

Kings and Prophets 14-01-31a

This is Friday, the 31st of January, 2014. We pick up our study of kings and prophets tonight in 2 Kings chapter 4. We're in the career of Elisha. We've seen some very fascinating things particularly relative to the way he represents and foreshadows things that will take place with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, where Elijah and John the Baptist and the Old Testament age are sort of linked.

Elisha and the age of grace and the productive things that come with the first advent of the Lord Jesus are here being suggested to us in very interesting ways. Let's take a moment at the outset to dedicate our time and our concentration to the Lord and then we'll begin. Father, we're so grateful for the abundant and manifest and diverse ways that You express Your compassion on us and Your grace toward us.

We thank You that we have this opportunity tonight to partake of the truth in Your Word, to share in it together in fellowship and in enthusiasm. We thank You for the Lord Jesus. We thank You for the inexpressibly great things we have in Him and through Him.

And we pray that we can take this time to re-energize and to revitalize our relationship with You through Him, that we'll be motivated and encouraged by what we see tonight from Your Word and that we'll be better equipped to fulfill Your plan and purpose for us both in this age and in the times to come. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

We have reached a fresh set of episodes that will be presented to us in the career of Elisha in 2 Kings 4. The last observation I will make about chapter 3 with reference to the final verse twofold actually. The first relates to verse 27 when the king of Moab takes his eldest son who would have reigned in his place and under siege, unable to break the siege and achieve any kind of victory when he tries to attack the lines, he's completely surrounded by both Israelites and Edomites but he attempts to break out through the Edomite lines. So it's not just the Edomites that are there.

The entire confederated army is there but his particular point of attack, he thinks the Edomites might be the weakest link. So that's where he tries to break through. He fails, has to return to his city and he realizes that all is lost and they're going to be reduced, they're going to be perhaps taken prisoner, pressed into servitude or whatever.

So what does he do? In desperation he goes to the city wall and in the sight of all of the besieging armies he sacrifices the crown prince of Moab. Burns him alive in front of everybody. It's a shocking heinous scene.

And the questions that I want to answer pertain to the middle of the verse where it says there was great indignation against Israel. Depending on the translation you have or the commentary you read, the subject of this wrath, who is it that's wrathful, who is it that's indignant will vary. This is often said to be divine wrath or God breaking out against Israel and it

has to do with the verb that is used here or the noun and the verb from which it comes.

This is something of a legitimate observation because the word here, Q-E-T-S-E-F or T-S-E-P-H, in every instance except a couple of the very latest uses is used of God. It's divine anger. It's divine wrath.

And so they say, well, since that's the only thing we ever see it used for in this age and before, it must be God who is angry, God who is indignant. So they figure that He must be the implied subject. It's a fair way to look at it.

It's not fallacious to draw that conclusion. However, it doesn't make a lot of sense in the context. So, without getting too far down the road in this, turn with me to, keep your finger here, and turn back to Deuteronomy 29, Deuteronomy chapter 29.

I think this is the easiest way to ensure that we really understand what's going on here. Deuteronomy 29, and we're going to be toward the end of that chapter. In this chapter, of course, Deuteronomy is the renewal of the covenant.

The Deuter second namaz law. Deuteronomy is the second giving of the law, the confirmation, the renewal of the covenant. It's a refreshed copy of the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone, and so on.

And so, in the beginning of the chapter, these are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel, in, where? The land of Moab. Where are they when the covenant is given? They're in the land of Moab at that time. So, verse 5, So, remember Sinai and the giving of the law was initially at the very beginning of the sojourn, right? They went to Sinai within weeks of leaving Egypt.

You remember that, right? That's when the smoke and the cloud, the people ran away, Moses went up, came down, his face shined, he saw the people sat down to eat, rose up to play, smashed the tables, and so on. That was 40 years ago now. So, here we are in Deuteronomy at the end.

That generation has almost entirely died out, except for Caleb, Joshua, and there might be a few little snaggletooth hangers on at this point. Basically, they've all dropped in the wilderness. You've not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or similar drink, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.

So, verse 5, verse 6, Why is there a fresh commitment to the covenant? New generation, right? These aren't the people that stood at the foot of the mountain and said all that the Lord has said we will do. They're all dead because they didn't have faith, weren't ready to enter the land, didn't believe the testimony of the spies, and so on. So, verse 19, Commit to this covenant, long and short, so that it may not happen when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my own heart, as though the drunkard could be included with the sober.

The Lord will not spare him. The anger of the Lord and his jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven. Someone who takes this covenant lightly, right? And the Lord will separate him from all the tribes of Israel for adversity, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this book of the law, etc.

etc. etc. This theme continues all the way through these verses down to verse 27, which is our verse.

