

Kings and Prophets 12-11-23b

We resume our study now looking at kings and eventually prophets. We have the prophet Nathan delivering a message to King David back in 2 Samuel chapter eight. And we're going to be chapter seven actually.

We're gonna be in eight here momentarily. But it's just a fascinating time in history and in the history of Israel. And it is also a new kind of history.

We have episodes that are recorded in the Pentateuch. These are the books of Moses, largely a narrative of the wilderness wanderings and the legislation that God delivered to Israel during that time regarding the building of the tabernacle and so on. And this was the building of a tent that would house the glory of God and yet be portable.

And it is interesting to us. And we've seen in studying the details of the tabernacle and the rich Christology that it communicates to us so much of our relationship with Jesus Christ and the way that his blood cleanses us from all sins and the ways that we appropriate God's grace in and through the work of Christ. This is a new kind of narrative.

And I was looking at this when I got to first Kings chapter two, verse three. Keep the charge of the Lord your God walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances and his testimonies as it is written in the law of Moses. This study is going to be taking us through the Hebrew books of Kings and Chronicles with some brief references back to the first of these three historic books that we've already studied in great detail, which we call first and second Samuel.

But Samuel, Kings and Chronicles are really a new kind of historical narrative. Why is that narrative possible? Because Israel has come into the land. The Deuteronomic history, the Pentateuchal history, the Genesis through Deuteronomy history that you have from Moses is sort of a unique product by one man, Moses.

There are a few guys filling in the death of Moses and some marginal notes and things, but largely Moses wrote this. Why? Because previous to that, writing was not a prominent feature of life. There was limited writing, but this was done on clay tablets.

You would take a soft clay tablet, you would imprint shapes on it with a reed stylus, wooden stylus of some sort, put the tablets out in the sun and let them bake. And the imprints would be preserved. And so these were used for the simplest records, usually accounting.

This is how much grain is in the silo. This is how much I traded one thing for another. People didn't blog in clay.

People didn't comment. There weren't clay tablets waiting on your doorstep every morning with the latest news. The daily dirt, as it were, laying out there on your doorstep and you just

pick up these scribes working all night long writing the news.

We sort of take it for granted that writing seems to have always existed, but it really didn't. There was such a thing as record keeping, but it was rare and very specialized. This is why when they break through the roof of a thing and find a vast treasure trove of tablets and everybody's all excited, oh, isn't this going to be great? We're going to get such wonderful insight.

And they start actually translating the things. And it's Ahab came in and bought 57 bushels of corn and he paid 20 shekels. Bildad came in and bought 20 bushels of corn and paid 18 shekels.

And it's just records of transactions because that's typically all writing was used for. There weren't novelists. There weren't short story guys.

There weren't people out to make a quick buck on a fantastic new idea. Then a screenplays and whatnot, they didn't do it. And one of the reasons they didn't is that civilization was so fluid.

And particularly for Israel, their people were migratory. Migratory people don't write. How many books have you read from Native Americans before the arrival of the white man? Did the white man come to the shore and they said, greetings, my name is, you know, he who runs fast in front of bear.

And look, here's my library of books about my people, about the great spirit and about the buffalo and my spirit guide and all that. Yeah, they didn't have any writing. Why? Not sedentary people.

They weren't agricultural either. The white man didn't come and find vast fields of maize and wheat and barley and stuff because these guys were living the hunter gatherer lifestyle. They were migratory and transient.

And they didn't have any need for writing. What are you going to write down? If you want to know the weight of the spring, you know, hack a notch in a tree. You don't need to write it down.

And, you know, the genealogies and stuff are fairly meaningless because everything was fluid and ephemeral and temporary. We're here for a while and we'll be gone. Maybe we'll be back next year, maybe not.

We're following the buffalo. We're following the deer. We're following whatever it is we're following.

And so writing didn't exist. Well, the Hebrews, very limited. We think that there were probably tablets that recorded the genealogies.

What is this? Names and numbers. Names and numbers. You know, Ele-Toledot.

