

2 Chronicles 28

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[0 : 00] Amen. 2 Chronicles chapter 28, if you need to see the parallel passage of this, which we will reference! a little bit, and you can kind of make a mental note of that, 2 Kings chapter 16.

So this is supplemental material to 2 Kings 16, which means we really don't understand all that 2 Kings is telling us about this period of time until we read it in connection here.

And you'll see why in just a moment what I'm talking about. Now, it doesn't repeat, it repeats some of the same information, but it doesn't tell it to us in the same way. It kind of gives us the rest of the story or further stories as the chronicler is looking back in the history of God's people and looking throughout this time.

One of the benefits in reading through 1 and 2 Chronicles is the focus is on the Davidic lineage. So we don't really get so sidetracked, not that it doesn't matter, but that time in history has already passed, of looking from the Northern Kingdom to the Southern Kingdom, Northern Kingdom to the Southern Kingdom.

We're just looking at the Southern Kingdom in particular. Now, we do have the mentioning of the Northern Kingdom and how it affects what is going on there. We'll see that tonight. But you also need to keep in mind that often, we'll read this in just a moment, that even the king of the Southern Kingdom and the people there are referred to as Israel.

[1 : 20] When we're reading 1 and 2 Kings, Israel is always the Northern Kingdom, whereas Judah is the Southern Kingdom. So I say that because the chronicler is writing showing what the body of God's people did, because coming out of the Babylonian captivity, they are a unified nation.

And so he's looking at their history, not just the history of the Southern Kingdom and the history of the Northern Kingdom, but really the history of the people of God as it applied through the temple, the priest, and the Davidic lineage.

And tonight, we're in 2 Chronicles chapter 28, and we're following the reign of a good king. One of the last few good kings, we're about to come upon the reign of a very good king in Hezekiah, but sandwiched in the middle there for 16 years is a rule without restraint.

So I want you to see this evening, a rule without restraint. Chapter 28, verse 1 says, Ahaz was 20 years old when he became king, and he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem, and he did not do right in the sight of the Lord as David his father had done.

But he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He also made molten images for the Baals. Moreover, he burned incense in the valley of Ben-Hinon and burned his sons in fire.

[2 : 42] According to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel, he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

Wherefore, the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Aram, and they defeated him and carried away from him a great number of captives and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who inflicted him with heavy casualties.

For Pekah, the son of Himalaya, slew in Judah 120,000 in one day, all valiant men, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers.

And Zichariah, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Messiah, the king's son, and Azrakhan, the ruler of the house, and Elkanan II to the king. The sons of Israel carried away captive of their brethren 200,000 women, sons, and daughters.

And they took also a great deal of spoil from them and brought the spoil to Samaria. But a prophet of the Lord was there, whose name was Oded. And he went out to meet the army which came to Samaria and said to them, Behold, because the Lord, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, he has delivered them into your hand.

[3 : 56] And you have slain them in a rage which has even reached heaven. Now you are proposing to subjugate for yourselves the people of Judah and Jerusalem for male and female slaves. Surely do you not have transgressions of your own against the Lord your God?

Now therefore listen to me and return the captives whom you captured from your brothers, for the burning anger of the Lord is against you. Then some of the heads of the sons of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Mishlamoth, and Jahisakiah the son of Shalom, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, arose against those who were coming from the battle and said to them, You must not bring the captives in here, for you are proposing to bring upon us guilt against the Lord, adding to our sins and our guilt, for our guilt is great, so that his burning anger is against Israel.

So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the officers and all the assembly. Then the men who were designated by name arose, took the captives, and they clothed all their naked ones from the spoil, and they gave them clothes and sandals, fed them, and gave them drink, anointed them with oil, and let all their feeble ones on donkeys, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brothers.

Then they returned to Samaria. At that time, King Ahaz sent to the king of Assyria for help, for again the Edomites had come and attacked Judah and carried away captives.

