

Kings and Prophets 13-05-01b

We resume now with this very fascinating study in 1 Kings 13, looking at the story of the wayward prophet, if you will. He does great up to a point, and there is a sudden failure and a sudden judgment. And really, the more you think about it, the more stimulating it is to think about, because you begin to ask questions.

Think about this. If you were a delegated authority, God said, you know what? Fill in your name here. I'm going to let you render justice in this situation.

Suppose you had the power to render some judgment at the point that the young prophet departs from the word that he was given and yields to the word of the old prophet and goes in and eats and drinks. And God says, it's kind of like they used to do in the football games, where in a break between halves or something, they'll say, you make the call, and they'll show you a piece of film, and here's a guy that does a particular kind of fumble in a particular kind of way, or there's too many men on the field, but something else happens, and they say, you make the call. What would the solution be? At the point that this young man sits down and eats and drinks, God says, you go down and dispense justice.

What would you do? Who would you judge? Who really is the culprit here? Who has brought this about? Does anything happen to the old prophet? He lies through his teeth. He catches this guy in a weak moment. This guy has gone all the way up from Judah, apparently on one of these 40-day fast things that Elijah did and Jesus did, and he goes up there and has this very demanding, stressful moment where he confronts the king who has armies and guards and soldiers, and there's the withered hand, the restored hand.

It doesn't go in with the king, and it's not nice to sort of slight the king, and he does it twice in addressing the altar and then in refusing the king's invitation to dine with him, and it's a very brave thing, so he's exhausted. It's been a long day for him, and he's going back, and here this guy hits him at his weakest moment when his flesh is taxed and weary and hungry and thirsty and offers him exactly what he needs. Could the young prophet rationalize this? Well, God has looked down upon my dire condition and has seen my need.

He has seen my thirst. He's seen my hunger, and he has sent this fellow man of God to minister to my needs. Didn't God send assistance to the children of Israel when they were in the wilderness and bring water forth out of the rock? God's doing something here for me, and what does he do? Apparently, he rationalizes that this must be okay.

He reasons that it makes sense because after successfully resisting two temptations, he gives in on the third. First time the king asks him, he says no. First time the prophet asks him, he says no.

Second time the prophet asks him when the prophet lies to him, he says yes. So he almost got that third one, and isn't that always the biblical way? Two times, one thing happens. The third

time, something else happens.

But wouldn't you think that judgment ought to fall on this lying, old, useless prophet that's been up there taking up space in the northern kingdom all of this time? Here's this young guy that's faithful, faithful, faithful, makes one little mistake, and he dies. How is that fair? How is it fair that the faithful prophet doing exactly what he's supposed to dies, and the old, worthless prophet who succeeds in getting the young one killed lives? Lives long enough to say, well, sons, at the point that I eventually do die, stick me in the hole with the young prophet, put me in the same tomb. Does this not seem grossly unfair? Why would this be? Well, in the case of Old Testament scripture in particular, at least from the standpoint that we're looking at it, there are two ways of interpreting, there are two ways of understanding the passage.

This has been called near fulfillment and far fulfillment. Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son. Now, what is the value of Isaiah 7.14 in terms of scripture? Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son.

Call his name Immanuel, et cetera. Now, if you look at that, in fact, turn there right quick, just go to Isaiah chapter 7. I'll show you one of the reasons it's frustrating to use the New King James as a guide for capitalization and punctuation, which we do at work. This is the prophet Isaiah sent to King Ahaz, and in verse 10, the Lord spoke to Ahaz saying, ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God.

Ask it either in the depth or in the height above. Ask for a solar, celestial, planetary, lunar sign of some sort, or ask something down below. Ahaz says, I will not ask.

I will not test the Lord. He chickens out. Isaiah says, hear now, O house of David, is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel. What kind of S is on the word son there? It's capital S, isn't it? What kind of an H is on the word his for his name? It's capital H, isn't it? That's the sign that we're talking about the Lord in some form or fashion, but is Jesus going to be born as a sign to Ahaz? No. They have no way of knowing.