These are the generations of, and then you've got this guy's name, so many years, had these

sons, and he died. This guy's name lived so many years, had his first son, had other sons and daughters, and he died. And it's accounting.

So I say all of that to introduce this idea. Why do we even have the ability to do the study that we are undertaking? Because there is a written account, a detailed written account of the period of the monarchy in Israel. Why? For the period of the judges, you know how much history took place in the period of the judges? And we've got that little short book of judges with a few prominent guys.

You've got Ehud, and you've got Gideon, and you've got just a few, Samson, and the real standout guys. But there were people living and dying, and raising families, and moving around, and fighting battles, and getting sacked by the Philistines. All these different things were happening, and there's no record.

Why? Because there were no recorders. Where is the first instance where we have official historians? Turn back to 2 Samuel, chapter 8. We were just in chapter 7. 2 Samuel, we just saw 7.17. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David. Then King David sat before the Lord, and he has a conversation.

That takes up the last half of chapter 7. Then in chapter 8, after this, it came to pass that David attacked the Philistines, subdued them. David took Methag-Ammah from the hands of the Philistines. He defeated Moab.

You go down to verse 3. He defeated Hadad-Ezer, the son of Rehob, the king of Zobah. Took from him a bunch of stuff. Verse 5, the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadad-Ezer.

David whacked them. Then verse 9, to, or to, depending on who you read, the king of Hamath heard that David had defeated all the army of Hadad-Ezer. Then he sent Joram down to King David to greet him and bless him because he had fought against Hadad-Ezer and so on.

And verse 13, David made himself a name when he returned from killing 18,000 Syrians in the Valley of Salt. More about that later. It's interesting to compare this to the parallel in Chronicles, which says something entirely different.

We'll get a chance to look at that a little bit later. But for now, he put garrisons in Edom, and the Edomites became David's servants. Now, here's where we pick up.

Verse 15. This is sort of the latter days of David. He finishes the wars that he's supposed to fight.

He's subdued and subjugated all of these neighbors, Moab and Edom and Hazor and these guys, that's all neighbors. David reigned over all Israel and David administered judgment and justice to all his people. Joab, the son of Zeruiah, remember he's going to end up siding wrongly with Adonijah, right? Was over the army.

Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud, was recorder. Zadok, the son of Ahitab and Ahimelech, the son of Abiathar, were the priests. Sariah was the scribe.

Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, was over both the Karathites and the Pelathites. And David's sons were chief ministers. Some of the Hebrew texts there actually say priests, but that's another corruption.

But I want to focus on a couple of things. You say, well, I promise you 10 out of 10 people are going to read this and just keep right on going. But slow down and look, because this is something new and unique.

This is something that has never existed before. David reigned. Joab was the army commander.

He is the commandant of the Israeli Marine Corps. He is the chief of staff. He runs the whole Pentagon.

Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud, was recorder. The word translated recorder there is *sofer*. S-O-P or P-H-E-R.

It comes, the verb is S-P-R or *safar*, *safar*. And that verb means to count. Now, what does O-E mean on a Hebrew verb? Everybody ought to know this by now.

What is the O-E in *fix*? Makes it a participle, right? It's like putting I-N-G on an English verb. So if *safar* means to count, what does *soper* mean? It means counting. We would say accounting.

I'm going to go over here accounting. And somebody from Oklahoma went back east and they said, you're accounting? Well, great. We'll set up a department of accounting.

And that's how it came about. So he is the counter. He's the guy who counts.

And this broadens. And as is so often the case, in England, they got the knight of the bath and the knight of the garter and all this other stuff, which is a lot more than sitting there pouring water into the tub for the king. It becomes a cabinet post.

It becomes a state office. And in surrounding kingdoms, they had this sort of thing. And so David has one himself.

He sets this up. There's no mention of it in the days of Saul. Saul is a traveling king.

