

How Everything Went Wrong

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[0 : 0 0] This morning's reading is going to be slightly abridged from 1 Kings 11 and 2 Kings 17. Feel free to follow along on the screen or in your bulletins.

Starting in 1 Kings 11, we read, Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh. Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite woman, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.

Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives who were princesses and 300 concubines. And his wives turned his heart away.

For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods. And his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.

For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not wholly follow the Lord as David his father had done.

[1 : 2 9] Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Melech, the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem.

And so he did for all his foreign wives who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods. Then in 2 Kings 17, In the ninth year of Hosea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Hela and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God. The people of Israel did secretly against the Lord their God things that were not right.

They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. They set up for themselves pillars and asherim on every high hill and under every green tree.

And there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the Lord carried away before them. Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes in accordance with all the law that I commanded your fathers and that I sent to you by my servants, the prophets.

[3 : 0 7] But they would not listen, but were stubborn as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the Lord their God. They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them.

They went after false idols and became false. And they followed the nations that were around them. And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings, provoking him to anger.

Therefore, the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only. This is the word of God.

And if you are new to Watermark, you are joining us in the middle of this preaching series called The Wonderful Work of God.

And we are looking at the whole storyline of the Bible. Often we know some of the stories in the Old Testament. We know the individual parts. But why are they there?

[4 : 32] Where do they fit in? Why has God given us Psalm 23 and David and Goliath? What is the point of all these things? And so we are trying to zoom out and see the big picture and how the storyline of God moves.

And what is God saying? Why does he give all these stories and commands and instructions? And what we are seeing is that what God is doing through all these sections is that he is showing that he made these promises.

God has promised to make the world right again. God is dealing with the brokenness of our world. And he is dealing with it in two ways. He is dealing with the cause, that's sin.

And he is dealing with the consequences, that's suffering. And he is making all things new. He has made these promises. And he is going to be faithful to his promises. He is working all things according to the purpose of his will to make all things new under Christ.

This is the wonderful work of God. And one of the ways to think about that is to think in terms of kingdom or kingship. God is this king. And he has all authority over all the world.

[5 : 43] And humanity, we have rebelled against him. We call that sin. We want to be our own lords and authority. And as a result of that, we've kind of been exiled from his kingdom.

We've been expelled from his kingship. We now live under not his blessing and his favor. We now live under the suffering and the curse of rejecting God.

And that's why the theme of kingship is such a big one in the Old Testament. God's always talking about these kings. And God gives his people these kings as pictures of the divine king.

Of course, the greatest of these is David. David is the great king in the Old Testament. And he rules with righteousness and justice. He rescues his people from their enemies.

And he's a picture of what does it look like to live under the rule of a good and gracious king. Ultimately, to live under the rule of God, who is the ultimate good and gracious king.

[6 : 39] And so David is a picture of God and his kingdom. But God's plans don't end with David. Remember, he makes a great promise to David. He says, I will give you a son. And that son will expand the kingdom.

And the kingdom will be a glorious place. And that promise is fulfilled in two ways. One, he has a son called Solomon. But two, he's going to have a great, great, great, great grandson called Jesus.

Both of whom are going to be greater kings than David. And Solomon, we saw last week, is David's son. He succeeds David on the throne. And he establishes the kingdom. And he expands the kingdom.

And by the end of Solomon's rule, or kind of midway through Solomon's rule, the kingdom, God's people in the Old Testament, is a wonderful place to live. It's exceedingly wonderful.

It is prosperous. It is peaceful. It is the picture of perfection on earth in many ways. And some of the things we saw last week is that they have abandoned prosperity.

[7 : 37] Remember, in Solomon's kingdom, silver is like cheap. You know, if somebody gives you a silver present, they're like, they were cheap, you know, for my birthday present.

Remember, the queen of Sheba, this foreign queen, she comes and she says, when she sees Solomon's kingdom, her breath is taken away. She is speechless. She says, I've heard the rumors of your kingdom.

I didn't even believe them. But even what I was told is not half the truth of what I've seen. Abundant prosperity. Amazing peace. All the nations around Israel are coming to Israel, not to attack them, not to subjugate them, but to learn from them, to do business with them, to trade with them.

Israel, for the first time, is at peace. There's prosperity. There's peace. There's wisdom. There's justice. There's equity. There's fairness. But the greatest thing about Solomon's kingdom is God's presence is there.