The farthest thing from Ahaz's mind is that in some far distant future, the line of David will seem to have withered away, and then suddenly here's the Messiah coming. It's the farthest thing from Ahaz's mind. He's got other fish to fry, and yet this short-term immediate episode has a meaning and a purpose and a significance in its own historical context, and yet that history is going to have overtones and foreshadowings and echoes that will apply and become pertinent later, right? That's just one example.

Back to our passage in 1 Kings, these happenings, this episode with the young prophet, old prophet, has a meaning. The pronouncement at the altar, the splitting of the altar, the withering of the hand, the restoring of the hand, all of that has a meaning to the witnesses, to

the generation in which it took place, the region in which it took place. The people who know about it get a message from it, right? Irrespective of its overtones, such as those we looked at in our first study tonight.

So we really have two equations to solve here. What did it mean in its day? Why did God choose this particular miraculous circumstance in that day and time? Haven't been a lot of miracles going on. I mean, you had the Shekinah showing up at the dedication of Solomon's temple decades earlier, but has there been a lot of miraculous goings on in either kingdom? Has God been appearing and healing or showing up in a miraculous way? Not so much.

So when it does happen, it is noteworthy. It has some significance, right? So we want to figure that out. What did it mean to the people in the northern kingdom? And for that matter, what did it mean to the people in the southern kingdom? Well, first of all, it's near context.

Then, beyond that, looking back on it with the benefit of knowledge of later things, the knowledge of its fulfillment. You see this a lot in the Gospel of Matthew. This occurred to fulfill that which was spoken by the prophet.

He shall be called a Nazarene or whatever. You know how it makes more sense later on than it did even in the day that it was delivered. And I think I've mentioned before that in seminary they used to try to teach us that you cannot legitimately find a meaning in a passage that those first recipients would not have understood.

In other words, you couldn't see any Christology in this story we're looking at because the original observers would not have known of any such Christology. And that being the case, if you go to Isaiah 14 and the King of Tyre or Ezekiel 28 and the comparison to Satan, well, the people in those days would not have understood that, so therefore, we cannot understand it either. In other words, there's a school of thought that says the only legitimate interpretation of anything in Scripture is that which could have been understood in the day in which it happened.

Well, we don't, I don't subscribe to that view. I think you just lose. That's like saying, well, yes, I know there's television, but I'm only going to listen to the radio.

Why would you do that? It's incomprehensible to me why somebody would think that God is time-bound. God can't put a message into Scripture for future people. It can only be a message that the first people would have understood.

I mean, that's just, you pretty much eviscerate prophecy in the Scripture with that view. But that was taught at my alma mater, and you wouldn't think, I can only imagine what gets taught elsewhere. So here's the deal.

We've got two things to figure out, and I've sort of given you both. Last time, we went through the story in its historic context. First session tonight, we looked at the possible long-term overtones and connections to the Lord Jesus, which it seems to me are virtually inescapable with the sort of that we have.

So now what we're looking for is, well, why did God communicate in this way to that generation, and why has he put this seemingly loaded episode in the Old Testament with such connection to the Lord Jesus himself? Why is it there? It's neat to see that it is there in the way that you look at Joseph with his coat of colors and his apparent death to his father. He is dead. The blood is presented to him, and the father grieves just the way God the Father grieved over the death of his son, but yet it is a redemptive death.

And even though it is a wrong that is perpetrated by his own brethren, it enables Joseph to be put in a position to be their deliverer and their Savior and to sit on a powerful political throne, as it were, over not just them but a bunch of Gentiles. And there's a very powerful foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus, which also you wouldn't be allowed to see in Genesis because the original recipients of the law would have never known that that was Christological. To me, I think, what kind of a no-fun view is that? It's just no fun.

God has done so many great things in his Word in weaving the strands together, and it's multidimensional. People that want to slice it with a little unidimensional knife are welcome to do so, but they're going to miss a lot, in my opinion. Well, this is another one of those.

So you have the Joseph story in its immediate context, and you see the faithfulness of Joseph, his faith, his endurance, his recognition that the Lord was at home, predicting the future, when the sheaves would bow, when the moon and the stars would do obeisance and so on. And he was laughed out of town for those dreams, but God gave him those to sustain him in that interim time. In the same way, we have that double situation here.

