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2 Kings 1 – Sunday School Lesson

Who Will Follow Christ?

March 14, 2021

Text: 2 Kings 1

We continue to look at the era preceding Jeremiah's day. These events are occurring in the northern kingdom, that capital of which was Samaria. If you haven't been able to follow this series before this, let me just set the scene a bit.

This is the time of the divided kingdom which began after King Solomon's death. The nation Israel split and a false king, Jeroboam, began to reign over the northern 10 tribes. This was wicked and a rebellion against the Lord because the Davidic kingly line ruled from Jerusalem and furthermore, it was at the temple in Jerusalem where all Israel was to worship. Instead, Jeroboam set up a blasphemous idol calf and

counterfeit priesthood. It would be the northern kingdom which would be destroyed first, in 722BC by the invading Assyrians as God's judgment against their evil.

Judah, the southern kingdom consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, would remain until 587BC. In spite of all the warnings they had seen God give them and in spite of seeing the destruction of the northern kingdom, Judah continued to rebel against the Lord and worship idols. There were a few godly kings who reigned, the most prominent being Josiah who effected far-reaching reforms and led the nation in obeying the Lord. Josiah died in battle with Egypt, and ultimately the Lord brought the Babylonians, under Nebuchadnezzar, as His instrument for wiping out Judah. Survivors would remain captives in Babylon for 70 (like Daniel and his friends) years until the remnant returned under Ezra and Nehemiah.

All this time remember, *the Lord preserved His true remnant, Daniel and his friends being examples.* This

remnant in all ages is the true church, the real flock of the Lord.

Alright then, 1 Kings ends this way, right after the death of wicked Ahab -

1 Kings 22:51-53 ESV Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel. (52) He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. (53) He served Baal and worshiped him and provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger in every way that his father had done.

Let me make a note of important application here:

If we are going to follow Christ, then we must break from the evils of the generations before us. Ahaziah did not. This is the typical pattern among human beings – “He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.”

We need to take very careful and sober consideration of this. *It is not inevitable that you walk in the sins of your parents and forefathers! It may be typical, but it is not inevitable.* For example:

2 Kings 21:1-9 ESV Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. (2) And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel.

(3) For he rebuilt the high places that Hezekiah his father had destroyed, and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. (4) And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem will I put my name.” (5) And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

(6) And he burned his son as an offering and used fortune-telling and omens and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him

to anger. (7) And the carved image of Asherah that he had made he set in the house of which the LORD said to David and to Solomon his son, “In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever. (8) And I will not cause the feet of Israel to wander anymore out of the land that I gave to their fathers, if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the Law that my servant Moses commanded them.”

(9) But they did not listen, and Manasseh led them astray to do more evil than the nations had done whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel.

That is about as wicked of a father as you could have – and grandfather and great grandfather. But now look –

2 Kings 22:1-11 ESV Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. (2) **And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his**

father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left. (3) In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the secretary, to the house of the LORD, saying, (4) “Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest, that he may count the money that has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people. (5) And let it be given into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD, and let them give it to the workmen who are at the house of the LORD, repairing the house (6) (that is, to the carpenters, and to the builders, and to the masons), and let them use it for buying timber and quarried stone to repair the house. (7) But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly.”

(8) And Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, “I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD.” And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. (9) And Shaphan the secretary came to the king, and reported to the king, “Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have

the oversight of the house of the LORD.” (10) Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read it before the king. (11) When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes.

I have said this many times before and I will keep saying it –

Family – mothers and fathers, grandparents, children, siblings – are right at the top of the list of idols that people worship today. Unlike Josiah, they will not break with evil blood when it comes down to a choice of family or Christ. They profess to be Christians, but they do not take heed to Christ’s command:

Luke 14:25-33 ESV Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, (26) “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

(27) Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. (28) For which of you,

desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? (29) Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, (30) saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ (31) Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? (32) And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. (33) So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

I have heard preachers and so-called Christian teachers try to water this down. They say things like, “well Jesus is only talking about being a disciple, not about being saved.” They maintain that all disciples are Christians, but not all Christians are disciples.” That kind of nonsense.

But Jesus IS talking about salvation here. He is telling us that if we refuse to give up everything and choose to follow Him no matter what the cost – even if it means that I will be the black sheep of

the family and be rejected and scorned by my own family – then He will not have us.