Solomon builds this amazing temple, this magnificent place that houses the presence of God. And for the first time in Israel's history, God's presence has a permanent dwelling in the center of the nation.

[8 : 42] And so by the end of chapter 10, the point that we're going to see is that Solomon is like a second Adam. And his kingdom is like a second Eden.

There's abundant prosperity and peace and wisdom and wealth and blessing. God's presence is there. It's just, it's wonderful. And by the end of 1 Kings chapter 10, you would hope that the next verse in the Bible says, and God's people lived happily ever after.

And Jesus came, right? Because everything is looking so amazing. And then you think, why doesn't Jesus just come? But that's not what happens. Because after 1 Kings chapter 10, in chapter 11, where Rachel read to us this morning, things take a turn for the worse.

And things start to go downhill again. And so let's see what happens here. While 1 Kings chapter 10 ends on a high, chapter 11, things go bad.

And the big idea for today is this. Trust in God, not the kingdoms of this world. Keep God at the center of your life. For while the kingdoms of this world will inevitably fail, God will be faithful and true to his promises.

[10 : 05] That's the big idea. Trust in God, not the things of this world. Keep God at the center of your life. Because the things of this world, the kingdoms of this world, are inevitably going to fail.

But God will be faithful to his word, to his promises. So hold on to him. So let's see how we get there. Open up your bulletin or your Bible with me and let's look at 1 Kings 11 again.

I'm going to read some of it to us again. I won't read all of it. But it says this. Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughters of Pharaoh, Moabites, Ammonites, Edonites, Sidonians, Hittite women, from the nations around which the Lord had said to his people, Do not enter into marriage with them.

They will turn your heart away. Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives who were princesses, 300 concubines, and his wives turned away his heart.

Now, you may think, okay, Solomon's got an issue with marital faithfulness here, right? That's a lot of women to love. 700 princesses, 300 concubines.

[11 : 09] That's true. But there's a deeper thing. What's going on here is that in the ancient world, the way to secure peace for your nation was to enter into political alliances with the surrounding nations.

And one of the best ways to do that was to marry the princesses of their kings. It's very unlikely that a foreign army and king is going to invade you, ransack the palace, destroy all the people in the palace, when his daughter and his grandchildren are in your palace.

So the way to make sure that there's peace around you is enter into these alliances, political alliances with the nations around you by exchanging your daughters in marriage. And so Solomon and Israel are doing that.

But God was very clear. He doesn't want his people to enter into marriage alliances with people that do not belong to the people of God. Why? Well, one, he wants God to be their security, their confidence.

Don't trust your political maneuverings, your treaties and your pacts that you make with those guys. Trust me. I will keep you safe. But the second reason is he doesn't want Israel to tolerate and then welcome and then finally worship the gods and the idols of the surrounding nations.

[12 : 27] Because that's what marriage is about, right? Marriage is the two becoming one. And so you have shared values and shared ethos. And ultimately he shared worship. And so God is very clear.

Let my people stay my people. But look what happens. Verse 4. When Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods.

Just a side note here. We're a very young church. Lots of young people. It's easy to think young people have lots of temptations. And once you're like 55 plus, you're free from temptations.

When Solomon was old, his heart was turned away. From now until the day we die, we're going to have to watch our hearts. First, temptation is always knocking at our door. When Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods.

And his heart was not wholly true to the Lord as God, as was the heart of his father, David. For Solomon went after the Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sinaeans, and after Milcom of the Ammonites.

[13 : 26] Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the Lord as David his father had done. Solomon built high places for Tremesh of Moab and Melech of the abomination of the Ammonites.

On the mountain east of Jerusalem, he did so for all his foreign wives who made offerings and sacrifice to their gods. I don't know if you noticed that in the first eight verses, five times it talks about Solomon's heart.

His heart was turned away. His heart went after other gods. His heart was corrupted. His heart, his heart, his heart. What's happening here? Solomon with his mouth and with his head, he's still worshipping God, but his heart has gone after another love.

He loved something else. Something else has taken occupation of his heart. We actually see at the end of chapter 10, it says that Solomon went down to Egypt and bought many horses from the Egyptians.

Now you think, what's wrong with horses, right? I like horses. I'm sure God likes horses. What's wrong with horses? Well, nothing in particular, except that God has said to his people, when you get a king, make sure that they don't go and build these massive stables of horses, and especially horses from Egypt, horses and chariots.

