

What's the Message – Lesson 61

Today we see how dangerous following false gods can be, as it leads to the total destruction of the Northern Kingdom.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. We pray today, Lord, that you will enable us to see clearly how the lives of our spiritual forefathers, the ten tribes of The Kingdom of Israel, have many parallels that apply to us today. And may the understanding of these parallels help us to avoid the mistakes they made by turning their backs on You, our patient and forgiving Lord. Amen.

Last time we gave our listeners a bit of a “teaser” when we said the death of Athaliah’s brother and son opened the door for her to usurp the throne of Judah. It happened this way. The purge of the house of Ahab, led by Jehu, killed not only all his family in Jezreel and Samaria, but also all the priests and followers of Baal.

But this did not include Athaliah and her grand-children, because she was in Jerusalem, beyond the reach of Jehu. So Athaliah conveniently did the elimination of Ahab’s descendants for him. As we read in 2nd Kings chapter 11: *Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family. But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king’s sons who were about to be slain, and she put him and his nurse in a bedchamber . . . and he remained with her six years, hid in the house of the Lord, while Athaliah reigned over the land.*

Quite a loving grand-mother, wouldn’t you say? But we leave this sweet lady for the time being, and return to the now “theologically cleansed” Northern Kingdom. As we read in 2nd Kings chapter 10, beginning at verse 28: *Thus Jehu wiped out Baal from Israel. But Jehu did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam . . . which he made Israel to sin, the golden calves that were in Bethel and in Dan. And the Lord said to Jehu, because you have done well in carrying out what is right in my eyes, . . . your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.*

And so it was. In the third generation after Jehu, during the 41- year reign of Jeroboam the Second, Israel was again enjoying golden years of prosperity. Sadly, it was to be the final hurrah, and the prophets Amos and Hosea spoke out against their vile disobedience of the Covenant with Abraham. Within the short period of 27 years, 6 kings had come and gone, some assassinated in only 1 to 6 months . . . Israel had become a vassal of Assyria paying heavy tribute . . . and its final attempt to regain independence was crushed by King Sargon of Assyria. The ten tribes were soon dispersed into the territories of Sargon, and the Northern Kingdom came to an end.

And with that, Teacher, I have touched only a few of the highlights of the history of The Northern Kingdom of Israel. Once again, we have seen quite a parade of characters, and a lot of action – mostly violent. But that was so long ago it is very hard for us to relate to this particular history. So once again, I must ask, what’s the message for us?

Ask yourself the question, “who is in control?” Can any nation, especially one that was chosen to be the people of God, disobey Him repeatedly, go off worshipping other gods, and not be punished? Is He only a God of love and forgiveness, or does He expect obedience in response to His great love and mercy?

As we read about the downfall of Israel in 2nd Kings, chapter 17, beginning at verse 7: *And this was so, because the people had sinned against the Lord their God . . . and they did wicked things, provoking the Lord to anger, and they served (forbidden) idols. The Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet . . . but they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the Lord their God . . . they went after false idols, and became false . . . and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger. And He removed them from out of His sight.*

Does this same condemnation apply to us? Have we substituted the gods of materialism and secularism for our Creator? Are greed and corruption, power and control, the real guiding lights of our lives?

The Lord has made it abundantly clear that He is patient, willing to forgive and permit “second chances.” But it should also be clear from the preceding, that there is a limit, and there comes a time of judgment. Do we listen? Can we learn from the mistakes of Israel? Is the Lord first in our lives?

Next time we will return to the surviving nation, the Kingdom of Judah and see how they fared.