

SUMMER 3 - Heavy Tidings of No Comfort or Joy

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, as we come to your word now, we pray that you'll open our eyes, our ears, our hearts and our minds, that we may not only understand it, but believe it and obey it, so that Jesus may be glorified in all of our lives.

We ask this in his name. Amen. We'll do turn to the Bible passage that was read for us, 1 Kings chapter 14. In the Pew Bibles it's page 279.

And for those here for the first time this summer, this is a series from chapter 11 through to, at the end of next week, chapter 16, really bridging the gap between Solomon and Elijah.

G.K. Chesterton once wrote something like, when people give up believing the truth, it's not that they believe nothing, but that they believe anything.

We see that time and again in history, in the Bible as well. The gullibility or the stupidity, the blindness, the foolishness of people who turn away from the truth and embrace lies and falsehoods, stupidity and folly.

[1 : 17] And that's really what we see in the story of ancient Israel here. We saw last week, Jeroboam, king of the northern division part of Israel, which was then called Israel, is distinct from the south part, which was then called Judah, instituted the worship of golden calves of all things.

Clearly inanimate, clearly human made, clearly nothing, and yet embraced that worship. What one commentator calls, in a slightly mocking way, neo-bovinism.

That is a new form of cow worship. I guess the newness, because Aaron had done that with the people of Israel generations before at Mount Sinai. So we have now this king, who at one sense, we saw two weeks ago, set up the northern kingdom when it broke away with a fair request, which was shunned by the south, that the son of Solomon, Rehoboam, would govern fairly and kindly, which he declined.

But then we find them tumbling quickly into this neo-bovinism. What we believe matters. It's not what our society tells us.

Our society tells us that what we believe doesn't matter at all, so long as we tolerate everything else. Then that's fine. But what we believe does matter. It's not the case, of course, that religion belongs in the private domain.

[2 : 45] But it's something between me and my God and that's it. At least Christian faith is not like that. It's a public religion, though it is personal, but not private. Nor is it the case that religion is simply a matter of opinion, a matter of choice.

See, Christians claim, along with some other religions too, that there is exclusive truth in the Christian faith. If people reject it, they're rejecting the truth and they do so at their peril and they do so foolishly.

And Jeroboam was soon to find that out. He chose this neo-bovinism, thinking perhaps it would somehow bolster his claim to be king. It was stupid.

And God's not indifferent to that. It may well be that in this life there are people who choose to shun God, who live a life that is pleasurable, wealthy, comfortable, whatever. But in the end, the scales of justice from a holy God are brought to bear.

For Jeroboam, in one sense, sooner rather than later, as we see tonight. The situation confronting us is simply that his son is sick. At that time, Abijah, son of Jeroboam, fell sick.

[3 : 55] We're not told how serious it is. We're not told what illness it is. We're not told whether they went to a doctor. We're only told that Jeroboam decided to consult a prophet. Remember, of course, that narrative writing leaves out lots of stuff that we may want to know the answers to.

Did they go to a doctor? We're not told. We can't assume. Unless there are hints for which I think there are none here. So off to the prophet is sent Mrs King.

That is, wife of Jeroboam. She's told in verse 2 by the king, her husband, Jeroboam, go, disguise yourself so that it will not be known that you are the wife of Jeroboam.

And go to Shiloh, for the prophet Ahijah is there who said of me that I should be king over this people. Take with you ten loaves, some cakes and a jar of honey and go to him. He will tell you what shall happen to the child.

Now, there's lots of puzzling things in this. Lots of intriguing things. Ahijah the prophet we already saw a couple of weeks ago in chapter 11. He's the prophet who declared to Jeroboam that he would be king of the ten tribes in the north.

[5 : 06] And that's what's referred to at the end of verse 2. Go to this prophet Ahijah and to make it clear for us, the reader, presumably clear for his wife, that the prophet Ahijah is the one who said I should be king over this people.

Now, because that little bit's included, it may well be a hint that Jeroboam somehow thinks that this prophet might be on his side, that he might give him a good word for his son, might somehow be able to pull some strings so that the son will live or return to hell.

That may well be part of the implication in referring back to the context of knowing Ahijah some years before. But why the disguise? Why the deceit from poor old Mrs King?

Why does she have to dress up as a commoner? Could it be, therefore, a hint, as I think is likely, that Jeroboam recognises that he has failed to keep the commandments and given to him by this very same prophet who promised him that he would be king of the ten tribes?

That is, if you read back in those verses in chapter 11, his kingship of the ten tribes came with the obligation to keep all the commandments, to walk in the way that David had walked and so on.

