

The beginning of the end

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[0 : 00] The Christian message is good news.! The Christian message includes the positive possibility of change, of change for the better.

! The Christian gospel is good news about new life.! The Apostle Paul said it's not a ministration of death but a ministry of life.

The Christian gospel brings about a better, new situation. It actually brings to each person a new centre.

So the person is no longer centred on themselves but their centre is Jesus Christ. They're centred outside themselves in Christ.

The Christian message is about help that does not come from us but comes from God who is beyond us and above us.

[1 : 12] The Christian message brings hope. It brings hope into people's lives in this world and more importantly in the world to come.

Without God's good news we are left to human resources which offer at best by God's grace limited hope, limited in its depth.

Human resources can do some things but they can't go to the deepest need. Human resources can do some things but they don't last forever. Human resources can do some things but they don't give us a final meaning.

Only God does that. And in this chapter of the book of Kings we see what happens if you're left to human resources.

It's a rather sad chapter. And in some ways it is the beginning of the end for the kings of the north and south kingdom.

[2 : 32] So the story so far, I know not everybody will have known this story. We've been reading through the book of Kings all the way through.

We've got to chapter 14. We saw the glory of Solomon which was fantastic. The high point of the kingdom, the golden age of the kingdom of God.

Solomon in all his glory. He built the temple, the house of God. He ruled the nations. He was the king of kings and lord of lords. People came to worship him from distant places.

That was his glory. He built the temple. There's the temple on the screen. And the temple was in Jerusalem in the south there.

One kingdom. One house of God. But then we saw that very quickly there was a split between when Solomon had died, Rehoboam his son and a newcomer, Jeroboam.

[3 : 41] Jeroboam in the end took this northern kingdom and Rehoboam was left with the southern kingdom here. Here are the two kings, Jeroboam and Rehoboam.

You'll recognize them. Jeroboam, in order to get political stability for the north, he made a new form of religion.

He made, it was like the real thing, but he'd made it. And he made priests and he made altars and sacrifices and times of sacrifices.

And worst of all, he made gods, the two calf idols. One in the north in Dan and one in the south in Bethel.

And this move by Jeroboam goes down in history as being the most awful, terrible mistake and indeed a sin, which gets stuck there in the history of God's people and which they never managed to escape from.

[4 : 58] At least the people in the north didn't. So we begin a downward path. For the northern kingdom, it's a rapid downward path. For the southern kingdom, it lasts longer, but it's still a downward path.

And we could ask this question, as we go through this, as we see sin taking hold, as we see God saying this is not right, do we see a single person praying?

Do we see a single person repenting? Repenting. Repenting means to turn round, to say, I was wrong. I've got that wrong. I'm going in the wrong direction.

I need to reverse course. I don't know whether you have that on your sat nav. Our sat nav is very, very polite. And it says something like, instead of saying, you stupid fool, why have you gone that way?

It says, she says something like, please perform a U-turn as soon as it is safe to do so. Please perform a U-turn as soon as it is safe to do so.

[6 : 07] And then she does give up after a while. How many people in this story perform a U-turn as soon as it is safe to do so?

Just keep your eye open and see. And we could ask the question, what, if anything, what factors can possibly reverse this downward trend?

And I can tell you that the only thing that's going to be any use in this is God's grace and God's promise.

And we'll see that coming into play. It's not the main factor in this chapter, but it is there. God's grace is when he does good things to people who don't deserve it, haven't earned it, but he does good to them anyway.

And his promise is something that he said, this is what I will do. And there are some places where God's promise is so obstinate that he says, this is what I will do.

[7 : 12] This is how I will bless. And I will not let the sins of my people stop me doing it. When you've got hold of that bit of the promise, you've really got hold of something that provides one rock in a turbulent place, one beam of light in a dark place.

So let's follow through the story. So we're in 1 Kings chapter 14. Now, our pronunciation, I don't know how you pronounce these Hebrew words, I'll have a go.