What was the capital city for Saul? Well, not until later days does he even have a city that he kind of hangs out in. But David does have a capital city of Jerusalem and he has a throne in Jerusalem and he's got a palace and he's got this stuff all set up. Remember, Saul used to sit under a tree.

They've moved up. This is a formal monarchy now. And Saul does have a palace later on, but not much, not anything like what David has.

But anyway, this is an office. He is the counter. He is the recorder, if you will.

Then you've got Zadok and Ahimelech who are the priests. This is all of your worship life. Remember the Ark has been brought and there's a huge Levitical operation going on in Jerusalem.

And these guys are over that. Then Saraiah or Sheva, depending on which account you read, was the scribe, scribe. This is Mizcar, an M in front of a verb, turns it into a noun.

Shafat is the verb that means to judge. Mishpat is judgments. Mishpat, Mishpat, those are the judgments.

Mishpat means judgment because it comes from Shafat to judge. So if I've got Mizcar, that means I've got a verb, Zakar. Zakar is the word that means to remember.

Zakariah, Zakariah, what? Is the first guy the, he's the Mizcar and the second guy is the Sofer? All right, one of them is one and one of them is the other. Let me see if I can make this big enough to see. Oh, that's okay, I'm in Kings.

I didn't wanna move away. So you've got, one of them is keeping an account. And we talk about, well, give an account of the battle.

Well, it's more than just numbers. It's the whole story, right? And so you've got one guy who is keeping track of that and you've got another. And what they typically do is translate the Mizcar as the speaker.

He not only has, keeps the memory or keeps the record, but he, you could almost, and it's translated secretary. I think, let me see where the, it says Sariah was the scribe. But in some cases, this is translated speaker.

I'm gonna go over and make sure I get this right. And so, yeah, Sariah is the Sofer. He's the accounting guy.

And Jahashafat is the secretary. They say secretary, but Mizcar or Mizkir actually here is the speaker. And he could be the press secretary.

He's the guy that takes what happened and speaks it forth, communicates it out. And of course, these are names that you run into other places. Jahashafat, of course, later on is gonna be a king.

Jehoshaphat, the Lord is my judge, or the Lord is judge. Yahweh is judge. But these are offices, and this is really my point.

These are offices that are created under David. They didn't exist before. The reason we can do this study, the reason we can look at these records is that these guys started keeping records, started maintaining records.

That you will hear people accuse Christians and even the Jews of believing in a bunch of mythology. We've got records of the Egyptian pharaohs, and we've got records of ancient Assyria. We've got records of Ebla, and we've got records of this, that, and the other.

We've got the Moabite stone, but there is no written history in Israel. Where is all of this history of David and Solomon and all of the subsequent kings? Well, think about the technology of writing. How were these records originally kept? Clay tablets.

And there was an innovation right around this time where instead of doing cuneiform and indentations in clay tablets, they realized that they could use pen and ink on papyrus. But papyrus was expensive. There are records of a king trading a whole shipment of cedar logs just to get 100 feet of papyrus from Egypt.

He sends them an entire truckloads and truckloads of cedar logs, and he gets back a mile or so of papyrus, and he's thrilled to get it, but it's very valuable. So for people that aren't quite that flush, what they said is, well, we can use the ink, but we can't afford the papyrus, so we'll bake smooth clay tablets, and we'll write on those. And this is what has come down to us.

Archeologists find these, and they call them astraka. And this is a clay piece with ink writing instead of indentations. Well, these survive real well in arid climates, not so well where it rains a lot.

Papyrus survives well where it's arid, like the deserts of Alexandria in Egypt, or in dusty entombments down there in the desert, not so well up where you've got rainfall and moisture. Moisture erodes this unglazed clay, washes the ink off over time. This ink was often made out of soot and oils of various kinds, and it washes away.

The papyrus rots away. And so many of these early records, unless they were copied, perished. Well, these records were originated by these men that David installed in the palace and gave cabinet minister posts.

And they began the archives. They went back and reviewed and rehearsed and recorded the earlier days of Samuel and Saul and so on. And then they moved forward and they recorded the reign of David and on down.

