

Kings and Prophets 14-06-06a

This is Friday, the 6th of June, 2014. We are prosecuting our study of kings and prophets in recent weeks and even months, mostly via the books of 1st and 2nd Kings. We're going to depart from that a bit tonight, but we'll begin as we always do by taking a moment for each of us to go before the Lord and ensure that we're prepared to make good use of this time, to have God the Holy Spirit be our teacher and to benefit from the things that we find in God's Word this evening.

Let's pray. Father, as we look back over another busy week, we thank you for your grace and your faithfulness and your compassion on us and preserving us and providing for us and challenging us with opportunities to put into practice the things that we learn as we gather to study your Word under the ministry of your Spirit. We pray that as we resume our study in this portion of the Old Testament Scriptures that your Holy Spirit will teach us, help us to see the truth that they contain.

These were written many centuries ago, and yet they are infused with your divine power and they are written for our instruction. It is profitable for so many things that build us up and equip us to do your will both now and in all of the ages to come. We pray that each one that has assembled this evening and has made a priority out of the truth of your Word will receive a blessing and that all of us will be encouraged and motivated as we seek to follow the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We pray it in his name, amen. We have come in our study, as I said, to 2 Kings chapter 6, and this is a point at which we begin to intersect once again with the account of events in the southern kingdom of Judah. We've been following the northern kingdom almost exclusively for nearly a year.

We last spent focused time on the kings down in Judah. It's been last July, as my recollection serves, and we have seen a few brief contacts where the two kings would get together and go attack Moab or have some glancing reference back and forth. But generally speaking, we have been following these kings up in the north.

If you have your Kings of the Divided Monarchy chart, and you may or may not still have that, I handed that out again nearly a year ago, there are some up here conveniently on the organ music rack. Also, if you're watching remotely, if you go to the website audio archive folder for Kings and Prophets and look back in the date range of last summer, you'll see that there's a JPEG there that has the same chart. You might want to refer to it just by way of refresher, because it begins with Jeroboam in the northern kingdom and Rehoboam in the southern kingdom circa 935 or so and moves forward.

In the north, we had Jeroboam, then Nadab for just a brief time, followed by Baasha, and he had quite a lengthy reign. Then we had Elah and Zimri, who were extremely brief, then Omri,

then Ahab, then the very short expanse of Ahaziah, and then Jehoram. And Jehoram or Joram in the north is who we have most recently been looking at.

And this brings us down into the time of the ministry of Elisha, and we are now circa 845 to 840 BC. That's where we are right now. So, we've had one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine kings.

Jehoram is the ninth king that we've seen up in the northern kingdom. Elijah has come and gone during the reign of Ahab. And meanwhile, in the south, we saw back when we began this study that it began with Rehoboam and his boast that his little finger was going to be thicker than his father's waist, and his foolish heeding of the young men who said he should be brash and bold, and he suffered for that.

Then we had Abijam, who lasted, I think, a little less than two years. And then Asa, and good King Asa, we saw largely the account of his reign through the book of 1 Kings. And in basically picking up at that point in 1 Kings, we have followed all the way through 1 Kings and into 2 Kings, where we've come all the way to Chapter 6. There is a great deal of overlap and parallel between 1 and 2 Kings and the books of Chronicles in places.

And then there are other places where they diverge. Well, we're going to back up just a little bit now and try to catch up with what's been going on down in Judah. A little bit of this will be reviewed because we have kept general track of who's king and some of what's gone on, especially with regard to Jehoshaphat, because we saw him in a combined campaign with Ahab.

But we're going to catch that up because right now, and again if you look at your chart, in the northern and southern kingdoms we have two kings with the same name. They are both Jehoram, and so for convenience we call the guy in the north Joram. But their names are the same.

And this is a wonderfully confusing syndrome that pertains all the way through the history of the divided kingdom. And as a seminary student, when you're trying to memorize who was doing what, where, and when, and you've got various Joashes and Jehoashes, which is basically the same name. You have a couple of Jeroboams.

