

Bad kings, worse kings

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[0:00] Let's pray. We thank you for the greatness of our God who came down from heaven, who died for us and!

help us to hear your word. we come to you, Lord, again on the promise that you made that those who meditate in your word shall be like trees planted by streams of water that don't wither but bear fruit in due season.

So help us just now as we come to your word. Amen. Please then turn to 1 Kings chapter 16, which is what Ruth so kindly and gravely read to us.

So you might ask the question, why do we look at this ancient text about a succession of these kings that's called evil kings, they're all said to be evil.

And why look at something like this in today's world? Today's world is a multi-faith world. It's a world of progress, advancement.

[1:18] It's a world, we might say, of high ethical standards. And in a world in which Christianity is seen as irrelevant and backward.

So why look at this obscure text? Well, I think the text has a great value for us. It teaches us a number of lessons. For example, it gives us in history form what the doctrine of sin teaches us about what the world is really like if God stands back and just lets it do its own thing.

It teaches us what the world is really like without God. It also makes the claim that the Lord God, the God of the Hebrew Bible and the God and Father of Jesus Christ, is the only God.

There is one God who made the world, who is the God of the Scriptures, and the God of the Scriptures, is the only God of the Scriptures, is the only God of the Scriptures.

And to follow any other God is a recipe for disaster. It also makes comments about what I refer to as progress.

[2:41] Progress is far from inevitable. By God's grace, there is such a thing as progress. And God said to the human race to multiply and have dominion over the world and expand and fill it.

And by God's grace, that does go on. But it is by no means true that if you just leave people to themselves, they get better and better. In fact, this text shows us the opposite. And it shows us how this works out in terms of relationships with God and how it works out in society.

And in some ways, it's an unwelcome text because it sort of pushes our noses into the realities of sin and evil.

That's what it does. We're face to face with sin and evil and the fact that God does know right from wrong and God is angry with what is wrong.

So here's an illustration. I saw this on the television the other day. Some school children washed their hands and then the teacher said, Are your hands nice and clean?

[3:55] They said, Yes, our hands are nice and clean. They said, Okay, well, put your hands in this Petri dish. Petri dish is a little dish with a special jelly stuff that germs can feed on.

So they just put their fingers onto that just once. And then you leave it to cook for a while. And you go back later and you find loads of germs that have grown into growths of strange colors and shapes.

And you think, Well, I never knew all those germs were on my hands. Didn't feel that they were there. Couldn't see them. And I think that's a reasonable illustration of what God says about evil. That not in our hands but in our hearts there is nasty stuff. If it's given the opportunity to grow, it could grow into very nasty stuff.

I'll say a bit more about that in due course. But Jesus says that human beings are evil.

[5:09] I've got a quote which I hope will come up in a moment on that. But it's a tough thing. It's very countercultural because we like to say, Oh no, people have a problem with self-esteem.

We need to tell them how good they are and how brilliant they are and how clever they are. And those things may be true in a sense. But God says you haven't understood yourself until you've realized you're a sinner.

And there is sin in your heart. And that sin is the same sort of sin that's in every heart. And your sin needs forgiving as much as anybody else's does.

That's a Christian truth. And it may be an unpalatable one. And it may be one that you've not actually grappled with personally. But let's see if this text will help us then.

So let's look. It's history. The next chapters tell us the story of the North Kingdom, Israel, and the Southern Kingdom, Judah. So the history goes to the king, King Solomon. The Northern Kingdom, which we were reading about, worships golden calves.

[6:14] They were set up in two sanctuaries. The Southern Kingdom worships the Lord but keeps the pagan high places. The Northern Kingdom has seven kings up to chapter 17 where Elijah comes in.

So let's just fill that out. So seven kings. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. The South has three kings which pop up there of which Asa is referenced all the way through here.

Because he has a long reign. And the other kings come in at year number this and year number that of Asa's reign. So looking at the seven northern kings. Click, click, click.