So, at this time, Abijah, son of Jeroboam, became ill. And Jeroboam, this is King Jeroboam, you understand, said to his wife, go disguise yourself so you won't be recognized as the wife of Jeroboam.

So, Jeroboam's son is ill. Not necessarily a baby. It could be a young man, maybe anything up to 40 years old. But, of course, the issue being that the king's son is a key person because the king's son is the key to the succession.

So, the king's son is ill. And he sends his wife. So, there she is. She's disguised. She has a green hat so that she wouldn't be recognized. He says, go to the prophet in the south.

[8 : 36] Go to Shiloh. Ahijah the prophet is there, the one who told me I would be king over this people. Take ten loaves of bread with you, some cakes and a jar of honey and go to him.

So, there's her shopping basket of bread and cakes and honey. So, she takes these as a sort of gift to get on the right side of the prophet. And so, Jeroboam's wife did what he said and went to Ahijah's house in Shiloh.

Now, there's the old prophet. Ahijah could not see. So, it wasn't really any point in her disguising herself anyway, was there? If you think about it. Ahijah could not see.

His sight was gone because of his age. However, the Lord had told Ahijah, verse 5, Jeroboam's wife is coming to ask you about her son, for he is ill.

And you are to give her such and such an answer. When she arrives, she'll pretend to be someone else. So, the word of the Lord steps in and comes to Ahijah and prepares him for what's going to happen and tells him what to say.

[9 : 42] And verse 6, when Ahijah heard the voice of her feet, that's literally what it says, at the door. He says, come in, wife of Jeroboam.

Why this pretense? So, in she comes. And he speaks to her. And this is what he says.

We'll come back to the details of it in a moment. But this is what he says. I have been sent to you with bad news.

Go tell Jeroboam, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says. I raised you up from among the people and made you a leader over my people, Israel.

So on and so on. To verse 12. Go back home. When you set foot in your city, the boy will die. All Israel will mourn for him and bury him.

[10:49] He is the only one belonging to Jeroboam who will be buried. Because he is the only one in the house of Jeroboam in whom the Lord, the God of Israel, has found anything good.

A terrible thing to say. So he gives a long prophecy, which we'll look at in a moment. But the key point for Mrs. Jeroboam is her son will die.

She goes home. She goes home. And at the sound of her feet entering, verse 17, Jeroboam's wife got up, left and went to Terza.

As soon as she stepped over the threshold of the house, the boy died. So there's a thing going on about feet and a thing going on about doors.

But anyway. As soon as her feet cross the threshold of the door, the boy died. They buried him and all Israel mourned for him as the Lord had said through his servant, the prophet Ahijah.

[11:54] So it forms a sort of there and back. And the poor boy, young man dies. So that's the outline of the first part of this text.

So we'll ponder that one in a minute. There's his life support system showing he's dead. So let's think about this bit first of all.

How on earth do they think the Lord will not see through the disguise? That's one question.

Do you not find, does that find you as, doesn't that not strike you as a strange plan? I want you to go and get a healing word from God.

And I want you to try and trick him by disguising yourself because we're here in the northern kingdom. You know, I had to make a few idols and so on.

[12:53] I got a bit of a telling off about that. But if you go and disguise yourself, God won't know about that bit. And he'll heal you.

Or he'll heal our son. It does not strike you as the strangest thing that Jeroboam could go and ask for his son to be brought back from death or almost death.

But to think he could fool the prophet and therefore fool God by his wife wearing a disguise. So I just can't quite imagine what sort of God they think God is.

Do they think he can't see anything? Do they think he's so easily fooled? The Bible says, Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight.

Everything is laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Let's not any of us, as we gather together in a Christian assembly this morning, have the slightest illusion, but that God sees us through and through.

[14:11] He knows what's in our heart. He knows what's in our heart and the depth of what's in our heart better than we do ourselves. So let's not come to God with any pretense.

You weren't thinking of doing that, were you? You weren't thinking of coming to God pretending that you're someone that you're not. Pretending that you're something that you're not.

