

Kings and Prophets 13-04-05a

This is Friday, the 5th of April, 2013. We're in the book of First Kings. We pick up in chapter 11.

Let's take a moment as we begin to ask the Lord's blessing in our study, focus our concentration, and prepare our souls to benefit from the truth that is in God's word. Shall we pray? Father, what a blessing it is to find ourselves free of encumbrance and able to gather and refresh ourselves at the well of living water where the truth of your word can restore us and renew us and give us strength for the present and for the days ahead. We thank you for this portion of your word and the truth that it contains for us.

We ask that as we look at it together, that each one will find benefit and strength and encouragement, and we can grow in grace and in knowledge as we study these things together. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

As you recall, our study on Friday nights is in Kings and Prophets. We have picked up, having already covered King Saul and King David in our study of First and Second Samuel, we began in First Kings and saw the transfer of power to King Solomon. And there are some significant portions of Solomon's reign that we are not addressing in this particular study.

One of the reasons being, I think they're going to be taken up in more detail in a future study. In particular, the construction and dedication of the temple is something we're going to look at in an upcoming short special. When I say upcoming, don't break out a fresh notebook.

It will be sometime in the unspecified future. But I do have the ambition of doing a study that will encompass specifically Levitical worship, beginning with what was delivered to Moses in terms of the offerings and the feasts. We did that offering study a long time ago, but I think most of us are pretty rusty on it.

We need to review our offerings and feasts and the significance of that calendar. And that gives us the opportunity to expand into the design and function of the tabernacle and then the temple, which came after. So I'm going to reserve these chapters for that study.

We're also skipping over the visit of the Queen of Sheba in Chapter 10. That's also something that I think is going to be addressed in a study of a different nature when we take up chronology and timing issues. I have another short study in mind where we'll take a look.

We've done bits and pieces of it in the past, but we've never done a really cogent look at chronology issues. When was the Exodus? When should archaeologists be looking for evidence and where should they be looking? What is the synchronization of the Egyptian pharaohs and the Assyrian kings and so on with Israelite history? Because much of the bunkum that you see on the History Channel in terms of naked archaeologists wandering around saying, well, you know, that's the name of a show. I'm not saying they're running around with no clothes.

There's an ongoing program called the Naked Archaeologist. I don't know why. But these various programs and specials come on and it's sort of damning with faint praise.

They act like they're objective and they're just interested in the truth. But what they really want to do is slip this foot and a half long bayonet into the chest of Christianity by saying, well, you know, we go and look for the archaeological evidence of biblical events and it's just not there. This town, the latest one that I read is that the town of Nazareth did not exist in Jesus' day.

Stuff of this ilk. And a lot of this, when you do have honest archaeologists who say, I can't find anything corresponding, it's because they're working with a bad calendar and there are ways to unscramble the calendar. And we're not trying to twist around to get the Bible to fit archaeology.

We're trying to unscramble archaeology because it's fouled up. Even if you didn't have a Bible, it would still be fouled up. Taking bits and pieces of the Egyptian king lists and making them sequential when they should overlap and so on.

And when you unscramble that, irrespective of the Bible, secular archaeology and secular history makes a lot more sense. Synchronizations between other ancient Near Eastern cultures line up much better. And do that first.

Then when you look at the Bible, you find miraculously that the Bible is another accurate witness chiming in unison with other witnesses to what went on. So I'm going to save the Queen of Sheba. She's an important element in finding correlations to Egyptian history and other things that were going on.

By the way, it's also possible to determine with a fair degree of accuracy who the Pharaoh was, whose daughter Solomon married. And it's not the one you see in the commentaries. At any rate, we're moving forward.

We're going to save those for other studies. And those chapters, while interesting and every word is profitable for doctrine and reproof, our study in the Kings and Prophets does best when we move forward and we see the ongoing dealings of God with his people, both in the united and now in the divided kingdom. Why does God allow the kingdom to divide? Why doesn't he keep it together or destroy it all in one piece? And there is a principle there that I hope we can elucidate before the evening is over.