And the Philistines also had invaded the cities of the lowland and taken the Negev of Judah and had taken Beth Shemesh, Ajalon, Gedaroth, and Sokol with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzel with its villages.

[5 : 37] And they settled there, for the Lord humbled Judah because of Ahaz, king of Israel, for he had brought about a lack of restraint in Judah and was very unfaithful to the Lord.

So Tilgath, Pilneser, king of Assyria, came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him. Although Ahaz took a portion out of the house of the Lord and brought out of the palace of the king and of the princes and gave it to the king of Assyria, it did not help him.

Now in the time of his distress, this same king Ahaz became yet more unfaithful to the Lord, for he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, which had defeated him, and said, Because the gods of the kings of Aram helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.

But they became the downfall of him in all Israel. Moreover, when Ahaz gathered together the utensils of the house of God, he cut the utensils of the house of God in pieces, and he closed the doors of the house of the Lord and made altars for himself in every corner of Jerusalem.

In every city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods and provoke the Lord, the God of his fathers, to anger. Now the rest of his acts and all his ways from first to last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

[6 : 51] So Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city in Jerusalem, for they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel. And Hezekiah, his son, reigned in his place.

Don't you see this evening a rule without restraint? Sunday night we looked at the reality of Ahaz's dad's reign, and how it was rather uneventful reign.

It was a reign that was declared to be good in the sight of the Lord, yet he did not do anything magnificent. It's a short chapter that precedes this, and we know that he did things that were good and right, but yet the people, and we'll see the effects of that in just a moment, were allowed to continue in their wickedness.

We saw the reality that while he did what was good, he also did not do anything amazing. He did not lead the people back to true worship. He did not restore a spirit of reverence for the Lord God. His rule of 16 years was rather uneventful rule, and we contrasted at that time that his 16 years of rule, where he did what was good, but he didn't really lead the people to do anything worthy of worship, contrasted with the rule of his son for the same amount of time, and see the grand impact his son had, not for good, but for bad.

[8 : 10] Here it is declared that he led the people without restraint. The wording is there just to lead the people to do whatever they want it, however they want it, in any manner, in any way they want it.

They were unrestrained in any act. It is a picture of one being unfaithful, and we should get this even from the writings of the prophets. It is a picture of one being unfaithful to their spouse. And again, we know God says that through the prophets of this time, that he looks at his people as being an unfaithful bride, one who has not remained true to the commitment.

Ahaz is one of those who has led the people, not just himself, but led the nation to be an unfaithful people before the Lord God. His 16 years are years of impact.

They are years of impact, which will in part be overcome by the rule of his son. One of the ironies is that his father did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and Hezekiah, his son, will do astoundingly what is right in the sight of the Lord, and will go to great lengths to restore worship.

[9 : 24] And he is used mildly of the Lord God. And yet, sandwiched between them is Ahaz, one who rules without restraint. So how do we get that, and what can we use to supplement the account we find of him in 2 Kings?

Hopefully, by the time we're done, we'll see a little bit of that. The first thing that we notice is the wickedness of his heart. We see the wickedness of his heart throughout the entirety of this chapter, but we're introduced to it immediately.

Not only does it declare to us that he reigned 16 years, and he did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord, as David his father had done, but he walked in all the ways of the kings of Israel.

So that is, he acquired the practices of the kings of the north. And we know from reading the historical writings that the kings of the north were an idolatrous people.

They worked and worshipped in idolatry. They continued to do so even when prophets would stand before them and declare judgments upon them. We know from the very beginning of the division of the nation that the nation of Israel to the north was an idolatrous people.

[10 : 33] And it just digressed throughout time. And here we see that Ahaz, though he is not one of those kings who is united with the kings of Israel, because actually he is defeated by them, he still mimics their practice.

But not only does he mimic their practice, it says he also goes a step further and begins to take on the practices of the nations which God had dispossessed from among them.