The anger of the Lord is aroused against this land to bring on it every curse that is written in this book, and now, I have to cover in between because it doesn't make much sense. In coming generations, verse 22, your children who rise up after you, the foreigner who comes from a far land, says, when they see the plagues of that land and the sicknesses which the Lord has laid on it. This is predictive.

Moses is saying, one of these days, if you all ever depart from this book of the covenant, if you violate this covenant, the Lord is going to bring all of these curses on not just an individual man, but the entire land. That's the scenario. Now, they haven't even gone into the land yet, and Moses is saying, at the point that you go into the land and violate this covenant, God is going to bring all these curses on you.

Verse 24, all nations will say, why has the Lord done so to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean? People would say, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt, for they went and served other gods and worshipped them, gods that they did not know and that He had not given to them. Then, verse 27, the anger of the Lord was aroused against this land to bring on it every curse that is written in this book. And the Lord uprooted them from their land in anger, in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.

This is a prediction of what will ultimately happen to the northern kingdom in 721 BC under the Assyrians, and what will ultimately happen to the southern kingdom of Judah in 587-586 under Nebuchadnezzar. Moses predicts it, that in the day that you break this covenant, God will bring these curses on you, you will be uprooted out of this land that you're about to enter. Don't take this as something that is irrevocable.

God can take this land away from you again. Remember, entering across the Jordan into the land of promise is not a picture of salvation. What is it a picture of? Blessing and reward in time, blessing and reward in eternity.

It is entering into that place of service and function where you actually are useful to the Lord. You can enter into that, and you can also be uprooted and cast out of it. How? Repeated pattern of apathy, indifference, disobedience violating, for us, what is the new covenant.

Don't lose your salvation, but you lose your place of service, function, blessing, opportunity. All of the things that fulfill the promises can be taken away. You are someone who still belongs to God, but you are in a case of discipline, judgment, and cursing.

The point here in verse 28, "...as the Lord uprooted them from their land in anger, in wrath, and in great indignation." Anger is the word *af*, A-P-H. That's one of the most common words for the wrath of God in the Bible. Wrath is *Chema*, C-H-E-M-A-H.

Indignation is *Kesef*, Q-E-S-E-P-H, our word. Now, I could spend all night talking about the semantic differences between these, but there is anger, *af*, there is wrath, *chema*, and great. Here, we have *gadol kesef*.

This isn't just *kesef*. It's not just indignation, it's great indignation. *Gadol* means large or huge.

So, this is an adjective, *gadol*, applied to *kesef*. Anger, wrath, great indignation. And it's saved for last.

Because this isn't just a flash of anger. This isn't just a momentary wrath. God is fed up and can't look upon this people with any favor anymore.

They've reached the limit. It's beyond the pale. This is *gadol*.

So, back to our passage. This isn't that Israel got angry at the king of Moab. It isn't that he incurred their wrath.

There is a great indignation. And this is the same phrase we saw in Deuteronomy 29. This is *kesef gadol*.

And this is beyond the pale. This crosses some line for them. And this is *al Yitzrayel*.

Which means against. It also means upon. Its primary root meaning is upon.

There was a great indignation upon Israel. And when they see this guy burn his living son on the wall and testify to the world that he sees no future for his dynasty, for his regime. It's beyond the pale.

You get the idea that this great indignation is a kind of disgust. And it's a disgust that pushes you beyond some line. If God is going to throw his people back out of their land, undo everything that he did under Joshua, reverse it all off, this begins to suggest things like the biblical flood.

It repented God that he had made man on the earth. And he undoes a lot of what has happened from that point. It repented God.

God changed his mind about leaving these people on the earth. God changes his mind about having his people in the land. And Israel changes their mind about reducing this city and trying

to finish off this victory.

And it leaves a bad taste in their mouth. And one of the things that you can think about here as we close out this chapter is, why isn't it a wonderful, sweet victory? Who is the victory being given to? It's being given to the descendant of Omri here. The Omride dynasty.

You're talking about this northern kingdom king. This is a demonstration from God. But it's sort of a bitter victory.

This last act of defiance on the part of the king of Moab is a reminder to them that yes, God gave them the victory. Yes, they're going to return to paying their tribute and so on. But this is an evil king of an evil land.

And you're not that far from it. So, just a little bit of further explanation of the very last verse. They departed from him.

Notice. They departed from him. They see this king and what he's capable of.

And they think, you know, this guy at a distance, diametrically opposite us on the Dead Sea, this is probably a good thing that we're no closer to Moab than we are. But the word of the Lord that was given to Israel, saying that God would be equally disgusted with them at the point that they depart from the covenant and do the debased and degenerate things that were going on in Egypt when God delivered them out from it. It is as though God is saying, you know this great disgust that you feel as you see this guy doing this on the wall? If you think back to the end of Deuteronomy, that's exactly the attitude God has toward you right now.

