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More Of The Same II Kings 14:1-29

Intro: Before we begin, I would like to preface our study with a warning and an exhortation. The warning is simply this: we are going to see more of the same. The previous chapters have revealed a long list of national and individual heartache, mostly in the northern kingdom of Israel but also in the southern kingdom of Judah. Our text today is no different. This continuity of catastrophe should cause the astute observer to stop and ask, “What gives? Why are we seeing the consistent failure and resulting consequences of God’s people on such a regular pace?” Of course, the easy answer is sin but if sin is such a given in the experience of God’s people, why would we even bother to resist it? Yes, sin is the problem but how so? What flaw in Israel’s national character is causing this reoccurring nightmare?

We know from Israel’s history that the problem started at the very beginning. Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom decided he didn’t want his subject traveling on a regular basis to the southern kingdom of Judah to worship Yahweh at the temple in Jerusalem. So, he establishes his own national cult of bull worship, claiming that the golden calves he set up were representations of Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel and as such, they could worship these idols at their leisure and not need to go to the temple to worship Yahweh.

The negative result of this practice was that Israel as a nation was characterized by an uncommitted faith and misdirected worship. Even when they were shown the error of their ways by the powerful prophets that Yahweh sent to them, they wouldn’t budge from their idolatry. These 2 egregious characteristics actually stem from a common root: a lack of concern for truth. Israel had the truth of God’s Word and the constant declaration of God’s prophets but they didn’t care about any of that. To them it was just noise but in truth, if they had pay attention to that noise, it would have saved them from a lot of pain, suffering, loss, devastation and ultimately, destruction.

You would think someone would have had the presence of mind to step back and ask “What’s gone wrong and how do we fix it?” But, apparently no

one did. This fact leads me to my exhortation. The stubborn sinfulness of the northern kings may seem tedious to us but it is merely the norm of human nature. When we look at the Israelite kings and scoff at their idolatry, we should, instead, allow it to compel us to analyze our own faith. Do we know what we believe? Do we know why we believe it? Are we concerned about not just knowing the truth but for seeing it lived out in our lives, allowing it to change the way we think, act and live?

These were the failures of Israel and, for the most part, Judah also. The testimony of **I & II Kings** teaches us that sincerity doesn't necessarily equate to accuracy; earnest adherence to religious ceremony doesn't actually equate to an honest approach in worship; stubborn dedication doesn't equal good doctrine. You can be completely sincere in your beliefs, earnestly adhering to the tenets of your faith and stubbornly dedicated to your form of worship and still be completely wrong and headed for destruction. We tend to blame quite a bit of the churches woes on tradition or denominationalism but tradition in itself is not wrong unless it is used as a substitute for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Denominationalism isn't necessarily wrong unless it's used as a substitute for your own personal study and experience with God's Word.

So, we will see more of the same in our study of **II Kings** but will it reflect our old way of life or our current way of life?

1-4 – Here we are introduced to Amaziah, the 9th king of Judah. Amaziah was the son of Joash, the boy king. We are given his length of reign and pedigree in **v1-2** and then the usual estimate of how he did spiritually during his reign. While all this looks fairly typical, an important principle has been inserted within this mundane estimation. We should recognize from our study of **I & II Kings** that David is the spiritual standard for all Judean and Israelite kings. The Davidic standard is mentioned some 12 times throughout the 2 books.

What we first notice in our text is that Amaziah failed to rise to the standard of David. He seemed to only be able to muster up to a Joash-standard, which, if you recall, is not really saying much. Joash started off good but then his fidelity to Yahweh fell by the wayside after his mentor, Jehoiada the priest passed away. But it's the next failure that we especially tend to yawn over: Amaziah didn't take away the high places (**4**). We've heard this before.

In fact, we've heard it so much we've become numb to its significance. We may even wonder that, if this is going to occur in every reign, why does the author bother to include it. Couldn't he assume we'd take it as a given and save space?

The author does need to be selective on what he includes in his manuscript and yet, he includes this exception in every case in which it appears. This is the principle we are meant to see – that Yahweh never fails to acknowledge every negligence short of full devotion to Himself. After reading this several times we start to assume that's about all we can expect from the kings of Judah but that's never Yahweh's attitude. He expects total devotion from the kings; He's looking for another David and He's not satisfied with anything less.

And neither are we if our hearts are in tune with His and our heads are screwed on correctly. If a wife were to say that her husband was an excellent provider but a non-existent companion, we wouldn't presume she's implying that she is happy with that arrangement – or that the abundance of provision on the one hand somehow soothed the pain on the other. Parents, if your kid(s) pulled you into the living room for 90 minutes, once a week and praised you for being a good parent and gushed over how much they loved and respected you but yet, they barely listen to your instructions and rarely do what you tell them; would you be satisfied with that?