[6 : 20] He hasn't done that. We saw that last week. And so, therefore, perhaps there's shame, guilt, embarrassment, whatever, about this king now after all these years, perhaps, seeking out this prophet, Ahijah, yet again.

Why take the cakes and the food? That may be a standard gift that's appropriate. It's not a sizeable gift.

Maybe if he was taking a dozen cows or something, then it might betray the fact that he's very wealthy, if not royal. It's a straightforward gift. Could it be an act of manipulation?

It's hard to know, isn't it? But certainly, it could well be an effort to appease God through the prophet, somehow to bring him on side. That certainly seems to be supported by the way the disguise is going on and he somehow thinks he might get a good word out of this prophet who once gave him a good promise of being the king, after all, two chapters before.

That's typical of human nature as well, that when we've done something wrong, when we're guilty or ashamed, we want somehow to self-atone. We want somehow to be able to sacrifice something, to contribute something to appease God.

[7 : 36] We shy away so readily from the free mercy that God actually extends to us in the sacrificial death of his son. To put it at a simply human level, how often do we hear of men who cheat on their wives but coming home with a great big bunch of flowers?

There's perhaps there a sense of making some form of offering as though somehow sacrifice will appease God. It won't of course. Scriptures are clear about that but maybe that's behind this act of Jeroboam the king.

There's certainly no mention of prayer. An argument from silence, we've got to weigh up the significance of that. It may have been that he did pray and we're not told but all the things we're told about Jeroboam probably suggest that he didn't pray.

after all, the gods that he worshipped were golden calves not Yahweh and now when he's facing this crisis of a sick son it seems that he recognises the futility of golden calves to bring healing for his son but there's no hint of prayer.

Notice how at the end of verse 3 it says that the prophet will tell you what shall happen to the child. It's an element of fatalism in that. Very common again in our society. We could well imagine people in our society, friends of ours who might trot off to read their horoscopes to find out what shall happen to them or to their son or to whatever or who consult the cards or go to some of those markets where people sit behind tables and read palms or whatever it is.

[9 : 11] It's a very fatalistic religion that and that seems to be what's behind Jeroboam's request as well. He recognises an element of fatalism.

What will be will be. Que sera, sera. Biblical faith isn't fatalistic. Biblical faith actually acknowledges that God is sovereign over absolutely everything and yet we're not fatalists because God wants to engage with us and us with him in prayer and we see time and again in the scriptures this invitation to pray though we may not know how the sovereignty of God actually intersects sometimes with our weak and feeble prayers and yet the Bible keeps testifying God wants us to pray and that prayers are heard and answered.

Prayers actually change what happens. We're not fatalists if we're Christians. Jeroboam of course is demonstrating I think here a distance from biblical faith.

He's not exercising that. Consider when David was David had a son who was dying and how he prayed to God prostrate before him and so on. Jeroboam's far from that and his foolishness is evident in all of this.

Not only in the disguise and what he's trying to do to sort of con a good word from a prophet but his foolishness because he's prepared to try and get a word from a prophet that might be a good word and yet he's failed to hear the words of God from the same prophet years before about obeying God.

[10:40] There's a selective hearing going on. He's sort of choosing the words that he wants. He's remembered the word that gives him the kingship but he's put aside the word that obliges him to the covenant commandments of God in the scriptures.

Now he's in a crisis so he wants another word from God, a good word through the prophet. It's a foolishness really, a selective hearing. Sometimes God in his mercy answers such requests but we can't bank on it.

But also of course the foolishness is evident in setting up Mrs King with a disguise. Because the prophet's almost blind. What's the point? It shows perhaps that Jeroboam's not kept touch with the prophet over the years intervening.

We don't know how many years. It shows therefore perhaps his distance from God's word through the prophet but it shows his foolishness and I suggest there's probably this element of implied acknowledgement here of a question.

Who's the blind one? The prophet or the king? See the prophet may be physically blind but he knows God's word as we'll see. The really blind one's Jeroboam surely.

[11:50] Just in the same way the issue of blindness and real blindness physical, spiritual is one of the intrigues in one of the episodes with Jesus in John's Gospel. So we've got a lot of puzzles.

Some of those things we can't be certain of but I think together the evidence is pointing towards the stupidity, the folly, the lack of biblical faith that the king is exercising.

Well the fact that Ahijah the prophet is blind does not in any way cut him off from knowing what's going on. God reveals it to him. He hears God's word and he speaks God's word as a good prophet should do both hearing and speaking.

It's all very well to hear it but unless you do something with it and Ahijah does both. He hears what God says and then he speaks what God says. In verse 5 the Lord said to Ahijah the wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you concerning her son for he is sick thus and thus she shall say to him.

