

Kings and Prophets 14-06-13b

We pick up our study in 2 Kings chapter 8 and verse 16, and we've seen the significance of this confluence here where we move from the account of God's provision for this widow and His grace in anticipating for her the onset of the famine, warning her, giving her a chance to be prepared, and we think about this. We say, well, you know, could there be some sort of post-apocalyptic nuclear winter future dystopian, you know, gray skies and people wandering around dodging zombies? And we think what could happen if and it could be anything that they have all kinds of doomsday scenarios about near earth objects. And what if somebody hacks the internet? And I saw Morgan Freeman the other night saying if somebody could delay time on the internet by a millionth of a second, the economies would crash and, you know, city scapes would crumble, which is actually true, by the way.

It is amazing the extent to which every part of infrastructure and industry is now utterly, totally reliant upon technology such as GPS. If GPS gets interrupted for five seconds, all air traffic control is now GPS. All aircraft guidance systems are GPS.

Thousands of things in every different medium of transportation are utterly and totally dependent on GPS. If anybody finds a way to disrupt GPS, there will be catastrophic, chaotic destruction at a level never before seen. And you don't have to take down the satellites and you don't have to interrupt their signal.

All you have to do is mess with the time synchronization. And if it's off by even a fraction of a second, you will be reporting inaccurate positions. Rate time distance formula, as simple as it is, is what GPS uses.

And when that stuff is messed with, people aren't where they think they are. By the way, when I was trying to navigate my way, I had fully prepped myself to drive out of Baltimore and get the short distance from BWI Airport to my hotel. I did not count on flying into Washington, D.C. six hours later at night in a thundering, blinding rainstorm and try to find my way out of National Airport and bumble around and get across the river and onto the parkway to get to Baltimore, which is on a good day, 45 minutes away.

And so I thought, well, no problem, I've got GPS in my phone. I've got Google Maps. So popped out the old phone and discovered that it was out of bars.

You know, its roaming deal had kicked in and sucked all the life out of the battery. And I had a plug charger, but I didn't have a phone charger because I was only going to be in the car for a very short time. So I got the thing going, but it told me I was on the other side of the Potomac.

And so as I was trying to come out of the airport, and I don't know if it's the radar or what's going on there, but the little blue dot that says you are here, I knew I wasn't on the other side of the Potomac. When I could see the little airport diagram in which I was located, and my blue dot is where Washington threw the cherry tree or whatever. So I had to just sort of, and the

signage is no help.

If you've been around there, the signage is deceptive. I needed to get on 295, which goes north and east to Baltimore. But to get there, you have to take the exit for South 295.

Who knew? Anyway, suffice it to say, we have this utter reliance on technology and on information to guide us and to ensure that we are where we need to be doing what we're supposed to do. And if any of that is interrupted, there will be chaos at a level that is unimaginable. And, of course, this is where the whole counter-terrorist effort is largely located, is cyber-terrorism, getting into our infrastructure and messing with things.

Thankfully, God is in his heaven, and he provides. The word provide in English is made of two parts. It comes from the Latin.

You know what pro means. That's also Greek, beforehand. But the last part is video, as in video, as in foresee.

To provide is to foresee the need. And that's what God does. When he provides for us, he already knows what the need will be, and he makes provision for us.

That's what he did for this lady, and that's what he's doing in the larger sense for the nation. For this lady, because she is obedient, because she is a woman of faith, because she is tuned into the plan and purpose of God and is actively engaged in being a part of that, her provision is of the positive type. The nation as a whole around her is going in the opposite direction, much as we might surmise is happening around us today.

Ever more so, the level of evil in which we find ourselves enmeshed is astonishing. God is also providing for Israel. What is he providing? Judgment, discipline.

This is of the corrective kind. Turn ye at my reproof. You don't need to die, O house of Israel.

Turn at my reproof. You're messing up. My provision for you is reproof.

This is what God commissioned Elijah to put in place back in 1 Kings 19. Anoint Elisha as prophet, anoint Hazael as king of Syria, and Jehu as king of Israel. Elijah only got around to doing one of those things, and that was begrudgingly after Elisha just dogged his steps for days.

But now the second of those commissions is, in a way, going to be fulfilled. In the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab, I will tell you without getting into it that there is an enormous level of difficulty in trying to reconcile the various notations having to do with what year this king acceded to the throne compared to some other king. If you're interested, look at a commentary, and you'll find that there's all kinds of histrionics going on about, wait, this can't be right because it says elsewhere something else.

It's not important. It is seriously not important. It has to do with the fact that Joram took over

before his father had died.

There's a two-year overlap. Mysterious numbers of the Hebrew kings, it's all explained in there. We don't need to go into it.