There's the southern kings. Forget them. So number one was Jeroboam, which we looked at the other day. He was the one who set up the golden calves, saying about these golden calves, these are the gods that brought you out of Egypt.

So he's really saying, he's latching into the Hebrew history. The Lord brought his people out of Egypt. But they're setting up the golden calves, saying, well, this is, these calves, that's the Lord.

[7:28] Which is breaking the commandment, which says, you shall not make an image of the Lord and worship using that visual image. So those are the golden calves, and those are the people who worship them.

And Jeroboam sets this thing in motion. And it's referred to as the sin of Jeroboam. And we go on through Nadab, who reigns for two years, and Ba'ashah, who reigns for 24 years.

Click, go back. I've done them in different colors, because this dynasty comes to an end. Father, son, then they all get wiped out.

And then you get another dynasty, Ba'ashah and Ela. And they get wiped out. And then you get Zimri, who's just king for seven days.

Hardly got a chance to change his Facebook status, I would think, in seven days. And Omri, who reigned for 12 years. And then, and Tibney, they were in a rival, they were, there was a civil war.

[8:48] If you do the maths, it looks as though there was a civil war for about four years. So he pops in there. And followed by Ahab, who reigns for 22 years.

And by the time we get to Ahab, things have got so bad that God intervenes. And he intervenes by sending Elijah the prophet. And when Elijah the prophet comes, things really get exciting.

So that's an exciting chapter. But we're in the boring chapter at the moment. And it's boring because sin is boring. It doesn't enlighten you. It doesn't excite you. It doesn't elevate you.

It's just awful. And that's the chapter that we're in. So some features of the text. Feature number one, the reality of evil.

Verse 1534. This is about Ba'ashah. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, walking in the ways of Jeroboam and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit.

[9:53] He did evil. We notice the presence of the word evil in that text. Chapter 16, verse 7. The word of the Lord came to the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, to Ba'ashah and his house, because of all the evil he had done in the eyes of the Lord.

Notice that text says the same thing. He did evil. Chapter 16, verse 19, about Zimri, who only reigned for seven days.

It says in verse 19, he died because of the sins he had committed, doing evil in the eyes of the Lord and walking in the ways of Jeroboam and in all the sin he had committed and caused Israel to sin.

He did evil. Verse 25, this is about Omri. Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord. 1630.

Ahab, son of Omri, did evil in the eyes of the Lord. So it's the text keeps on saying, what do you make of these kings?

[11:10] Answer, they did evil. They did evil. So my first point is that text says there is a reality of evil.

There is such a thing as evil. The world that we live in, the BBC world, which would assume that evolution sort of answers every question and is the reason for everything.

And if you're at all intelligent, you couldn't help but believe that that's the answer to everything, has no answer to the presence of evil. How can there be a definition of evil in an evolutionary world where dog eats dog, the survival of the fittest, if you're stronger and better and you hit somebody on the head harder than somebody else does, then that's progress, isn't it?

That's what evolution is about. But the Bible says, well, that can't be the answer. Because everybody knows there's right and wrong.

And the Bible says there is evil. It's wrong. It should not be. It's bad. And let me also say that the kings that are referred to as doing evil, they're referred to from the point of view of the writer and from the point of view of the Lord, whose book it is.

[12:37] I don't think they thought they were doing evil. They thought golden calves, creative. Golden calves, popular.

Golden calves make sense. It's the point of worshipping where you can't see what you're worshipping. Golden calves, politically expedient because the followers go to worship the golden calves.

They don't risk going to our rivals down in the south to Jerusalem. They don't think it's evil. No, please bear in mind, this definition of evil is to do with the golden calves.

It includes other things as well, but it's fundamentally to do with the golden calves. They thought it was shrewd and natural, the worship of the gods that seemed right to them.

But the Lord says it's evil. That's rather disturbing, isn't it? That's something that maybe many people think, well, that's obviously right. But the Lord could say, actually, that's terribly wrong.