That is, he begins to worship Baal, and he even goes to the great length of sacrificing his own son to foreign gods. Some try to soften the text and say, well, maybe it means something figuratively, but the literal reading of the text is that he even sacrificed his own children in idolatrous worship.

And we know from historians of that time, it was declared of Ahaz that Ahaz was positioned and prepared to worship any god, lowercase g, but the Lord God.

Because as time progressed, he did not get better. He did not learn. He did not repent. It declares to us that he does these things at the very beginning. Verse 4 says, He sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

[11 : 55] Now that phrase is important because we are reminded of even the good kings, his father being one of them, and we have it declared to us that this man did what was right in the sight of the Lord, only he did not remove the high places.

So we must be reminded that even though many kings had done good, and some kings had done good up until this time, the allowance of the high places to remain unchecked becomes a great hindrance later on to other people.

So this one thing is allowed to remain, and now we see Ahaz taking advantage of these high places and worshiping and going under every green tree. It tells us that as time progressed that he led the people to do great wickedness.

It says that he even digressed in his respect for the Lord God. Notice the wickedness. It says the Lord humbled him, but Ahaz didn't do anything to repent.

It tells us that in the time of his distress, in verse 22, this same king, Ahaz, became yet more unfaithful to the Lord. Notice the wickedness of his heart.

[13 : 08] He began to take in other gods, lowercase g, again from the people of Damascus. He began to look, not at the Lord God, but yet he continued to look around him to try to find a solution, but the solution, I mean, he's reigning from Jerusalem where the temple is.

But we notice there's no restraint there because the heart is desperately wicked. So we see the wickedness of his heart. The second thing that really stands out to us, and we don't really see it here, but we see it over in 2 Kings, so this is where we need to have the passages together, is we have a king with a wicked heart, but not only is his heart wicked, but number two, look at the weakness of those around him.

Surely his heart is wicked, but also those around him are weak. Now, we are reminded of this because wickedness does not get to do whatever it wants to do and does not always have its way.

As a matter of fact, I think it was Warren Wiersbe who said, wickedness often prevails because of the weakness of men in compromise. Weak men compromise and allow things to remain, and then wickedness takes a hold of that compromise and begins to prevail among a people.

That is something that's even happened in our own nation where we say, well, we'll compromise here, and we'll compromise here, and we'll compromise here, and we kind of pull back a little bit, and all of a sudden, wickedness begins to have its way.

[14 : 38] It is in our own lives personally, and it can happen in our church life corporately, and it definitely happens in our nation because we just allow things or permit things to be.

And you say, well, pastor, what weak men are you talking about? Because one thing, when we read this passage, we notice that everyone is just kind of falling in step. There's no one checking Ahaz. It says that he leads them to have a lack of restraint, and we see when we go to 2 Kings, we won't turn there, but if you go to 2 Kings, you will see that there was a time when he could have been held in check, unlike the mighty priest of the Lord who stood their ground during the days of Uzziah when Uzziah went into the temple to burn incense, and there was some mighty priest of the Lord who stood before him and said, it is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense.

We just have to go back a couple chapters to this. The high priest during the days of Ahaz actually aided in his wickedness. The 2 Kings account tells us there was a time when Ahaz went to go see the king of Assyria, and when he saw the king of Assyria and he saw the magnificent altar that the king of Assyria worshipped his false god upon, that Ahaz reached back out to the high priest of his day, Eurasia, and asked him to build an altar just like it.

Eurasia goes to Assyria, he sees the altar, he goes back home, and before Ahaz is there, he has the altar built. And in doing that, they push aside the altar of the Lord and they put this grand altar to the false god in its place.

[16 : 21] So what we notice here is it's not just the king's heart is wicked, but there's no one around him to hold him accountable. As a matter of fact, in our text, the only people that seem to do what is right are the people from the northern kingdom of Israel.