But if you have turned with me now to 1 Kings chapter 11, we left off here last time. And there is a relationship between your degree of interest in the things of God and God's degree of interest in blessing you. We determine it is a you know, some things are inversely proportional.

The more of this, the less of that and other things are directly proportional. And the level of interest that we have in the things of God correlates directly with God's interest in paying attention to the details of our lives in terms of blessing and opportunity and fruitful time spent in this life. If we are uninterested, if we have other priorities, well, God is going to look for other

believers who are more interested in his plan and purpose.

And he's going to work with them. He's going to, quote unquote, spend his time on them and not on any of us that become apathetic and indifferent and are easily distracted. Well, what happened that we saw last time in chapter 11? Solomon, with all of that potential, all of that wonderful gifting and blessing from God got distracted.

He let a distraction in the door before he had his first conversation with God in the form of a foreign wife. Do you remember in Genesis the lengths to which Abraham went to ensure that the wife for his son and heir, Isaac, would be of the people? You remember that? Sent the servant a long trip, looking, eventually discovered after much prayer and seeking, the servant finds Rebecca and brings her back for Isaac and they, it's love at first sight. Why? Not because Cupid shot an arrow in each of their corpus delecti.

Why? Because in seeking out a woman who is interested in the things of God for a man who is interested in the things of God, the first and highest priority is satisfied. Isaac loved the Lord God. It's the reason he's the heir.

Not a lot is said about his spiritual life, but you can trace it as we have done in Genesis. And she's similar. And that's the most important thing.

They didn't have to go out on dates and dazzle each other with their wardrobes or find out that they like the same bands or want to go to the same concerts or, you know, were interested in the same number of kids. There are things that are much more important. And the essential element of belief in God and faith in God, God brought them together.

God created their compatibility for them and knowing the mechanism by which he was going to bring them together. Jacob, his mother, wanted to ensure that he would go north and find a wife from their own people. Go see Laban.

Well, anytime you see prominent people in the Old Testament marrying outside the circle of Israel, trouble ensues. David had trouble in his household. What did he do? He married some daughters of kings in the surrounding area and you end up with Amnon and Absalom and some of these other ne'er-do-wells, Adonijah, multiple wives.

It doesn't say, and behold, she was the daughter of Shilaniah of Judah or something. No, he's from some far off land. So when Solomon collects this vast array of women, it doesn't bode well.

And you see the deterioration in his walk with God come to fruition in chapter 11. And because of that, the Lord raised up adversaries against Solomon. Think about the spectrum that believers can have in terms of interest in the things of God.

We think about ourselves. It's a Friday night. There are people who say, Friday night, got to get me a movie ticket, got to get a date, got to grab the wife or the husband.

Let's go out and let's do something. Let's go out and we've been working all week. Let's cut loose.

Let's have a party. They may be believers. They may, you know, stagger into church on Sunday, but it's for form's sake.

It's for appearance's sake. Or maybe they've got some friends there they want to see. And so there's the real low end of interest in the things of God.

And then there are people who will maybe don't feel 100 percent, maybe other things that could be getting done. But you know what? It is time to set aside some time for the study of the word of God. And that's what I'm going to do.

I'm going to set the time aside. I'll attend if I can. I'll listen if I can.

I'll do what I can to honor God because that's my top priority. You know, we do a lot of things that require effort because it's a priority. We put ourselves out for things that are important to us.

We inconvenience ourselves for things that are important to us. You can look at the level of inconvenience that you're willing to put up with and tell what your level of priority is in that area, whether it's a person or an activity or a career or any other pursuit. Learning a musical instrument.

How bad do you want to learn it? Well, how much do you practice? How much do you put yourself out? How much do you set aside and clear the decks to to improve that skill? People who want to be chess players. You've got to spend hours playing chess, studying chess, going over games, analyzing and figuring out strategic weaknesses in games played by others, playing games yourself, playing in tournaments, getting beat, figuring out what you did wrong. If you're going to be good in a sport, you spend hours and hours practicing.