I'll tell you exactly who you are. You're a sinner who needs the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse you before you can come anywhere near God.

And I hope you don't think you're anything other than that, because that would be a pretense.

Second question.

What possesses them to think that God will give a healing word when they have despised his clear word? Chapter before.

[15:10] This is when the man of God came and denounced the altar that Jeroboam had set up.

Do you remember? Altar, altar, priests will be burned on you. Jeroboam could not be clearer about the wrongness of these calves, these idols.

He could not, God could not have been clearer than that. In the previous chapter. He knows what God's word says perfectly well. And in the previous chapter, you remember he stretched out his hand to say, arrest that prophet.

His hand got paralyzed. He asked for prayer. The prophet prayed and his hand was restored immediately like that. He'd been on the end of a miraculous healing.

But he hadn't taken it to heart. He hadn't changed a single thing. God had turned back his hand, but he hadn't been prepared to turn his heart.

[16:20] And now he says, oh, this God whom I have insulted, taken no notice of, go down and ask him for a favor.

And don't do it in an honest way. Do it in a somewhat dishonest way. Disguise yourself. Disguise yourself. What possesses him to think he can treat God like that?

How could anybody think that you can hear what God says and hear what God says and refuse to do it and refuse to do it and refuse to do it and refuse to do it and then go to God and say, oh, please, can you answer this particular prayer?

I found it difficult to put an exact word on the perverseness of what Jeroboam and his wife are trying to do.

One word is presumption. Presumption means, I don't know, to go to God and assume that he will do something when you've got no right to assume that at all.

[17 : 58] And in this particular case, it's a healing. I think, well, let's see. Earlier on, he received a healing that he did not deserve.

He prayed for it. Maybe he thought, oh, God always does that. You know, you've just got to ask God. He'll always bail you out, no matter whether you take any notice of him or not.

How dare he think that? And I would not be so rude as to pin this on any of us, but I'm sure there are churches with people sitting in them who assume that God will bless them when they have not done what God says.

When they have refused and refused and rejected and rejected and taken no notice and just assume that that doesn't really matter to God at all.

And he'll just pat them on the head and say, well done, whatever you want, I'll answer your prayer.

There was a certain, I can't remember who said this, somebody will tell us who it was.

[19 : 15] God will forgive. That's his business. God always does that. You don't have to be serious about things. You don't have to turn. You don't have to realize that you're a lost sinner.

This is what this person is wrongly saying. Oh, God just forgives. It's easy. It isn't. Please don't go away from this meeting thinking, oh, God will just forgive any old how.

God will answer any old prayer. It doesn't matter how I treat him. It does. And here is an example of somebody who has refused and refused.

And when God says, and when they say, will you heal my son? God says, no, I won't. Do they think that God is the sort of God whose word can be brought into play when it's an emergency?

And that's the only time, you know, and God is perfectly happy with that. You know, it's just like an insurance policy that for 20 or 30 years, you never have to draw on the insurance policy.

[20 : 37] Then in emergency, a house, the tree falls on your house, you ring up the insurance and there it is. You only need it for that one in 20 year sort of event. God's word is not like that.

God's word is not just for emergencies. God isn't there saying, you know, in case of emergency, in the unlikely event of an emergency, pray.

God wants to be God of all our lives, all the time. He wants us to live under his word every moment, not just at the emergency times.

I don't know. They're fools, aren't they? Jeroboam and his wife. They're so foolish, thinking that they can deceive God, thinking that they can just get God to do what they want, even though they've taken no notice of him at all.

Well, I don't know. Let's look at what, let's look at this longer passage in the middle that, because this is a key passage that Ahijah says.

[21 : 51] So let's go back to this in verse 7. Longer version of what he says. Go tell Jeroboam, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel says. I raised you up from among the people.

I made you a leader over my people, Israel. I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you. But you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes.

You have done more evil than all who lived before you. You have made for yourself other gods, idols made of metal. You have provoked me to anger and thrust me behind your back.