[13:49] And Jesus says this. Here's the quote. He's actually talking about prayer. But he says, it's the bit where he says, if a son asks his father for a bread, will he give him a stone?

If he asks for, what does it say, a fish, will he give him a scorpion? Then Jesus says, if you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, da, da, da, da.

So he just throws that in in passing, but he takes it as an assumption. Human beings have evil in them. He says, you are evil. Which is a shocking thing to say.

Jesus said it, so argue with him. So in other words, chapter 16 is not a museum of how ancient people used to make a mess of things.

It is more like a selfie in which we look and we see, apart from God's grace, that's us. Apart from God's grace, I'd be doing that.

[14:58] The same germs that were on their hands. If my hands had been put into a different Petri dish, I would have done the same thing. Who's going to say they wouldn't have done the same thing?

So, number one, the reality of evil. Number two, decline as a direction of travel. So that's fairly easy to show. It's a history of sin. Chapter 1233 says, yeah, this is when Jeroboam set up the golden calves.

So we're there in the timeline of history. 1625 says, 1625, Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord and sinned more than all those before him.

So, it was bad. Jeroboam's sin is an iconically bad thing to do. It is going the wrong way, taking a terribly wrong step.

But then Omri sinned more. 1625, there's Omri. And then 1630, the word that I missed out about Ahab, he did more evil than Omri.

[16:13] So, it gets even worse. And so, this is one of the features of the text. It's a decline. It's going down like that. So, this shows us not only there is the reality of such a thing as evil, but there are degrees of sin and evil.

In other words, you know, there's bad and worse and worst. And it's all evil, but there's degrees of it. And if by God's grace, you've never murdered anybody or committed adultery or stolen, then I would suggest, rather than saying, what a good person I am, you'd be better to say, thank God for keeping me back.

Thank God for delivering me. Thank God for not leading me into temptation. It's only by God's grace that we are where we are.

And as I said earlier, it's a sort of historical example to contradict the idea that things always get better. Things definitely can get worse.

And here's an example of it. So, this should now be number three. Features of text number three, the obstinacy of idol worship. So, this is just another obvious comment. It started off with the ways of Jeroboam.

[17:39] There's your timeline again, worshipping the calf idols. And Jeroboam continues to worship the calf idols all the way through his reign.

And Nadab does the same, 1526. 1526. 1526. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, walking in the ways of his father and in his sin, which he caused Israel to commit.

So, he did the same thing. And Ba'ashah 1626. And Baasha, 16.2, he walked in the ways of Jeroboam and caused my people Israel to sin.

And Baasha and Elah who followed him, 16.14, they continued as well. It says, they, that should be 13, shouldn't it? They provoked the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger by their worthless idols.

They did the same thing. And Zimri, even though he was only on the throne for seven days, he's condemned for doing the same thing. 19, he walked in the ways of Jeroboam and in the sin he had committed.

[18:45] And Omri did the same thing. 16, what about reference? 26. He walked in the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and in his sin which he caused Israel to commit.

So there's a, there's a frightening consistency. They just stuck to that idol worship.

God spoke against it again and again, but they just said, whatever. Idols, good, very successful.

Look at the amount of money we make in the gift shop. I mean, how can that be wrong? Look at the way we stay together as a nation. I mean, how can that be wrong?

So here is something about the obstinacy, the stubbornness, the way that it's in the human heart. Although God says, don't do that.

[19:45] I say, I'm going to do that. The sort of stubbornness, hardness, obstinacy is part of the human condition.

It's certainly here. In many ways, if a head of state put a measure in operation, they thought, this is a grand idea.

Well, you know, you know what will happen in our political system. The next government would be elected on saying, we'll get rid of that, that old-fashioned, you know, whatever, just say this is wrong-headed and we'll change everything and make the world better.

For something to stay in place for generation after generation, ruler after ruler, says something. And they obstinately stuck to idol worship.

