

Jehosophat - The Shepherd King

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] A very sincere and warm welcome to you all this evening on a very warm evening here in Stornoway. I hope it's pleasant where you are as well. I'd love to have brought the service to you from the Manse Garden this evening.

Unfortunately, the Stornoway motorbikes up and down Matheson Road would have been difficult and anyway, the Wi-Fi probably wouldn't be strong enough out there to keep the service signal going.

So, we are in the lounge and you're very welcome wherever it is you're watching from this evening. I'm going to begin our worship by, first of all, reading from the Word of God.

That's from 2 Chronicles and chapter 15. The second book of Chronicles, chapter 15. I'm going to read the first nine verses of the chapter.

The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, Hear me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin.

[1 : 05] The Lord is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. For a long time Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law.

But when in their distress they turned to the Lord, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them. In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for great disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the land.

They were broken in pieces. Nation was crushed by nation and city by city, for God troubled them with every sort of distress. But you take courage.

Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded. As soon as Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded, he took courage and put away the detestable idols from the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim.

And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the Lord. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon, who were residing with them.

[2 : 22] For great numbers had deserted to him from Israel when they saw that the Lord his God was with him. And we pray God will follow with his blessing that reading of his word.

Let's now join together and call upon God in prayer. Let's pray. O Lord our God, we give thanks that you are the God of your people today, as you were in the days of Asa, and as you were in the days even before this stretching back to the very first human beings.

We thank you that you are our God this evening. And we thank you especially that you have revealed yourself as our covenant God through the Lord Jesus Christ. O Lord, we have so many privileges that those in the Old Testament times did not possess.

We have a much greater clarity of your salvation. We have a complete record in your written word. We have so much, O Lord, to look back upon of works that have actually sought to describe and to explain the scriptures to us.

We thank you, O Lord, that all of these blessings reach us today, our generation. Forgive us, we pray, for our lack of application to your word and to all the other advantages we have.

[3 : 40] Forgive us for the many sins that we do, Lord, freely confess before you now. We come before you not only to give you those elements of our worship, but also to receive from you the forgiveness that you are pleased to give to those who cry out to you for mercy.

We thank you tonight, Lord, for every advantage we have in the gospel and for the way in which we can look back upon our history and realise that you have blessed us abundantly as a people.

Lord, help us, we pray, not to regard those things lightly or to forget them or see them as no longer appropriate. We bless you for every way in which you continue to bless your word amongst us.

Yet we pray, O Lord, that that will be greatly multiplied so that we see throughout our society the influence of your word being spread abroad more and more and affecting more and more people.

Because we know, O Lord, that compared to the many that there are so few, it seems, O Lord, who follow you truly. We ask, O Lord, that you would bless your own word through your people.

[4 : 50] Come with your spirit, we pray, upon us as a people. For we know that when our hearts are closed against the Lord, when we have departed from your ways, when we have hewn out for ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that cannot hold through water, when we have turned our face towards those things that are detestable in your eyes, Lord, our God, be merciful to us, we pray.

Send the breath of your spirit abroad upon us. Turn us into your own ways. Turn us into a desire to be a people that are holy, a people that are dedicated to you, O Lord.

Graciously bless those who lead us in government to that end. Lord, we give thanks for the relative peace that we enjoy in our land, and yet we know that in these past days there have been disturbances.

And, Lord, we ask that you would come and show to us as a people that the true peace of the gospel is the only lasting peace that will come and secure our hearts.

We pray, O Lord, at this time for our nation. We ask when it seems that so many have not learned much from the coronavirus pandemic that has come upon us, when it seems that people are still so concerned to do what seems right to themselves.

[6 : 13] Be merciful to us, Lord, we pray. Help us to learn from these providences, for you are speaking to us through them. Help us to see them in the light of your word of truth.

Enable us, Lord, to look to you in prayer and in supplication, to seek that you would turn to us and be merciful to us. Turn not away from us and take not your word from us.

Make us not, Lord, a spiritual desert, as has happened to many other places throughout the world where your word once flourished. Give us not as a people to think that that would never happen to us.

Give us, Lord, we pray as a church, ever to be mindful that we ourselves, as Asa, was reminded by the prophet that while we are with the Lord, he is with us.

That you have indeed set conditions in your government by which your promise is promised, but not unconditionally. We ask your blessing for our government.