We don't know what that will be yet but the way the story is told it's delayed until the wife of the king gets there to give us an added drama to what's happening. We don't want to hear it twice in this story and when she came Ahijah tells her what the Lord had told him.

[13:06] He's faithful in reporting it is the implication of that. And so when she came she pretended to be another woman at the end of verse 5 but when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet as she came in at the door he said come in wife of Jeroboam why do you pretend to be another?

Before she's had a chance to open her mouth. In fact she never speaks in this chapter at all and his identification of her when she's in disguise and he's blind in a sense validates his word.

It shows the authentic nature of what he's about to say. That happens several times in the scriptures we saw it last week as well with the man of God and the old prophet there as well that in a sense something that they do or say with an immediate result in a sense provides the basis for trusting what they say for the longer term future and that's also what we see in tonight's passage as well with this prophet.

So he's not just an old man who's easily duped by or bribed with a bit of cake that's because God's no Santa Claus you see he's not conned by cake underneath the chimney in order to give a sort of nice gift to a son at Christmas time God's not like that and this prophet's response before the

woman has time to even open her mouth let alone hand out some gifts shows who's really in charge shows who's sovereign not the king but God and God's word and suddenly the issue is not just the son's illness either because all of a sudden in the words that the prophet says to Mrs. King the son's not mentioned for several verses that is the whole issue now becomes Jeroboam his descendants the whole nation their future yeah imagine if you were Mrs.

King you just want to find out about your poor little boy we're not quite sure how old he was he might have been a young man and he's telling you all this stuff about your king about the nation about its destruction and so on it's a bit mind-stopping no wonder she's speechless and doesn't say anything.

[15:12] The whole dynasty and the whole nation are at stake, not just one young man's life. The son actually is not mentioned in the prophet's words until you get to verse 12 and he says a lot of stuff between verses 6 and 12.

Firstly, he announces, I am charged with heavy tidings for you. Or just before that when he says, come in wife, why do you pretend to be another? He doesn't stop for an answer that we can see here.

No answer is given. He shows the folly of her disguise. Why bother? He's really saying God knows. You can't deceive God. And I'm charged with heavy tidings for you.

No good news of the angels of Christmas here. This is bad news. Heavy tidings. And she's probably thinking, oh dear, it doesn't look good for my son. She's right but it's worse. Firstly, the way his response to her is shaped shows that the rejection of God is completely ungrounded, without basis, without excuse.

That is the first two verses or verse 7 and the first bit of verse 8 are saying what God has done that Jeroboam has turned his back on. See how it says, Go tell Jeroboam, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, because I exalted you among the people, I made you leader over my people Israel, and I tore the kingdom away from the house of David to give it to you.

[16:38] Now, actually four times there in the Hebrew is the emphasis on I. It's lost in our English translation in that we don't need it all the time, but it's a shame that the emphasis is taken out. Because what these opening words are, God to Jeroboam in effect, through a prophet to his wife to the king, is saying Jeroboam, I've done this, I've done this, I've done this, I've done this.

And all of them, in a sense, are positive actions towards Jeroboam. I was the one who exalted you from among the people. I was the one who made you leader over my people Israel.

I was the one who tore the kingdom away from the house of David. I was the one who gave it to you. All of those acts of mercy and grace, which we've seen over the last two weeks, especially two weeks ago, God is the subject.

But that then heightens the contrast with what Jeroboam has done in relation to God. So the second half of verse 8 and all of verse 9 responds now with the emphasis, but you have done, you have done, you have done, you have done, that in response to God's acts of mercy, grace, whatever.

He spurned it all. See what it says. Yet you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commandments and followed me with all his heart, doing only that which was right in my sight.

[17:53] But you have done evil above all those who are before you. And you have gone and made for yourself other gods and cast images. And you have provoked me to anger and you have thrust me behind your back.

That's in effect how the emphasis lies in those verses. Again, sadly a bit lost in our English translation. I, I, I, I, I have done this, but you, you, you, you have done this in return.

And it's an unfair response to the great acts of God for Jeroboam. We're told that he's not like David. The words here at the end of verse 8 echo what was originally said by the prophet to the king back in chapter 11 when he was promising to make him king over the ten tribes.

In verse 9 we're told at the beginning you've done evil above all those who are before you. We're not sure exactly who that refers to because he's the first king of the north. Certainly he's done more evil than Solomon and David before him, maybe Saul before him.

Maybe he's just talking generally speaking about all his rights before him. Then in this act of worship of other gods you've gone and made for yourself other gods.

[18:59] It's not just that these other gods have somehow fallen into your lap. It's a deliberate act of going, of turning your back on God, going elsewhere and making for yourself other gods. Not even adopting other gods of other faiths, particularly at this point.