All of the rest of these kings, it's going to be meticulously recorded in the books of the kings, in the books of chronicles. But these are the guys, this is where it starts. Jehoshaphat and Sariah are the guys who start this up.

And that's why we have an account to study. Now, why is this important? Because they also take care to record, sorry. They also take care to record other really, really important documents like the law of Moses.

And this, that was written in books. By the way, the word for book is also sephir, S-E-P-H-E-R, which comes from the same word that means to count. And so you have the sephir of the wars

of the Lord.

You have the sephir of Jasher, which means upright, the book of the upright and so on. So these books were recorded because they were considered extremely valuable. Other routine things, when Abraham wants to send a message up to his kinsmen to find a bride for Isaac, he sends a servant with a verbal message.

That was the way that messages were previously sent. You can see that in Genesis 32.3. You can see it in Numbers 22.5. You can see it in pre-writing days, you sent a servant and he would express your wishes. Later on, when they had writing, you begin to see letters being sent.

Here's a trivia question for you. What is the earliest biblical record of a letter being sent? Earliest record of a letter being sent. It will surprise you.

If you're still in 2 Samuel 8, just flip over a page to chapter 11, two pages. 2 Samuel 11.14, in the morning, it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter saying, set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle and withdraw and let him be slain.

That's the first letter written in the Bible. Earliest time you see it mentioned. There are some earlier writings.

You can go to Deuteronomy and it talks about Deuteronomy 24.1. The man wants to divorce his wife, let him write her a certificate of divorce and put it in her hand and send her away. It's a set of marks, probably on a tablet. And she carries that and this is the written record of the fact that she's been dismissed as wife, if you will.

Moses mentions that there are books that are written, you remember in Exodus 32, he's talking to the Lord and he says, if you're gonna take out the people and destroy them, then blot me out of your book, which you have written. That's back in Exodus. So it's not that writing didn't exist or books didn't exist or certificates didn't exist, but this is where history books, accounts of deeds and doings and people really begins in earnest.

And previous records that were still extant are converted into this form. And so it is these men, probably, who begin that tradition in Israel of scribal record keeping and copying. David appointed them to keep a record and maintain this that we are going to study.

And we are grateful to God that these things have come down to us preserved through centuries and centuries and millennia. We are three millennia after, we're 3000 years after David and we have these records. And these are the men who first wrote them down.

These are the men who organized and collated and translated and transferred these earlier documents into the form that we have. That's why we have the book of Kings and Chronicles. So these men are important and it's no accident that their names are recorded and that David set up these offices.

Like George Washington, he knew that these records would be important later on. Washington kept all of his correspondence from the earliest days when he served as a Colonel and went up and fought in the French and Indian War. He meticulously preserved his orders, his letters, letters to him, letters from him.

He made copies, he had secretaries. And in the latter days of his time in the Revolutionary War, he had a whole tent full of guys doing nothing but carefully transcribing these things. And organizing them and sequencing them and safeguarding them.

And he had them in trunks and had them on carts. And he refused to commit them to, when he wanted to get them down to his house, he didn't send them by ship. He was afraid the ship might sink.

And so he insisted that they be put on an ox cart and taken by land all the way down there to what's Washington's house's name? Mount Vernon. Had them taken to Mount Vernon that way. And later on he donated them to the Library of Congress.

But he knew the value of these records and he wanted to make sure they were, so did David. David was a great leader and this is the reason we have it. Well, so he says, be careful when he gives Solomon this charge and he says, be careful to keep everything that is written.

Well, how is Solomon able to reference this stuff? Like everything else, David has provided it. David has ensured that it's written down. Everything that existed from the days of Moses, everything that existed all the way through, it was preserved through the times of the judges.

It comes down to David's day and David gets it written down, gets it organized, gets it written. And he says, look, you keep the charge of the Lord your God as it is written in the law of Moses. And you're gonna have no trouble finding it.

It's in the library. I've had it all recorded for you. And how important is it so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn that the Lord may fulfill his word, which he spoke concerning me saying.