[7 : 16] Lord, bless them, we pray, faced with so many difficulties at this time. We pray that you'd bless them as they deal with the ongoing virus outbreak. We pray that you would help them as they bring up regulations from time to time and as we see an easing of the restrictions.

Lord, our God, we pray that as a people you would give us the wisdom, concern for others that we ought to have. And enable us, we pray, to listen to those whose expertise is brought before us and who advise our politicians and our government.

And we ask that whatever we may think, O Lord, of these things and whatever our opinion may be of their opinions, grant us, Lord, we pray, that we may think deeply through these issues and realise that we are responsible not only for ourselves, but for other lives as well.

So bless us too as a congregation, we pray. Grant when we are still unable to be together in one place, that you would continue to bless us through these means that we now use.

We give thanks for your word that still reaches into our hearts, into our homes and families, into our communities. We pray tonight that your word will be blessed to ourselves and to all who partake of this time of worship.

[8 : 36] sanctify it to us, we pray, by your Holy Spirit and enable us at all times to rely upon your Spirit. For we know the flesh profits nothing, that it is the Spirit alone who quickens.

Remember those who are ill in time, we think of those especially of our own congregation, our communities and our families. We commend them to you, O Lord. We pray that your blessing will reach them.

We ask for those of our young people who have been ill in recent times and in these days gone by. And we pray that you bless them too and help them in their young days, Lord, that they may indeed walk in your ways and seek to please you and be given by your Spirit and by your word of truth the strength to resist all that would call them away from you and call them away from giving their lives to you, to be ruled by you.

We ask for those who mourn today. We pray for those who have lost loved ones in recent times, not only through the coronavirus, but other ways by which death has reached into families.

Remember them, Lord, we pray, and we ask that your comfort, which is unparalleled and which is so far above our comfort, may reach them through their lives and through their families.

[9 : 53] And we ask, O God, that as we continue to live under the conditions we have in this providence, we pray that you would make us wise unto salvation.

We pray that you would give us to be more and more concerned to glorify your great name and to wait upon you and your leadership and your guidance through all the issues of life.

Hear us now, we pray. Accept us freely for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, children, I'm going to just refer again to one of the birds of the Bible tonight.

Tonight we're looking at the swallow. The swallow was mentioned a number of times. I'm going to just read one of the passages. It's in Psalm 84. Quite often seen these words where the psalmist says, How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts.

He was speaking here about the temple in those Old Testament times. And he was longing for the temple, just as we're longing for the time that we can come back to the church.

[10 : 59] But remember that the church is not the building any more than the church in those days was the temple. But the temple was where God met with his people and where they worshipped him and where God had promised to make his name known there.

So he says, The swallow is a very small and a very attractive bird with its long forked tail and its wonderful acrobatic flight.

You can see its wonderful colours, the beautiful dark blue, blackish colour and the brownish red throat and forehead. Very distinguishable.

And the swallow finds its food in the insects that fly in the air. That's where you find them darting about. And they're really, really skilful and fast at catching these insects that fly about.

And in order to build its nest, which the swallows in this country certainly build from mud and bits of grass and so on, they kind of put it together. They carry it in their mouth and beak to where they're usually under the eaves or somewhere you'll see their nest.

[12 : 26] And it's reckoned that they take about 1,200 journeys back and forth from where they pick up the mud and the bits and pieces they use for the nest.

It takes around 1,200 journeys to build that nest. Isn't that really amazing? And not only that, but the swallows, every year they're here for the summer, but every year they then fly off.

In September, they're here usually March, April, spend the summer here, build their nests, have their young. Then off they go around September time and they travel all the way to South Africa from here, which is a journey of around 6,000 miles.

You'd never believe that little bird could travel 6,000 miles. It goes down, they go down through, first of all, through France and then down through Spain across to Africa and they have to cross the Sahara Desert or the major deserts of the world down through the whole of the African continent till they reach South Africa.

And then they come back again, 6,000 miles again, when they come back the next summer again. What an amazing little bird that it has all that energy and it travels all of that distance in order to actually carry out what it wants to do here and then go back to summer in South Africa.

[13 : 50] There are three things or so that that teaches us, that the swallow teaches us. It teaches us, first of all, dedication. Because when you see the swallow spending all of these, all that time going back and forth, 1,200 journeys or so to build a nest, that's really dedication or a picture of dedication.