You've got these Jehoahazes. I memorized it just long enough to pass the test and promptly just flushed it out of my mind. To me it's impossible.

So we'll try to track this with the convenient use of our chart. Now, having said all that, here's the thing. If you look where we left off last time in 2 Kings 6, you will see that there is a break right after the restoration of the widow's land.

We have Jehoram talking with Leprous Gehazi and finding out about how this woman was given a son who prospered and then died suddenly and then was restored to life. Whereupon Elisha warned of a coming famine and said, Go away because there's going to be this seven-year famine. So she went to Philistia and she came back.

That's where we left off last time is really at the end of chapter 8. I think I said 6, but I really mean 8. You have to listen to what I mean and not what I say. So in chapter 8, verse 6, not chapter 6, verse 8, but 8, 6, the king asked the woman, she told him, the king appointed a certain eunuch for her saying, Restore all that was hers and all the proceeds of the field from the day that she left the land until now. So even though she has been gone, she suffers no loss.

Well, this brings us then to the episode of the death of Ben-Hadad. We looked at this. We saw that Hazael who had been predicted to be the king in Syria way back when God spoke it to Elijah at the end of 1 Kings, is now going to actually take that role.

Elisha is involved. He's up there and stares at the guy and tears stream down his face because he can see in prospect the evil that this guy is going to perpetrate as the rod of God's anger and the staff of his indignation. And the reason I'm now going to go over to Chronicles and catch up the history of Judah a little bit is because of this principle that we saw last time.

God commissions Hazael to be king in Syria. Why does God care who is king in Syria? It might as well tell us that God decided that this guy is going to be the emperor of China, some dynasty over there in China. Who cares who's the guy in the Ming dynasty or whatever other dynasty they've got over in China? Who cares? It's not Israel, so why would it matter? Now we don't have the history of the pharaohs in the Bible.

We don't have the history of many of the other surrounding nations. But God takes an interest in who is the king in Syria. And I ask myself, why? Why is that? Because God is going to pick up the nation of Syria, and he has already been doing this, and use it as a paddle, as a rod of correction.

And that makes it significant. They are significant to the extent that they impinge on God's people. And there's a principle here that is useful for us to observe, I think, which is many times we think, well, these circumstances, here I am at work, and there's a bunch of unbelievers in the hierarchy and making policy and deciding what my work will be.

I've got co-workers, and it's all in the realm of unbelief. There's no Christian dynamic. There's no Holy Spirit group there.

This is just life as it is, and I'm encountering people. You can be in a military unit. You can be in a company.

You can be in a class if you're a student. Whatever people you get thrown in with. I've had this happen when I was on a jury.

You just suddenly are grouped in with a bunch of people and kind of through no fault of your own, and we can unconsciously begin to think, well, this is real life, and I'll get back to the Bible class and spiritual things and prayer and pleasing God and all that when I get back to kind of a spiritual environment. This circumstance encourages us to do otherwise. God takes an active interest in Syria because Syria as godless unbelievers are going to directly affect His people in

northern Israel.

God takes an interest in the unbelievers in your periphery, in your hierarchy, in your controlling environment. We think, well, they're unbelievers. They're in the kingdom of darkness, principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age.

Yes, but above all of that is the sovereign Lord God, and if something is going to come in contact with us, with you and with me, God takes an interest. And this ought to really be a comfort for us, personal or impersonal. If there is going to be a famine, which is a weather phenomenon and an agricultural phenomenon, sort of cause and effect there, who can control the weather? Who can decide whether crops are going to succeed or fail? Well, God knows in advance.

God orchestrates these things, and He has direct personal knowledge of the effect it is going to have on His people. That's why Elisha warns the widow. That's why she goes to a place of safety and provision during this seven-year famine.

That's why the people, and we saw how this sort of foreshadows the tribulation period, those people who turn to God in the tribulation, that seven-year period when they are obedient and they heed God's admonition, when they see the abomination of desolation flee, they are going to be protected. The world is going to be in the grip of forces of darkness, and yet God's people will be preserved. They have been given guidance.

