

## At the Feet of Kings Learning Reformation from Judah

FBC Sermon Series

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*Objective:* That we would understand the character and choices that led to various triumphs and tragedies of faith in Judah's monarchy. That such understanding would be applied to each believer's own character development.

*Statements of the objective:* 1 Kings 15 <sup>11</sup> Asa did what was right in the LORD's eyes, as his ancestor David had done. <sup>12</sup> He banished the male cult prostitutes from the land and removed all of the idols that his fathers had made. <sup>13</sup> He also removed his grandmother Maacah from being queen mother because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. Asa chopped down her obscene image and burned it in the Kidron Valley. <sup>HCSB</sup>

It (Asa's stand) took courage...Our idols of fortune, fashion, popularity, self-indulgence, must be severely dealt with if we desire God's best. We can only be right with God and with one another when we are right about our little gods and man-made idols. – Herbert Lockyear, *All the Men of the Bible*

*Theme:* Through the various historical authors, God is publicly calling later generations to reliance upon Him alone. It is textually certain that these records were intended to be read aloud as a call for later people to learn from the past.

The Chronicler holds forth two main themes:

1. Unifying ideals continue to call God's people back to the Lord, despite the division of the times.
2. A responsive trust in God can again lead to the blessings of His mercy in our hearts – a blessing that can change our times.

The authors of Kings want us to observe two themes:

1. God is at work in history, even the periods that seem dark.
2. *The fate of the people is directly correlated to whether they (as represented in their king) are respond to God's calling or continue on an unreformed path of destruction.*

*Statements of the theme:* 2 Chronicles 10 <sup>6</sup> Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer this people?" <sup>7</sup> And they said to him, "If you will be good to this people and please them and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever." <sup>8</sup> But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him. <sup>9</sup> And he said to them, "What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put on us'?" <sup>10</sup> And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, "Thus shall you speak to the people who said to

*you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it for us'; thus shall you say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's thighs. <sup>11</sup> And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.'*" <sup>ESV</sup>

*The lesson is that the people set aside by God can either be sustained by the Word of God or destroyed by it." – G.H. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, (New Century Commentary)*

*Premise:* We are in need of support as we battle to reform ourselves and our culture. That support can only be found in the Lord and His Word. By sitting at the feet of Judah's kings, we can learn from their handling and mishandling of battles against the same forces that beset us today.

Statements of the premise: 2 Chronicles 33 <sup>10</sup> *The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they didn't listen. <sup>11</sup> So He brought against them the military commanders of the king of Assyria. They captured Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze shackles, and took him to Babylon. <sup>12</sup> When he was in distress, he sought the favor of Yahweh his God and earnestly humbled himself before the God of his ancestors. <sup>13</sup> He prayed to Him, so He heard his petition and granted his request, and brought him back to Jerusalem, to his kingdom. So Manasseh came to know that Yahweh is God. <sup>14</sup> After this, he built the outer wall of the city of David from west of Gihon in the valley to the entrance of the Fish Gate; he brought it around the Ophel, and he heightened it considerably. He also placed military commanders in all the fortified cities of Judah. <sup>15</sup> He removed the foreign gods and the idol from the LORD's temple, along with all the altars that he had built on the mountain of the LORD's temple and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside the city.* <sup>HCSB</sup>

*Maybe he will feel it too. Maybe it will even change him now from what maybe he couldn't help but be. – William Faulkner, Barn Burning*

*Textual notes:* The Chronicle will be primary, with Kings and other texts secondary.

1. Without in any way casting doubt upon its inspired status, I am treating the books of Kings as Deuteronomic in nature. I find the authors judging each king based upon his or her harmony with the character and conduct of the cultic practices laid out in Deuteronomy. Therefore, it follows as an example that the most excellent practice is the destruction of high places.
2. As for dating, I will be using a simple system – in fact, the one I used in teaching Bible at the Middle School level. There are many factors in these annals that make dating uncertain – different ways of calculating regnal years, rounding off, known and unknown co-regencies, use of synchronized history in some places (as opposed to annal history in others), spring vs. fall figuring of the New Year over this long course of time, etc. Below is a workable simplified form:

| <i>Kings of Judah</i> | <i>Reign starts</i> | <i>Kings of Israel</i> | <i>Reign begins</i> |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Saul                  | 1048?               |                        |                     |
| David                 | 1010                |                        |                     |
| Solomon               | 970                 |                        |                     |
| Rehoboam              | 931                 | Jeroboam               | 931                 |
| Abijah                | 913                 | Nadab                  | 910                 |
| Asa                   | 911                 | Baasha                 | 909                 |
| Jehoshaphat           | 873                 | Elah                   | 886                 |
| Jehoram               | 848                 | Zimri                  | 885                 |
| Ahaziah               | 841                 | Tibni                  | 885                 |
| (Athaliah)            | 841                 | Omri                   | 885                 |
| Joash                 | 835                 | Ahab                   | 874                 |
| Amaziah               | 796                 | Ahaziah                | 853                 |
| Uzziah                | 790                 | Jehoram                | 852                 |
| Jotham                | 750                 | Jehu                   | 841                 |
| Ahaz                  | 732                 | Jehoahaz               | 814                 |
| Hezekiah              | 715                 | Jehoash                | 798                 |
| Manasseh              | 697                 | Jeroboam II            | 793                 |
| Amon                  | 642                 | Zechariah              | 753                 |
| Josiah                | 640                 | Shallum                | 752                 |
| Jehoahaz              | 609                 | Menahem                | 752                 |
| Jehoiakim             | 609                 | Pekiah                 | 742                 |
| Jehoiachin            | 598                 | Pekah                  | 752                 |
| Zedekiah              | 597                 | Hoshea                 | 732                 |
| Conquered             | 586                 | Eliminated             | 722                 |

3. The more heavy-handed aspects of Kings intrigue me, though I am at a loss as to what to make of them. Kings was likely compiled earlier than Chronicles, and could be reasonably expected to have more nationalistic hope and zeal. Yet it clearly is more pessimistic. The Law is seen almost exclusively in its prohibitionist light, and even the kindness exhibited Jehoiachin (2 Kings 25:17-30) is not drawn out to its full extent of implied blessing. We see more clearly from a New Testament perspective that this kindness was a fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy – that God can start again and the line of David will not fail. Yet, Kings in no way capitalizes on this hope.
4. Contrarily, Chronicles, written likely at the height of Persian world domination, is surprisingly upbeat. The Chronicler goes out of his way to emphasize the hope in every defeat and the power of repentance and reformation upon the present and the future.

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*Bibliography:* Allen, *1 & 2 Chronicles*; Beitzel, *Moody Atlas*; Constable, *1 & 2 Kings (BKC)*; Hays & Duvall, *Baker Bible Handbook*; Hughes, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome*; Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*; Merrill, *1 & 2 Chronicles*; Newsome, *Synoptic Harmony of the Kings*; Nystrom, *Characters and Kings*; Redford, *The History of Israel*; Thompson, *1,2 Chronicles (NAC)*; Williamson, *Israel in the Books of Chronicles*