And when you think about 6,000 miles to South Africa, 6,000 miles back, how far would you and I walk in order to hear the gospel if we didn't have a car and if there wasn't a church very near us?

Here's a bird that teaches us about dedication. And that dedication that we want to show in our lives is to God and to God's worship, to God's word and to God's people.

And indeed to everything that God wants us to do for him. We have to be dedicated to that in obedience to God. And we should take pleasure in that dedication even if at times it's difficult.

Second thing the swallow teaches us about is sharing. And sharing is a really wonderful thing because sharing things is in many ways the opposite of selfishness.

[15 : 05] The swallows share building the nest. The male and female swallows, they share in the building. The female doesn't say, look, I'm going to lay the eggs you're the male, you're the daddy, you go off and build a nest, I'll wait till it's finished.

No, they share together equally in the building of that nest. And not only that, but they also remain a pair for life.

You only find a swallow taken up with another swallow if its mate dies. And there's a lesson there of not just, not just of dedication, but also faithfulness.

Faithfulness to each other and sharing together things that they need to share in their lives as swallows. And that, of course, is far more important for us as Christians.

You children share in Sunday school. You're sharing things in school. You share things with your friends. And the best thing of all to share, of course, is the gospel message about Jesus.

[16 : 07] And I know that many of you are doing that. And I know that many of you have gone to speak to others about your Sunday school and how you enjoy your Sunday school. You want them to share in that as well.

And that's a great thing. Sharing Jesus, sharing the gospel, sharing the message of the Bible is important to all of us. And in Psalm 84 that we read, the psalmist there was feeling rather envious that the swallow had a nest at the altars of God and for whatever reason he seems not to have been able to go to the temple at that time.

And he was envious at the swallows. He was longing to get back to the courts of the Lord, as he put it. For he says, even the swallow has her nest at you altars.

And the reference to the altars is important. And that's to do with sacrifices in the Old Testament. And when we ourselves think of the church being the people of worship God, when we think of the altar being Jesus where the sacrifice of Christ's death was accomplished, we want to be as near to that as possible.

Stay near to Jesus. Stay near to his death as your security, as that which keeps you safe. And you know, in verse 10 of the psalm, that's Psalm 84, the psalmist says, For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

[17 : 36] I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. And I've written a wee comment in my own Bible beside that, and I can tell you what it says, just as I was reading this whenever it was I wrote this some time ago.

The least place in the church is preferable to the highest place in the world. The least place in the church, and doorkeeper is saying, I'd rather be that than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

wickedness. And so for yourselves, children too, treat as special the fact that you belong to the church, as you do.

The fact that we really appreciate that you belong to the church, and that you are special to us as the young people of the church. So there's the swallow, all that dedication, all that sharing, teaching us some of the things that are important in being Christians.

Let's again say the Lord's Prayer together. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[18 : 51] Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. I'm going to read again, it's in chapter 17 of 2 Chronicles.

We're going to read verses 1 to 13, and then we'll look at some of the teaching of that passage. So 2 Chronicles, chapter 17, and verse 17, chapter 17, verses 1 to 13.

Asa, that we mentioned, we met in the reading of chapter 15, died, you see that, at the end of chapter 16. And now you read in 17, Jehoshaphat, his son, reigned in his place, and strengthened himself against Israel.

He placed Phoshas in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, that Asa, his father, had captured. The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David.

[20 : 03] He did not seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father, and walked in his commandments, not according to the practices of Israel. Therefore the Lord established the kingdom in his hand, and all Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor.

His heart was courageous in the ways of the Lord, and furthermore he took the high places and the Asherah mouth of Judah. In the third year of his reign, he sent his officials, Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah.

And with them, the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebediah, Asahel, Shemamiroth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobaniah.

And with the Levites, the priests, Selishamah, and Jehoram, and they taught in Judah, having the book of the law of the Lord with them, they went about through all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people.

And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, and they made no war against Jehoshaphat. Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and silver for tribute.

[21 : 16] And the Arabians also brought him 7,700 rams, 7,700 goats. And Jehoshaphat grew steadily greater. He built in Judah fortresses and store cities, and he had large supplies in the cities of Judah.

He had soldiers, mighty men of valor in Jerusalem. And then we read the names of some of those military men that he had. So may God again bless to us this passage of his word.

Now as I come to look at it with you, we can actually, first of all, say that 2 Chronicles says more about Jehoshaphat than any other king except Solomon and Hezekiah, two of the greatest kings of Judah, Israel, Solomon and Hezekiah.