God knows where they all are. He knows them by name. And their fate is not in the hands of people, it's not in the hands of the Antichrist, not in the hands of the beast or the false prophet or Satan or the demons, not subject to any of these plagues and seals, trumpets and bowls that fall upon the earth.

They are just as secure in the hands of God as you and I are right now. God does not leave us. He does not forsake us.

And He is actively aware both of impersonal forces that are beyond our control and of people like Hazeal, who can wreak all kinds of havoc on the land but not on God's people. Nothing gets through the wall of fire that God does not, with forethought and for our benefit, allow. So, as we go forward, remember this principle.

God cares for us. Particularly in this age, we are united with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. We are the body of the Lord Jesus on this earth.

Fret not thyself because of evil men. You can be sobered, you can be saddened the way Elisha was as he stares at Hazeal and can foresee the necessary discipline and judgment of God. But he is not depressed.

He doesn't give up. He doesn't say like King Joram, the Lord do so to me and more also if I don't have this guy's head on a pike before the day is over. We have confidence that God is in control.

Now, there are people who believe and there are teachers who teach that God is a God of love. God so loved the world. God is love.

And they look at all of the manifestations of God's grace and they say this. God does not actively send negative consequences to His people or to unbelievers. What He does is withhold blessing and the sin is its own discipline.

The consequences of deciding to be far from God and of choosing the wrong way in the wrong world, these are sufficient in themselves to bring judgment and to cause the negative consequences. There are two things at work here. One is not looking at all of the scriptures.

You can look at some scriptures that certainly indicate that God is love, that God is gracious, extending mercy for thousands, third and fourth generation. He is slow to anger, quick to grace and forgiveness and so on. However, God does actively chastise.

But if you don't go and look at those passages, you're not going to see it. Secondly, it is popular and it's fairly common down through history to see that scripture gets interpreted in the light of current cultural feelings, what they call memes, cultural memes. I won't bore you with some of the other terms, but sort of stock viewpoint that is a part of culture.

And right now, for example, it is a part of culture to try to overcome the holding back of women that has historically taken place, preventing them from pursuing careers and moving up in government and having senior executive positions in companies, which is cultural. It's not biblical, it's cultural. And they were held back.

And so then there's this big effort to try to right that injustice. Well, that's a cultural thing. However, if you go to scripture and try to dismiss scriptural passages that say that the man is the head of the woman in a marriage and that women should be submissive, they should be silent in church, they should not have authority over a man in church-related contexts, you take culture and you begin to distort and suppress biblical truth for the sake of a cultural principle.

Same thing is true with homosexuality. It's very popular now to try to overcome what has been wrong treatment. Yes, homosexuality is an evil.

Yes, it is a sinful practice. But because you identify someone as evil and sinful, that does not justify wrongful oppression or treating someone with injustice. There is a justice system that will handle these things.

And it is not our place to judge. We can recognize when something is wrong. It's an entirely different thing to say, I am judge, jury, and executioner.

Because I have found you guilty, I am now going to personally punish you for this thing that I see as wrong. It's an odd thing that there are people who will actively persecute, let's say someone who is a homosexual, but you don't see them go down to a known brothel and persecute the hookers that work down there. You don't see them go to the city hall and

persecute the councilmen who are obviously perpetrating evil every day with their speeches and their influence and their trying to perpetrate all kinds of havoc.

There are many places where you can... But this is their particular hobby horse. This is one they want to ride and it's convenient and it's not right. We can identify sin.

We can identify evil. But we have to be very careful when we start setting ourselves up as a means of punishment. Again, look at this passage.

God will select the rod of his anger and the staff of his indignation. If he's going to punish, he'll pick up Assyria. He will pick up Syria.

God is in his heaven. God is the judge. God will pass sentence and God will see that the sentence is carried out.

But this cultural notion that it is... God is all love. God is all positive. He's light.

