

GM // onliners // new...

Explain Look to the Rock ... [Rock = Jesus].

All of Bible about him.

Get a more complete picture of Jesus.

More we see/know Him ... more amazed ... leads to more faith/worship = changed life at the deepest level of our being.

More impressed with him ... less impressed with ourselves.

Today we are in 2 Chronicles 17.

It is one of the historical books that looks at the kings of Judah.

And this chapter looks at the reign of Jehoshaphat.

[rough name ... good thing he was king.]

Kings played a significant role in Israel's history.

God promised King David that one of his descendants would sit on the throne and would bring prosperity to Israel and peace to the world.

As the years rolled on, many kings came and went ... but none proved to be the Messiah.

However, the good ones would give clues to what the true Messiah's reign could be.

2 Chronicles 17:3-15

3 The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, 4 but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel.

5 Therefore the Lord established the kingdom in his hand. And all Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor. 6 His heart was courageous in the ways of the Lord. And furthermore, he took the high places and the Asherim out of Judah.

7 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; 8 and with them the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah; and with these Levites, the priests Elishama and Jehoram. 9 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.

10 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. 11 Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver for tribute, and the Arabians also brought him 7,700 rams and 7,700 goats. 12 And Jehoshaphat grew steadily greater. He built in Judah fortresses and store cities, 13 and he had large supplies in the cities of Judah. He had soldiers, mighty men of valor, in Jerusalem. 14

This was the muster of them by fathers' houses: Of Judah, the commanders of thousands: Adnah the commander, with 300,000 mighty men of valor; 15 and next to him Jehohanan the commander, with 280,000; 16 and next to him Amasiah the son of Zichri, a volunteer for the service of the Lord, with 200,000 mighty men of valor. 17 Of Benjamin: Eliada, a mighty man of valor, with 200,000 men armed with bow and shield; 18 and next to him Jehozabad with 180,000 armed for war. 19 These were in the service of the king, besides those whom the king had placed in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

What do you find impressive about Jehoshaphat's story?

Is it the power of Judah's military strength?

Is it that other kings were lavishing him with gifts to earn his favor?

Is it his expansion and strengthening of Israel's infrastructure?

Or is it the peace he brought to the nations during his reign?

Our tendency is to judge by fruitfulness, and miss what's most important.

2 Chronicles 17:3-4

3 The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek

the Baals, 4 but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel.

What God counts most worthy in Jehoshaphat is his faithfulness.

Why is the king's faithfulness so important?

When you look at Israel's history, if the king was faithful, so were they.

We are no different today.

We Need A Faithful King To Be A Faithful People

We often think we can do all the right things on our own.

I don't need church // spiritual leadership // accountability.

I got this on my own.

But the Bible says different.

When Israel didn't have a king over them they were just as bad ... maybe even worse off.

It said that "Everyone did what was right in their own eyes."

[free-for all, libertine freedom-fest // funny how man-made liberty always leads to idolatry]

The irony is that you could say they were faithful ... just faithful to the wrong things.

And faithfulness to the wrong things isn't praiseworthy.

If you faithfully look at porn it's not going to produce good fruit in your life.

Same thing If you faithfully overspend or overdrink or overwork or overeat ...

That's what verse 3 calls "seeking the Baals".

The Baals were a bunch of false demon gods that the nations all around Israel worshipped. [Baal means "master"]

You could worship them in different ways ...

- sacrifice animals or your own kids
- have sex with prostitutes at an Asherah pole up on a mountain

When Israel occupied the land, God said, "Don't follow the nations and worship them. Don't get sucked into their way of life."

But Israel had a wandering heart ... and they frequently ran after the Baals.

See, there is an intentionality to turning from God and choosing sin.

We aren't innocent.

We make a choice.

And if we are honest with ourselves we'd confess that without any outside intervention ... we'd never make the right choice.

These verses talk about seeking God and walking in His commandments.

Which takes intentionality too.

If you aren't taking the time to seek Him ... you won't suddenly have a deeper love and devotion for Him.

And if you're not seeking God ... you will seek the modernized Baals ...

Some of them seem so harmless but occupy so much of our time, and some where we put our hopes.

[Netflix ... news ... politics ... social media]

Jesus said you can't serve 2 masters. You'll end up loving one and hating the other.

[Romans = chose Jacob not Esau. Love is choosing one over the other]

Bottom line ... there isn't room in your heart and affections and devotion for God + anything else.

So then, what needs to happen to the idols in our heart?

2 Chronicles 17:6

6 His heart was courageous in the ways of the Lord. And furthermore, he took the high places and the Asherim out of Judah.

Our idols need to be ripped out. [it is painful, hard to do]

STORY: 4 day media fast ... sounded easy ... so hard!!

Left to ourselves we won't deal with the idols in our hearts.