And after them, more time is given, more space is given to Jehoshaphat than anyone else. He was, by and large, a good king. He came to be referred to as the shepherd king because he had a pastoral concern and care for his people, as we read in this chapter itself.

And of course, like every other human being, apart from Jesus, he had flaws. And when you go into chapter 18, you can see some of those flaws, some of the things where he failed, bad alliances that he made, especially with Ahab, a wicked king, Ahab from the northern kingdom of Israel, Israel, through which Jehoshaphat very nearly lost his life.

[22 : 54] So he wasn't perfect. He wasn't a perfect king. No king is perfect other than Jesus himself. One wonders if there had been a statue of Jehoshaphat in Jerusalem in the conditions that we see in our country today.

Would it have been brought down and chucked into the river? Who knows? We are living in difficult times, friends, when certain elements of history themselves are defaced.

No leader has ever been perfect. No hero has ever been without many defects. And we see in our country a failure to realise that sometimes, for example, people like Churchill, whose statue was defaced, of course he had faults.

Of course he had excesses in his life. But when you look at the good points, the fact is that he led this country in a time of grievous war against Nazism, against all the powers that would actually eventually have stamped out freedom of speech and freedom of worship had they won the day.

You have to look at people in that context. You know, the country or the nation that forgets its history will soon repeat the mistakes of the past that's commonly often been said.

[24 : 22] And I just happened in this interaction last week, just on one occasion on Twitter, I don't go on it all that often, but I asked a very simple question. Who should decide on which statute should be left standing or taken down?

Very soon, I had a short, curt answer from someone I had no idea who it was and all it said was, I do. I have the right to decide.

That's what the movements that we see of that kind in our country are actually seeking to bring about and that's what you find sadly, all too often throughout our country, people living for themselves.

Selfishness. I do. You see, the way it's, the more you put the Bible aside, the more you turn the Bible's teaching on its head. The Bible tells us, the Lord tells us, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength and your neighbour as yourself.

And these people would actually say, you shall love yourself with all your mind, with all your heart, with all your strength and never mind about God and your neighbour.

[25 : 36] We don't want to become that sort of society though there are elements of that already in it. This man had many flaws, Jehoshaphat. He was a good king but he was not a perfect king.

We'll refer to that near the end of our study this evening. But there are three things in the passage that we learn from his reign. First of all, notice his personal faithfulness to God.

You find that in verses 1 to 6 of chapter 17. His personal faithfulness to God. He walked, we're told, in the ways of his father, David, his father, David being his ancestor, David, who was one of the great kings of Israel, if not the greatest.

Well, this is what he's saying. The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the earlier ways of his father, David. He did not seek the Baals, these were the gods, the idols of the Canaanites, like many of the kings did, but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments and not according to the practices of Israel.

Therefore, the Lord established the kingdom in his hand. His father, Esau, was a fairly good king, but his reign, you could say, well, if you use a footballing term, it was a reign of two halves.

[26 : 55] You know, the cliché that football commentators, when one half was being well played, the other half a bit of a disaster, well, it's a game of two halves. Well, the reign of Esau was a bit like that, a reign of two halves, you'll see it in the previous chapters.

But Jehoshaphat was, by and large, a good reign and he walked in the ways of his father, David. He was true to God. He was faithful to God. He followed the example that David had set him, though he himself, of course, had many excesses as well and indeed at times needed rebuked by the Lord.

And that is important, too, for us. We've had many people before us who were great examples to us. Some of them we knew in our own lives in previous generations, some in the generations before that.

Are we today following their footsteps? People who are faithful to God, people who gave such time to prayer, to prayer meetings, to worship, to the work of the church.

Here was a man who says, I want to be like David. I want to be like my ancestor David. I want to be faithful to God. My kingship is not going to be about myself. It's going to be about God and his kingdom and his glory.

[28 : 15] So we do have to note with thankfulness to God, not the kind of thing that dismisses from our memory those who have gone before as if they would be no longer of any use to us in our day and our generation.

Godliness is godliness. Faithfulness is faithfulness. Being true to God is being true to God whatever generation we belong to. He walked in the ways of his father David and you see the consequences of that.

You can see that in verse 3 and also verse 5 where you find that the Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David.

In verse 5, therefore, the Lord established the kingdom in his hand. Sometimes you find in the Bible that the Lord being with his people is set out as the reason or the foundation that enables them to act in a certain way.