Because of this, I am going to bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every last male in Israel. Let's just follow that bit. So, it came out rather small.

My spontaneous generosity. Jeroboam, you were a buildings manager. Jeroboam, you were a king. You never asked for it, but I gave that to you.

[22 : 57] That was my spontaneous generosity. I raised you up and made you a leader. Isn't that worth something? And I promised you that if you walked with me, I would walk with you.

It was a two-way thing in that sense. I wanted you to be responsive to me. I'd given you that. I wanted you to be appreciative to me. I wanted you to walk with me.

Keep my commands. Follow me with all your heart. Like King David did. It's not perfection. David made some serious mistakes. But his heart was in the right place. And what did you do? You insulted me. A bit like my insulting drawing. What did you do? Verse 9. You made other gods, idols made of metal. And what did you do?

You provoked me to anger. Now, I don't know. You're all very nice people. You would never provoke anybody to anger, would you? But you can imagine somebody provoking to anger. You could imagine little comments being made to annoy somebody.

[24 : 03] You could imagine things being done just to annoy somebody. Just to wind them up. Can you get the idea of that? And this is what God says.

What you have done, you have poked me. You have got at me. You have wounded me up. You have hassled me. You have irritated me. You have provoked me to anger.

And how did you do it? By those flipping calf things. Those idols made of metal.

And you pushed me behind your back. I was standing next to you. And it does say you pushed me. You pushed me behind your back. And I'm angry, says God.

The God of the Bible is a God who is capable of anger. He is not simply and only and solely a God of love. He is a God of holiness and anger.

[25 : 05] And this has made him angry. And he says, because of this, because of these calf things, he says, I am going to cut off from Jeroboam every last male in Israel.

Now, if you've got an authorised version in front of you, or if you find one at home, you will read the literal translation, which I think I would be too embarrassed to read, because it refers to how gentlemen go to the toilet different from ladies.

And that's what it refers to. It's a toilet way of describing. And the theme continues. He says, you lot, I'm going to get rid of every male.

I will cut off from Jeroboam every last male in Israel, slave or free. I will burn up the house of Jeroboam as one burns dung. That's how I'm going to treat you guys.

You provoke me to anger. You are a pile of. Well, I've drawn some of it. I put four stars. You can fill in the stars. You could put D-U-N-G, or you could put something else in there.

[26 : 17] But he says, that's what you guys are. That's why I think of the way you have behaved.

That's what you're a pile of. And I'm going to do what you do with that stuff, which is to sweep it out and burn it up.

And God is so angry about this. He says, I will burn up the house of Jeroboam as one burns dung until it's all gone. And then he says about their burial or lack of it, dogs will eat those belonging to Jeroboam who die in the city.

The birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country. The Lord has spoken. It is a disgraceful end. And God says, I'm so angry about this.

You have wounded me up so much with this. And Mrs. Jeroboam, as for you, go back home.

When you set foot in your city, the boy will die. All Israel will mourn for him and bury him. He is the only one belonging to Jeroboam who will be buried, because he is the only one in the house of Jeroboam in whom the Lord, the God of Israel, has found anything good.

[27 : 42] He will raise up somewhere. I've got that. Let's come back to that in a moment. And God says, I'll raise up another king. And he'll cut off your family.

There'll be an assassination. So it won't be a dynasty where son follows son follows father. He'll be cut off and we'll start again with another royal line.

And this is it. This is the day. Now. Verse 14. And what happens to the king will reflect on what happens to the people.

The Lord will strike Israel so that it will be like a reed swaying in the water. He'll uproot Israel from this good land that he gave to their forefathers.

Scatter them beyond the river. Because they provoked the Lord to anger by their gods and their idols. And he'll give Israel up because of the sins Jeroboam has committed.

[28 : 42] And the sins he caused Israel to sin. Do you get the idea? It's a sin. They'll go back almost like going to Egypt. They'll go across the river. Actually it'll be the other direction. But it's like going back into captivity.