[14 : 42] Why? Because, one, God delivered you from it. That's your old life. God rescued you from it. Never go back and strengthen ties with the people from where God delivered you.

But two, again, I want to be your security, your safety. Trust in me. Look at Deuteronomy 17. It says, So God says, When you've got a king, don't go and strengthen his military power with alliances.

Don't go and marry lots of foreign women and make alliances. And don't become wealthy and proud and self-sufficient. And what does Solomon do? Strengthens his military capability.

Marries hundreds of foreign wives and has excess gold and silver. And so, just like Adam and Eve, Solomon's heart is turning.

It's turning. His heart is not after God. He's still worshiping God. But there's a little shrine over there. There's a little temple over there. On the hills just behind Jerusalem, he builds a temple for this God out of the way.

[16 : 08] Maybe in his house in the back corner, just puts a little shrine to this God to keep his wives happy. And before you know it, just like Adam and Eve, the consequences are disastrous.

There's shrines in this temple all over Israel. And the consequence is that Israel will never be the same. The first thing that happens is the nation of Israel splits into two.

Solomon is the last king of the unified Israel. Because Solomon has a son called Rehoboam. And when Rehoboam becomes king, the first thing that happens is 10 out of the 12 tribes split away.

And they say, we don't want you, our king. We're going to go form our own nation of our own. And so, they form a breakaway nation. It's called the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. And Israel are never again, 3,000 years since then, are these two kingdoms united.

The once great nation of Israel is now split up into two smaller kingdoms. Now, it's a bit confusing because the Northern Kingdom is known as Israel. So, that's a bit confusing. The Southern Kingdom is known as Judah.

[17 : 12] And these two kingdoms, the once nation of Israel, are fighting for the next 200 years. They're at each other. They don't get along. There's civil war. And things go from bad to worse.

For the next 200 years, the Northern Kingdom lurches from one disastrous king after another. And there are assassinations. There are members of the royal family killing other members of the royal family.

There are coups. The nation just goes down here. Worse and worse and worse. And eventually, you have kings burning their own children in the fire as offerings to pagan gods.

It's just utterly awful. And so, look at what happens in 2 Kings 17. Rachel read it for us. It says, It says, Asherim was the goddess of fertility of one of the surrounding nations.

They built these poles and they bowed down to it. There they made offerings to foreign gods in the high places. But the Lord had warned them by every prophet and every seer, saying, Turn from your ways.

[18 : 37] Keep my commandments and my statutes in accordance with my laws. But they would not listen. No, they were stubborn as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the Lord their God. They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them.

They went after false gods and became false. They followed the nations around them. They burnt their sons and their daughters in the fire as offerings to pagan gods. Then the Lord was angry with Israel.

He removed them from his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only. So you've got these two kingdoms, the northern and the southern kingdom. And the northern kingdom, Israel, they just, things go really bad really quickly.

And for 200 years, God is pleading with them, sending their prophets, saying, come back, and they don't listen. And so eventually, 200 years to the year, after they split, in 722 BC, the king of Assyria marches into Israel, and he completely wipes them out.

Completely destroys them. And Israel, this northern kingdom, is never again constituted as a nation. They never come back to the land. They are forever wiped out.

[19 : 47] But they don't exist anymore. Now the southern kingdom, Judah, they're a little bit better. But they're not too much better. They have a mix of good kings and bad kings. They have good kings like Josiah and Hezekiah.

And they try and reform things. And whenever they come to the kingdom, they pull down the ashram. They pull down the pagan temples and shrines. And they call people to worship God. But their reforms are always short-lived.

And so they rule well. But as soon as they die, the next king after them just goes back like the other kings. And so they last a little bit longer. They last about another 150 years. But things still go down, down, down.

And Judah's kings end up doing just what Israel had done. Worshiping foreign gods, adopting pagan practices, committing injustice. The rich are exploiting the poor. The powerful take advantage of the powerless.

And eventually Judah in the south is just like Israel. And God sends prophet after prophet, warning after warning. But they don't listen. So 150 years later, Babylon marches into Jerusalem.

[20 : 49] Lays siege to Jerusalem for three years. Eventually they burn down the walls. They march in. They destroy the temple. They destroy the palace. They kill thousands of people. And those that they don't kill, they march off as slaves back to Babylon.

And they take them to exile. And so God's chosen people are now as slaves to the Babylonians. Let's read the last section of the scripture, what happens.

If you've got your bulletin, 2 Chronicles 36. It says, So he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans.