Solomon wasn't there to hear the Lord speak. David wasn't even there to hear the Lord speak. Nathan heard the Lord speak.

Nathan communicates it to David. David gets it written down. The Davidic covenant is in writing.

It's recorded in the book of Samuel, which he spoke concerning me saying, if your sons take heed to their way to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, he said, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel. In the same way, nation in the Old Testament, individual soul of the believer now. How can we ensure that the Lord Jesus is on the throne as they say, that he is truly the Lord of our lives, that we are walking in the way.

We've got to pursue it. We've got to know what is written down and walk in that truth. Commit ourselves to it.

And yes, there will be failures. There will be stumbles. There will be faults by others.

There are people who try to betray David and we are secured by the presence of the Lord. He will see to it that not one of his words falls to the ground. Now, very quickly, look at this.

Moreover, look at verse five. You know also what Joab, the son of Zeruiah did to me and what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner, the son of Ner, and to Amasa, the son of Jether, whom he killed. And now, David spared Joab.

You remember? He assassinated Abner. David had an understanding and a covenant with Abner and Joab was aggrieved because of the whole Asahel running after him and he killed him with the butt of his spear. And Joab, in time of peace, assassinated him.

Look at what David says specifically. This is the key, whom he killed and he shed the blood of war in peacetime and put the blood of war on his belt that was around his waist and on his sandals that were on his feet. Now, what did we begin the evening talking about? There is a contrast with David and Solomon, king of blood, king of war, king of conquest, king that achieves victory, and Solomon, who is the king of peace, who is in the city of peace that has been established by his father, Jerusalem, Shalom, and the house of God is going to be built by the king of peace on the foundation that David has laid in warfare and in securing peace all around.

What was Joab's crime? Abner had been an enemy, perfectly legitimate to kill him if you can. If Asahel had been able to catch him and kill him, it would have been a wonderful thing. But he says, it was a different time.

The war is over. And in a time of peace, Joab is still trying to fight the war. Joab says, Abner is fair game because he killed Asahel, which was in battle.

Fair and square. Now it is a time of peace and Joab is acting like it's still the war. I will avenge Asahel.

And he deceives and then assassinates Abner. David let him live. David said, I am not going to slay you.

You're my nephew and so on. But he tells Solomon, and this is interesting. If he's given a reprieve, if he's given a stay of execution, as it were, to Joab, why does he say this to Solomon? This is what he's guilty of.

He shed the blood of war in peacetime. And that blood is around his waist and on his feet. Therefore do according to your wisdom and do not let his gray hair go down to the grave in peace.

Do not let him die in peace. I thought Solomon was the king of peace. I thought this was the time of peace.

You remember Agag? Surely the violence of war has passed and Samuel grabs the nearest sword and turns him into stew meat. Hacks him in pieces. Well, David says, look Solomon, I gave him a reprieve but you are not to let him go to his grave in peace.

And this is a fascinating kind of justice here. What exactly is going on? Well, we're out of time for this evening. However, I will offer you a suggestion to think about between now and next Friday.

And this is largely the answer. Think about that contrast. Think about our lives.

There are two phases in our lives just like there were two phases in establishing the kingdom in Israel. Once we are saved, once we are a child of God, we are saved by God's grace, we are washed in the blood of the lamb and we are entered into relationship with God. There is a lot of stuff we have to deal with.

And it doesn't matter if you were saved as a child. In our soul, there is a lot to deal with just as in the land, there are a lot of enemies that need to be conquered and slain. What do they represent? What do the Philistines and the Moabites and the Edomites and all of these other enemies, what do they represent? This is active antagonism to the things of God.

This is destructive opposition. This is sin. This is evil attacking us.

And it has got to be overcome. It has to be slain. We have got to drive the enemy out of the land and secure our borders as the first order of business.

You have no business going to seminary. You have no business being a missionary. You have no business saying, what is my spiritual gift? I need to get busy and start until you have slain the enemies in the land and secured your borders so that they don't come back.