If you're going to be good at anything. And why would you do that? Why would you set aside other things and say, no, sorry, can't chat right now, can't do this, can't do that. It's a priority.

Well, think about our capacity for self-deception. Hands up anybody that has never fooled themselves. Hands up anybody that thinks they do not ever deceive themselves.

Not me. I'm, I'm totally honest with myself. I know exactly what I'm doing.

No, you don't. Nobody put their hand up and that's good because if you did, I'd have to come push it down for you because you'd be fibbing. Everybody deceives themselves.

We all do it. And this is a bad area to deceive ourselves. Solomon, I suspect didn't realize how bad he had let things get.

Maybe ever. Hey, I'm the wisest King that ever lived. Remember that temple that I built every

day, walked around, saw the temple.

There's my accomplishment. There's the laurels upon which I rest. There's, you know, my father and I built, you know, that's our lasting living legacy.

That thing will be here for 10,000 years. Well, it wasn't. So priorities, where do we spend our time? What are we willing to put ourselves out for? Well, Solomon ended up putting himself out, inconveniencing himself, compromising his values to do what? To worship God, to purge his household of these extra concubines and wives and so on.

No, to build high places and temples for them, to accommodate them, to make them feel happy. And I'm sure he justified it and thought, well, you know, you can't marry somebody from a far off land and drag them down here and then make them sit around staring at the, at the one God's temple. Let them have their own little worship place.

Let them have a Buddha or a, or a little, uh, avatar figure of some God, some Ashtoreth or some, uh, Baal or Chemosh or Dagon or who knows what, were there Philistines in his harem? Who knows? They were from all over and they were pagans. Now it's an interesting thing to me and I've never really been able to come up with an answer to this question, but what do you think the nation of Israel would have thought of Solomon if all 700 of his wives and all 300 of his concubines had been Israelite girls, every single one of them Israelite. How popular do you think he would have been among the Israelite men looking for wives and, you know, establishing a household, but can't do that.

Kings mopped up all the eligible women, got all the pretty ones, got all the ones that had all their teeth, got all the ones that knew how to cook, got all the ones that had any value in any marriage. He's got a thousand women, but he didn't. He got, he got foreign wives, got them from all over the place.

And that's, and so it's a catch 22. There's no right way to do a thousand wives. There's no right way to do a thousand women in your hair.

You get them from Israel. You're the whole nation's going to rise up and revolt and try to liberate them. So other guys have a chance.

You get them from the surrounding nations. You end up with this. So principle, the point to be honest with ourselves, we need to do basically three things.

First of all, set aside some time free of distraction and do some honest soul searching. You can't really figure out what you're doing. If you just give it a lick and a prayer.

This is like saying, well, when I turn the key, my car starts, so everything must be okay. If you don't stop and take time to walk around and check all four tires, you don't open the hood, pull the dipstick out and check the oil, pull the other dipstick out and check the transmission fluid. If you don't get a flashlight and look at your fan belts, you're just going to take a trip across a

state or two and not check your car.

First going to put your family in there and endanger yourself and everybody else because, well, I just don't really have time to give the car a thorough check. I mean, you know, it starts. I didn't see any lights come on.

My oil light's not on when I put it into drive, so it must be okay. You don't check the water wiper fluid in case your windshield gets obscured and you need to wash it. You run into a boy.

One time we were driving through Arkansas. Where was it where we hit that swarm of love bugs? They said, Oh, those are love bugs. All right.

It was Arkansas. We were driving south from Conway coming the long way back down, not going through Oklahoma. We had a swarm of everybody.

I stopped at two different gas stations and they said they're love bugs. I thought Herbie was the love bug, but they, all of a sudden there was nothing but bug guts. I mean solid bug guts because these things are in such a swarm.

It's like shotgun pellets hanging in the air and driving through them. It was a solid opaque wall of bug guts. Well, so you turn on the windshield wiper and now you've got smeared bug guts.

Well, look, if you didn't take the time to check and make sure that you've got wiper washer fluid and I had not, well, no way to clean the windshield. And I literally was having to look out the side window to see where I was going. That's why I had to stop at the gas station.