Nobody questioned it at all. Don't have any questions being asked in the Houses of Parliament there in Tirza. Not that they had Houses of Parliament. They did not turn.

[20:51] They did not turn. And the Bible is full of the instruction to turn.

In one way, you could say that is what history is about. That is why history contains the things it contains because it is God saying, turn.

Turn from worthless idols to the living God. Now, you see, if you have a version of Christianity which says, oh, you don't need to turn, you're doing fine.

You know, you're not a Christian, well, you're doing fine. Just God, all that God wants you to know is that he loves you. That is a very inadequate statement on God's behalf because what God does say is you must turn round.

It's called repentance and go the other way, not away from God but towards God. and that's why he says to the Thessalonians, this is what you did, you turned from worthless idols to the living God.

[22:12] And let me just say a word about this worthlessness, verse 14. The word is a worthless idol is hevel. It means like a vapor, a breath, you know, something that just disappears like in a puff of smoke.

He says, what have they done with God? They've, let me tell you about the word glory. The glory of the Lord, the word glory, kabod, means heaviness.

It doesn't mean brightness, it means heaviness, weightiness. And what they've done is they've taken all the heaviness out of God, the substantial nature of God and they've just turned it into just a sort of breath.

That's it, that's who God is, just a breath. No, nothing is of weight. Nothing is to be taken seriously. Nothing is of consequence. that's what human beings do to God. They take his glory and turn it into a puff of smoke.

[23:27] Right, if we may, let's go through, having made those general remarks, let's go through the history and I'll try and do it without lingering too long. So let's look at the history of Baasha, verse 33 through to 16, 7.

of course this is the first, there's quite a few things to say about it. Baasha, it, apparently you look it up, it means stinker.

You wonder, is that the name that his parents gave him or is it one of these things in the Bible where the writers have changed something slightly just to make it, just to tell you what they thought of it, you know, like Lord of the Flies and that sort of thing.

so anyway, literally, apparently, stinker, stinker means bad smell. He reigned for 24 years, says that in verse 33, he continued in the calf worship, as we've said, and let me pick up on this, verse 34, walking in the ways of Jeroboam and in his sin which he caused Israel to commit.

What it actually says is it literally repeats the word sin two or three times. He continued in the sin of Jeroboam which he caused Israel to sin. And that's what's said all the way through.

[24:49] It's a sin that people were made to sin. He suggested them a sin. This calf worship thing was a sin and they sinned by sinning this sin. Now the root idea of sin is to miss the mark and that might perhaps help us to get some idea of why God thinks this calf worship is so bad.

So Jeroboam is saying there's the calves, these are the gods that brought you out of Egypt and it misses. It sins. It misses the mark. So in terms of thanksgiving they did not glorify God or give him thanks.

They just missed doing that. Here's an illustration. So you think of somebody and you think oh I'll give them a really nice birthday present. Maybe somebody you love, somebody you care about. Maybe a child typically with a child. put a lot of effort into this present. You can't wait to see the smile on their face when they open it.

They're very young they'll be more interested in the wrapping paper than actually the present but anyway you give them this present and you wait for the smile and you wait for the thank you and they miss it out.

[26:07] They miss that and it can be very hurtful can't it? Well you know that meant a lot to me and God says you know look at all I've given you where's the thank you?

Don't thank those calf idols thank me sin is to miss or I thought of another example if you do tagging on Facebook so those of you who don't have Facebook just go to sleep for a moment you know you've got a picture of a family group or something like that on the seaside and you're going to tag somebody and say this is this is you know this is granny here she is and you actually instead you put the little box for the tag on the ice cream vendor who's standing in the background and which is mum which is gran no that's not gran that's just some random person who happened to be in the background you've missed this is this is who gran is not that person over there and this is what idolatry does it says who's the glorious God who's the great God who's made the world and given us everything and sent his son for us what that idol no way no no that's not who that's a that's a missing the mark that is this is God or