Because you have embraced the gods of the land. You have departed from the covenant. And this is God's soon-to-be attitude toward you in terms of being just fed up and brimful, indignant and disgusted.

So, just remember this feeling when you think about God and Deuteronomy 27. 29-27. So that brings us to chapter 4, Elisha and the Widow's Oil.

A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets. I stopped and read that over several times and I thought, let's just think about this. A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets.

What a way to introduce a gal. It doesn't say there was a woman in the city of this. It doesn't say the woman in the land of that.

She is introduced to us as one of many wives of many sons of the prophets. So, why are we given this introduction? If we just stop right here, what do we know so far? There is a community of professional prophets. In what land? Northern Israel.

How effective are these guys? I mean, ask yourself, what state is the Northern Kingdom in? Is this Judah and Jehoshaphat and teachers going out into the community and finding willing

students and hearing ears and sowing the seed of the Word of God so that it bears fruit in the soul? Who are these guys? This is a whole community of prophets and what is the testimony of the Word of God of their effectiveness? If there was any, it's not in the Word of God. These are the sons of the prophets. Being a son of a thing is always a little bit iffy, unless you're a son of God.

But, you can be sons of Belial, you can be sons of disobedience. Jesus talked to the Pharisees and said, yes, you are sons of your fathers who slew the prophets and you're filling up and completing their sins. It's just an interesting community here.

These are sons of the prophets, but I would also offer this as a thought maybe to the Catholic Church. If these are, in fact, alleged prophets of God, one thing they are not is celibate. Wives of the sons of the prophets.

So, where do you get off saying it's better to be celibate? That's working out real well, isn't it? Not that we judge things by results, I'm just saying there's no precedent in Scripture. The apostle Peter was married. How did he get a mother-in-law otherwise? He didn't hire one.

Well, I need a mother-in-law. No, he was married. You don't get a mother-in-law without being married.

And Peter's mother-in-law is the one that Jesus healed of the fever, remember? When they were up in Capernaum. So, guess what? There's no biblical precedent for celibacy as some high mark of spirituality. I've completely misread Paul on this point.

She is a certain woman of the... Notice it's not a certain man of the wives of the prophets. It's a certain woman of the wives of the prophets. Just so we understand what the Bible considers marriage to be.

Woman of the wives of the prophets. It's a useful verse for those who begin to think that, you know, it's defined some other way. Only now in this country would we have to make this point.

She's a woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets. She cried out to Elisha, says, your servant, my husband, is dead. Your servant, my husband, is dead.

And you know that your servant feared the Lord. Now, this is a new advance on our understanding. A, apparently her husband and by implication the other sons of the prophets, recognize that Elisha is the real deal.

Remember we had some sons of the prophets lurking in the vicinity when the transfer of office took place over across the Jordan. These guys are watching from a safe distance. Well, we know what typically happens.

This guy winds up in a ditch someplace. Let's go look for him. They don't look like they're the sharpest knives in the drawer, really, when it comes to spiritual things.

But they're sort of the Greek chorus. You know, they're there as kind of background for the real prophet and what he does. Has God ever said to Moses, to Samuel, to anybody, let's have a community of prophets.

Is this of God? We have no indication that it is. We also have no indication that it isn't. We just don't really know who these guys are.

What we do know about this man is that Elisha knew him and knew that he was actually a man of faith. He was known to Elisha. So Elisha is acquainted with this community.

Maybe he's trying to, maybe he figures this, maybe this is his Bible class. But notice they are not sons of the prophet, singular. This is not the disciples of Elisha crowd, per se.

They are sons of the prophets, so there's a community and this seems to be like a hereditary thing. Guys before this thought that they were prophets, or acted as prophets, or identified themselves as prophets and officiated in some way. And these guys are in that, they are sons either naturally or by profession.

But they've come to this community, they want to serve God, they've given away some things, but they've got families. So that's what you've got here. Your servant, my husband is dead and you know that your servant feared the Lord.

So she says, remember my husband, you've seen him before. You know him and you know that he feared the Lord. He wasn't just any old guy.

He really did love the Lord, fear the Lord, serve the Lord. And the creditor is on his way. Is coming is a real good translation.

This is the imperfect in Hebrew and it means he is on his way to take my two sons to be his slaves. This guy because he's a professional prophet, apparently doesn't have a job, doesn't run a farm, doesn't have a paying for profit occupation, and so he's in debt. Seriously in debt.

Now the law says that you can do this. That a creditor in Israel can legitimately come get somebody if they default. This is Exodus 21, 2 through 4. If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years.

This is indentured servitude to pay off a debt. This is a six-year contract. He'll serve six years and the seventh he goes free and pays nothing.

Deuteronomy 15, 12 through 18. If your brother, a Hebrew man or Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you, send him away free. You shall not let him go empty-handed.