And there were other people out there, you know, using the stuff to clean them. I said, what is this? Oh, those are love bugs. Well, I say that to say this, we need to do three things to avoid self-deception.

First of all, stop and take the time to analyze. Superficial analysis will yield faulty results. You're not going to figure this out sitting here right now thinking, Hmm, do I? No, I really don't think so.

And then you go on. That's not going to work. Got to spend some time, spend some quality time, get up early, open in prayer, ask God the same thing that David asked him, Lord, show me my hidden faults.

Try me. See if there be any wicked way in me, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Go read Psalm 50 and Psalm 51 and have that attitude and go to the Lord and ask him to give us the eyes to see past our self-deception.

That's first. Secondly, when we do the analysis, where do you spend your time? Now this is going to hurt. It hurts me and it's going to hurt you.

I doubt anybody could keep a journal. If you could, it would really be an emphatic underlining

for this point, but just compare even estimate how many hours in a week have I spent on the internet? How many hours in the week have I spent watching TV versus how many hours and go ahead and throw in Bible class. You get credit for four sessions a week, a Bible class, add those in and see if Bible class and devotions and meditation comes anywhere near internet time and TV time and anything else that you know, in your heart of hearts, soaks up a lot of time.

Step two, where do you spend your time? Where a man's time is, there will his heart be. Also time is treasure. Time is a gift from God.

Every second we spend, we only get that second once. It's like money. What do you invest it in? What kind of return are you going to get? Is it really worth one more episode of NCIS? And no prayer, no devotions, no thought back to the last Bible class, no looking ahead to the next Bible class, no listening to the word of God on your go Bible or no research into where is the passage where God says that the souls under the altar cry out how long or where is the passage where God says that the, uh, the unsaved dead are going to be raised or going to be judged or any other question that, that might be on your mind.

Obviously we are called to a balanced life. This is not an exhortation to no internet or no TV or no books or no hobbies or no sports or no conversations, no video games, none of that. But if we're honest with ourselves in the second step, what's the balance? Where is our heart? Do we really look forward to these other things a lot more than we do spending some time on our identity and our present relationship with God and the future potential with God for all of eternity? What's the balance look like? And I am confident that every single one of us could make a better balance than what we've got, including me.

I don't think any of us really balance that as well as we could or should. Uh, it's hard, but listen, if it was easy, uh, there wouldn't be any least in the kingdom. Uh, if it was easy, there wouldn't be such a thing as an overcomer.

If it was easy, everybody would be walking with Christ in white. Everybody would have the white stone and the new name and the hidden manna. Everybody would be sitting with Christ on his throne.

It would be all chiefs and no Indians. Well, it's not going to be that way. So we want to be honest with ourselves and look, you're free to choose in that second step.

You can say, you know, I really do spend my time in other places. And if I'm truly honest with myself, I'm content with that. I don't really want to be an overcomer.

I don't have much of an interest in reflecting the glory of God. I'm saved. I'm not going to go to the lake of fire or, you know, wink out forever.

So if I'm in the rear with the gear, I'm content. Listen, a lot of believers consciously or unconsciously make that choice. I'm not interested in being that close to Jesus.

I'm content to be Bartholomew or, or Simon the less or somebody in the disciples. I don't, I don't have any ambition to be Peter, James, and John. I can only say this.

If you don't have an ambition to be pleasing in the Lord's sight and to strive to be everything you can be and to serve him to the maximum extent and reflect his glory to the widest possible extent, you did not understand your salvation. You did not understand what the Lord Jesus did on the cross. You do not understand the love of God.

And you do not understand the tremendous gift that has been given to us in being born in this age. We have been given potentials that old Testament saints would almost literally have killed to get. And if we do not appreciate those things and if we don't value them and if we're not motivated to pursue them, our understanding is weak.

Find somebody who can do a better job of communicating the truth of the word of God to you so that you do catch fire. If these Bible classes don't light your soul on fire and, and foment your ambition to live for God and to excel for the Lord Jesus Christ, please, please find somebody that does teach the word of God in a way that does that for you because that's the way it should be. You should be motivated.