But then there's this side to it as well because God has linked together certain things in the way that our lives relate to him. And some of his promises are linked to our obedience to his will and to walking in his ways.

[29 : 27] And that's what it says here. The Lord was with him. Let's go back to chapter 15, the first passage we read there where this Azariah, the son of Oded, he went out to meet Asa and he said, listen to me, this was a man of God, a prophet of the Lord, the Lord is with you while you are with him.

If you seek him, he will be found by you. But if you forsake him, he will forsake you. Now that principle is still in place. That connection still is valid in our lives as well.

We turn away from the Lord. Don't be surprised if he turns away from us. If we actually forsake him, no surprise if he forsakes us.

He is connected together. So many things that we need to bear in mind if we want to have his blessing and know his blessing in our lives. They're not going to come to us irrespective of how we behave, of how we are in relation to him or to his word or to anything else.

So here is, first of all, a man who is faithful to God and the consequences of that were that the Lord was with him and moreover, the Lord established the kingdom in his hand.

[30 : 44] That word, therefore, in verse 5 there really shows you, chapter 17, verse 5, therefore the Lord established the kingdom as a result of the king's faithfulness.

God was pleased to establish the kingdom under him. There's the first thing, his personal faithfulness to God. How important is that to yourself tonight?

How important is it to put him first? As we saw last week, the way that Jesus comes before us and taught his disciples and the crowd around him to put him first.

Here is a man who put God first, above himself, above his family, above everything else. Second thing you learn from the passage about Jehoshaphat is his program of instruction and that's in verses 7 to 9.

In the third year of Israel he sent his officials and then they're named and then with them the Levites and with these Levites the priests and they taught in Judah having the book of the law of the Lord with them.

[31 : 47] They went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people. You see the combination here of religious and civic officials. Now, I know that in those days you didn't have the same differentiation or separation between what was religious and what is secular that you find in our day.

Everything in a sense was religious in the days of Israel and Judah but still they had officials which had specifically civic duties as well as those that had specifically religious duties and what you read here is that they both all of these officials took part in this magnificent program of teaching.

They led this program the teaching of the law of God the teaching of the word of God throughout the cities of Judah they taught the people.

would that that were the case in the day and generation we belong to. What a difference this made in Jehoshaphat's day as it did later in Josiah's day as it did in Hezekiah's day.

What a difference this would make in our own day if this was the burden of our religious and our civic officials our government from the top downwards.

[33 : 08] What a contrast to that you find sadly in our kingdom. Just let me take that example just ongoing just now of the no fault divorce bill that's at present before parliament in Westminster.

No longer is it going to be needed to have proof of marital breakdown in order to enact a process or follow through a process of divorce or the annulment of a marriage.

The only thing that's required is that a person can say right I want a divorce I want this marriage I want this relationship of ours to come to an end let's be friends but let's not stay married anymore whatever it is that's the only thing that's required.

And the Lord Chancellor or Justice Lord Chancellor's comments in this were really telling or interesting the other day because this came up on the Christian Institute site where he actually said when he was asked would this not further undermine marriage itself or send a wrong signal out to society this is what he said issues of reform of the process for divorce are not germane to the issue of marriage itself.

Well Lord Chancellor I can't understand that maybe you can but if you're dealing with a matter that's going to dismantle marriage and make it easier and on the same mouthful you're saying that that's not germane to the issue of marriage itself that is illogical that is false that is ridiculous that's what we've descended to as a society where there isn't even a logic anymore applied to the relationship between the process that you need to go through for divorce and marriage itself and it's another measure for dismantling family life marriage all that's around that of course sadly it comes to a point in some marriages where they can't go on that's not something we need to understand we accept that but to actually come to this level and say all that's needed is well I don't like you anymore