God is light and in him is no darkness at all. Therefore, anything that smacks of justice and discipline can't be coming from God. It's coming from the dark side.

And so all of the consequences are built in to sin and evil. It's a happy thought. It's a nice idea.

It's just not biblical. The Bible tells us that God actively judges. God doesn't wait for sin to infect and rot and disintegrate someone's life, especially a believer.

This would be the equivalent of a parent saying, well, you've been disobedient and you're going to see that that's going to have bad effect on you later on. No, the parent, if they're a good parent, is going to create consequences to train the child now. I will create bad consequences for you.

You are grounded. You are in the corner. You lose privileges.

In extreme cases, you receive corporal punishment, which is punishment in your corpus, which is basically... I was... This is probably indelicate and I'll ask forgiveness in advance. But I was amused thinking about the word ass because it's the name of an animal, right? How did it come to be used to allude to a portion of the human anatomy? Well, it is that upon which you sit. And in the King James Bible, it talks about the Lord Jesus entering in what they call the triumphal entry.

You remember that? Going in with the palm branches and garments. And what is He riding upon? What is He sitting on? Well, and so this was a joke back in Old and Middle English that it was not quite a pun, but it was a joke. Well, what do I sit on? Well, that's what I sit on.

And so that became the term for that. Anyway, now it's too indelicate to really say as I have just done. But the destination for punishment for a child is that upon which they sit.

And we, as parents, sometimes have to create that negative consequence because we don't have time to wait for the natural deleterious effects to set in. And God doesn't either. Our life is too short.

And sin is fun initially. But God will proactively judge and discipline. And we're going to see it tonight.

So what we're going to do now, since we followed, again, the history of Israel coming forward through Jeroboam, the major kings, Jeroboam, Baasha, Omri, Ahab, and down to Joram or Jehoram. And we're at a good place to kind of catch up and then move forward in Judah. We're going to back up just a little bit.

You remember Rehoboam. We covered him in significant detail. Abijam didn't last long.

And then King Asa. Now we saw King Asa as we went through 1 Kings 15. And the main thing we saw about Asa was that he removed his mother, Ma'akah.

Remember, she was one of these queen mother types. And she was trying to rule the kingdom because she had been the queen. But then when the father died, she wanted to kind of take over.

She wanted to be a Cleopatra or a Jezebel. Well, Asa removed Ma'akah, his mother. We saw this back in 1 Kings 15 from being the queen mother because she had an abominable image made for Asherah.

Asa cut down the image, burned it at the brook Kidron, but he didn't take out the high places. There was too much resistance. Asa didn't get the high places totally removed.

But he did a pretty good job. And then we saw in 1 Kings 15 when Asa and Baasha united together to fight the battle there that we saw in 1 Kings. And what we didn't see was the events in 2 Chronicles 15.

So we want to turn back to 2 Chronicles 15 now and pick up a little bit of what we missed in Asa. And this is just going to be a very brief review. So turn with me to 2 Chronicles 15 because we're going to move forward through Asa and Jehoshaphat and catch up with Jehoram down in the south.

So in 2 Chronicles 15 a little bit of this is going to be reviewed, but then a lot of this is not in Kings. So it tells us that the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. Names are always significant in Scripture.

Azariah the son of Oded. Azariah is this prophet's name. This is his sort of claim to fame prophecy here.

Azar comes from a verb in Hebrew and then of course you have the ya ending there. So what you have is God is our something. And you might think, well, is it Etzer? And it is.

Here I raise my Ebenezer. Hither by thy help I've come, and I hope by thy good pleasure safely to arrive at home. Come thou fount of every blessing.

Ebenezer was the stone of help back in the days of Samuel. Well, Eben is stone and Ezer or Etzer is help, stone of help. Ebenezer, Ebenezer Scrooge, oddly enough, stone of help, Scrooge.

Well, Ezer or Azar actually is the word for help or Etzer. And this is the root of this prophet's name. This is basically Etzer-i-Yah which is Yahweh is our help.