You should be excited. You should be enthusiastic and and look forward to your times with God. You should look forward to Bible class as another bite of the Holy manna.

And if you care anything at all about that and listen, it isn't, it isn't going to hurt my feelings. You have to want that and you have to find somebody that can feed you in a way where you grow. And if it's not me, so be it.

Find who can do that for you. But don't say, well you know, I just kind of sit through these things. Don't waste the time.

It's, you can't get this time back and you can't get the opportunity back. Go for the gusto. Do whatever it takes to get motivated and get with it.

That's step two. Step one, you must consciously decide to spend the time to analyze what's going on or we will deceive ourselves by default. We lie to ourselves by default.

Secondly, pray, start with prayer, ask and it shall be given. If you ask for insight, if you ask for visibility, Lord, show me where I'm failing. Show me where I'm falling short.

Can you envision any scenario where God would not answer that prayer? Lord, I suspect I might have some faults. Please show them to me. Oh no, not going to help you out with that.

Are you kidding? The word of God in our souls, the Holy spirit active in our souls. One of his ministries is conviction, right? So if we're asking for conviction and the Holy spirit is there for conviction, and if we spend any time thinking about the word of God, we will discover where we're fooling ourselves. But a lot of us are kind of scared to ask the question in the same way

that we're scared to say, Lord, do whatever it takes in my life so that I can grow and glorify you to the maximum extent.

We're afraid that God's going to say, well, that's going to take some suffering and we really don't want to suffer. We're like Peter. Oh Lord, I'll follow you to the death.

But if a maid servant asks me by the fire, if I know you, well, that's a little scary. I'm just going to, you know, distance myself, be honest. And then thirdly, what's the first step? Set aside the time.

Don't be a fool. Set aside some time and do some self analysis. Secondly, pray, ask for guidance, ask for wisdom, ask for insight, and then spend that time looking at priorities, looking at values, looking at goals, looking at the way we spend the capital God gives us each week.

He hands us the talents. What do we do with them? Do we invest them for the master or do we stick them in our pocket and carry them around for ourselves? And then thirdly, whatever that analysis reveals and hopefully it will reveal areas where we can improve areas where God can prune us in the vine so that we will bear more fruit. Do it, do what it takes.

It's not enough to take your car down to the mechanic and say, I'm going to spend some time all inconvenience myself and do without my car. So the mechanic can check it out. Mechanic checks out and says, well, you've got four things that really need to be fixed or this car is going to stop in a matter of hours.

You know, you desperately need a drain and flush. You desperately need an oil change and you desperately need brakes all the way around. This car is going to be dangerous to drive.

If you don't do something right away, you say, okay, well, thanks a lot. You hop in the car and drive off and don't do anything about it. And sure enough, out of brakes, smoke coming out from under the hood and your car is wrecked.

The third step is take action. It is not enough to know what needs to be done. Go to the doctor.

Cholesterol is high and you're overweight. You need to lose some weight and get a better diet. Okay, thanks doc.

And you do nothing. What's the point of going to the doctor if you don't follow the guidance? If God answers our prayer, if he reveals what we are doing in the areas of falling short. And listen, it's not like this is going to be a drudge.

You know, by now, you all certainly know that there is no place of greater satisfaction and happiness and fulfillment and blessing and feeling like you're alive in every cell in your body than when you're in the very center of God's will and God's plan. It is the, it's the, you know, you talk about swinging a Louisville slugger and hitting the sweet spot and knocking a baseball out

of the park. I don't know if you've ever had that experience, but it, you know when you hit a baseball and you've hit the sweet spot on the bat, the ball just take it.

There's another third added to the distance because you just hit it exactly right. Just exactly right. Couldn't have done it better if you tried.

That's, that's the way we perceive life when we are in the center of God's. Well, it doesn't mean that we're not in pain or that we're not tested, but there's nothing better and we know it. So we've got to take action.