I once got rung up by somebody who was on the M25 looking for Gatwick and a person said I'm I've I started off from Brighton I've gone past where would you pass if you went that way turn off for Epsom and I'm now finding signs for the M11 where's Gatwick gone to which the awful answer was

you've passed it quite a long time ago what shall I do well you might as well go around again now you just missed missed the junction and this was to miss God to be living our lives and just completely miss God went right past maybe to deliberately miss maybe that gives us some ideas of why this is that sin is sin it's missing let's go on with Ba'ashah it's said that he that this evil verse 2 provokes

God to anger you walked in the ways of Jeroboam caused my people Israel to sin and provoked me to anger the living provokes God to anger by their sins it says let me just see this is verse 7 am I in verse 7 yeah I've gone down to verse 7 provoking him to anger by the things he did literally by the work of his hands people worship idols they're made just remember the calf idols are made out of gold they weren't made out of plastic they weren't cheap they were the best that those sculptors could do and the thing about idolatry is that it can be the best that people have they make an idol out of the best the best career the best qualifications the most amount of money the highest craftsmanship the nicest house all of those things can take the place of God and become idols but it says that God is provoked

Romans 2 5 says because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath the idea the idea of provocation that somebody is just quite patiently sitting there and you dig them in the ribs you could try this now it's just an experiment or put your finger in somebody's eye next to you and they say no thank you don't do that and then do it again nobody's trying this but in the end I feel sure that the person next to you would say look will you just stop it because you provoke them they might be very patient people but by the time you put your finger in their eye four or five times they would I'm sure they would react this is about God's patience he does not wipe out the southern kingdom immediately but he is provoked and as it says there in the

[31:08] New Testament human beings now as it were poke God in the eye and nothing happens and they poke him in the eye again and God says don't do that worship me don't attack me and then they poke God in the eye again God says no worship me don't attack me because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath wrath one day God will say I told you not to do that you are storing up wrath you say well nothing's happened but you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of wrath and let's say another thing about Baasha do you notice that in 16 verse 1 the word of the Lord came to Jehu and then in 16 verse 7 the word of the

Lord came through the prophet Jehu to Baasha the beginning and end of Baasha the description of his life is bracketed by the word of God the word of God the beginning and the end now you can imagine stories of kings you get these you know all sorts of stories of kings and kingdoms you could find them on the telly nowadays kings rise and fall and people get their heads chopped off and it just goes on and on and on for series after series in sort of like a soap opera style is it actually heading anywhere or is it just perpetuated to keep the story going and keep up the ratings is it going anywhere but this story you see it does it seems to be it might seem to be out of control but actually it isn't it isn't out of control there is a plan there is a final judge there is a final happy ending and this is all being moved towards that you know what

God has in mind so it won't be a happy ending for everybody but it will be a happy ending and it is showing that God is in charge of all this mess and how does how does the Lord participate in the unfolding drama answer he participates by sending his word which is an interesting feature because the text time and again says this so the Lord sends his word Baasha does his stuff the Lord sends his word and such and such happens well God that was according to God's word such and such happens well that fulfills God's word and one of the quiet participants in this drama is the Lord's word the

Lord still has his word the word for now is not anything to do with laying the foundations of Jericho or calf idols because I don't think many of us are worshipping calf idols but there is a word which says to everybody one day there will be judgment for our sins and now is the time to turn back to God through Jesus Christ to make peace with the king before he comes to judge Psalm 2 expresses it this way kiss the son lest he be angry and his anger flares up in a moment now is the kiss of allegiance now is the time to put our lives on the track of obeying Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour now is the time to get onto that track it's his word that says this so

I can ask the question how are you with the word of God we have his word in a written down form it doesn't mean it's a dead old word it's a living word how are you with that word if the word of God says something what do you say do you say maybe maybe not or if the word of God says something do you say okay whatever you say that's for me what's your relationship to God God's word remember the story that Jesus the wise man and the foolish man the one who built his house on the sand the one who built his house on the rock and the one who built his house on the sand his life just fell to pieces in the end one who built his house on the rock that stood firm and this both of them heard the word but one of them!