It's salvation unwinding. Because what God did for Israel was he brought them out of slavery. Out of a foreign land. Across water. To a safe home.

And God says, if you don't walk with me I'll undo that. I'll send you back across the water. Back into slavery again. And what was it that was the cause?

It was those flipping calf idols. That's the sin that Jeroboam sinned with. That became a sin. That Israel sinned.

Now this is programmatic now for the rest of the book. We'll find this following through. Of all of Jeroboam's years.

[29 : 44] His 22 years. What is actually recorded for us? Now interesting. Not his popularity. Because I think he must have been a very popular man.

I think people thought he was great. A lot of people went to these calf idols. They were very, very popular. He built stuff. But it's not his building success.

And how old would he have been when he died? I haven't done the maths. He reigned for 22 years. Which is pretty good. But what the Bible says is.

Who or what was he worshipping? Who or what was he worshipping? And I could ask the same question about us.

This is how God sees it. God does not say. Well look at all the people in this congregation. Some of them have got PhDs. Some of them have achieved things in their lives.

[30 : 50] Some of them have earned thousands of pounds. Some of them. Does God rank it in that order? People who earn the most money at the top. People with the best education at the top.

Does God do that? No. What he says is. What I'm interested in is. Who or what you worship. Not interested in your income. Not interested in your nationality.

I'm interested in who or what you worship. And who do you worship?

Who do you give your life to? Who do you bow down and say. This is my all. This is my everything. This is what I am most concerned about in my life. This is my all. This is my all. In the New Testament.

[31 : 49] The Apostle John writes to churches and says. Keep yourselves from idols. God asks us that question.

Who or what do you serve? Really. Not just what you say. But really. What is your life given to? Who is your life given to? Who is your life given to? And interesting to look at Mrs. Jeroboam. So let's go back to Mrs. Jeroboam.

What. Have you noticed what she says? Have you noticed what she says? What does she say? What does Mrs. Jeroboam say?

What does Mrs. Jeroboam say? Nothing. Nothing. Which is in fact. Is one of the striking things of the chapter. Ahijah says all this to her.

[32 : 59] Jeroboam says all this to her. She. With her disguise. Oh. Son's going to die. Nothing.

She doesn't say anything. In the Bible. When God warns. It's really an invitation to a dialogue. Do you remember when Jonah went to Nineveh and says 40 more days and the city will be overthrown?

You know they didn't go. Oh 40 more days. Write that on the calendar. 40 more days. Yeah. Very good. Okay. What did they do? What did they do?

They repented. They said to God. This is awful. We need to do something about this. What are we to do? Repent.

We repent. What does Mrs. Jeroboam do? Absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing.

[33 : 58] What does she say to God? Absolutely nothing. What does she try and put right? Absolutely nothing. Nothing. Now is that faith? No.

I don't know what it is. There was an opportunity there for her. She could have said, so she could have come to Mr. Jeroboam. Oh, you've realized who I am.

What? Really? What can we do? What can we do? Go back to Jeroboam. We've got to repent.

Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. Don't.

If God speaks to you, don't just say nothing. Talk to him about it. That's what he wants. He's trying to draw each of us into that relationship and dialogue.

Perhaps you've come along for the first time, and you've come because you're interested in finding out about God. He's speaking to you. You speak back to him.

[35 : 04] Ask him. I didn't quite understand what that bloke was on about this morning, but I'd like to. Please tell me more. But don't do the Jeroboam thing of just doing nothing.

Jeroboam's son. There he is, mourned with all the people. Mourning. How old was he? Perhaps he was under 40. He was buried and mourned. There was something good. I don't know what good was it. What was the good that God found in him?

Did he pray to the Lord, perhaps? Perhaps the Jewish tradition is that when he was supervising the border crossing to people go onwards to Jerusalem, that he gave the border guards the night off so that the pilgrims could go through to Jerusalem.