This is what David did. David slew the Philistines. David slew the Moabites and the Edomites and the Syrians and all of these other ites and enemies and achieved the peace.

In the latter days of his reign, he had achieved peace all around. This is our first order of business. You cannot grow.

You can't say, you know, I really want to get into the deep things of God. First things first. We've got to tend to our own lives.

And if there is besetting sin, if there is unresolved issue, if we've got something in our lifestyle, you're not going to find gay theologians getting anywhere. Why? Enemies in the land haven't driven out the Philistines. You cannot get anywhere in theological understanding while enemies are still in the land.

You cannot build the house of God and experience the presence of God until you slay the enemies and drive them out of the land. That's first and essential. People say, well, you know, I just, I can't, what's the matter? Why isn't God close to me? Why don't I feel a sense of his presence and his blessing? Look around.

Have you got some Moabites and Edomites that are around? Now, in the course of this, this is warfare. This is warfare. And there can be unfinished business as a result of that war.

Relationships can be disturbed as a part of that warfare. There is an issue that arises between Joab and David because Joab's supposed to be on David's side in this war. And Joab transgresses.

Joab betrays. Joab assassinates someone that David had made peace with. And in a time of peace, Joab is trying to fight the war.

This is the clue. This is the reason. What is the reason that David gives? If it was just the matter of the assassination, why didn't David have him killed? David says, I can't kill him, but you don't let him go to his grave in peace.

Same thing when you get to Shimei. Shimei. Notice, show kindness to Barzillai because in time of war, in time of conflict, in time of adversity, he was my friend.

And you continue that. A friend in war, friend in peace, that never changes. But you can have a friend in war that causes a problem and he's not a friend in peace.

And he's not going to still be there in time of peace. His existence is okay during the time of war, but when the time of peace comes, his existence comes to an end. Same thing with Shimei, the son of Gera, Benjamite from Bahurim.

We'll get into this next time, but just by way of anticipation, he cursed me with a malicious curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim. Remember, this is a time of struggle and conflict for David. He's got betrayal in his own household.

There's the Absalom rebellion and so on. He came down to meet me at the Jordan. He was seemingly repentant.

And I said, I will not kill you to him. Now, therefore, do not hold him guiltless. You are a wise man.

Notice he cites Solomon's wisdom, both with Joab and with Shimei. You're a wise man. You know what you ought to do to him, but bring his gray hair down to the grave with blood.

Joab brings a curse on David by his betrayal. Shimei pronounces a curse on David in hatred. And David says, both of these men, Solomon, you, the king of peace, must deal with.

I was not in a position to deal with it. You do. Why exactly is that? Well, we'll look at scripture

and answer that question as best we can next week.

But there is an application for us. There is a time of personal growth and evaluation that is our time of warfare. And there's a time when we've largely got those battles fought and won.

It's a rare thing that we give in to our old sins that so easily beset. We've kind of graduated from milk to meat and we're on the way. We're striving to go through the straight gate.

Sin is not our biggest issue anymore. Faith and growth are our priorities at that point. And it's not so much that we're fighting the old battles, but there is baggage.

There's detritus from back then. And we're gonna see a great application from this next time as we move from milk to maturity, as we move from war to peace, as we move from cleansing the land to establishing a place for the presence of God in our own soul. And this is intrinsic.

It is essential. And it's a beautiful, beautiful picture of what we are called to. So we'll take a look at that in detail next week.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for this wonderful record of your dealings with your people in ages past, how pertinent and how meaningful it is and what a wonderful ministry God the Holy Spirit has in bringing these things to our minds and encouraging us and challenging us with them in the day and the time in which we live. We pray that we will be ready pupils, that we will see the way in which we should walk and the application that we should make of these truths as we await the day of the Lord Jesus' return and the wonderful kingdom of peace that he will establish and in which we have the opportunity to serve.

We pray that in all things, our Lord Jesus Christ would be glorified. We ask it in his name. Amen.