[36:36] to practice let's carry on and let me just say another couple of things about Ba'ashah this judgment comes to him verse seven because of all the evil he had done in the eyes of the Lord provoking him to anger by the things he did and becoming like the house of Jeroboam and also because he destroyed it did you notice that at the end of verse seven Ba'ashah is judged for destroying the entire house of Jeroboam and interestingly he did this according to the word of the!

and if you like to ponder that he was doing God's will and yet he was blamed for the violence with which he did it he is blameworthy for such wholesome violence because he destroyed the house of Jeroboam that is how I read it a little bit like Judas isn't it who it was foretold that he would commit the sin of handing Jesus over so it was foretold and yet he's blameworthy woe to that man by whom the son of man is betrayed so there's some deep things about God's sovereignty in the whole matter of evil apparently it is not an excuse to say oh God planned this evil so I couldn't help it apparently that is not an excuse accepting responsibility for our sins is essential to becoming a Christian so we're not allowed to say God made me do it it's an important turning point in life to say actually those things I did I was out of order I was wrong I need forgiveness for my sins let's move on to Ella and I'm just wondering whether I should get through all this material we'll carry on for a little bit Ella in verse 8 he reigned two years the army was besieging Gibethon and king Ella was drunk with Arza the man in charge of the palace and this chap Zimri plotted against him and came and it says he struck him down and killed him and then he became king so here is more of the way of evil works assassination treason murder 1612 says this was in accordance with the word of the Lord so God was sovereign over this but it was an evil act let's look at Zimri who plotted against his master I think we finished with Ella that was it Ella done Zimri who plotted against his master he reigned seven days interestingly that he gets almost as much almost as many words as Omri who reigned for how long was it 12 years but interestingly Zimri gets the same amount of space the army was besieging Gibbethon under Omri the army made Omri king and left the Philistine battle to make war against Zimri in the capital city so when they heard about this you see it in verse 17 so all the people at the battle fighting in the battle and they hear get a text which says hey Zimri's just assassinated King Ella and they say oh this is terrible right Omri you be king so they leave fighting the

Philistines get back home to get Zimri out of the way and when Zimri saw that the city was taken verse 18 he sets the place he goes into the presumably the sort of central secure area sets it on fire and he dies and it says this is the outworking of evil he died because of the sins he had committed doing evil in the eyes of the Lord and walking in the ways of Jeroboam and in the sin he had committed and had caused Israel to sin Zimri started a fire and burned himself just another terrible growth on the petri dish of evil isn't it fragmentation conflict instability suicide as it is here when God's people leave the battle with the enemy and make war on one another things have got to a bad state and acting as if our lives are our own to begin or not and to end as we please is not [42:12] God's way but you see all these things on this petri dish as it were let's look at Omri so it began with a half and half split verse 21 the people of Israel were split into two factions half supported Tibni and the other half supported Omri so that seems to be for about four years but in the end the stronger one wins Omri's followers prove stronger than those of Tibni son of Ginnath so Tibni died and Omri became king interesting that this is resolved simply by strength what you say might is right so it wasn't let's have a vote it wasn't which of these two potential leaders is more ethical or which is more trustworthy which is the best chap wasn't that it was just which one can knock the other

one on the head harder the one who is stronger that's what it says Omri's followers prove stronger he reigned 12 years he brought

Samaria which was a good move as far as I can that's referenced because it was a good move good place to buy property good investment but Omri too is notoriously evil he did evil in the eyes of the Lord and sin more than all of those before him calf thing all over again provoking God all over again and that's the end of the Omri story now it's interesting that he gets as many words as Zimri who reigned for seven days why is God not particularly interested in Omri why is it nothing there about his bank balance or the territory that he held and apparently it's not worth mentioning in God's assessment it's not worth mentioning the thing is who did you worship Omri when you had those people there what did you say to them about worshiping God or what you did to that was a disaster end of story