I mean, that's just a Jewish tradition. It doesn't say it here, but it would have been great if he had, wouldn't it? That would have been a fantastic thing. Just one thing. Perhaps he couldn't do much more than that, but he wanted to do something for the Lord rather than those calf idols.

Whatever it was that he did, God saw it. God responded. And you might say, well, I don't think much of this response because he still died.

[36 : 26] The positive thing was that he got a decent burial and people mourned over him. Well, okay. Actually, we're all going to die. Okay. God saw something and God responded positively.

And I want to say that God does see positive things that people do. And maybe you're thinking, I've got something I could do for the Lord.

Perhaps I can't do very much. I could do something. Well, I would say do it. Because it would be great on the last day for God to say, I saw you do that. I saw that cup of cold water given to somebody because they're a Christian.

I saw that kind deed you did for me. It's always worth doing those things that the Lord only perhaps will see.

It's always worth turning back to the Lord because he notices. You know the story of God as the waiting father looking for his son to return. And while his son is still a long way off, the father sees and runs out to meet him.

[37 : 39] You turn back to God even if you're a long way off. God, it's a very undignified thing for a gentleman to do actually, especially a senior gentleman to run. But incompatible with the orderly nature of a gentleman, I think is the quote.

But God does run. And he says, I'm like that father. You just turn back even if you're a long way off. I'll run out to meet you. That's rather lovely, isn't it?

Let's go now to the southern kingdom. Verse 21. Rehoboam, son of Solomon, was king of Judah.

He was 41 years old when he became king. He reigned for 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 Na'amah. She was an Ammonite. What was his mother's name?

Na'amah. And what nationality was she? Ammonite. Okay, just to make sure you don't miss that point. It's an interesting point for mums, actually. Because it shows how influential a mum can be on her child.

[38 : 47] Because this is brought, you might see it again. So this is Rehoboam. This is the city where the Lord put his name. I put his name in Hebrew over the top of the city.

God says, I'm there. That's my special place. God's headquarters on earth in the Old Testament. And then verse 22.

Judah, the southern kingdom. Judah did evil in the eyes of the Lord. By the sins they committed, they stirred up his jealous anger more than their fathers had done.

They set up for themselves high places and Asherah poles. So I don't know what an Asherah pole is. It's some sort of tree thing that they worship under every high hill and every spreading tree.

And people worshipped that. You see, the southern kingdom. You'd think north versus south. The northern kingdom get it all wrong. The southern kingdom, fantastic. But no, the northern kingdom get it wrong in their way.

[39 : 49] The southern kingdom, they get it wrong too. Slightly different way. But they still get it wrong. They, although they've got, oh yeah, we've got Jerusalem. We've got the temple. We worship the Lord.

But they also add to that, this worship under green trees and on high places.

There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land. The word is holy one. It must be sarcastic, mustn't it?

Male shrine prostitutes. What is going on there? What is going on there? The people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations that the Lord had driven out before the Israelites.

They have become like Canaanites. They do the Canaanite things. So they have, you know, it's very distasteful, isn't it? They must have some sort of sex for sale in the name of the Lord thing going on, in the name of religion.

[41 : 06] It is called detestable. And in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak, king of Egypt, attacked Jerusalem.

He carried off the treasures of the temple of the Lord and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including all the gold shields that Solomon made. Do you remember those gold shields? We saw them a few weeks ago.

Fantastic gold shields. And now they're all taken away and replaced by plastic ones from Pound Saver. Well, actually, not plastic ones. They're bronze ones.

He took everything and made all the gold, including all the gold shields that Solomon had made. So King Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them and signed these to the commanders of the guard on duty at the entrance to the royal palace.

Verse 28. Whenever the king went to the Lord's temple, the guards bore the shields and afterwards they returned them to the guard room. Count them in, boys, because that's all we've got.

[42 : 04] So here's Rehoboam. As for the other events of Rehoboam's life and all that they did, they're written down in the book of the affairs of the kings of Judah.

Egypt figures in this downward story as well. In this case, King Shishak, the king of Egypt, comes up, takes the treasure from the temple and then goes back.