Supply him liberally from your flock. From what the Lord has blessed you with, you give to him. Remember you were a slave in the land of Egypt, your God redeemed you.

I command you this thing this day. And if he doesn't want to leave, he has the option of becoming a pierce to your slave. That's your Deuteronomy 15.

Exodus 21. This period of servitude creditors can enslave debtors and their children to work off a debt when they can't pay. The period of servitude cannot last beyond the year of Jubilee.

This is Leviticus 25. But if somebody does have a creditor of this nature they are not to take advantage of them. This is also Deuteronomy 15.

At the end of every seven years you grant a release of debts. This is the form of the release. Every creditor who has lent to his neighbor shall release it.

He shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother. So he can bring him into indentured servitude for up to six years. In the seventh year the debt is forgiven, the servitude is released.

But this was a way that you could make loans and not just take advantage of in Israel. You can make these loans and if a guy doesn't pay it back, he'll pay it out in service to you for up to the seventh year. It's legitimate.

This creditor is on his way to this lady because her husband incurred these debts. Now, this lady has tried everything to service this debt. She has gone to extraordinary lengths to not be in default on this debt.

How do I know this? Keep reading. Elisha says to her, what shall I do for you? What do you have here in the house? She says, your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil. She has no furniture.

She has no bedding. She has no clothing. There is nothing in the house but a jug of olive oil.

That's it. Everything else, the house is empty, unfurnished, unadorned, unsupplied. There's one jug of oil.

It's like the syrup when you go to IHOP. A little deal of oil. That's all she's got left.

Every other thing of value in the house has already been sold to service this debt but it was insufficient and now her two sons are to be taken to repay the balance of this debt. So she has tried everything and her husband is gone and there's no other option except for these guys to go serve. Now this is legitimate.

It's happened uncountable times in Israel. It's not unusual but she, without her two sons, has no option. She's going to be out there looking for somebody who leaves the corners of the field uncleaned.

She's going to be a pauper and instead of just resigning to this fate, she goes to the prophet and says, look, my husband loved the Lord. He served you. Here's my problem.

What can you do for me? That's the situation. So the answer to this problem is all going to hinge on what she does have. He doesn't ask anything about what happened to your other stuff.

He doesn't ask how did you get into this mess? What have you been doing? Buying expensive bonbons and flat screen TVs. How did you get into this debt? What kind of fool are you? No interest in what has transpired in the past. No condemnation or let me tell you about keeping a budget, etc.

etc. None of that. He starts in the present.

This lady has come to him. She wants to to solve this debt problem and keep her two sons, keep her family together. So he starts at point zero.

What have you got to work with? I got a jug of olive oil. That's it. This is a small jar.

This isn't like a giant pot. It's a jar. It's a jug.

It's a cruise. It's a tabletop syrup dispenser of oil. That's it.

Elisha says fine. We're going to work with that. So the point as we pause here to take our break that you can draw from this is A. This lady has done the right thing by taking her problem to the Lord specifically to the man of God.

Her husband feared the Lord. This is a family of prayer. They are dedicated to God and she says I'm not going to go into a life of crime.

I'm not going to do anything other than find in my spiritual life a solution to this physical life problem. Elisha, the man of God, says what have you got? Well, very little. She's got this jug of oil.

But this jug of oil, as you know, is going to be enough. So point of application when we find ourselves in similar circumstances, don't worry that God is going to say well, why didn't you, you know, wagging a finger. If you're a person that loves God and you've done your best to be responsible maybe you're a victim of circumstances beyond your control.

Evidently this lady this debt thing was something her husband did. He's gone. Now she's stuck with it.

What was my retirement plan now? What is my future going to be? There will be something to work with. I've never seen the righteous go hungry. I've never seen his seed baking bread.

If you genuinely love God and you're trusting him for your provision there will be a way and the place to look is what have I got? This is the question the man of God asks. Elisha is just like the Lord Jesus. When people bring a problem to the Lord Jesus what does he always do? He asks a question.

And Elisha is your prototype, your foreshadowing. There's so many of them in the Old Testament. Joseph is an obvious one.

David is an obvious one. Here this woman goes to Elisha and Elisha foreshadows the Lord Jesus and he asks a question. What do you want me to do? What have you got? We should do the same thing and expect God to raise that question in our own lives.

Well, if I've got a problem here what are my available resources? Because even though they may seem insufficient God can make them sufficient. God will work with what we have. We may have made a lot of mistakes.

We may have deprived ourselves of a lot of things but God will work with what we've got if we go to him and look to him and trust him to fulfill his promise of provision to those who love and obey. So this is where we'll pause. We'll pick up here momentarily and see how this works out and what the New Testament implications are from it, which are really pretty interesting.