So let's take it in its historical setting first. There's a lot of space devoted to this, isn't there? I mean, I would think the reign of Jeroboam, he's the king, the things that went on in the throne room, just like Solomon. You know, we have that long story of him offering to split the baby, and most of the acts of Solomon are not in Scripture.

And yet, other things are greatly expanded. And we've got a whole chapter devoted to this episode. It's a chapter in the Word of God.

So it's important. What did it mean to the people in that time? Well, Jeroboam is the king of the divided kingdom, and he is not content with the political division that God has said is his will. God has said politically the kingdom is divided.

God said nothing about spiritually, religiously. God hasn't said, and behold, you will establish another capital up there with a different temple and a different altar and a different set of priests. All of this is going beyond what was spoken.

You know, we have an injunction in Scripture, do not go beyond what is written. And he took a legitimate thing, which was the divided kingdom throne, and went way past his charter. So because of that, you have this king standing in as a priest, which he is not, at an altar, which he is not authorized to build, in a place where he is not authorized to build it, offering a sacrifice

that he's not supposed to offer during a feast that he made up himself that's not supposed to be happening, having commissioned a bunch of other people to be priests, which are not supposed to be, worshiping a god of his own manufacture, like unto the one that Aaron made that Moses destroyed.

And as I said before, how many ways is this wrong? He's got a great big fishing cap on. This is wrong across it. He's got a big neon sign on his chest, flashing, wrong.

He's, there's a chorus of people behind him, singing wrong. The skies have opened up and there's a plane flying by with a banner that says wrong. Everything about this is just wrong.

There's not a right thing about it. You can't find a single right thing in it. What does God do to Jeroboam? The only time anything happens to Jeroboam is when he specifically tries to attack God's messenger.

His arm withers, and that's almost immediately reversed. At his simple request, Miriam got turned leprous for carping about her brother Moses, and she had to be leprous for, what, 10 days? A week or 10 days? It seemed like it was 10 days. The king has a momentary fright, but it's sort of like Moses at Sinai.

Put your hand in your mouth, and it's like, oh my gosh, put it back in, pull it out, now it's restored. Just a very momentary thing. The king is a horrible perpetrator.

The prophet is a horrible perpetrator, but there is somebody who has the word of God, and that guy is held to a really high standard, isn't he? He does so much right, and then he makes one little misstep, and he's dead on the road. It's like Ford, found on road, dead. So why this disparity? And this would have been evident to everyone.

Everybody knows, not the least of whom are the people back at the ranch, back in Judah, from whence this prophet has come. You don't think they're going to hear about this and get the full details of the story down in Judah? So the story resonates in both places. What's the message? What's the purpose? Why did God do this? Well, I would suggest that it goes in three directions, kind of like the work of Christ on the cross.

You know, there's a Godward aspect of propitiation. There's a sinward aspect of redemption, and there's a manward aspect of reconciliation. You know, man is reconciled to God.

God's justice is propitiated, and the penalty for sin is paid. It's redemption. Threefold.

Well, I think there's a, I would suggest there's a threefold message in this. First of all, there is a great contrast set between the king and what he's doing and the word of the Lord. But it is, at this point, it is not unto death.

The first picture they get, the prophet condemning the altar, crying out against the altar, talking to the altar, and the altar responds by doing what? Prophet talks to the altar, and the altar

responds by cracking open, destroying itself. A split open altar that spills out the ashes is not a functional altar anymore. The prophet comes up and talks to the rocks, and the rocks respond.

The prophet talks to the rocks, the rocks hear the word of the Lord, and the rocks obey. If Jesus had told the rocks to become bread, they probably would have done so, but Jesus refused to do that. But on the day of the tragic entry on the two donkeys, and people are saying, Hosanna, Hosanna, and they said, they came up to him, they said, tell your followers to be quiet.

What did Jesus say? If I hush them up, what would happen? The rocks would cry out. If I hush up the people, if the people do not respond, the rocks would cry out. Here, the rocks have got better ears than the people.