You've actually made another god. How stupid is that? Made by human hands. You've cast images and provoking me to anger. The very thing that God has said he would do.

You see, God's not indifferent to people's choices of religion and faith and so on. He's provoked to anger. A righteous anger. A holy anger.

He's been spurned. He's been ignored and rejected. And as the end of verse 9 says, you've thrust me behind your back. You've put me to one side, out of sight, out of mind perhaps.

Put me out of the way. Taken me from your mantelpiece or whatever, metaphorically speaking.

Now before we move on, there's an ethical dilemma perhaps here.

[20 : 02] The comparison of Jeroboam with David is striking. Jeroboam is being castigated for his sin. He's being contrasted unfavourably with King David, Solomon's father, so in effect the grandfather of Rehoboam currently reigning in the south.

And David, we're told in these verses, is one who kept my commandments and followed me with all his heart, doing only that which was right in my sight. The end of verse 8. David's described very glowingly there.

What about Bathsheba, his adultery with her? What about Uriah, her husband whom he organised to be murdered at the battlefield?

What makes David so righteous? Is God blind to David? Isn't it a bit unfair of Jeroboam to cast him in such a poor light when it looks as though David's not being portrayed perhaps that accurately?

What makes David so righteous? Is this a fair description by God? David wasn't perfect.

[21 : 14] These verses are not saying that he was. Unlike Jeroboam who pursued his sins without repentance, David we know very well from Psalm 51 for example, full of real repentance for his act of adultery at least against or with Bathsheba.

God extended mercy to David as a result of Psalm 51. So the righteous person in God's eyes is not the morally perfect person on earth, there is no such person, but the person who does actually heed God's word, but God's word and law combine within it the means of forgiveness through repentance, sometimes sacrifice through prayer.

So the embracing of God's law is not just a sense of trying to embrace perfection morally, though it strives towards that, but it's embracing a penitent sinfulness, if I can put it like that as well, which David modelled.

Jeroboam doesn't. So there's an element in which this righteousness of David is not his own inherent righteousness and perfection, he was an adulterer and a murderer in effect, but through his confession at least he received mercy from God.

Sins wiped away. I think that's made clear in Psalm 51. The contrite heart that is acceptable to God. His righteousness is in a sense given to him as he confesses and is penitent for his sin.

[22 : 50] It's not a moral perfection on earth, but it's a righteousness under God's law where forgiveness has been received because he's confessed and been penitent for his sin.

Righteousness, you see, is God's gracious bestowal of his mercy to penitent sinners. David modelled that in the Old Testament.

It's even clearer in the New. You see, Christians are righteous now, not because we're morally perfect now, but because our sins are atoned for and forgiven.

And like for us, so for David, in the end his righteousness is the righteousness of Christ given to him. That's the comparison that's being made here. Not a comparison of a moral perfect being.

He wasn't. But of someone who through his confession and penitence, repentance if you like, has come to know the forgiveness and mercy of God and received the righteousness of God in place of his sin.

[23 : 52] Is that not the case for Christians? That exchange that all hinges on the atoning blood of the cross. Well, moving on, God's punishment here, as elsewhere, often fits the crime.

Often God holds, hands people over into their sin. You choose this path of sin, it's got inbuilt elements of punishment. Here, the appropriateness of the punishment is in a word.

In verses 10 and 11, we get the description of the punishment. Therefore, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam. How can God bring evil? He's not evil, he's perfect, he's holy. But it's a play on words to an extent because Jeroboam, in verse 9 we're told, has done evil.

If you've done evil, Jeroboam, then I'll do evil back to you in punishment. Not that God is compromised by doing evil, the word doesn't quite mean that in the sense of God being the one who brings evil, it's God who's bringing punishment, who's bringing disaster we might say, bad

things generally to happen to you.

That's what's going on here. It's not a compromise of God's morality. So God says, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, not just on Jeroboam himself, but on his whole house.

[25 : 13] As so often we see in the scriptures, the sin of one person has ramifications beyond that individual. So here. I'll cut off from Jeroboam, every male, both bond and free, the expression there is uncertain, apparently in the Hebrew.

It probably means, in a sense, every man, without exception. Young and old, we might say man and boy, bond and free. It's hard to imagine a descendant of Jeroboam being a slave, as in bond, but it's probably an idiom to mean everyone, without exception.

And I will consume the house of Jeroboam, just as one burns up dung until it is all gone. Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city, the dogs shall eat.

And anyone who dies in the open country, the birds of the air shall eat. For the Lord has spoken. There it's clear who's in charge. It's the word of God who's in charge.

Not the king. That statement of punishment begins at the beginning of verse 10 with therefore. It's not God's caprice of anger, just deciding to pick on Jeroboam.

