

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 52
Week 52 – 1 Kings 15-22; 2 Chronicles 13-23

Key Concepts: the three main concepts here are that there are no perfect leaders, that God sends prophets to show the people the way and that there are consequences, both positive and negative for faithfulness or a lack thereof.

Stories: in 1 Kings we meet good Kings (Asa and Jehoshaphat) and bad kings (almost all of the others), witness war between Judah and Israel, alliances between the two, the rise of other powers such as Syria, the rise and fall of a series of kings in Israel (often brought about by assassination), the apostasy of all kings (some worse than others), the rise of Elijah the prophet, his struggles with King Ahab and the prophets of Baal, the influence of Queen Jezebel, and finally the death of Ahab. In 2 Chronicles we encounter more details about the supremacy of Judah (the faithful nation) over against Israel (the unfaithful nations), the reigns of Asa and Jehoshaphat (good in Judah) followed by Jehoram, who killed all of his siblings, the short reign of Ahaziah (evil) and then the reign of his mother Athaliah (who was a daughter of Ahab) who is ultimately overthrown by followers of the child-king Joash.

Brief Summary: what we encounter in this section is the continuing roller coaster of faithful/not so faithful leadership by the kings of both Israel and Judah. While the writer of Chronicles attempts to draw clear distinctions between the leaders of the two kingdoms (Israel – bad, Judah – good), the historical record makes this a difficult task.

We will begin by looking at the two good kings of Judah. Asa and Jehoshaphat are counted among the good kings of Judah. They are considered good because they eliminated male-cult prostitution, removed Baal worship from its place as a central religion of the empire and attuned their “hearts” to God. These are the marks of a good king as exemplified by David (who in a nice aside is spoken of as a great king except for the incident with Uriah). In fact under Jehoshaphat there was supposedly a time when “the book of the law” was taught across the kingdom (2 Chronicles 17:9). Unfortunately though, even good kings fall. Both Asa and Jehoshaphat sin at the end of their reigns and pay a price for it.

The most evil off the Israelite kings in this section is Ahab, along with his wife Jezebel. Jezebel was a non-Israelite who worshiped Baal and its associate deities. She took great offense at the prophets of YHWHY who condemned her for this worship. She spent much of her time as queen trying to exterminate all of the prophets of YHWHY. Ahab’s sin was that he was complicit in these actions; worship of Baal and the extermination of the prophets. In addition he was willing to allow his wife to murder their neighbor Naboth, so that Ahab could gain Naboth’s vineyard (remember all land was tribally controlled and no one was allowed to take it).

One of the most important parts of this section is that we encounter the prophet Elijah. While other prophets will come and go playing bit parts in the story, Elijah is front and center with his own significant role to play. Elijah confronts the king and queen, destroys the prophets of Baal, heals, brings the dead back to life, is fed by angels, feeds and cares for a widow, hear God’s still small voice and is reminded by God that he is not the only faithful Israelite left alive. The significance of Elijah is that in his work we are reminded that God had not given up on Israel. They were still God’s people and God wanted them to return to right worship and right living.

1. How would you relate the humanness of the kings with the humanness of politicians today?
2. What attributes do you believe make for a “good” leader in church or society?
3. Have you ever heard the still, small voice of God? If so, how did that encounter impact you?