The prophet prophesies the word of the Lord, and the rocks say, oh, I'm not supposed to be an altar? Okay, they split apart, and all the ashes go tumbling down the hill. What does Jeroboam do? Does Jeroboam get down on his knees? Even King Saul occasionally repented. He would say, I've been wrong to chase you, David.

Come back home. Samuel, I've been wrong. Come back and be my minister again.

I repent. This guy, even with his arm episode, doesn't even blink. Doesn't even blink.

Did you see verse 33, was it? 33, after this event, Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but again he made priests from every class of people for the high places. Whoever wished, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. This thing was the sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy it from the face of the earth.

This is going to be the basis for destruction of the house of Jeroboam in the future, but not in the present. There is a time given before destruction. If there is a pronouncement such as, yet 40 days and Nineveh will be destroyed, why didn't Jonah march in and say, hi there, Nineveh, you will now be destroyed, and he steps back out and fire and brimstone fall.

He didn't do that, did he? You've got 40 days. You've got that number 40. 40 years, wilderness wandering, you've got 40 years to change your mind.

If the traditional understanding that Noah preached for 120 years, people tended to live a lot longer in those days, but that's a multiple of 40, a perfect set of 40s, three 40s. So there is time given. God knows they're not going to repent, but the time is given.

But Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way. The rocks disassemble themselves, but the man has a heart that's harder, harder than stone. That's the idea.

Do you think that somebody in that day would have picked this up when they saw that Jeroboam didn't really change his ways? Do you think they would have said, you know, the man spoke and the altar disassembled itself? But Jeroboam did not disassemble himself. What was 2 Chronicles 7.14? My people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and

seek my face. I will hear from heaven.

I will turn. I will heal. The rocks will do it.

The man will not. So that's a lesson they could have easily picked up from that first part of the story, right? How about the second part of the story? It's, this word gets around, you know, people in the country don't have, especially in those days, no radio, no TV, no internet, no cell phones. So, you know, stories would travel like wildfire.

And you can bet that these details quickly spread across the whole land. What's the gist of it? The man resisted, resisted. And when he gave in, he died.

When he obeyed the word of the Lord, he lived the first time. The king couldn't harm him. The king got harmed trying to harm him.

The guy is nine feet tall and bulletproof. He is king proof when he's doing the word of the Lord. The king is reaching into the fiery furnace trying to harm this guy.

The king gets withered. The man does not. The man walks away scot-free.

As long as that man is in the will of God, nothing can harm him. How does he get out of the will of God? Does he commit a grievous sin? Does he make a golden calf? What's worse, to eat a piece of bread or make a golden calf? I'm asking you now. You're the judge.

You're the jury. I'm asking you, the jury, on the scale of sin, making a golden calf and setting it up for worship and building an altar and telling everybody that this is the God that brought him out of Egypt and everybody should worship it and commissioning a bunch of false priests that aren't from the tribe of Levi and doing this in one city and getting ready to do it in another or eating a piece of bread and drinking a cup of water because you're really tired and you're really hungry and you're really thirsty. Which is the worst sin? Well, which one does God judge with death on the day? In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

Adam didn't even die this quick. So which is the worst sin? What would you put on your paper? Well, it's a worse sin, but it's it God's going to wait on which is, what does the episode tell us is the worst sin? If you've got the clear, personal, firsthand word of the Lord from God's lips to your ears, violating that word is serious. Somebody else trying to tell you what God told them doesn't count.

It's what God tells you. That's a second lesson that comes out of this observation. You don't need a Bible.

You don't need a lexicon. You don't need hermeneutics. All you need is observation and a little bit of thought.

The word of the Lord is serious business. And if I see a man who has given the word of the Lord and he obeys it and he's preserved and he disobeys it and he's immediately killed, what does

that say to me? What is my personal application? Do I have a word from the Lord? Do I know the will of God and the word of God for me? How diligent and how faithful and how consistent and how resistant to temptation am I when it comes to the word of the Lord for me? Am I satisfied that I've kept it in the past, but maybe today I won't? Or am I going to stick? Am I going to endure? Am I going to persevere? You look at the Lord Jesus and his faithfulness through temptation after temptation from the beginning of his ministry all the way up to Gethsemane. What if he had folded that night when the disciples fell asleep and he was in prayer with his father? He said, Father, I really don't want to drink this cup.

