we believe in God as Trinity that we believe in the person and work of Christ as being son of God and son of man we believe in substitutionary atonement by the cross that on the cross he bore our sins he suffered under the wrath of God that we are justified we're put right with God by faith alone in Christ alone that there needs to be the new birth you must be born again we believe in the future coming of

Christ we believe in the eternal new world and the eternal punishment for the unrepentant I mean those are sort of basic points of the message which is the gospel and I think Paul would strongly

say if you're trying to mix up with people who don't believe that Jesus is the son of God you know woe to you if you're trying to align yourselves with people who don't believe that Jesus died on the cross bearing our sins under the wrath of God then you know this is then woe to you I'm sorry it's strong but I mean it to the end of

Jehoshaphat and it says of him Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the city of David now I'm not sure whether I would you like to put a tick there would you like to see a tick next to that one buried in the city of David you're not sure are you I think this is a positive because what was the alternative of the other kings of the north what happened to them dogs at them yes do you remember that dogs lick their blood they didn't get buried they got eaten by wild animals so I think this is a positive and his son followed him would you say that was a positive thing if your son can follow you I think in the book of kings this is a positive because the alternative is that the whole lot were wiped out so Baasha his dynasty was wiped out and actually

Ahab's dynasty is going to get wiped out in a generation or two but have your son follow you is a positive so it's honourable to be buried with respect rather than eaten by dogs I didn't do the dogs picture and it's honourable to be laid in the city of David great place to be buried God's headquarters rather than in some forgotten field and it's good to be followed by one's own son as sort of fulfilment of God's good promises there so I think those are all good but I'm going to stand back from it from the point of view of the whole Bible and say and yet it's just a pity that he died because the idea of the king of God's kingdom is that he will reign forever and this is another candidate for that of whom you say okay he was good he had his limitations and he's not the [37:40] Messiah let's try the next king and the Bible history goes through it's like with Noah you think is he the Messiah because he saved the whole race really and then you find he gets drunk and you say oh no dud next please so here we have Jehoshaphat a good man had his limitations but he's not the forever king the forever king is the one that Peter speaks of in that same city many many years later and he says I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried and so was Jehoshaphat and his tomb is here to this day God promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ he promised a forever king he spoke of the resurrection of the

Christ that he was not abandoned to the grave nor did his body see decay and God has raised this Jesus to life which we say hallelujah that's great so we've looked at the this account of Jehoshaphat what people said about him what God said about him and I asked the question that I began with what will God say about us it's a serious question what will be said about us the book of Revelation says about the death of Christ's people blessed to those who die in the Lord for their deeds follow them so the things we've done in this life as a blessing will be remembered and taken into account and rewarded and there's a blessing in that that's a great text used at funerals it's a great promise here's a sinister assessment made by

Paul of two of his colleagues Hymenus and Alexander they made shipwreck they just messed it up completely and I've got no confidence that they are Christians that'd be a terrible thing wouldn't it Paul gives a warning to those who say they're Christians and carry on in envy and drunkenness and orgies and the like and he says I warn you as I warned you before that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom which is solemn isn't it and it does say how are we living what is the work of the spirit in us at the moment we know Jesus Christ is a great saviour we know we're called to follow him not just look on from a distance and take the promises from a distance but to be involved with him and that means a change in the way we live what about what Paul could say actually of himself at a senior age to say

I fought the good fight I finished the race there is now laid up for me a crown of righteousness in glory that would be a great thing to have said for God to say even to be able to say of oneself is what Paul said you know I've managed that you know I remember there was a time when we had our little children and you think mercifully I can't remember a lot of it but you think it's so demanding having little children they keep you awake all night and you think I don't know whether I'm going to be a good father to these children I don't know how it will all turn out and at some point in their late teens you think actually we've managed that they haven't come out too bad you know you never stop worrying about your children but there comes a point where you say well I have done that bit

and Paul looks back on a much longer life and he says well you know I had all sorts of temptations in front of me

I could have gone off the rails in all sorts of ways I could have abandoned my post I could have stopped being a minister of the gospel but I've come to this point now and I'm nearly at the end and by God's grace I fought it I fought the good fight I finished the race I've done that it would be great to be able to look back and say that here's a negative one of people of whom Jesus himself says they heard the word they rejoiced to hear it and they fell away as quickly as they'd heard it they were really enthusiastic and then boom you never saw them again or the man in the parable of the talents who said to his master you've given me five talents and I've gained five more you gave me certain spiritual privileges and opportunities I've put them to work I've invested time money energy prayer and look something good has come of this great thing to be able to say flip side of it the seed grew but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choked the word that it became unfruitful that's one for older people so you say young people they respond quickly and then they forget quickly see that's all about young people this one's about older people isn't it they hear the word but the cares of this world the cares of this world the legitimate cares you know money family working hours shift work all this stuff the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches comes in and chokes the word so it becomes unfruitful or what about

[44:10] Tabitha great thing to say of her no she never got choked the word wasn't choked and she stayed the course and she was always doing good and helping the poor and then the long version of that text end of life the master says good and faithful servant well done enter into the joy of your Lord that's the question what will be said about us we're going to sing together let's sing about fighting on