So without further ado, in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoshaphat, notice having been king of Judah is in italics. He is still king of Judah, but his son Jehoram begins to reign as king. Evidently Jehoshaphat became enfeebled.

There was just an announcement this past week, and I forget which country, but some king has abdicated, and he's not dead yet. But his health is bad, and so he's turning, they said abdicated, but it's more like he's retiring. And he's becoming sort of king emeritus, and his son's going to go ahead and take over some European small country, I forget which.

Well, that apparently is what happened here. And he's 32 years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. In fact, his solo reign is going to be six years.

He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done. For the daughter of Ahab was his wife, and he did evil in the sight of the Lord. Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah for the sake of his servant David, as he promised him to give a lamp to him and his sons forever.

Notice the use of the term forever. There is coming a time when there will be no such lamp in Jerusalem, and it's in the not terribly distant future. So what does forever mean? Forever, le'olam, means into the indefinite future.

And at this point, the future time when there will no longer be a Davidic king sitting on the throne in Jerusalem is somewhere in the indefinite future. Events can conspire to bring about a termination of forever in some cases. People say, well, you can't say that because it says that we're saved forever, that we have eternal life.

Well, that's right. So don't get anywhere near any sort of circumstance that might shorten forever. That's my view.

It seems to be relatively easy. But I'm not saying anything about the duration of eternal life. You remember that eternal life is life that partakes of the quality of God's existence.

But you could imagine that the angels in eternity past were created immortal and in a forever sense. And yet Satan fell. A third of the angels followed him.

And there is going to be a terminus ad quem for that group where in the ages of eternity past, it might have seemed equally indefinite and was potentially. But through their decisions, they willfully disobeyed. They willfully rebelled.

They willfully fell. And it's just another illustration of the fact that when the Bible says forever, there can be limits to that based on time and circumstance. And I'm thinking specifically of

Revelation where it says that the beast and the false prophet and those who take the mark of the beast in particular, that's the one I'm really thinking of.

Anyone who takes the mark of the beast is tormented in the presence of the holy angels and the lamb. This is in the vicinity of Revelation 14 as I recall. Tormented in the presence of the holy angels and the lamb.

And the smoke of their torment ascends. They have no rest day and night. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever.

Forever. Well, how long is that forever? Well, how long are they going to remain in the presence of the lamb? How long are they going to remain in the presence of the holy angels? And how long is there going to be day and night? So, just since it's here, forever isn't always a guarantee of endlessness. Many times forever has an end.

This forever in terms of David having a son on the throne in Jerusalem is going to have an end. It's going to have an interruption. Then it is going to have the Lord Jesus coming back to breathe fresh life into that promise.

At any rate, he walked in the way of the kings of Israel just as the house of Ahab had done. Now, this is pretty much the understatement of the chapter. Keep your finger here, but turn over to 2 Chronicles chapter 21, where we get a bit fuller description of the reign of Joram in Judah.

2 Chronicles chapter 21. Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. By the way, it is going to be fascinating if they ever find this resting place of the kings is somewhere in the bowels of the mountain that is surmounted by Mount Zion.

But the city of David is in the side of that mountain, and there are unknown numbers of caverns and things that are hidden, and nobody can get to them now because the Arabs are sitting on top of it. And the last thing they want to do is give Israel any claim to the turf. So they refuse to allow any archeology, any investigation, any access to that part of the temple mount that they control, which is most of it.

But somewhere in there, the tomb in which the sons of David have been laid, and I think including at some point the throne itself. I've told you before, I don't think scripture is anything less than literal when it says the Lord Jesus will rule in Jerusalem and sit on the throne of his father David. I don't think that's just a metaphor for the rulership function.

I think he's going to sit on the chair, and I think the chair is there, and I think it is awaiting the day of its revelation. God only knows at this point where it is, but I'll bet you a shekel that it's there. At any rate, he rested with his fathers, buried with his fathers in the city of David.

If you've seen the map, you know that Mount Zion and the temple mount is up high, and further down, nearer the spring Gihon, that's the old city of David. Jerusalem is swarmed all

over that mountaintop, but the old city of David is relatively small, and there's all kinds of hollow spots in that mountain. He had brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat.

Now these guys are sons of Jehoshaphat, and they are named. Listen to these names. Azariah.

What does Azariah mean? We just had another individual by this name. Etzer Iya, the Lord is my help. Jehiel, Jehovah is God, or Jehovah is my God.

Zechariah, Zachar is to remember. Yah, of course, remember the Lord, the Lord is my remembrance. And you go on with all the rest of these.

Azariah who? Michael, Mikael, who is like God. And Shaphat, the Lord is my judge. All these were sons of Jehoshaphat, king of Israel.

Their father gave them great gifts of silver and gold and precious things with fortified cities in Judah. What a blessing, you say. Not so much.