[26 : 21] It's an anger in response to sin. Because you've done that, therefore I'm doing this and I'm justified in doing this because of your sin against me. In spurning the original acts of grace, I extend it to you.

The promise of chapter 11 is forfeited here. That is the promise of some dynasty to David. It was always and only in chapter 11 a conditional promise. Unlike the promise to David that promised regardless an eternal dynasty from David's line.

Not so with Jeroboam. That was never promised. And so the conditional promise to Jeroboam is now forfeited by his sin. The language is very vivid. It's almost crude actually.

When it says in verse 10, I will cut off from Jeroboam every male, literally it is, I will cut off from Jeroboam everyone who urinates against the wall.

You might use a stronger word than urinate. It's speaking about men but it's using slightly crude language and it goes on notice to say that, and I will consume the house of Jeroboam just as one burns up dung.

[27 : 33] For we know what dung is and we'd be justified for using a slightly stronger four letter word there for the same thing because that's really what's going on. It's striking language that's meant to shock.

It's saying in effect that Jeroboam and his dynasty and his nation, his house is just dumb. That's not very complimentary.

Moreover, one of the disgraces of the person who dies is the lack of burial. It's almost a curse it seems in Deuteronomy 28. It's certainly a disgrace when Saul is killed and not buried in 1 Samuel 31.

And so here, there will be improper burial. Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city, dogs shall eat. And if you go to many cities, sprawling cities of our world, they're infested by dogs who just scavenge around the rubbish heaps.

That's what would happen here. And anyone who dies in the open country, the birds of the air shall eat. And if you drive in Central Australia, time after time after time, by the side of the road, there's the carcass of a kangaroo or something like that and almost invariably on top of it, an eagle pecking away, scavenging at the corpse.

[28 : 48] That's what will happen to those of Jeroboam who die in the country. Very vivid language throughout these verses. Often the words of judgment in the scriptures are very vivid. Often almost apocalyptic.

That's why you get the style of writing about judgment in say, the book of Revelation, in Daniel as well. Why you so often get very vivid language about judgment in the prophets as you do here.

It's meant to shock us. It's meant to alarm us. It's meant to provoke us into repentance. For us reading this, this is meant to incite within us a desire to be obedient to the commandments of God unlike Jeroboam.

For Jeroboam, it's too late. But the book wasn't written for him, though these original words were for him. The book's written for us to incite us to obedience. And finally, after all of this, poor Mrs King, who's probably pretty gobsmacked at the moment and wondering whether she could get a seat to sit down in, she's then told about her son.

Therefore, and only obliquely really, verse 12, therefore set out, go to your house. He's almost dismissing her and you can imagine her thinking, I only asked about my son. And he says, when your feet enter the city, the child shall die.

[29 : 59] All Israel shall mourn for him and bury him. For he alone of Jeroboam's family shall come to the grave because in him there is found something pleasing to the Lord, the God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.

Something pleasing found in him is a hint of covenant keeping. We're not sure exactly what or whether it's just a general reference. Proper burial, though, for this young man. That hardly seems consolation, does it?

When the rest of the family is going to be not buried and left to the dogs and the birds. You can hardly expect her to go away saying, isn't it great? My son's going to be buried properly.

No, he's going to die. We're not sure his age. It could be a person in their 20s or it could be even younger than that. We really don't know. The word for lad or boy or child is fairly wide in its reference.

Doesn't this look a bit unfair? Here's a man, young man for whom something pleasing is found by the God. And this is, remember, with his father who's a king who's completely apostate, who's instituted false religion and yet somehow his son is covenant keeping in some way and yet he's going to die.

[31 : 14] That doesn't seem quite fair. It almost looks like the innocent person is suffering. Doesn't seem that much compensation to say, well, he will get a burial after all. Where's the justice in this?

What's going on? Well, it might look unjust but remember it's, in saying that something pleasing is found in him it's not saying he's perfect.

He doesn't deserve to live a long life just like you and I don't. Really. No one deserves to live. Even those who might be described as having something within them that is pleasing to the Lord.

We've got to keep our sense of justice right here because sometimes we think we deserve more than we do. When that happens which is very frequent I think for us Christians we've really lost grace and lost mercy.

But justice is found in the scriptures having said all that. Justice for someone like this is certainly found in the scriptures. You see justice doesn't mean a long life on earth.

[32 : 27] That's not the great reward. If that's what we cling to and hope for then more to be pitied are we than all. Because what God promises those who keep his covenant is an eternal life in a perfect place.

That's not only perfect in duration but perfect in quality. and even a tragically short life on earth is well and truly compensated if that covenant keeper arrives through God's mercy into his perfect kingdom for eternity.