I wonder what God will say about us and it's an interesting and rather encouraging verse that Jesus spoke where he said that even a cup of cold water given by a disciple because another person is a disciple will not be forgotten it'll be rewarded that's interesting it's the opposite of Omri isn't it because with Omri huge swathes of his achievement are just written off rubbish nonsense pointless go away but with the Christian ah there was a cup of cold water there was a smile there was an encouraging word oh yeah write all that down yeah tears I'm going to keep those in a bottle yeah prayers yes interesting isn't it the things that God values and then we come on to Ahab and Ahab is totally awful we'll find out quite a lot more about him when we look at

Elijah he well it gets repetitive doesn't it he did more evil verse 30 in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him and it says he not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ephbaal king of the Sidonians so the sins of Jeroboam it says he considered them trivial and the wording there is when you look down on something and you say you know as if I'd be interested in that so this sin which the Bible has said that's awful that's a terrible sin that's awful sin he says oh call that sin well you know let me show you what sin is and it says three times doesn't it he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria no sorry began to serve

Baal and worship him an altar and a house he went in for Baal worship big time he also made an Asherah pole for worship and he says he did more to provoke the Lord to anger than all the kings of Israel before him and it's just a movement of sin isn't it from bad to worse to missing God from missing God to worshipping another God altogether because Baal is a different God we still live in a world which says always lead to God people say that don't they always lead to God we mustn't mix up tolerance with what am I trying to say relativism in today's in today's for Christians

[47:26] I think it's right for us to be tolerant to say we're Christians we don't expect the government to legislate that Christians are right and everybody else is wrong so we expect freedom to do what to do our worship and we expect freedom for other people to worship it doesn't mean we think they're right but we want them to be treated as human beings always don't lead to God and what else did we have oh this is the last bit about Hiel of Bethel rebuilding Jericho now you may or may not know that Jericho was the entrance city to the Canaanite empire that Joshua in the old days invaded because God said this is the promised land and the Canaanite empire is an evil empire and with

Ahab presumably with Ahab's permission this chap Hiel of Bethel rebuilds Jericho and so during this kingdom somebody starts to rebuild the Canaanite empire and it had been said in the time of Joshua whoever builds this is cursed because this is not God's way forward this is the terrible way backwards that was exactly what God wanted them to destroy and there was a curse cursed before the Lord as anyone who builds at the cost of their firstborn they will build the foundations and at the cost of their youngest they will build the gates and it says this is exactly what happened he laid his foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken by Joshua son of Nun so all these kings make such a terrible hash of it and God comes out he's the only person who comes out on top on this even though they sinned in such terrible ways

God was still ruling in Ahab's kingdom there was no fear of the Lord no respect for his word no reverence for his plans so I look into this chapter and thank you so much for your attention as we've been through it it shows us the reality of evil murder grabbing for power drunkenness betrayal

suicide might is right it's there the bible is a realistic book it says that's what evil is like and the root of evil is missing the worship of God that's what the root of evil is and the end result of evil is death and the pointless death of innocent children presumably if I understand the Jericho thing rightly I don't think there's a huge amount of hope in this chapter but there is hope in the bible because what this chapter says is we need goodness me how we need a saviour how we need a redeemer somebody will come into this mess and sort it out and bring some light and hope and forgiveness and newness and transformation and it would be wrong to finish without saying God has done that and the person who does it is Jesus we need a saviour and the redeeming story is that this saviour's got right involved with all the mess of our sin got right in there and said there's not a bit of this that I'm not going to address even to the point of the death penalty that all those kings suffered Jesus our king suffered it for us so that we might go free let's sing there is a redeemer which is 334 and could Chris close in prayer when we died died died