That's another word for the Babylonians. He killed their young men with the sword. He gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, the treasures of God's house, the treasures of the king and the princes.

He took these off to Babylon. They burnt the house of God. They broke down the walls of Jerusalem. Burnt all its palaces with fire. Destroyed its precious vessels. He took them into exile.

[21 : 59] Those who had escaped from the sword. And they became servants to him and to his sons. To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah. Until the Lord enjoyed its Sabbath 70 years.

Okay, you're tracking the storyline. So there's Solomon, great kingdom. The kingdom splits because of his idolatry. The northern kingdom gets wiped out. Southern kingdom lasts a little bit longer.

But eventually Babylon takes them into exile. And so this one magnificent kingdom. Once glorious place where God's people and his presence are. And his prosperity and peace is now nothing but a smoldering pile of ruins.

And it's utterly disastrous. And God's people are now serving godless nation in Babylon. Ruthless Babylonians. And in a sense, Israel is all the way back to Genesis chapter 3.

At the fall. Remember there's the creation and then things fall disastrously. And Adam and Eve are exiled from the garden. Expelled from God's presence. No longer living under God's blessing and favor.

[23 : 01] Now living under God's curse. And then God restores things better, better, better. And now they're all the way back there again. Exiled out of God's kingdom. Expelled from his presence. Living under the curse of the Babylonians.

I'm not sure if you know Psalm 137. It is probably one of the most heart-wrenching chapters in the entire Bible. Listen to Eugene Peterson's translation of it.

It says, Alongside the waters of Babylon, we sat on the banks. We cried and we cried. Remembering the good old days of Jerusalem. Alongside the quaking poplar trees, we stacked our unplayed harps.

That's where our captors demanded songs of us. Sarcastically and mocking, saying, Sing for us one of those happy songs of Zion. God, remember the ruin of Jerusalem.

That day that they yelled out, Rick it, smash it to bits. Oh you Babylonians, you ravagers. A reward for whoever gets back at you. For all you've done to us.

[23 : 59] Yes, a reward to the one who grabs your babies and smashes their heads against the rocks. It's pretty gruesome. It's in the Bible. That's how Israel felt. All that had happened to them.

That's where Israel landed up. And so this is the story of God's people. From David and Solomon through Israel's annihilation at the hands of the Assyrians.

Judah's annihilation at the hands of the Babylonians. And here they are, weeping and mourning in Babylon. Okay, we're going to pause the story there.

And next week we're going to pick up on what happens. But here's the question. What should we learn from this? What does God want to say to us? I mean in some ways, why doesn't God just go from Solomon to Jesus?

Why is this in the Bible? If you remember last week, Neil spoke about how Solomon's kingdom is like a model. A foreshadow of the great kingdom.

[24 : 57] And now it feels like the model has been completely smashed. So why is it in the Bible? What should we take from this? Well, let me give us four things that I think we should learn from this. Okay, four things to take with us this week.

First thing is this. The Lord of history. The Lord of history. One of the great points that Neil's made last week is that God's plan for salvation is historical. You shouldn't just read the Bible as metaphorical, allegorical.

These things really happened in the history of the world. You can go and visit these places. Archaeologists have uncovered them. You can touch them. You can feel them. This is real historical stuff.

The Bible isn't just a book of philosophy from which you're only meant to extract some deeper spiritual truth. It's really historical. So on the one hand, the one danger is to read the Bible as just allegorical, metaphorical.

Okay, there's some lesson in it. And actually the Bible wants to say these are real historical realities. This happened to God's people. But the other danger is to read the Bible purely from a historical, archaeological perspective.

[26 : 05] And to think, okay, this is a great story. So God brings his people and then 922 this happens and 722 this happens and Assyria comes and then Judah comes and Babylon and then there's Cyrus. Great story.

And you can attribute the fall of Jerusalem and these things to ancient Near East political history. But the point that God wants to make here is that God is the Lord of history.

These things aren't random or on chance. God is the one who's weaving and guiding all of history according to the purpose of his will. The God that we've been talking about all these weeks, who spoke his covenant to Abraham and Moses and David, is ultimately the one who is God of history.

As has often been said, history is his story. So we sang it earlier. None above him, none before him, all of time in his hands. That's not just, you know, poetic lyrics.

That's absolutely true. All of time, from 100 billion years in the past to 100 billion years in the future, all of time is in his hands. And he is guiding all of it.