Notice it wasn't Israel who led the charge to tear down these high places where false gods were worshipped.

It was their faithful king.

We Need A Faithful King To Tear Down Our Idols

And that's b/c so often we are blind to what our idols are.

We keep them locked up in dark rooms of our heart.

We let God into the foyer and the living room where things are nice and tidy ...

But there are "off limits" places we don't want to give God access to.

We compartmentalize our relationship with Jesus.

Example: God has a say in what I do at church.

- I'll show up ... pay up ... serve up.

But when I exit the church doors ... I'm calling the shots.

Jesus doesn't have a say in how I spend my time ...

How I work ..

How to love my spouse or children or neighbors...

Or, how I spend my money.

We have to ask ourselves ...

If God is not informing those parts of my life than what is?

I'll tell you what is ...

It's the collective culture conscience we grow up in.

We grow up with this idea that our conscience is this pure, undefiled part of us that always guides us the right way.

[TY Jiminy Cricket.]

But your conscience is malleable ... it is formed and shaped by the culture you grow up in.

Unwittingly we adopt cultural values to determine what is right and wrong.

This is why idolatry is so deceiving and hard to find in our hearts.

Our society often approves what God disapproves.

And one of the biggest idols in our hearts that we follow is this maxim that “you should do what makes you happy.” or “Live your truth.”

We are taught to believe that our emotions are reality and our feelings are our north star.

But this cultural dogma leads us to worship at the many high places that society has constructed.

Christians do this to... we are not immune.

Actually, I would argue that the longer you follow Jesus the more likely you are to fall into this trap.

See, when we first begin that journey of faith it's accompanied with excitement and passion and all the newness of being awakened to something transcendently beautiful and wonderful.

But things don't stay that way ... and you can't help it.

You will go through seasons of life where, like the Israelites, you get bored or weary with the manna from heaven.

[Unpack stage of life]

Throughout church history ... called the “dark night of the soul.” **[explain ... like losing taste during Covid // coffee :)]**

Sounds really gloomy.

Well, it isn't a fun place to be.

And this isn't relegated to "lukewarm" Christians.

It seems like it is no respecter of persons.

King David went through it many times ... the apostles did ...

Paul talked about despairing of a burden beyond his strength.

You have various personal accounts through the centuries from pastors like St. John of the Cross & Billy Graham & Martin Lloyd Jones.

Here is why I'm bringing this up...

Our culture tells us that if we are feeling something akin to the "dark night of the soul" then something is wrong and we need to fix it.

So, if prayer and reading my Bible isn't accompanied by angelic choirs singing over me ...

Then give it up.

If I'm not enjoying going to church or serving at church...

Just stop.

B/C why serve if I'm not wanting to or I'm not enjoying it anymore.

Here is a popular excuse we use these days.

“I just don’t want to be inauthentic.”

When you get to heaven ... God is going to say something over you based on your faith in Jesus...

“Well done good and [authentic servant] NO faithful servant.”

Satan is twisting this good desire for authenticity to create a false idea of what devotion and love to God is.

Jesus said its not really impressive to love people who love you, but try loving your enemies ... that’s when you start to understand love.

That means you love when you don’t feel like it, or when you aren’t benefiting from it emotionally or otherwise.

And that is the true sign of maturity in Jesus.

That is why God brings us through those “dark-night-of-the-soul seasons.” **[God seems distant and silent.]**

He is stripping away an obedience and love that is dependent on moods and feelings.

He is teaching us to love even when it feels like we are giving more than we are getting.

But if we don't ... if we live for emotional happiness and authenticity ... we will drift into worshipping today's Baals.

Thankfully, we have a King who gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit that guides us into God's truth [not ours].

Israel needed a king to take the initiative and tear down their idols.

So do you and I.

And he is doing that ... even right now.

God's grace is convicting some of us in the room right now.

Our hearts grew cold and we didn't stay devoted ... we pulled away and went our own way.

But Jesus the Faithful King is here right now leading you back to the Father.

The Father is here with open hands, saying come ... return ... I love you ... I want to restore you.

Take hold of his grace right now, repent and receive the goodness of the Father over you. [no shame / he rolls it away].

As much as we need Jesus to tear out what is bad ... we also need him to put in what is good.

A good king knows that & does it.

Look at what Jehoshaphat does next...

2 Chronicles 17:7-9

7 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; 8 and with them the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah; and with these Levites, the priests Elishama and Jehoram. 9 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.

God's faithful king doesn't just say what NOT to do ... he teaches WHAT to do.

We Need A Faithful King To Teach Us How To Worship And Obey

Jehoshaphat sent out all those trained in the Book of the Law to teach the people how to obey.

Jesus loves obedience.

He is a king who rules over a kingdom.

He has commands he expects us to follow.