The Lord is our help. He's the son of Oded. Oded comes from a verb and you'd think it would be Adad but it's not.

It's more like Ud because it's got a weak, it's like a special form in Hebrew. But this verb from which the second name comes, Oded. Do you see anything about the vowels there that I've talked about before? Oded, O-E-N-F-I-X which is what? It's like I-N-G in English, right? So whatever the verbal meaning is here, it means it's ongoing.

It's a gerund. It's kind of a present tense. Running, swimming, walking, O-E.

So this is Oded, somebody that does something repeatedly. Well, Ud means to do it over or to return, to repeat, to continue a thing. And even the preposition that means until in Hebrew comes from the same root.

You say Ad and in Latin you have ad infinitum, you know, until infinity. Well, this has roots way, way back in this ancient syllable. Ud, Ad.

And Oded means somebody who returns continually. Who persists. Who is doing a thing and keeps on doing it.

And it's continuous path. So this is God's help, the help of the Lord, son of perseverance, son of continuing to do what you're doing. It's a fascinating name.

Before you even get to the message, you think, wow, what great names these guys have. Because this is the southern kingdom and Asa is a good king. Azariah feels the spirit of God come upon him.

He's the son of Oded. And he goes out to meet Asa and he says, Hear me Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while you are with him.

The Lord is with you while you are with him. Now this confuses the Calvinists because God doesn't do anything conditionally. God does what he wants to do and everything else just falls into place under the sovereign will.

But Azariah says, God will be with you as long as you stay with him. As long as you commit your way to him, as long as you're faithful and obedient, God will be with you. But if you do not, if you seek him, he will be found by you.

But if you forsake him, he will forsake you. It doesn't say, if he forsakes you, you will forsake him. That would be something you might hear from a reformed person.

God's presence depends on what you choose. It's just plain and simple. The Lord is with you so long as you are with him.

If you seek him, he will be found by you. What a great promise. If you seek him, he will be found by you.

What's great about this construction, and they do a pretty good job of preserving the Hebrew here, is notice the emphasis on God. It doesn't say, if you seek him, you will find him. If you seek him, he will be found.

It puts the emphasis on God. If you seek him, he will be found. It's like a little mini chiasm.

If you seek him, he will be found. Works great in English there. So, you forsake him, he will forsake you.

For a long time, Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law. Notice how closely associated the presence of God is with a teaching priest and the word of God, which is the law. In these days, the word of God is the law.

They've got the law and they've got the psalter, basically. They've got the hymn book. But, when in their trouble, they turned to the Lord God of Israel and sought him, he was found by them.

Notice the construction again. He was found by them. Because the important part is that God is present.

And in those times, there was no peace to the one who went out, nor to the one who came in, but great turmoil was on all the inhabitants of the lands. Nation was destroyed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every adversity. What he's talking about here is, in those times, when God's people turned to him and he was found by them, the ones who went out and came in, these are the ones who went out to battle against Israel, had no peace and no success.

They were greatly troubled and they were in turmoil. All the inhabitants of the lands, the surrounding lands, and the nations destroyed each other, and cities destroyed each other, because God troubled them with every adversity. So you, verse 7, be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.

What a great promise. And it holds just as true today as it did when Ahaziah spoke these words. It is a biblical principle, Old Testament and new.

The Lord is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you. And when he is found by you, those who seek to trouble you will be confounded.

They will end up troubling each other. They will end up destroying each other. But you, be

strong and do not let your hands be weak.

This tells us that weak hands is a function of our own choice, our own failure. So don't let your hands be weak, and your work shall be rewarded. Great promise.

Well, this is a good place for us to pause and take our break, because we are going to see, as we trace very quickly now the history of Judah forward to catch us up with what we've seen in the Northern Kingdom, how this principle is so manifestly illustrated, so evidently brought forth in the times of Asa, of Jehoshaphat, and down into the reign of Jehoram. But let's pause here and take our break.