[27 : 16] I don't know if you noticed in our passage, 1 Kings 11. Solomon's heart turned away from the Lord. So the Lord raised up an adversary to King 17.

The ninth year of King Asher, Salmaneser, king of Assyria, captured Israel. He carried them away to Assyria. This happened because the people of Israel sinned against the Lord. Therefore, the Lord was angry and he removed them out of his sight.

This isn't just political history. This is God acting in history. Or chronicles. The Lord brought up against him the king of the Babylonians and removed them to Babylon.

The point is, human history isn't simply human history. It's God working in human history to accomplish his plans and his purposes. God is not just a watchmaker God who kind of winds up the dial, puts it to go, and then stands back and says, let's see how things work out.

He is intricately involved. And the Bible word for this is sovereign. Sovereign. Sovereign means Lord over everything. The one in total control.

[28 : 20] God is sovereign over everything. Over all of history and everything that happens. And sometimes we in the middle of history can't see what God is doing.

You think, God, what are you doing? How can you let this happen? That's why we need the Bible. To remind us that God is in control. He's working all things according to the purpose of his will.

And what is the purpose of his will? To bring all things together under Christ. To bring exiled, expelled sinners under Christ's blessing and rule. And those who refuse to come into Christ's rule will one day be expelled forever.

For all eternity. But God is working all things to bring as many people as possible under the rule of Christ to experience his blessing. God is the Lord of history.

He brought these things to bear. Second thing. The deceitfulness of idols. Look at the height of Solomon's rule.

[29 : 19] Things could not have been better. Abundant prosperity like they've never known before. Peace and justice in the land. Freedom from all their enemies. Things are...

It's amazing. At the height of Solomon's rule, Israel is the closest that they've ever got to heaven. And yet just a few years later, in terms of human history, they are as close as you get to hell.

What happened? What happened? You'd think that after all God had said to them and told them and given them and sent to them, you'd think that they'd learn. And you'd think that you could say to them, guys, learn from the kings that went before you.

This is not going to end well. But they don't. And it's easy to look at Solomon and Israel and think, you idiots, come on. Like, how many times do we need to go through this?

And yet there's something that just keeps them falling again and again and again. What is it? The Bible says that true spiritual health and the true spiritual condition of our hearts is never measured by what we know in our heads, but by the condition of our hearts.

[30 : 29] What I'm saying is true spiritual health is not by what you know, it's by what you worship. By what you worship. What's most important to you?

What are you hoping and trusting in? It's why the scriptures warn us again and again about the dangers of and the deceitfulness of idols. Now, what is an idol?

An idol is not just something in the, you know, shrine in the kind of back of your house or a shrine in the street. An idol is not just something that you burn incense to. An idol is the thing that you love supremely above anything else or that you trust to give you peace and security.

David Paulson says, An idol is something other than Christ that has taken the title of your heart's trust, preoccupation, loyalty, fear, or delight.

It's the thing that's most precious to you. It's the thing that you feel like you could not live without. Either because the thought of living without it makes you fearful and anxious and worried, or because you feel like there's no purpose to life without it.

[31 : 37] So, for instance, work can easily become an idol. Or, let me put it this way. An idol is also something that you make sacrifices for. You sacrifice good things, things that are precious to you, to keep that thing safe and secure.

So, for instance, how do you know work has become an idol? Well, when you're sacrificing relationships, your family, maybe your integrity, your ethics, in order to prop up your work and make sure that it stays intact, it's more than just important to become an idol.

Well, how do you know money has become an idol to you? You're willing to sacrifice relationships, integrity, truthfulness, in order to keep that thing safe. Quick story, I had this temptation a little while ago.

So, I was applying for a scholarship, a bursary, for some educational things, right? And one of the questions was, okay, what's your bank account like?

Well, I had just received some money from my grandmother that had passed away, and my dad had also just given me a great gift. So, my bank account was looking pretty healthy. And I was wrestling so much.

[32 : 39] Should I reveal and tell them what's exactly going? You know, there's other investment here, should I just leave it out? I'll just tell them about this. No one needs to know about that. What's going on there?

Am I willing to sacrifice integrity, truthfulness for my bank account? That's an idol. That is a real wrestle in my heart, right? Now, throughout this passage, we see that idols, idols are occupying not just the landscape, but the hearts of the people of Israel.