He taught “seek first God’s kingdom.” & “to love one another as I loved you.”

And look how he commissions his disciples to go and make disciples.

Matthew 28:19-20

9 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The reason we want people to read the Bible is because Jesus’ commands are in there.

We go to church to learn about Jesus and his commands.

And you can’t do that outside of community b/c Jesus commands have to be lived out.

Jesus’ commands are to be walked out in every part of our life.

And as we do that we incarnate the person of Jesus in this world.

Jesus said they will know you are my disciples by your love for one another.

The term Christian came from outside the church.

People called the early disciples that because it meant “little Christs”.

They could see Jesus in the way they lived their lives.

We are called to live a life according to the way of the cross.

It is sacrificial not selfish...

The more Christ is formed in us the more we give our lives away.

We pray less “God give me the desires of my heart.”

We pray more “God move me to the desires of your heart.”

This is not the popular side of discipleship.

We like the benefits ... not so much the cost.

And following Jesus can sound heavy on the suffering and light on the blessings.

But, the way of faithfulness is the way of the crucified Jesus.

Through giving our lives away ... we realize that Jesus gives us much more back.

B/C as the faithful King leads us into greater faithfulness we do see the blessings.

2 Chronicles 17:10-13

10 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. 11 Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver for tribute, and the Arabians also brought him 7,700 rams and 7,700 goats. 12 And Jehoshaphat grew steadily greater. He built in Judah fortresses and store cities, 13 and he had large supplies in the cities of Judah. He had soldiers, mighty men of valor, in Jerusalem.

Good things began to take shape as Jehoshaphat led Judah back to God.

When we follow King Jesus the same thing happens.

The Faithful King Builds A Flourishing Kingdom

You see the surrounding nations get hit with the fear of God.

They were in awe of God's power.

The result was peace for God's people. No wars or conflict or persecution.

And during that time of peace Jehoshaphat took to building up His kingdom.

They put in infrastructure to serve the poor better.

The wealth of the nations was brought in: silver, gold, livestock.

They built fortresses for people to run to for refuge and safety in case of future persecution.

You see these moments of peace throughout the book of Acts as King Jesus is ruling over his church from heaven.

There is breaks in the persecution as the fear of God fell on those outside the church.

This paved the way for them to preach and teach openly.

During those times they added infrastructure like deacons and food serving programs so poor widows could eat.

Acts 9:31

31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

You look at all the ways Jehoshaphat built up his kingdom...

It brought a comfort to the people.
Storehouses for food distribution ...
A mighty army.

What is happening ...
God is on the side of Jehoshaphat because he was a faithful King.
God established his kingdom and it flourished.
But that did not last ...
Jehoshaphat died and other kings came and went.
They became more and more unfaithful.

And Israel is left wondering ... when will this Messiah come?

When will THE Faithful King take his throne?

That was fulfilled in Jesus ... He is the promised King.

He was perfectly faithful to God in every way.
God was not only with Him ... He is God who is with us.
And his kingdom has flourished from the beginning.
It is always multiplying & increasing.

[thru the weak things ... sacrifice, costly love, faithfulness]

One day Jesus will come and bring His kingdom down from heaven to cover the whole earth.

There will be no more wars, no more hunger, no more death, no more dark nights of the soul.

We live in that future hope now.

Yet, we are waiting and anticipating that day when our faithful King comes and brings the fullness of His kingdom forever..

BAND COME UP

NOT A CHRISTIAN:

- All it takes is faith in Jesus the faithful King
- Jesus came and died on the cross for you.
- Before he took his seat on His throne in heaven, he took his place on a wooden cross.
- Before he was crowned with glory and victory, he was crowned with thorns of mockery.
- Before he was robed in splendor, he was stripped & whipped to a bloody pulp.
- He was the King crucified for you & your sin so that you could be saved ... into His kingdom.
- If that is gripping your heart ... that's Jesus at work ... simply surrender to Him.
- Confess your sins and confess that Jesus is your savior and King.

CHRISTIANS:

- Where are you not allowing Jesus to reign in your life?
- What are the idols that the Holy Spirit's been pointing out this morning? → simply repent and turn back to Jesus.
- Jesus is calling all of us into surrender. What is he calling you to surrender today?

I want to give us a moment to silently reflect on that in prayer right now.

The Bible instructs us to examine our hearts before communion.

So we aren't going to rush into communion right now.

We are going to take a moment to respond to the Holy Spirit.

COMMUNION

This is for Christians.

We do this because we believe Jesus died for our sins.

We do this as a means of confessing to the church around us that we are committing ourselves to following our faithful King.

But we are celebrating that He went before us in every way.

He is the one leading us to tear down idols and follow him.

[On the night he was betrayed ... took bread / took cup / blood of my cov. / forgiveness]