Look at the parallel in Matthew where we see even more plainly that Jesus is speaking of being saved – or not –

Matthew 10:32-39 ESV So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, (33) but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

(34) “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. **I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.**

(35) **For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. (36) And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.**

(37) **Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (38) And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (39) Whoever finds his life will**

lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

That is plainly not some idea of “there are Christians and then there is a higher level of Christian called a “disciple.” No. It means this:

Philippians 3:7-11 ESV But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) **Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ**

(9) **and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—** (10) that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (11) that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Let me elaborate a bit on Paul’s words here. Note especially what he says in verses 8-9 again. I will suggest this to

you-

Anyone who does not count everything as loss for the sake of knowing Christ, is inevitably and necessarily embracing some kind of self-made righteousness.

Now think about this carefully. If someone, especially people who claim to be Christians, refuse to give up everything in order to follow Christ (ie, choose Christ over everything else when confronted with such a choice)...if they refuse to obey Christ...*then they necessarily do not regard Christ as necessary to them being pronounced righteous before God. Because something and someone is more important to them than Christ.*

See it?

- Christ is our righteousness. He is the only righteousness before God. [1 Corinthians 1:30 ESV And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,]
- Necessarily then we seek Christ above all. Count all loss in order

to follow Him.

- But, if we choose people/family/things, etc when faced with a choice between them and obeying Christ, then...
- We are not regarding Christ as the only One in whom righteousness before God is found. We are not seeing Him as our treasure –

Matthew 6:21 ESV For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 13:44-46 ESV “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. (45) “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, (46) who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Mark 10:21-22 ESV And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” (22) Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful,

for he had great possessions.

I know what it is like to be despised by father, mother, sisters and family. So does Verla. And I hope you do too. It is not pleasant. It isn't something we want, but the fact is that when we choose Christ, when we value and love Him above all else, the world is going to hate and despise us.

I can remember my father – with whom I had some great times hunting and fishing as I grew up – eventually talking to me and looking at me with an attitude of contempt. And I have experienced the mocking of my mother as a result of me choosing Christ. Verla has been derided and reviled with the vilest of hateful language by her sisters. So I know what I am speaking of here. None of this was because we were not as tactful as we should have been, or because we “went too far” and didn't make compromises we should have – *so please don't try to lay that blame on us.* We won't accept it. The truth is this:

Luke 6:22 ESV “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!

John 15:18-19 ESV “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

You do not need to follow in the footsteps of your parents or grandparents or any who have gone before you. Many if not most people do, but you can break from people and things that oppose your obedience to Christ, and in fact you MUST do so to be saved. If you are Josiah, you do not have to be a Manasseh. But if you float along and try to please the world and Christ, this is the inevitable result:

Matthew 6:24 ESV “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Is anyone listening this morning the kind of person whose Christianity is all talk but no obedience? I hope not, but this kind is very common –

Matthew 21:28-31 ESV “What do you

think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ (29) And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. (30) And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. (31) Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.

Wicked King Ahaziah Confronted by Elijah

I want us to be familiar with the history of this era, specifically with the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Here in this first chapter of 2 Kings we have an example of what I call *knowing unbelief*. We just have time to read it this morning, but follow along as I do –

2 Kings 1:1-18 ESV After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel. (2) Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick; **so he sent messengers, telling them, “Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from**

this sickness.”

(3) But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, “Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?’

(4) Now therefore thus says the LORD, You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.” So Elijah went.

(5) The messengers returned to the king, and he said to them, “Why have you returned?” (6) And they said to him, “There came a man to meet us, and said to us, ‘Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, Thus says the LORD, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’” (7) He said to them, “What kind of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?” (8) They answered him, “He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist.” **And he said, “It is Elijah the Tishbite.”**

(9) Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty men with his fifty. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, “O man of God, the king says, ‘Come down.’” (10) But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, “**If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.**” Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

(11) Again the king sent to him another captain of fifty men with his fifty. And he answered and said to him, “O man of God, this is the king's order, ‘Come down quickly!’” (12) But Elijah answered them, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

(13) Again the king sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty **went up and came and fell on his knees before Elijah and entreated him**, “O man of God, please let my life, and the life of these fifty servants of yours, be precious in your sight. (14) Behold, fire came down from heaven and consumed the two former captains of fifty men with their fifties, but now let my life be precious

in your sight.” (15) Then the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, “Go down with him; do not be afraid of him.” So he arose and went down with him to the king

(16) and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron—is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word?—therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’”

(17) So he died according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. Jehoram became king in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, because Ahaziah had no son. (18) Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?