So it was with Amaziah. Why does righteousness have to be so restrained? Why must godliness be so tame? What the text is revealing is that half-hearted orthodoxy is not covenantal obedience. For Amaziah, it was enough to be like Joash. Why get excited over high places? Why let righteousness get your blood pressure up? No need to rock the boat. It's been going on this way for so long now, why bother?

We see this same attitude spread across Christian circles today. We have bad-mouthed the Pharisees so much that we tend to forget they were sticklers for personal piety; albeit an external piety. The Pharisees problem was that they were so pious that they felt free to judge anyone who failed to live up to their standards. But, while being judgmental is not a healthy Christian characteristic and we shouldn't try to be the Holy Spirit in other people's lives, we should allow the Holy Spirit to do His necessary work of

sanctification in our own lives; we should cooperate with Him in that work. Personal piety should be every believer's goal because the Bible commands it ([I Pt 1:13-16](#)). Righteousness doesn't just happen; it must be a rigorous, deliberate pursuit. We must be aggressive in our personal godliness.

5-14 – Amaziah starts off with a pretty impressive record. He executes his father's assassins but does so with the restraint the Law of Moses requires ([Deut 24:16](#)). Next, he pulls off an astounding victory over Edom in the Valley of Salt, inflicting many casualties and conquering a strategic location (Petra?). But, then all this victory goes to his head and he turns his attention north to Israel and decides to pick a fight. Now, in Amaziah's defense, Israel had provoked this confrontation with some less-than-gracious actions against Judah that are recorded in [II Chron 25](#). But the author of Kings doesn't include any of this back-story so we'll just deal with what we have.

Amaziah's not asking for a summit meeting here, he's looking to stir up hostilities against Jehoash. If you recall from [13:7](#), Jehoash's father had a run in with Hazael of Syria that left Israel's army severely decimated. With his own army of 300K, maybe Amaziah thought he could take Israel with no problem. Jehoash tries to paint a picture for Amaziah to show him how foolish his aggression is. The implication of his fable is unmistakable: "Did you hear that squish when the wild beast stepped on the thistle? That's you Amaziah." If you continue to pursue this foolish war plan you're going to get squished. Victory has made you proud and your pride will lead to disaster for both you and Judah.

But Amaziah couldn't be reasoned with, the battle was engaged and Judah got spanked. Jehoash actually achieves something few winners enjoy – he captures the opposing king (checkmate)! The author emphasizes this rarity by listing Amaziah and his heredity first in the sentence; but that's not even the worst of it. Jehoash then makes a run up to Jerusalem, trashes about 600 ft of the northern wall, helps himself to all the wealth of the temple and the palace and, to add insult to injury, carries off some hostages (royal?) to go spend some time with him in Samaria. None of these are desirable outcomes but let's focus on the plundering of the temple and the palace.

At least 7 times in [1-2 Kings](#) the treasures of the temple and palace are either forcibly taken as plunder or voluntarily given away as tribute or bribes.

3 times these treasures are directly plundered by conquerors. The 1st was in **I Kings 14:26** when Shishak of Egypt defeats Rehoboam. This is the 2nd; the 3rd (last) will be in ch**24** when Nebuchadnezzar comes knocking. The 2nd and 3rd events have some striking parallels. In both cases, the temple and palace are stripped of their wealth and the king is taken with other hostages. Here in 14, Jerusalem has fallen and Judah has now had its 1st experience of an exile of sorts. Thus, our text serves as a foreshadowing of what's to come at the end of the book. The king captured, walls destroyed, treasures rifled, hostages taken: all a prelude to more of the same.

The story isn't any different for Israel. The same foreshadowing pattern is seen in **Amos 4:6-12**. The prophet lists off several covenant curses God inflicted on Israel to drive them to repentance. But after each blow Yahweh declares, "Yet you have not returned to Me." Whether it was famine, drought, crop failures, military defeat or disasters; it made no difference. Israel was dense, they didn't get the point. They ignored the foreshadowings. All that remained for them was to meet...God in terrible judgment and that's not very far down the road for Israel.

Of course, neither Israel nor Judah holds a monopoly on denseness. We're seeing a surge in crime an increase in mass shootings at schools and jobsites. There are endless scandals at the highest levels of our government. We've been attacked by terrorists at home and overseas. Our economy is in shambles and the level of morality in society has hit an all time low in my opinion. Are these God's foreshadowings meant to awaken a nation that literally has no knowledge of God; that through its courts and legislature has instituted a culture of death over the most innocent of lives among us for over 30 years, a society that revels in rampant immorality; that caters to all who glory in their sexual perversions? Is God shouting at America? Is He giving us glimpses of what is to come?