And that's startling. There are men who stood up and said, hey, wait a minute, we shouldn't take these people captive. The prophet is right. We'll get to them in just a minute. Let's turn them back. There are people who clothed their naked and anoint with oil and feed those and take them back to Jericho.

They do what is right. But in the southern kingdom of Judah, where the temple is, where the priests exist, no one is doing what is right. Why? Because the chapter before, remember, where the king who did what was good, yet the people continue to do wickedness.

They're coming out of a complacent season where there's nothing bad going on, but there's also no growth happening. There's no renewed worship. There's no return to the Lord.

And people are comfortable in their despair. They're comfortable in their wicked practices. Men get complacent, and complacency leads to a king with a wicked heart doing whatever he wants to do.

[17 : 38] And now there are no longer people of conviction to stand up and say, no, we shouldn't do this. As a matter of fact, this chapter tells us there are none that oppose him. He leads every one of them, it tells us, just to live very unfaithful.

Why? It's because of the weakness of those around him. Now, surely God has his people. We'll see it. Hezekiah, his son, is not, you know, an anomaly. He is one of those few.

But in our text, there's none around the king who will stand up and say, no, we won't do that. And that warns us because we ought to be people of conviction.

We ought to be people of standards. And we ought to be people who can oppose lovingly and truthfully and honestly the wickedness that stands. Yet, the priests that opposed Uzziah did not do it in a mean way.

They did it in an honest, bold way. But yet we find none of those holding Ahaz in check. And so we do not wonder how he could go so far.

[18 : 40] So we see the wickedness of his heart. We see the weakness of those around him. Third, we see the wrath that comes upon them. Notice the wrath of God's judgment.

It tells us in verse five, wherefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hands of the king of Aram. And Aram came and defeated him and carried away from him a great number of captives and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hands of the king of Israel.

So now we have battles back to back, right? Historians tell us that he didn't necessarily outright lose the entirety of these battles, but he suffered greatly because of them.

Jerusalem never fell. And we'll get to that in just a moment why it didn't. But yet we see the suffering. But notice, just like every other sin we find in scripture, those who suffer most are those around him.

Multitudes of people are carried away. And one day, 120,000 people die. Now we don't need to say, well, that's unfair. And that's why we look at this reality that none of them stood up with conviction.

[19 : 44] They're dying in their own sins, sure. But it was the decisions of the king to lead them and the judgment and the wrath of God fell upon them because of the rule of the king and then people are suffering.

120,000 died, 200,000 are carried away. God is bringing judgment and yet there's no repentance. It says that even in repentance, he just kept going further and further.

And it says at that time, King Ahaz in verse 16, sent to the king of Assyria for help Tilgath-Pileser. He wants help from him. Now, if we want to parallel this passage and want to do it right, in 2 Kings, it does tell us that the king of Assyria did come in and temporarily deliver him from those who were opposing him.

The king did come in, pushed back the Edomites. He did come in and push down and kind of quarrel all the others. It cost him dearly, but we find out here that he afflicted him in verse 20.

This Tilgath-Pileser, king of Assyria, came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him. So notice this wrath. Even those he's reaching out to to aid him hurt him.

[20 : 57] And he paid a great cost for that. He took from the temple of the Lord. He cut the utensils in two and he gave it to the king. He took from his own palace and gave to the king.

He took from the houses of the wealth of his land and he gave to the king. And all that he gave really kind of flew back in his face. It was not an aid. It says that he afflicted him.

Primarily because the greatest affliction was not the enemy opposing him. See, the king did come in and push back the Edomites and push back some of those people that he thought was his greatest enemy.

But the affliction was really that when the king did that, he went to Assyria and he saw the Assyrian gods and he brought those gods back to Jerusalem. He began to worship and now the wrath continues to fall upon him in a greater way because while the physical enemy may be pushed back, the internal enemy is still causing greater harm.

The detriment of Ahaz really is attributed to even the help that he reached out to. And we see the wrath of God that came upon him. In his death, he is not buried with the kings.