That's the third step. Solomon does three things. He does not spend the time.

Where do you read anywhere in chapter 11 that Solomon went to the temple and sought the Lord God as he did at first? He had 700 wives, princesses, 300 concubines. Solomon was old. His wives turned his heart after other gods.

His heart was not loyal to the Lord is God as was the heart of his father, David, where your treasure is. There will your heart be also. If your treasure is earthly and momentary and temporal and ephemeral here today, gone tomorrow, that's where your heart is.

And as our interest and our participation in the Lord's work, as our interest and our participation in our investment in the things of God wanes and diminishes God's interest and investment and participation in our lives is going to shrink accordingly. And when we reach a certain point where we are actually doing more harm than good as believers in the plan and purpose of God, we are a negative influence. The only usefulness God has for us is as a test for others.

Then God is going to not only withdraw blessing and withdraw protection and withdraw active presence, but he will become our adversary. If we become an adversary to God, he will become an adversary to us, even though we are his children. The Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon.

Hey, dad, the Edomite. Now, why would God do this? Does God not love Solomon anymore? Is God, has God forgotten his promise? No. Why does he do it? Turn ye at my reproof.

Why will you die? Oh, house of Israel, turn you at my reproof. It's a reproof. It's an attention getter.

We get these in our lives. We say, I do not understand why things are the way they are. If we don't realize that there are resources to apply to a test, now, we may wonder if we're going to be able to stick with it and pass the test.

But if we know how to pass it, we know what we're supposed to do. Sort of like, I remember when I first had to do the PFT in the Marine Corps, and you've got to do, you know, these different things. And I wasn't, I've never been athletically gifted.

And I thought, well, I don't know if I'm going to be able to do this or not. Well, I knew what I was supposed to do. It wasn't a matter of not knowing how to do pull-ups or not knowing how to run three miles or not knowing how to do sit-ups.

The question was, could I, did I have the mental tenacity and the physical endurance to do them and do them well? Well, we know when we're in a test what to do. If we don't, if we get an adversary and we don't know what to do, we don't know how to cope, that's a time to start asking questions. Has God raised up an adversary because he's trying to get me to turn to his rebuke? Again, go back to the three steps.

Carve out some time. Pray and ask God for insight and be honest with ourselves. If everything checks out, then on step three, what do we do? Redouble our efforts.

We know where the strength is. It's the Word of God and the Spirit of God. It's prayer.

It's seeking and asking and knocking, cultivating God's presence and power in our lives. Lord, give me strength. What did Jesus do in the Garden of Gethsemane? The Lord Jesus himself went to the Father and said, this isn't my choice, but your will be done.

But Jesus spent three hours in prayer before he got arrested, right? Three solid hours. He knew he had a big test. What did he do? Did he say, somebody loan me a scroll, let me read Isaiah? Let me go read Psalm 20? What did he do to face his test and pass his challenge? He prayed three solid hours in the Garden.

Remember? Peter, James, John, come with me. He went ahead, came back after an hour, found them asleep. Wake up.

Help me. Pray with me. Went back.

Prayed for another hour. Came back. They were asleep again.

Prayer. Go to God. Lay it out.

Realize that we don't have the strength anyway. It has to come from him. Well, Solomon does not do this.

You search chapter 11 in vain to find him looking to God. Hadad comes and hears that David has died. He leaves Egypt.

He was an adversary of Israel. Verse 25, all the days of Solomon besides the trouble that Hadad caused. And he abhorred Israel and reigned over Syria.

Well, Solomon is a great example at the beginning of what to do. And he's a great example at the end of what not to do. We're going to pause and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to pick up in verse 26 and see what the consequences are. It's

one thing if you say, well, I may not be batting a thousand in the plan and purpose of God, but that's really on me. I'm just costing myself blessing and reward.

I'm costing myself opportunities. I'm distancing myself from the Lord at his return. No, you're not.

You are part of a body. You are part of a people. You are part of an organic unit that belongs to God.

And when you fail, you don't just hurt yourself. We'll see that when we come back from the break.