15-22 – King Jehoash of Israel must really rate because this is his 2nd obituary (**13:12-13**). The obituary of Amaziah of Judah is a little messy. It seems a conspiracy was hatched against him, he discovered it and left town but they tracked him down in Lachish and put the kibosh on him. Then, after they assassinated him, they gave him a kosher funeral and installed his son Azariah (or Uzziah) as king in his place. Azariah may be the son of the hated Amaziah but he is confirmed as king. It's amazing that in the midst of all this royal intrigue and murder, things remain stable.

Of course, all this political stability rests on divine promises. Yahweh had promised Jehu of Israel a 4-generation dynasty and Jeroboam II is the final installment of that promise. But Yahweh promised David an unending dynasty so, in spite of a Judean hit squad, Azariah is the current proof that God's promise holds true. Yahweh's promise directs history. No matter what happens in Judean politics, Yahweh's promise rules. Even when the Davidic king is unseated by Nebuchadnezzar the Davidic line continued and resurfaced in Matt 1 in Jesus. His life moves from ministry to crucifixion to resurrection to ascension to enthronement at the place of supreme authority and power in the universe. In its time that hidden reign will be visibly imposed and obvious to all ([Rev 11:15](#)).

23-29 – Amidst the usual formula that announces and assesses a new king, we are presented with a bit of a conundrum between [v24-25](#). On the one hand we are told that Jeroboam did evil in Yahweh's eyes and in the next we see him successfully restore Israel's borders back to what they were during the reign of Solomon! What gives here? Evil and success is a strange combination. Why is Yahweh allowing this to go on? Why doesn't He bring Jeroboam's reign crashing down in disaster? Why is Israel still worshipping calves and living the high life? There's wickedness in high places and both the military and the economy are expanding at a booming rate!

Why were things this way? For 2 reasons: 1) because of the word of Yahweh. He had spoken through Jonah the prophet predicting this massive military recovery of Israel. 2) Because of the warm compassion of Yahweh. In fact, it was this compassion that drove His word. Israel's God is still the same exodus God who sees the affliction of His people and responds with mercy and power. You almost get the sense that Israel is on the cusp of being wiped out entirely but Yahweh is reticent to bring them there.

But, what of our conundrum? What does it mean to teach us? The point we're to take here is simply that prosperity may be a sign of God's compassion but not of His commendation. It's easy to misread signs. Jeroboam's success was not an indication of Yahweh's favor at all – merely His pity. This may be a bit unnerving for the “word of faith” and the name-it-and-claim-it crowds for the text is telling us in no uncertain terms that whether nations or individuals: do not mistake God's patience for His

pleasure, don't mistake His longsuffering for a license to sin (Rom 2:4). While Israel was enjoying the highlife, little did they know that within 60 years of Jeroboam becoming king, the kingdom would cease to exist.

Secular history records Jeroboam as being a significant and powerful player on the Near East stage during his time. There is no doubt he put Israel back on the map. The way ch13-14 are arranged, they highlight Jeroboam's success.

First, Israel is reduced within an inch of her life during the reign of his father Jehoahaz (13:1-7) then Israel is restored to her former glory under Jeroboam (14:23-27). Yet, there's one line that brings Jeroboam down to size, the Lord... saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash (27b).

The entire record of his reign makes the same point. Out of the 7 verses that describe this heavyweight king, 4 verses consist of standard formulas. Of the 3 verses that say something distinctive about his reign only half a verse (25a) mentions his historical achievement – the rest is theology (25b-27). The way Yahweh reports royal greatness cuts it down to size. Of course, that's the way the Bible estimates all human achievement that doesn't bow the knee to God. This point doesn't just apply to deviant kings but to all who claim to minister for or serve in or simply carry Jesus' name. "Only one life, Twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last."

Jeroboam might have thought he was something special but he was only the instrument Yahweh used to deliver Israel from her oppressors. He was Israel's longest tenured king, ruling for 41 years but if he worried about his legacy, he shouldn't have because it was about to go up in smoke.

Personal piety and godliness is what God expects from all of His children but these things have value beyond pleasing God. If we honestly desire to influence the world around us for the cause of Christ; if we truly desire to see the power and grace of God manifested through our lives; if we fervently desire to see God's will accomplished in our lives then we cannot hope to achieve any of those things by imitating the world or uniting with the world. These wonderful blessings will only be achieved to the degree that we are willing to be different from the world.

God has called us to be holy, not to rain on our selfish sin parade but

because He knows that's the only way we will make a real impact on the world for Him. The world doesn't need us to tell them that God's way is better – they need us to show them! The world doesn't need holier-than-thou Christian critics – they need holy Christian examples. After Jeroboam dies, the end of Israel is near and the prophetic ministry is greatly increased. That's the grace of God – when judgment is just around the corner then the testimony of His grace is multiplied. Will you be His voice? 😊