It's got into them. Now, what's so dangerous about an idol? The Bible says idols are dangerous for two reasons. One, because they'll enslave you. You think you're controlling it, but it controls you, and you become a slave to it, and it manages your life.

But the second reason is this. It changes you. Loving or trusting anything more than God actually changes you and makes you become like the idol that you're trusting in.

I don't know if you noticed that sentence in 2 Kings. It says, They went after false gods and became false themselves, following the nations around them. Friends, don't miss what God wants us to see here.

[33 : 51] Those who worship false gods become false themselves. They become duplicitous. They become dishonest. Those who worship empty gods become empty themselves, superficial.

Those who love and trust and put their hope in meaningless gods, like money or career or title or social status, find that life becomes meaningless. Friends, those who trust in fragile gods, insecure gods, find that their hearts become insecure and they become fragile themselves.

We become like what we worship. Greg Beal says it like this. What you revere is what you become like. You'll resemble either for ruin or for restoration. What you're loving.

What are you loving? What are you trusting? What makes you feel safe? What makes you feel secure? What can you not live without?

Friends, what are you tempted to sacrifice your honesty for? What is the thought that to live without it makes you feel anxious or afraid?

[35 : 08] What is more precious and delightful to you than knowing the one true God? Because what Solomon wants to teach us here, what God wants to teach us here is that thing will kill you.

It'll kill you. It'll kill your joy. It'll steal your joy. It'll steal your security. You, like Solomon, may think it's nothing. You may think, I've got a handle on it. I'll keep it in the back waters.

This thing's not going to control me. It will eat you alive. And one day, many, many years from now, you'll wonder how you became the person that you are today. And where it all went wrong.

Friends, hold on to Christ. Love Christ. Trust Christ. Worship the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the one true God that will never let you down. Who won't change you and control you and enslave you.

He'll set you free. The deceitfulness of idols. Okay, third thing, and we're almost done. The inevitable destiny of human kingdoms.

[36 : 04] So, first thing is this. The Lord of history. The deceitfulness of idols. The destiny of human kingdoms. At the end of 1 Kings, the writer, the end of 1 Kings chapter 10, the writer really wants us to be blown away by the magnificence of Solomon's kingdom.

Solomon's kingdom is awesome. There's peace. There's prosperity. There's wisdom. God's presence is there. There's hope. There's joy. Do you remember what the Queen of Sheba says? Happy are your men.

Happy are your servants. It's like, this is heaven on earth. Things couldn't get better. And yet, just a few short years, it's all gone. Now, we've just spoken about a personal level.

But this is also true on a national level. On a social level. I think what God wants us to see here is that institutions, organizations, empires, and kingdoms, unless they're built on God, the destiny is they will fail.

See, it wasn't just Solomon's life who fell apart. The whole nation falls apart. The whole kingdom falls apart. And friends, it doesn't matter how strong or powerful or majestic or imposing an empire or a kingdom is.

[37 : 12] Unless God himself is at the very center, that thing will not stand. It will not last. Its decline, its eventual collapse is inevitable.

In Revelation chapter 11, there's this amazing little verse that is, I've often thought about it over the years. It says this, the kingdoms of our world will become the kingdom of Christ, of our Lord and his Christ.

And he shall reign forever and ever. I don't really know what that exactly means in its entirety, but I think it means this. Every single kingdom, whether political, institutional, corporate, financial, even churches.

If those are not built on the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel and his glory, they have an expiry date. And there is a day coming when either they will submit to Christ and acknowledge Christ as king, or they will be engulfed by his kingdom.

They will be swallowed up by him. And friends, this is true even of churches. Even every church on its website is going to say, we follow Jesus. We love God and the Bible. Yes, all glory of God.

[38 : 21] Great. But friends, any church that is not rooted and anchored in who Christ is and the gospel and his glory, any church that's built on a human personality or on a vibe or on a community or on a great building, it is going to fall apart.

Solomon's kingdom paid lip service to God. But where was their heart? Their heart was running after the idols. And it fell apart. Friends, God doesn't owe anybody anything.

He didn't owe Israel blessing and prosperity. He doesn't owe watermark blessing and prosperity. And if we drift away from Christ, our own demise is inevitable. All human kingdoms, even churches, will fall apart if they're not built on the rock that is Christ.

Here's the last thing I think God wants us to take from us. The God who is faithful to his promise. The Lord of history, the deceit of idols, the destiny of human kingdoms, but the God who is faithful to his promises.