It's a little bit of a forewarning, isn't it? One day, he won't just take treasure, he'll take people. And it'll all go terribly wrong. The Egyptians remove bit by bit the glory of the southern kingdom.

It's a foretaste of exile. 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.

And Rehoboam rested with his fathers 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.

[43 : 16] What was his mother's name? Naamah. And what nationality was she? You see, notice it's put there twice. As if to say, you know, here's the issue.

I always said that the faith of the parents would have a big influence on the children.

And here's where, in a sense, it's gone wrong that this guy, his mother was an Ammonite. They don't worship the Lord. They have their own idols. And that got into him at an early age and it never left him.

I would be far from saying that people are permanently conditioned by every single thing that a mother has said. Far from saying that. I'm saying that it is saying mums have a great influence. Mums have a very special role in the upbringing of children. And particularly here spiritually. Mums have a privileged place. You can do, mums, you have the opportunity to bless your children in a way that no one else has.

[44 : 27] So I'll just make that point as we go past. Here are the two kingdoms in descent, in decline. We in the West are brought up with this myth of progress, aren't we?

We're brought up with this idea that things always get better. And there's always development. And evolution fits in with this. Because we're always going on to things that are bigger and better and higher and greater. But actually the Bible says that is not the inevitable path of humankind at all. Without God's grace humankind descends. And here is a fall. You have one king who is no good in the north. You have his son who is no good in the north.

And they are assassinated. And you get another king who is no good in the north. Did no one cry out for help? Did no one pray? Did no one ask for the Lord to help?

The only good person in the story is the Lord, isn't it? And just think how patient God was. Because you might say that the book of Kings is a sort of 400 year story of sin and misery and decline and grimness.

[45 : 37] But actually you could turn that on its head and say it's a story of 400 years of God being patient and giving people another chance. And another chance and another chance.

And being patient and warning and giving people another chance. And giving people another chance. It's a story of patience and grace, it seems to me.

And if you go to the southern kingdom, you get, I can't remember which son's which now. So, Rehoboam, and his son is no good as well.

And then after that you get a son who's brilliant. Where did that come from? Well, I think it came from God. It says about the southern kingdom that God had chosen to put his name there and chosen to bless for the sake of David.

And that's one of those promises that God is saying. And I won't even let human sin stop that one. I will make sure David has a son.

[46 : 41] And I will make sure that his kingdom lasts forever and ever. And of course, the greatest example of this is the son of David whose birth we celebrate at Christmas.

The glorious, perfect son of David. Jesus the Messiah. Well, let's wrap it up. We've been looking at this kingdom where it's all gone wrong because people have not taken God at his word.

The final kingdom, the Jesus kingdom, is a kingdom where God still insists on relating to us by his word. Jesus says, if you love me, you will obey what I command.

He still says, I want you to take seriously what I say. Jesus says in Luke 6.46, why do you call me Lord, Lord, but you don't do what I tell you. He still wants us to be obedient disciples.

In the chapters that we're looking at, you get this iconic sin of Jeroboam. And his sin goes on, echoing down through the generations. And they continue in the sin of Jeroboam.

[47 : 51] And they continue in the sin of Jeroboam. And in the southern kingdom, they didn't remove the high places. And the next lot didn't remove the high places. But in the kingdom of Jesus, we have our king.

And his effect echoes on through the generations. Not because of sin, but because of his obedience. Which blesses one generation after another.

The final kingdom has a clearer and stronger redemption. You notice that the son who died in 1 Kings 14. He died and was mourned.

And it was a sort of concession. And achieved nothing. But the son of David who died in the final kingdom.

Is a sinless son. It's not just that there's something good. It's everything good. He dies for the sins of others. As a substitute.

[48 : 57] And achieves everything. And I want to invite everybody here. To call on Jesus.

To be your Lord. And your Savior. And your King. And your God. And everything.

Let's sing together. Let's sing together. Thank you.