[35 : 29] I don't need any proof that our marriage has come to this point that it's really irretrievably broken down let's just apply for a divorce that's friends that's where we're at and it's only one of those examples one of those symptoms of a sick society a society that's gone morally bankrupt that the people who are leading us are actually engaging in these sorts of decisions and irrational connections we need to cry out to God we need to cry more than ever to God to bring us to our senses because coronavirus will not itself do it nothing in providence itself will do it nothing that happens to us daily on that level will do it we need the Holy Spirit of God we need God to move amongst us we need the kind of thing that you see in the days of Jehoshaphat people who are burdened by God equipped by God to go out amongst the people to teach them the things of God and that's our duty as Christians not just for us as ministers it's our duty as Christians as far as possible difficult though it is to frequent people with the teaching of the Bible the teaching of the Word of God so that's the first thing in his program of instruction the religious and civic officials they all came together to do this and that widened the reforms that had started under his father Asa because you read here that he went about through all the cities of Judah whereas Asa was focused more on Jerusalem and didn't go much beyond that and isn't that what we want as well for the influence of the gospel to spread throughout our communities to spread throughout our land see when God works when God comes with his power when God like the psalmist says like the streams in the Negev comes with this rushing torrent of blessing that we pray for then you see many many people caught up in it and many people caught up in it for their good these are our aims and our desires prayers and our supplications right here and now that there would be a great increase and spread of the gospel and the gospel's teaching and people's commitment to the gospel throughout our land and then the national curriculum if you like to say in his program of instruction the national curriculum was the book of the law of the

Lord in verse 9 there he taught in Judah having the book of the law of the Lord with him they went about through the streets it reminds you of Nehemiah's time where you find in Nehemiah chapter 8 that Ezra who read the book of the law as he read the book of the law the people stood there from early morning through to midday they were attentive to the book of the law Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for use above the people they had built him a kind of pulpit if you like they all bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord and said amen and amen and they also appointed people who are named there to help the people understand the law while the people remained in their places they read from the book from the law of God clearly and they gave the sense so that the people understood their reading and that's basically what was happening in Jehoshaphat's day as well and it is interesting as we'll see that the books of chronicles were actually written specifically to encourage those who had come back from 70 years captivity in Babylon the captivity that God had himself forewarned them of that they had not made preparation to avoid because they rejected the teaching of the prophets so they went and spent these years in exile in

Babylon their temple was ruined all the precious things they were carried by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon they returned you find the account of it in Dehemiah of course and Ezra but also the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were instrumental in being used by God at that time of return to encourage the people to exhort the people to motivate the people and that's basically what 2nd Chronicles is about it's a book for motivation it's a book that seeks to encourage those who are beginning again to rebuild to continue to trust in the Lord to resist the temptation that came from many around them to just abandon the work those people who said look the glory days are gone what's the point the glory days are over you're not going to recapture that anymore just leave it be plenty of people who would say that to ourselves plenty of people would say yeah alright you're referring to things like the reformation things like revivals and the 1800s and later on and so on but these are the glory days these are gone well of course we know they're gone but their God isn't gone the God who brought them about hasn't disappeared and he's not changed and he's the same God trust in him continue to trust in him pray that he'll do what he's done in the past and that's why we're teaching our people from the Bible that we will learn from history even from the bad things that happened in history the Bible doesn't hide the things that were wrong in the lives of certain people even of these kings but it didn't just then as the account was being put together and written up it didn't actually decide well he was really a bit of a brute

Manasseh for example who organized the slaughter of thousands of people we don't want him in this book well God says he's in the book so you can learn from it and you can learn precious things from it that's the kind of thing we need to bring our minds of our people back to not just start pulling down statues because they had this or that excess in their lives learn from history history is there to be learned from it's not just a matter of learning dates and learning events and learning things learn principles learn behaviors learn what's right and wrong learn what's not acceptable and what is put it against the light of the Bible so here's the national curriculum for Jehoshaphat the law of the Lord so his personal faithfulness his program of instruction I spent more time on that the night tended and finally the third point is his prestige beyond Judah his prestige beyond Judah verses 10 to 12 the fear of the

[42 : 36] Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah and they made no war against Jehoshaphat some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver for tribute and the Arabians brought him rams and goats and so on and Jehoshaphat grew steadily greater now that's really interesting it says the fear of God fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah and you notice it doesn't say the fear of Jehoshaphat fell on them or the fear of the people of Judah fell upon them the fear of the Lord fell upon them they took note of the God of Jehoshaphat and we're being made aware here of Judah's God at that time you have a similar thing in the New Testament when you go to what Paul said about the Thessalonian church a very young church and years when he wrote to it but he said not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere so that we need not say anything for they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and through