What if he had folded? What if he'd said, Father, I am not going to drink this cup. I've seen these people and they're not worth it. City of Jerusalem, look, I've seen the blueprint for the new Jerusalem.

Let's just build that thing and let's bring it down and set it right on top of this one and mash it into oblivion. And let's just do something different. This whole dying for the sins of the world thing, I just don't see the upside.

These people aren't worth saving. They're stupid, they're faithless, they're fickle, they can't concentrate. I tell them stuff, I feed 5,000, I feed 4,000, I ask them about bread, they have no idea.

I just got through standing on the brow of the hill, weeping over all of them. I would gather them under my wings, they will have none of me. I came into my own, my own, know me not.

What's the upside here? I'm tired of resisting this temptation to be angry with them and to turn them loose and forget about them. No, not going to drink the cup. And you can see why.

Do you think Jesus could have rationalized letting this cup pass from him? Look, Lord, we can eliminate this entire creation and start over, nobody's going to know. Why don't we just start over and just do the whole thing different? Why redeem this one? A little thing about the promises of God in there that have been made, the integrity of God at stake, Jesus stuck with it. He did not fade on the third or the fourth or the 300th or the 400th or the 70 times seven temptation like this prophet does.

We have an obligation to be faithful no matter how many times we have been tested. It's not an excuse to say, well, this time I'm just too tired. This time I'm fed up.

This time I've reached my breaking point. I'm too hungry. I'm too thirsty.

I'm too weary. I'm going to sit down under this tree. God didn't say go up there, do the thing and then sit down.

He said, go up there, condemn the altar and come back a different way. Coming back means travel. It doesn't mean stop.

Prophet's first mistake was stopping in the North. Anything up there in the North seems to get infected. Everything up there is going bad.

That's one of the reasons God was willing to split it off and give it to Jeroboam. The people up there had already defected. If that had been a land full of faithful, God-fearing believers who came on the assembly feast, do you think God would have let them have Jeroboam for a king? They wanted to defect to your tent.

So Israel, we have nothing in David. And if we have nothing in David, then we have nothing in the Lord. And so God said, fine, I'll give you a king after your own heart.

But he sends the prophet up there. Why? He gives them warning beforehand. He gives them warning during and even in their departed state, he gives them a warning.

He sends them a prophet with a sign warning. Rocks are smarter than you people. I speak to them and they obey.

I'm speaking to you. What are you going to do? And if they do not humble themselves, God is going to humble them. If they do not fall upon the rock to be broken, then the rock is going to fall upon them and crush them.

And of course, they're going to go out 100, was it 721 to 586, 140 years ish before the southern kingdom, because that's where the faithlessness is. But God is merciful and God creates responsibility by communication. If you were blind, you would have no sin.

But because you say, we see your sin remains, Jesus told the Pharisees. Communication creates responsibility. You wouldn't be responsible for sin, righteousness and judgment, except that God, the Holy Spirit has come and made them the issue and communicated them.

Everyone is accountable for the knowledge of God that he has put in their hearts. If they don't have the knowledge of God, they're not accountable. If they can't look up and realize that there is a designer for the design, accountability is not created.

But when the knowledge is placed in their heart, when the evidence is placed in creation and when the spiritual communication is made by God, the Holy Spirit, those pieces of communication, those witnesses, those outcries of the word of God to their heart creates responsibility. And if you reject those communications, your blood is on your own hands and your own head. And of course, this is what people say when Jesus is crucified, let his blood be on us.

Well, condemned out of your own mouths. So these are things that people in the day could have drawn. God has sent a messenger up here and this is the first miracle in the Northern Kingdom after there is such a thing as the Northern Kingdom.