He gave the kingdom to Jehoram because he was the firstborn. When Jehoram was established over the kingdom, this is Joram, he strengthened himself and killed all his brothers with the sword, and also others of the princes of Israel, posed a threat. He isn't confident that the anointing as king is sufficient.

He thinks his brothers might potentially unite against him at some point. So this is a preventative, preemptive strike. These wonderfully blessed, well-to-do sons of Jehoshaphat are all slain.

And their names are given to emphasize that these brothers were probably, any one of them, more worthy of the throne than Jehoram. What's interesting to me is God allowed them to be slain. Here's Elisha warning a widow of a coming famine, get away.

These sons, royal princes, are evidently given a warning, or if it was given it was not heeded. I would think if there was one given it would be in Scripture. But they're slain and nothing stops the sword of Jehoram.

Slays them all. With their families, any offspring that they had, that could be a royal claimant, slaughtered. Other princes, cousins, anybody that had any remote prospect of rising up and leading a popular movement to become king, kills them all.

So when it says he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, that's saying a lot. He's walking in the ways of Ahab and Jezebel. Jehoram was 32 years old when he became king and reigned 8 years in Jerusalem.

And notice if he overlaps 2 years with Jehoshaphat, as we think he did, did he wait until his father was dead to slay his brothers? Yes he did. Because it says that Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers, back up in verse 1. So long as Jehoshaphat is alive, the brothers prosper. But upon the death of the father, Jehoram quickly eliminates any doubt as to who is going to sit on the

throne.

And he thinks, well this is going to secure me. Many of these kings reigned 35 and 40 years. He's only going to last 6. And 6 is a number that has some significance in terms of the imperfection and temporary nature of man and man's work.

And the earth itself, God created it in 6 days and rested on the 7th. And this earth is going to pass away. It's temporary, even though it's a work of God.

And even though he saw that it was good when he created it, it was done in 6 days. And 6 is the number of human ephemerality and impermanence. Well, this guy is going to reign for 6 years on his own and then he's going to be out.

He walked in the way of the kings of Israel just as the house of Ahab had done, for he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord. Yet the Lord would not destroy the house of David, this is identical to what we have over in Kings, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever.

In his days, in the days of Jehoram, Edom revolted against Judah's authority and made a king over themselves. So Jehoram went out with his officers and all his chariots with him, and he rose by night and attacked the Edomites who had surrounded him and the captains of the chariots. Thus Edom has been in revolt against Judah's authority to this day.

At that time, Libna also revolted against Israel because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers. He made high places in the mountains of Judah, caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit harlotry, and led Judah astray. This is within one generation of Jehoshaphat and all of the teachers and all of the investment, if you will, in the population, in leading them in the law of the Lord and in distributing priests and teachers throughout.

In one generation, it flipped. Notice that although he was a murderer, a mass murderer, a multiple murderer, fratricidal king, heinous evil, when he's surrounded by the Edomites, God allows him to escape. But his brief reign is plagued with trouble.

No peace. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. And the peace that was enjoyed in previous reigns and in a large part of Jehoshaphat's reign, Jehoshaphat had the privilege to go pick fights elsewhere as he did against Moab when he confederated with the north and whatnot.

It disappears. And then in verse 12, we have the note that we came forward and looked at a bit earlier in our study that reminds us of the fact that Elijah did not go to heaven in the fiery chariot. Remember now, Elisha has already been doing his thing up in the north, and this is well after the time of the Jordan and the fiery chariot and all the things that have happened in 2 Kings that we've seen thus far.

A letter came to Joram from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus says the Lord God of your father David, Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father or in the ways of Asa king of Judah, but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot like the harlotry of the house of Ahab and also have killed your brothers, those of your father's household, who were better than yourself. Behold, the Lord will strike your people with a serious affliction, your children, your wives, and all your possessions, and you will become sick with a disease of your intestines until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness day by day. I would deliver this particular prophecy by letter also.

And this came to pass and was fulfilled. There are fates worse than death, and this was the judgment. But I'm reminded of the children of Job that Satan was allowed to remove from this life, who pretty much got a direct short train ride to the millennial kingdom.

And as Jake Hess used to sing, death ain't no big deal for a believer. In fact, in many cases, it is a welcome deliverance and promotion. And there will come a time in the tribulation when men will cry out for death and it will not come.

And if you look at some of the technological progress, I've mentioned this before. I just saw something this past week. They were talking about a guy who was wounded by an IED in Iraq, and about half of his thigh muscle in one of his legs was just instantaneously removed by a piece of shrapnel.

