

Revival: *The War in Heaven* 2 Chronicles 21-23

Bad news is always followed by good news, because the forces of good in this universe are stronger than the forces of evil. Ezra knew that. He and his people were emerging from a national crisis. So, Ezra writes stories. Real-life stories, with real-life lessons.

We've been wrestling with hope in our society for a few years now. Ezra's people wrestled with it for decades. The story I want to explore with you today is a story of hope.

Starting Point – 1 Chronicles 17:10-14

There are two promises in this passage:

- One is that there would always be a descendent of David ruling over the nation of Israel.
 - The second was that one of those descendants would rule "God's kingdom" forever. In other words, that the Messiah, the Forever-Ruler, would be a descendant of David.
- There was a time, however, when it appeared this prophesy was in trouble, but God and His faithful ones came through and kept hope alive.

To get us started, we need to lay a historical foundation to understand how hope was kept alive.

1. God promises that David will never lack an heir on the throne of Israel. 1 Chron. 17:10-14

2. God promises that an heir of David will rule God's kingdom forever. 1 Chron. 17:14b

At this time in our story, Israel is divided into two kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom is simply called, "Israel," and its king is Ahab. The Southern Kingdom is called "Judah," and its king is Jehoshaphat. In those days, it was common practice to form alliances with neighboring nations to strengthen your political position, establishing for your people peace and security.

Ahab, to secure *his* northern border, had married the daughter of the king to his north, Ethbaal of the Kingdom of Sidon. The word, "eth" means, "with." The word "Baal," means "Baal," the fertility god of the Canaanites. Ethbaal was "with Baal." He was a worshiper of Baal.

Ethbaal's daughter was named "Jezebel." (You may have heard of her before. She is infamous for worshiping Baal and corrupting most of the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the time she was its queen. She was wicked to the core; strong personality: even the prophet Elijah was afraid of her.) Ahab married Jezebel. (Political)

3. To form an alliance with Ethbaal, king of Sidon, Ahab, king of Israel, married Jezebel, princess of Sidon.

Together, they had a daughter they named Athaliah.

Meanwhile, in Judah, Jehoshaphat and his wife had a son they named Jehoram.

During his reign, Jehoshaphat made an alliance with his greatest threat, Israel. 2 Chronicles 18:1 says that these two kings sealed their alliances by marrying their children to each other. In this case, Jehoshaphat married his son, Jehoram to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, king of Israel.

4. To form an alliance, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, married his son Jehoram to Ahab and Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah.

In Duet. 17, God established rules for the kings of His people. God forbid Israelite kings to make alliances with foreign kings, since the Israelite king was to trust God for protection and not other kings. Not to mention, Israelite kings were to marry only one woman from Israel. These alliances and pagan marriages always brought pagan worship into Israel.

Do you see a problem? The wife of the Crown Prince of Judah was not a follower of Jehovah, but a Baal-worshiper.

Everything went along fine in Judah, until the day that Jehoshaphat died. On that day, Jehoram became king, and Athaliah became queen. This is bad news.

1 Chronicles 21:1-4 states that Jehoram's first act as king was to do what no Israelite king had ever done, but what most pagan kings from places like Sidon usually did, and that was, he killed all his brothers so that none of them could threaten his right to the throne.

5. When Jehoram became king, he killed all his brothers. 2 Chron. 21:4

This happened in 841 BC. Suddenly, of all the descendants of David, there is only one direct descendant, Jehoram, along with all the sons. Later that year, Jehoram dies of a painful disease. (His punishment for leading Judah from God.)

When a king dies, his kingdom is vulnerable, because the neighboring nations know that the new king will be young and inexperienced, so that's when they attack.

The attack happens. Judah is invaded by her neighbors, the Philistines, and the Arabians.

2 Chronicles 21:17 tells us that Judah's enemies took much booty with them, including all the sons of Jehoram, except Ahaziah, the youngest.

6. The Philistines took all but one of Jehoram's sons (Ahaziah). 2 Chron. 21:17

2 Chronicles 22:1-2 – Ahaziah becomes king at age 22 and reigned for one year. He was killed in battle.

His sons and nephews were too young to rule, so Athaliah became the ruler of Judah. This is not good.

2 Chronicles 22:10 – Athaliah proceeded to kill all the royal heirs of the house of Judah.

7. When Ahaziah died, Athaliah killed all the royal heirs. 2 Chron. 22:10

So, is the line of David dead? Is the promise God made to David not true? The person in charge of their nation, has driven a stake through the heart of all their hopes. For the next seven years, Judah lived under the rulership of Athaliah, a foreign queen, worshiping a foreign god.

Now God acts. In 2 Chronicles 22:11-12, we discover that Jehoshabeath, King Ahaziah's daughter, rescued her youngest brother, Joash, from Athalia's slaughter, and hid him for seven years.

2 Chronicles 23:1-3 –The priest, Jehoiada, husband of Jehoshabeath, summoned all the leaders of Judah to Jerusalem to crown Joash king.

2 Chronicles 23:12-15 – Athalia is arrested and executed in the king's palace.

8. Seven years later, it was discovered that one heir survived. 2 Chron. 23:3

The Messianic line is saved! God's promise to David is still on track!

2 Chronicles 23:16-23 – Judah rejoices that Athaliah is dead; the nation turns back to God.

Ezra's Lessons – Vertical and Horizontal

1. There is a war in heaven that is fought on earth. 2 Chron. 18-24; Eph. 6:11-12

A. God always has plans to build up. 1 Chronicles 17:10-14

B. Satan always has plans to tear down. 2 Chronicles 22

C. God always wins. 2 Chronicles 23

2. Success is determined by the company you keep. 2 Chron. 24; 2 Cor. 6:14-16

A. Be careful who you marry. 2 Chron. 18:1-2; 2 Cor. 6:14

B. Always have a mentor. 2 Chron. 24:15-18