That altar splitting and that hand withering and restoring, these are like unto the breaking of

the power of Egypt, the demonstrations of the superiority of God over the powers of Egypt that Moses produced at the Exodus. God is, in effect, offering them deliverance from this Egypt-like regime that worships idols, that sets up a false priesthood. You don't think they had the priests of On and of Isis and all that down in Egypt? Aaron tries to set up a golden calf because it reminds him of Egypt.

This is a new Egypt in the Northern Kingdom. They've essentially gone north, but they've really gone south to Egypt. And this withered hand and this split altar, demonstrations of God's power over the king and over his works, is a call to the people.

You can be delivered from this if you want to, if you will. And I suspect that there may have been a few people in the Northern Kingdom that saw this and had a heart for God and moved south. Said, I am getting out of here.

God has spoken. This is the one true God, and his man comes from Judah. There are no prophets up here that God is going to use.

I can't get the word of God up here. The word of God comes from Jerusalem and below. So that's where I'm going to go.

And there's probably some people who this was sufficient testimony to make a geographic move to get to the word of God. And sometimes that's what you've got to do. A lot of us have done this.

The deciding factor in our move was geography, to get to the word of God. And God honors that. And you see what happens.

God has magnified his word above his name. How many times in this passage, how many times in this passage is the word of the Lord emphasized? That's the issue. It was the issue in that day, and it is the issue when you come forward to the Lord Jesus, who is the word made flesh.

John chapter one, first John chapter one, the word made flesh. What do you do with the word? Man shall not live by bread alone. If you go to the bread and the water at the house of the prophet, you will die.

It's every word. There's a reason why Jesus quotes that passage. Zechariah is hundreds of years in the future from this point.

He hasn't yet said what he's going to say, but the principle is communicated here. And the people of Israel know this. They know their history from the law.

So there is that immediate testimony to the people of that generation. There is an enhanced and multi-dimensional testimony in the days of the Lord Jesus and that much more today for us. So what is the application for you and for me? It's easy to get caught up in the daily needs and the daily desires of our lives.

It is easy to say, I am thirsty. I am hungry. I am tired.

Let me sit under the tree. And when somebody offers me bread and water and tells me that it's okay, it's from the Lord, I blind myself to anything but what I want to hear. People up in the North love to have somebody tell them what they want to hear.

Kings up there from now on are going to want prophets around them to tell them what they want to hear. We don't want to be told what we would like to hear. We want to be told the Word of God, which cuts through the flesh.

That lion and that donkey, that's the spectrum. The Lord Jesus knew when to be humble and when to ride on the foal of the donkey. And He knew when to rise up and be the conquering king and lion of the tribe of Judah.

He had it straight in His mind. There is a time for us to stand. There is a time for us to attack.

There is a time for us to be aggressive. There is a time for us to be bold and forthright and offensive on the offensive. There is a time to be lowly and humble and riding on the foal of the donkey.

You've got to know which is which. If you do it wrong, the lion is going to tear you up and leave you dead and you will be in no shape to ride the donkey except as a corpse. Does it take God making us a corpse to ride the donkey? God resists the proud, gives grace to the humble.

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time. The Lord Jesus is our example of knowing when to be humble, when to open not His mouth, and when to stand up and preach and proclaim and identify Himself as the King. You've got the lion, symbol of ruling authority, symbol of aggression, dominance.

And you've got the donkey, symbol of submission, burden bearing, humility. Well, it's a very rich picture here. It harks back to the book of Judges, chapter 18.

You remember there was another man with a concubine. What town was she from, by the way? Bethlehem in Judah. And she comes up north.

You've got right before that the whole episode of Dan. Back in the days of the Judges, Dan was a bad place to be. The town got established back in Judges 17 and 18, that whole situation there.

Evil pertains and persists up there. This story has ties back to that. I wish we had time to examine them in detail.

We're kind of doing an overview. So this is by way of observation and suggestion of the kinds of things we see in this Old Testament narrative that should have been persuasive, that would have been perspicuous to somebody like Saul of Tarsus as a Pharisee, who could begin to see the alignment of the life of Jesus of Nazareth with picture after picture and prophecy after

prophecy and extended narrative after extended narrative in the Old Testament. And if it was pertinent for them, how much more so for us? We've got the completed canon of Scripture.