[22 : 12] He's buried in the field. He's counted as one of the desperate kings, one of the wicked ones that they don't want to associate with the people of the Lord. But that leads us to the last thing. We see the wickedness of his heart, the weakness of those around him, the wrath that came upon him.

But notice this. We want to see this. The witness of God's faithfulness. One of the most encouraging things that we find when we read passages like this is that God is so faithful.

So much judgment falls and rightly so upon Ahaz and upon those around him. So many different people come and attack, but Jerusalem never falls. The day will come when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon comes with his captain of his army, Nebuchadnezzar, and Jerusalem will fall.

But the day hasn't come yet. But with all the attacks, the king of Aram, the king of Israel, even the king of Assyria, I mean the king of Assyria, the Assyrians will carry away the northern kingdom.

But yet we find that Jerusalem stays attacked. There's great loss of life. There's great loss of wealth. There's great loss of spoil. They are plundered multiple times.

[23 : 22] But yet God maintains the people. And in doing that, he is preserving the Davidic lineage. So we stand astounded because the preservation of Jerusalem and the preservation of Judah as a nation and even the preservation of the lineage of David is not because of the faithfulness of man.

Time after time again, we would say, okay, God would be just to wipe that out right there. God would be just to bring a full and final judgment upon that lineage.

God would be just in his wrath. Even though these kings, they have sons who die and their great expenses paid, yet God is so faithful.

We even notice the faithfulness of God that when Israel to the north carries away these 200,000 women, boys and girls, and they're going to make indentured servants or slaves out of their own

kinsmen, which is a direct abomination before the Lord because he tells them in the book of Deuteronomy not to do that, then we have this rather otherwise unknown prophet, Oded, not to be confused with Obed.

We don't know anything else about this prophet. He has one scope of prophetic ministry, and it is he goes to the army that's coming with all these captives and he stops them.

[24 : 44] And this is a northern kingdom, right, that has wanted nothing to do with the Lord God from the very beginning of the split. And yet God is faithful and preserving and God cares about the entirety of the nation.

God is not confined to do this, but notice what, the prophet comes and says, hey, you have enough sin of your own without adding to it.

Right? You're already standing condemned before the Lord God. Why add to that? So not only is he preserving the 200,000 captives, he's also preserving the people that are bringing these captives in from sinning further.

And then there are those who do right and stand up and say, yes, we shouldn't do that. And they send them back. God's faithfulness in always having an individual on scene. And we find them at times in the most unlikely of places.

We would not expect to find a prophet arising from the northern kingdom to approach the people of the northern kingdom to declare the word of the Lord. Yet here is one we know nothing else about in all of history.

[25 : 55] Other than God had him there for a moment to save a multitude of women, boys and girls, and to call to account a number of people who already stood condemned.

God is faithful because he is showing and displaying his concern for his people even in spite of his people. He is not calling for the deliverance of these 200,000 because they deserve it because remember every person was doing wickedly.

He is doing it to show his faithfulness, his mercy, his love, his grace. And he is preserving his people so that even as the chronicler writes, they know that at that time in history they're just a minority of people but God is faithful.

God is going to fulfill his word. He's going to bring about when this is originally written and the first intended audience is reading it, they're still looking for that king. God's going to bring that king.

We see that in spite of the wickedness of people's heart. We see that in spite of the weakness of individuals throughout time and we see it even in spite of the fact that God's wrath has been just and proper and good but God's witness is his faithfulness to him.

[27 : 17] Even in our own lives we understand that God is faithful. He calls us to trust his goodness and his mercy not because we deserve it but because he is faithful.

So we see the witness of that even in these dark places. We can despair because we see such tragic chapters but we can also stand encouraged because even in the midst of such tragic chapters there is still a good God doing his purposes for his glory.

He's still bringing about what he has promised. And we see that recorded for us in 2 Chronicles chapter 28. Thank you brother. Okay.

We have time to pray tonight so that would be good.