And normally, this would have been crippling to the point that they might have had to amputate because it rendered his leg completely nonfunctional, and he would be better off with something mechanical that they could manipulate. However, with state-of-the-art technology, they took some of the remaining thigh muscle cells in that leg and they re-grew muscle tissue and implanted it, and they reconstructed the muscle by re-growing the tissue from his own stem cells. It turns out they didn't need fetal stem cells after all.

They have figured out how to do without them, and one of the reasons they've had to figure this out is that President Bush did not allow them to do much by way of taking stem cells from pre-born infants, and it forced them to find other creative ways. Well, now they've perfected that technology. The doctor who was involved in this and the research team involved in it said, really, you're going to see within something measured in single-digit years that this technology, we will be growing complete arms and legs.

And he said, we're already having to get together and begin to address ethical concerns over this. And I thought, ethical? What's unethical about... I mean, man, if I lose my arm and they can grow me another one, I'm there, you know, sign me up. They said the reason is there is no distance between re-growing an arm and growing an entire body.

That's how close they are to taking the building blocks of life and re-creating. Well, this level of... It's a combination of knowledge and ignorance. We know enough to do some of these things,

but they don't have God's wisdom in how to go about it, how to ensure that it's not misused or that it doesn't have catastrophic unintended consequences.

They are also getting way down the road in integrating technology into your biology. And if you think losing GPS is going to be a problem, wait till people lose the chip in their head. There's a huge cyber security threat because people who are now already... I saw a guy that, you know, they implant... They chip people just like they do dogs now and use it for security.

You can only get through the security door if you've got the chip. And they say, okay, fine, we've got that all encrypted and the chip will get you in. But a guy, as an experiment, infected his chip with a virus and the next time he walked through the security at his own lab... And he did this intentionally, malice aforethee.

He wanted to test the system. Could it be done? As soon as he got scanned by the chip reader, the virus uploaded into the software that controls the chip reader and infected the entire security system, took the entire security system down, opened the entire facility up to anybody that wanted to walk in because of that one little chip, just like a grain of rice, that was between his finger and thumb, and took down the whole building. And it greatly cascaded beyond what he had expected.

This is where our nation is headed. This is why it is such a wonderful thing to be the child of God, to be called by His name, and to know that even if you are Azariah, even if you are Zechariah, or Azariahu, or Jehiel, or Michael, or Shephatiah, and it seems as though evil wins and you suffer some sort of loss, any kind of loss, any kind of setback, any sort of displacement, trust God. God knows what He is doing.

These young men did not have to witness the deterioration, the degradation, the corruption, and the downfall of the kingdom of Judah they grew up in under Jehoshaphat, their father. They grew up and came to adulthood in the days when the Word of God was being taught throughout the land, when you could leave your doors unlocked, when there were people of integrity who appreciated the teaching of the Word of God. And within a few years of their death, Judah has become just like northern Israel.

Aren't there times when you wish? I know there are people in the oldest generation of our country who would just as soon not see what our country looks like right now. How much better to be overlooking the vista of the millennial kingdom from your palatial mansion with your family around you and the blessings of God flowing like milk and honey throughout the land. These young men, God allowed their assassination, but look at the blessing it is for them.

They go from one of the best times in the kingdom of Judah straight into the millennial kingdom to see the Lord Jesus Christ, their great-great-great-grand-nephew, if you will, on the throne, perfect government for a thousand years. And they don't witness the carnage that is about to set in. It looks bad from a human perspective, but we look at things the way man looks.

God is in his heaven, God sees and God knows. This is our challenge to faith. Does God allow a famine in the land? If we're to be here, he'll protect us and preserve us.

If it's time for us to go, it is a far, far better thing God does for us then than he's ever done before. It's like Paul says, on the one hand, I would love to depart and be with the Lord. On the other hand, I know that it is necessary as an apostle to stay and continue the apostolic ministry, but to live is good, to die is better.

Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. And that confidence gives us peace. We're not going to suffer the rebellion of the Edomites.

We're not going to suffer the uprising of the Leibniz if we trust our Father in heaven, if we rely on his provision and his protection and his judgment. In whatever he permits through the wall of fire, we will have peace that the wicked will never know. They are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest.

If Thames casts up mire and dirt, there is no peace for those people. This is our heritage, this is our birthright. This is what the Lord Jesus, one of the last things he said before he left, the last thing he said was, peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives.

That's our birthright. And whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. What a wonderful blessing, what a tremendous gift, what a great thing it is to belong to God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, we'll continue our study of the Word of God on Sunday morning. We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for this portion of your Word, and even though to some it may simply be a dry account of historical events, for us it breathes a witness of your watch care, your love for those who love you, your fatherly discipline and judgment when we stray, your call to faith and obedience, your demand that we be righteous in your sight, not only do you make the call and set the requirement, but you've given us the means to do so.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these things on our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.