We must make sure we keep our sense of this life in perspective it seems to me. Too often I think Christians are drifting away to thinking this life is so important and we cling to it so desperately. And this sense of justice of course 150 years later was made even clear as a prediction by a prophet called Isaiah who said that someone would die for the sins of God's people and of course 900 years after these events occurred that one came that suffering servant that really innocent one the really perfect one who committed no sin who alone of all human beings ever to live could say I do not deserve to die yet did tragically young and he died not just because of others' sins which is the case of the son of Jeroboam Abijah here he's dying because of his father's sin is the implication of all this but that innocent one 900 years after Abijah dies not only because of others' sins but on behalf of others' sins to atone for their sins.

All of us deserve to die no matter how good we are. The scriptures are very clear about that and if we don't have that sense of perspective through these stories we will end up somehow thinking or accusing God of injustice but he's not.

[34 : 23] His scales of justice are perfect. They're directed in these Old Testament stories forwards to the cross and in our perspective backwards to the cross and because of that to the day when he returns to judge.

our opportunity to live comes only through that really innocent one Jesus Christ as was the case for David as was the case for Abijah whether or not they fully expected a Messiah in the form of Jesus or not.

God's judgment against Jeroboam doesn't stop here having dismissed the woman to go back to her house having said that when your feet enter the city the child will die having given her no hope of the child living at all moreover in addition to this and you can think not more really I've just had enough you know this is a real bad hair day the Lord will raise up for himself a king over Israel he's just done that that's Jeroboam but no this is another one we'll find out next week that his name is Basha it's a new dynasty not of the dynasty of Jeroboam and he'll cut off the house of Jeroboam today even right now he says at the end of verse 14 a bit unclear what the Hebrew means there as you can perhaps see in your footnote no one's really quite sure it's an emphatic idea it's an idea of certainty maybe not necessarily saying right today this 24 hour period Jeroboam's going to die he doesn't but as certain as today is today this will happen that's in effect what's being said here at the end of verse 14 and Basha we'll see in chapter 15 and 16 next week but there's even more verse 15 the Lord will strike

Israel as a reed is shaken in the water it's not just Jeroboam and his royal household that's going to be struck the whole nation will be struck and they'll be struck as a reed is shaken in the water an idiom an illustration of instability and if you were to map out all the kings of Israel from Jeroboam to its destruction 200 years after he came to the throne there are plenty of kings can't quite remember how many now and it's very unstable lots of assassinations lots of dynasty changes lots of short reigns he will root up Israel out of this good land that he gave to their ancestors and scatter them beyond the Euphrates the river that runs up in what is modern day Iraq of course but in those days the Assyrians were there and it's the Assyrians of course from the Euphrates area who came and demolished Israel in 721 BC why?

because Israel as a whole not just Jeroboam but Israel have made their sacred poles probably wooden maybe stone poles a bit like totem poles probably with carvings on them maybe fertility symbols phallic symbols or women's breasts because Canaanite religion was a phallic fertility type religion that's what they're making this is not making up or creating out of your mind a golden calf that's one step of apostasy complete stupid idolatry but now we see that Israel is also adopting other religions the Canaanite religions the sacred poles are one of the things that Israel was meant to destroy in the instructions back in Deuteronomy 12 for example and now they're actually importing them and using them in their perverse and apostate worship and it's provoking the Lord to anger he will give up Israel abandon Israel is the idea there because of the sins of Jeroboam he's the one who gets the blame they've followed him they're also culpable but it's Jeroboam above all who's blameworthy which he sinned and which he caused

[38 : 00] Israel to commit the false religion of the Canaanites is the main grounds for their original expulsion from the land when Israel came into the land if Israel's going to adopt Canaanite practices this is what they should expect that they'll be treated like the Canaanites were treated and they'll be expelled from the land that God promised to Israel 200 years nearly at this point till that happened why believe that sort of prophecy because as the next verses say verse 17 then Jeroboam's wife got up she's not said a word maybe she doesn't actually say a word at all she gets up and she went away and she came to Terza which seems to be the capital for a while until Omri built one a bit later on at Samaria and as she came to the threshold of the house the child died she doesn't complain to the prophet she doesn't plead with him she still goes home and the child dies exactly as the prophet said and you see the immediate fulfilment of that little prophecy about the son when you get back to the home or the city he'll die and he does is meant to tell