God and to wait for his son from heaven you see what he's saying there we don't need to say anything about you because you're actually making it known yourselves by the lifestyle you're now living how you turn to God from idols this is actually something being sounded forth just like broadcast on a loudspeaker your faith in God has gone forth everywhere you see when God comes powerfully into a community other communities take note that's what you find in the history of revivals where you find God coming powerfully into any community that it spreads through there and then onto other communities in the great revivals of the past and in Psalm where you find the Psalmist longing for these days of the past and where you find them praying to God that they would again know the blessing of the Lord and refer to those who are going forth with precious sheaves they are sowing the seed turn he says out captivity like the streams in the south and what he's saying is that when the

Lord turned the captivity of Zion when he blessed us we were like those that dreamed our mouth was filled with laughter our tongue with singing then those among the heathen said the Lord has done great things for them yes the Lord he says has done great things for us whereof we are glad wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if as Christians we were to see other communities people in all our communities throughout our nation taking note of God at work amongst us amongst us as Christians not talking about denominations talking about Christians the Christian community and even verse 11 you find even those who were traditional enemies of Judah some of the Philistines Kenny preaching today referred to the Philistine Goliath and his defeat by David well here are the traditional enemies of the people of

Judah and Israel some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver for tribute reminds you doesn't it of Jesus himself because that's what you're getting a glimpse of here the kingship of Jesus himself Psalm 72 the glories of his reign Matthew 2 and verse 11 those sages that had come from the east with their presence looking for the Messiah having followed the star they opened their treasures Matthew tells us and gave him of their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrror you see chronicles second chronicles and indeed first chronicles the books of chronicles you could say they're really a spiritual gallery they're a gallery of pictures of portraits of kings various kings down through these years and as you're going through this gallery you're looking for the king you're looking for the perfect king and you come to the lengths of

Jehoshaphat and you wonder ah I wonder if this is him he's walking in the ways of his father David he wants really to fulfill all these things of faithfulness to God but then you don't go very far before you realize well no he's not perfect and you come to the end of second chronicles and still the perfect king hasn't arrived and you have to wait for the new testament to begin with the arrival of king Jesus and you know I've mentioned this before but and you'll recall it I'm sure second chronicles in the Hebrew Bible is the last book of the Hebrew Bible not the prophets second chronicles is the last book of the Hebrew Bible and it's really interesting and telling how second chronicles concludes because as we said there's no perfect king you come to the exile that's mentioned the people actually going to be taken into exile and then the proclamation of

[48 : 19] Cyrus the king of Persia to allow the people to come back after the captivity back again to Jerusalem this is how it finishes thus says Cyrus king of Persia the Lord the God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah this is the last sentence of the Hebrew Bible whoever is among you of all his people may the Lord as God be with him let him go up you see the Old Testament finishes on that note of anticipation a note of anticipation because you've gone through all this gallery of kings and you're still waiting for the perfect king but he has come he has arrived he's been in this world he's lived in this world he died in this world he came back from the dead in this world he left this world he's gone back to heaven the son of

God king Jesus friends let's go up to him I don't mean up to heaven of course but up to him in the sense of how he is in the gospel how he is as the king of kings and the lord of lords to go up to him in obedience in loving faithful commitment to him tonight will you and I not open our treasures as those wise men did in Matthew and as you open your treasure give to him what expresses your love whatever it be of go up to him God bless to us this time of looking at his word we're going to conclude now by singing to God's praise in Psalm 102 this is from the

Scottish Psalter and it's the second version of Psalm 102 from verse 13 thou shalt arise and mercy yet thou to Mount Zion shalt extend her time for favour which was set behold has now come to an end these are words which reflect upon the disaster of the exile and the state of Zion and appears that that's what's in view and the saints take pleasure in their stones our very dust to them is dear then he says God in his glory shall appear when Zion he builds and repairs that's God in reviving power every time it's happened he reveals his own glory and hears the prayers of his people we'll sing verses 13 to 18 and the tune is Dover Stale thou shalt arise and mercy yet the tomb saiyon shall extend her time for favor which was set behold is thou come to amend thy saints take pleasure in favor stones her very dust to them is dear all heathen lands and kingly thrones on earth thy glorious name shall fear

God in his glory shall appear when Zion be filled and repairs he shall regard and lend his ear and to the needy's humble prayers the afflicted's prayer he will not score all times this shall be on record and generations yet unborn shall praise and magnify the

Lord now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and ever more Amen thank you very much once again for joining in this time of worship with us we trust that you will remain safe and know the Lord's blessing in the days to come thank you once again and