We see this in two ways here, and then we'll wrap this up. The first one is this. Throughout Israel's history, God has been speaking to them. He's saying, if you love me, if you trust me, if you build your lives on me, if you follow me, if you stay under my rule, you'll experience my blessing.

[39 : 39] But if you don't, if you go your own way, demise and destruction is headed your way. God has been speaking to them for hundreds of years, sending prophet after prophet, warning after warning, saying, turn from your ways, follow me, trust me, I have got your best interests at heart.

And when Israel doesn't, and things go pear-shaped, that's not because God is having a temper tantrum. God is not flying off the handle, saying, fine, let's do things your way.

This is the outcome of God's word to them, year in and year out. God is not flying off the handle or losing his temper. God is being true to his word.

But of course, that's not the only promise that God made. The Lord, the God of their fathers, spoke to them and called them to himself and said, I will be faithful to my covenant promises.

God has made promises that despite the rebellion on the sin of his people, he will be faithful to his promise to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Moses and to David. And that through this wrangled, tangled, messy, family, nation, history of Israel, God will send a true king, heaven and earth true king.

[40 : 55] And he will be a king that really will rule forever and ever and ever in righteousness and justice. His kingdom will be marked by truth, but also marked by immense mercy and grace.

And his kingdom will expand and his kingdom truly will never end. And God makes this promise that despite his discipline of Israel, despite the Assyrians and the Babylonians, his kingdom promises will not fail.

His true king will come. And his kingdom will come. And deal with the sin of the world and the consequences, the suffering. And his kingdom will welcome in all who don't deserve to be part of it.

This king will come who will welcome sinners and sufferers alike. This king will come. He will have such authority.

He will drive out demons with a word. He will control the weather with what he says. With a touch, he will heal the demon-possessed and the sick.

[41 : 57] He will overturn death. He will have such authority. And yet at the same time, he'll be so gracious, he'll be able to say, Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden.

And I will give you rest. But God made his promises to his people that if you turn your back on me, it will end disastrously. But still, despite your sin, my king will come.

And his kingdom will come. And all who come to him will find rest. And so friends, the decline and the exile of Israel is a clear reminder, as Alan said to us earlier, God is no grandfatherly old man, a benevolent old senile, as C.S. Lewis used to put it, who just says, live however you please and all will be fine.

But God is also not a ruthless, demanding, distant God who is only appeased by back-breaking moral effort. Who is he? He's the God of the promise.

He is God who is faithful to his word. He is the God who is making all things new. He is the God who is come to us in our sin and our suffering and promises that if we will simply trust him, he will make our lives new as well.

[43 : 18] He is the God who is faithful to his word and true to his promise. He is the God that we can trust. And so friends, this week, as we go into our week in Hong Kong, there are going to be times when it's hard to trust God.

Why should we do that? He's the Lord of all history. He is working all things according to the purpose of his will, to bring things under Christ. Friends, this week, let us look at our hearts and recognize the deceitfulness of the idols and the things that we trust in.

This week, let's look and think about what are we building our lives upon? And what is the destiny of those kingdoms? Where will they end up? Let us pray.

But ultimately, this week, let's trust him. The one who is faithful to his word. The one who is faithful to his promises. Let's do that now.

Let's pray. Why don't you join me as we pray? Father God, as we read your word and the history of your people, it is, in some senses, so heartbreaking.

[44 : 23] God, when we see the pain of what happened with Israel, the agony, God, God, it challenges us as well.

When we see the sin and the fact that your people so often turn from you and trusted in false gods. God, won't you help us to search our own hearts?

Holy Spirit, won't you help us to see what are the things that we are trusting in? What occupies the seed of our hearts? God, I pray, won't you shine the spotlight of your spirit on our hearts and help us to see that.

Help us to trust in you. And God, you've given us so many reasons to trust you. Jesus, but you went to the cross for us. But God, what this passage shows us is that you are faithful.

You are true to your word. And so God, I pray this week, won't you help us? Whether we are parenting, whether we're in the office, whether it's in a relationship, whether it's in our studies, whether it's making a business deal.

[45 : 29] God, won't you be true to our hearts? Won't you be supreme to our hearts? Won't you be the one that we love and trust above all things? God, won't you draw near to us and help us to trust you?

Won't you pour faith into our hearts? And ultimately, God, as you came to us, won't you help us to draw near to you?

Lord, we pray these things in your good and gracious name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.