What kind of people ought we to be in this light? Are we going to be the old prophet resting on our laurels? Well, you know, back in the day, I really did a lot of study. Back in the day, I was really on fire, kind of coasting now. You know, Jesus will be back any day.

Don't have to work too much harder. Are we the young prophet? Well, this sounds good. Let me just try this for a little while.

And I depart from the Word of God that I know in my heart and soul. There's lots of opportunity for application as we think about these things and think about its pertinency and relevancy for us. Well, there is a future repercussion on this.

If you go to the book of 2 Kings, and we don't have time to look at it in detail, I'm already out of time for tonight, but just turn real quickly to 2 Kings chapter 23. King Josiah is going to rebuild the true temple. He's going to restore it.

Now, this is still Solomon's temple. It's kind of in rags and tatters, but it's still standing. Haven't had the Babylonians, haven't had Nebuchadnezzar come yet.

2 Kings 23. King sent them together, the elders of Judah, Jerusalem. King went up, Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

King stood by a pillar, made a covenant before the Lord in verse 3 to follow the Lord and to keep his commandments and testimonies. Verse 4, he commanded Hilkiah, the high priest, priest of the second order, the doorkeepers to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the articles that were made for Baal. Can you imagine? There was articles made for Baal, Asherah, and for all the hosts of heaven inside the temple.

And he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron and carried their ashes where? To Bethel. That's where idolatrous worship stuff belongs, is Bethel. That's a pretty good hike from Jerusalem up to Bethel.

This, Josiah knows what he's doing. This is a symbolic act. He burns all of this pagan stuff and carries the ashes to Bethel.

Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem. And those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and all the hosts of heaven, he brought out the wooden image from the house of the Lord to the brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the brook Kidron, ground it to ashes, threw its ashes on the graves of the common people. Then he tore down the booths, the perverted persons that were in the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image, brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, defiled the high places where the priests had burned

incense, from Geba to Beersheba.

He broke down the high places, the gates, which were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua, governor of the city. Nevertheless, the priests, the high places did not come up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brethren. He defiled Topheth in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech, which they were doing down there right outside Jerusalem.

He removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun. Look at all of the trash that was going on in Jerusalem by this time. The altars on the roof, on the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made.

The king defiled the high places, verse 13, east of Jerusalem, on the south of the Mount of Corruption, Solomon the king of Israel had built. This is in and around the Mount of Olives, broke the stuff in pieces. Now look at verse 15.

Moreover, the altar that was at Bethel and the high place which Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, that altar and the high place he broke down, he burned the high place and crushed it to powder and burned the wooden image. Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that were there on the mountain. He sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar and defiled it according to what? The word of the Lord, which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.

Then he said, what gravestone is this that I see? The men of the city told him, it is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel. And he said, let him alone, let no one move his bones. So they let his bones alone with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria.

All of those years later, remember Josiah is the last king, this is the days of Jeremiah, this is in the late 600s, 620-ish, from 640 down to about 600, that time. And what we saw was happening in the 900s, the latter part of the 900s. So long time later, but the prophecy was not forgotten.

The bones are still there. And why does Josiah say, let them alone? Because he knows what the word of the Lord was. Your corpse will not return to the tomb of your fathers.

He could have brought that guy back and buried him in Judah. He didn't. God's word lives and abides forever.

If you want something to persist after death, something that reaches beyond the mundane and the immediate and temporal, it's the word of the Lord. You cannot go wrong prioritizing and dedicating everything to the word of the Lord. That's how we know what we know.

That's how we are guided. That's how God, the Holy Spirit speaks to us. This is what keeps us on the narrow road.

It's what cleanses us, washing of water by the word. And when the Lord Jesus talked about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, when you look at that chapter in John, what's he talking about? It's the word of God. In the upper room, when he says, this is my flesh and this is my blood, it's the word of God.

That's what we imbibe. That's what energizes us. And there is no more vivid picture of what dedication to it can do and what departure from it can do than this story in 1 Kings 18.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the blessings that we receive through it, the power that you grant to us in it.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will minister it to our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.