Jeroboam meant to tell Israel meant to tell the original readers we are facing doom as a nation because of our apostate religious practices God promised that this son would die and he did he also promised that our nation will be taken away scattered out of the land across the Euphrates and it does later that is the immediate fulfilment prophecy serves to authenticate validate give seriousness to the longer term prophecy as well God's word of course is always to be trusted God's word is sure God's word is sovereign not the king it's the same lesson that we saw last week really well we come now to the little sum up of Jeroboam this is typical through the book of kings as each king dies there's this little summary type statement of them right now where we've got people sort of summarising the leadership of Mark Latham what were the things that are noteworthy about Mark Latham all sorts of things no doubt if you think long enough perhaps what about Jeroboam well we're told here that all the acts of Jeroboam how he warred and how he reigned they were written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel that's not in scripture why isn't it in scripture why don't we have all those wars and details here we don't need that the writer of kings like the

writer of the bible always is very selective he tells us what God wants us to know if you were writing a sort of secular human history a political geographic type history of ancient Israel then your weight of information for different kings would be very different from what we get in the old testament for example next week we'll see Omri a little paragraph given to him he was a very very powerful man known in the ancient world outside the old testament but the bible is very selective because the one thing that matters above all things is their relationship with God what sort of religious practices they did that's what matters not whether they defeated this person not whether they defeated that person not what their wars were not what their geographical boundaries were particularly not who was in their government not whether they won various sort of pre-election or pre-selection battles or anything like that it's simply their relationship with

God pre-eminently that's what matters most and for us the same because in the end whatever our hobbies or our little activities whether we've made a million in our job or not what all those things that sometimes get trotted out in obituaries the one thing that matters really is whether you knew God or not and that's what this book of kings one and two kings keeps directing us to Jeroboam didn't that's actually why we've got quite a deal about Jeroboam because of his apostasy it's why we're not told about other things in the end they don't matter because all the stuff that our whole world our phone conversations our newspapers they're all so engrossed in trivia sometimes you know those endless people who ring up on the radio with all sorts of claptrap and nonsense it doesn't matter in a hundred years time it's nonsense do you know God do you worship the God of the Bible that's the thing above all things that matters the most and Jeroboam didn't the rest of the acts of

Jeroboam how he warred how he reigned are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel in a sense he's saying you can read it somewhere else doesn't really matter for this the time that Jeroboam reigned was 22 years he actually outlives Rehoboam king of Judah and Rehoboam's son he lives into the third king of Judah's reign but we keep hopping from one to the other through the book of kings slightly anachronistically then he slept with his ancestors which is just basically saying that he dies there's some argument to say that he's buried with them is that what the expression means but it doesn't unnecessarily and his son Nadab succeeded him well that's the northern kingdom for you and if you were watching this on primetime tennis tv you'd be saying this is a foregone conclusion why bother watching this match it's straight sets they're heading to defeat it's been predicted from the very beginning God's sure they've lost the first game of the first set because the sons died you can be sure that the prediction that they'll lose this in straight sets is clear why bother staying watching the Vodafone arena or any other telephone arena for that matter let's switch to a different arena and so that's what we do in verse 21 maybe this will be a bit more interesting maybe this will be a bit more of a battle that will engage us in prime time so now we swap to Judah and surprise surprise or a few surprises actually here

[44 : 02] Rehoboam son of Solomon reigned in Judah Rehoboam was 41 years old when he began to reign and reigned 17 years now the tape's being changed at this point or a couple of weeks ago he's happened to be an Ammonite and then we read in verse 22 that Judah did not just Rehoboam but actually the whole people of Judah now did what was evil in the sight of the Lord hey we've just read that and so we might well expect the same story all over again some sort of prophet some immediate judgment some end of dynasty but it's not actually what we get more interesting match stay tuned they provoked God to jealousy with their sins that they committed more than all that their ancestors had done oh isn't jealousy a sin aren't we told not to be jealous how can God be jealous but there is a righteous jealousy remember the jealousy of a spouse for their husband or wife for the exclusive relationship or the jealousy of a parent for a child there's a righteous jealousy that's not at all a sin that's God's jealousy

God wants an exclusive relationship with his people and he's jealous when it doesn't happen and here it's not happening and so they provoked him to jealousy God's personally offended by sin he's not indifferent to it at all whether he acts immediately to punish or not and so he's provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed more than all that their ancestors had done sounds just like the northern kingdom all over again for they also built for themselves high places forbidden back in Deuteronomy high places would have been on top of hills Canaanite places of worship it was a fertility religion remember so on top of a hill you were sort of closer to God closer to the sky the sun the rain and all that sort of stuff they built pillars exactly the sorts of things that have just been condemned we saw that were done in the north and they built sacred poles on every hill the

same thing and under every green tree a big green tree in an arid place like Israel was a great sign of fertility what this is saying is that the south is no different from the north up in the north they adopted all sorts of

Canaanite religious practices we thought that they might go bad because they start with golden calves but even in the south in a shorter reign Rehoboam 17 years they have fallen just as far even though they've got the temple in Jerusalem they've fallen just as far there are also male temple prostitutes in the land again a feature of Canaanite religion if you want to engage a fertility god to bring you rain and crops and animals and children what do you do you go and have sex with a temple prostitute male or female no one cares it doesn't matter you may not know and by engaging in some sort of temple prostitution act you're somehow trying to induce the god or the gods to bring rain crops animals or children it's Canaanite religion pagan religion they committed all the abominations of the nations that the lord drove out before the people of Israel they weren't even selective they didn't say oh we don't like those abominations they're a bit bad we'll do them all we'll have everything what do you expect after all when the king who's not long died had Ammonite wives

Moabite wives Edomite wives Egyptian wives etc let's incorporate them all and of course Solomon built some of these shrines to start with that's where it's gone it's just as bad as the north in every way we shouldn't expect anything different why then does Judah not face the same punishment with the same ferocity of judgment here as the northern kingdom why does it seem through here as well as through the later stories of one and two kings that God seems somehow a little bit more lenient to the south to Judah centred on Jerusalem simply because God's keeping a promise to David not because he's got a compromised moral standard not because he's blind to the sins of the south not because they're any better they're not but he keeps the Davidic king on the throne with a brief interlude of an exception where one king's mother gets on the throne but he keeps his promise that promise back in 2 Samuel 7 that guides the story of the monarchy of Israel so that the southern kingdom has a Davidic king because he promised

David a dynasty and it has the temple in Jerusalem the second part key part of that promise is it unfair that God somehow treats the northern kingdom so ferociously when he doesn't do so to the south none of them deserve mercy remember all of them deserve judgment judgment's coming maybe at different times in different ways justice will be done no one deserves anything at the hands of God none of us can make a claim on God nothing in our hands we bring God is sovereign to dispense mercy to those whom he wants to dispense mercy and that's not Old Testament teaching it's New Testament as well Romans 9 to 11 in the fifth year of the reign of Rehoboam verse 25 tells us that King Shishak of Egypt that's another pharaoh of Egypt came up against Jerusalem so much for political alliances that the king's father had had by marrying one of Pharaoh's daughters he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord that's the temple as well as the treasures of the king's house he took everything maybe that's where the Ark of the [49 : 35] Covenant went he also took away all the shields of gold that Solomon had made he's taken the good stuff he's not fussed about it being religious paraphernalia he's fussed about it being gold that's what he wants it's the wealth and whether it's him stealing it because we know that the temple was not in any way invaded or destroyed it's more likely from what we can gather that under pressure from the advancing army of the of Pharaoh Shishak it's something like 60,000 chariots apparently King Rehoboam was pleased to give him the gold let come in and take it take it spare the city spare me take it I'll be on your side it happened all the time in the ancient world you pay what's called tribute money tax to a stronger nation so that they leave off you at least for a while while it's expedient for them to do that don't think this is a myth because there's a stele a stone pillar inscribed in Karnak in Egypt that refers to this very Shishak who conquered not only this area but many other Israelite cities as well all the way up through Palestine trying to secure the trade routes for which Israel is right in the middle the flat lands along the

Mediterranean coast from Egypt to Babylon and Assyria it's all there in the history outside the Old Testament once again we can be in a sense confident that what we're reading is reliably and historically true and all of this is a foreshadowing of the final end of judgment at the end of two kings when Babylon comes and they don't spare the temple or the city or the king God is warning his people Jeroboam received no more warnings the south receives more warnings they're just as bad judgment will come justice will be done and at the end of the chapter you get again the assessment of the king all the acts of Rehoboam yes they're in other annals you can read that we don't need to

know about all that for this purpose there's war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam the people of God divided against themselves and hostile fighting each other Rehoboam dies and he's succeeded by Abijam whom we'll see next week we've seen two snapshots in this section in a sense it's a snapshot of the whole of the book of kings the north moving inexorably inevitably to destruction it comes within 200 years in the south the same sins yet treated much more leniently what we find you see in the midst of all of this is what we could say is a murky and muddy a messy moral morass it's confusing our fallen world there's no simple justice here the wicked sometimes get away with things for a while other people who are innocent seem to suffer too quickly it shows us the nature of the rescue that you and

I need from this murky world from this sinful world in which we're so caught up mercy no one deserves it but it's coming justice coming as well we find here that God's word is sovereign to bring about his purpose it's God's word that is guiding the history of his people and the history of this world and it's a word that is guiding this world towards the innocent one who suffers a vicarious suffering so that others may live it's guiding us to great David's greater son to a greater kingdom a kingdom under God's perfect rule