

## **Kings and Prophets 14-06-27a**

This is Friday, the 27th of June, 2014, in our study of Kings and Prophets. We are currently in the vicinity of 2 Kings chapter 9 and its parallel account which has a bit of a gap at this point over in 2 Chronicles. We'll follow our usual custom and take a moment to dedicate our time and our concentration to the Lord and then we'll begin.

Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for all of your blessings, the privileges that we enjoy in the Lord Jesus that sustain us, that encourage us, that equip us and arrange the circumstances of our lives to move us forward in your plan and in your purpose. We thank you that we have the privilege of being a part of that and in a positive way.

We thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit to guide us, to remind us of the truth. As we study your word this evening, we pray that his ministry will be active within each one of us to help us understand what is said, to see its pertinence and its applicability in our times, in our circumstances and the decisions we make and the actions that we perform. We pray that in the days ahead, these things will live and breathe spiritual vitality within us so that we are not just going through the motions, we're not just doing the habitual things but as a result of coming to a clear understanding of your word, we will be thoroughly equipped for those good works that will stand at the judgment and that will enable us to receive your approval as good and faithful servants.

We pray that each one here will receive a blessing, that we will grow in grace and knowledge as a result of our fellowship and our time spent in your word. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen. We've come to an interesting juncture here in our study of the kings in the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom and they're, as Dr. Crystal says, they're inter-commingling.

They're interaction, the relationships and interplay between them. There are times when the kingdoms seem almost entirely separate and unaware of one another. Other times when they seem quite intertwined and we're at one of those points and one of the reasons for this is not that it is God's action.

This is really sort of a point of introduction as well as a point of application. There is a time for everything under heaven. There is a season when certain things pertain.

There are other times and other seasons where the opposite is true. You remember the famous passage in Ecclesiastes where you have those opposites. What's really bad is to be out of sync and out of touch with God's time for a thing.

It is not enough to look at fellowship and say fellowship is good. A close relationship between the Northern and Southern Kingdom, after all they used to be the United Kingdom. They were a single nation.

They were brought into the land under Joshua. You can make all kinds of arguments for unity in

the kingdom, right? What a bad thing that these kingdoms have split. Wouldn't it be great if they got back together? Makes sense.

You could make all kinds of theological scriptural arguments for that. But here's one you cannot make, that it is always God's will for these nations to be united. The prophet warned Rehoboam, you're going to see this kingdom torn from you and split.

And it was God's will that Judah be separate from the Northern Kingdom, that he deal individually with these two kingdoms, that there be ten Northern tribes and two Southern tribes. Now is this the ideal will of God? Is this what God envisioned and gave as a goal and an ideal to Moses and to the people who left Egypt and were going to come to a good land? He didn't say you're going to come to two good lands, one in the North and one in the South, and you're going to be separate. But because of the nature of these people, it is currently God's will that there be two kingdoms.

And we have seen in the past that when people tried to artificially reunite Israel, it was a bad thing. We've seen alliances go sour. We've seen heartache and destruction take place when these kings try to ally and sort of start talking in terms of why don't we reunite.

There's a reason why God split the nation. And for the time being, it is God's will that it be split. Now, ask yourself this question.

Because you are theologues, because you are theophiloi, because you are astute students of God's word, there are times when we are to forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, and there are times when we are to treat someone as a heathen and a tax collector. You can't do both with the same person at the same time or the same people. Hello, smack, I love you, go away, closer, you know, it's just, it's confusion, right? There is a time and there is a criteria, a set of criteria.

If it's one criteria, it's a criterion, right? If it's single, it's a criterion. If there's more than one, it's criteria. There are criteria, multiple criterion-s for figuring this out.

Now, think about it. Do you embrace, draw closer, cultivate fellowship, try to arrange time and support and mutual encouragement with someone? Or do you maintain a bit of distance, pray for them, watch for signs of a return if they have departed from the things of God and have lost their interest and their enthusiasm and have gone into a path of disobedience? I was thinking about this earlier today in looking at the material in Hebrews chapter 10. I had a question come up about that and the notion of if we sin willfully after we've received knowledge of the truth.

Well, what if someone in your periphery is a believer, normally would qualify for all of the one another commands, but in your observation and to your knowledge and without much question, they are willfully pursuing a pattern and a habitual state of disobedience. Those who do such things knowing better do them anyway. You have to make a decision.

Am I going to stay close and continue to touch the unclean thing or am I going to put some

distance here unless and until this person recovers and becomes of like mind with me? What fellowship has light with darkness or faith with faithlessness? God himself often would remove people. So this is the question as we look at this time in the history of Israel with the divided kingdom, God has divided them for a reason. God has told us on the one hand, Paul says, I hear there are wars and divisions among you in Corinthians and this is a terrible thing.

Why are you split? But in that same context, he says, now there must needs be discernment and division in your midst. Otherwise, those who are approved would not be evident. So which is it? Do we assemble or do we disassemble? Do we unite or do we divide? Are we close or are we at a distance? Well, it depends.

And if we're out of sync and we're uniting when God has commanded us to divide and if we are dividing when God has commanded us to unite, we've got the wrong set of orders. We're looking at the wrong music. We're going to be out of harmony, out of sync, out of touch and out of the necessary obedience to God's plan and purpose.

So in this particular case, given the out and out house of Ahab, Queen Jezebel, worship of Baal that is taking place in the northern kingdom, along with the golden calves that were put in place by Jeroboam, the northern kingdom is fraught with false worship. They've dedicated themselves to it. It's popular up there.

It's the stylish thing to do. They've embraced it. They've promoted it.

They encourage it. They love it up there. Is this the time for people in the southern kingdom to seek unity and brotherhood and affiliation and alliance when these people are so thoroughly anti-God of Israel? The question answers itself.

Of course not. And yet these are the times where you see the king of Judah entering into alliance. This was the downfall even of good kings like Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat does many wonderful things but he also goes too far. He thinks it would be wonderful to try to close the gap between the two kingdoms. And every time he does that he gets burned and bad things happen.

So it is an illustration. It is a lesson for us to recognize that we have to be sensitive to the times. There is a time for everything.

There is a purpose and a season that we have to discern. Well, having said that, you will remember that back at the end of 1 Kings, back in 1 Kings chapter 19, we saw God give Elijah a commission. And this commission is in a way a map.

It is a forth telling of what is going to happen. God says in verse 14 of 1 Kings 19, I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. Which kingdom is Elijah ministering in? North or south? North, right? What does he observe? Your people have

forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword.

Now, we don't have a lot of details about this, but we know that Jezebel actively persecuted prophets in the northern kingdom. Elijah himself had to flee from her. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life.

Now, you remember that it's a little bit ironic that Elijah says this. They have killed your prophets with the sword. Why is this ironic? When did Mount Carmel take place? Previous chapter, right? Whose prophets got killed with the sword? At whose behest? And I think probably wrongly.

So, for Elijah to say, well, look, they're killing your prophets with the sword, has a little bit of a ring of irony, shall we say. Suddenly, a voice came to him and said, what are you doing here, Elijah? He responds with this information. So, the Lord said to him in verse 15, Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.

Now, what country is the wilderness of Damascus in? Syria. Leave the land, he says. Return on your way to Damascus.

Return on your way to Damascus. This is the geographical command of God. When you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria.

Also, apparently, subsequently, you shall, in parentheses, return, and anoint Jehu, the son of Nimshi, as king over Israel. And, parentheses, subsequent to that, Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abel-Meholah, you shall anoint as prophet in your place. Do these two things and retire.

He is not going to leave his office by way of death. He is going to anoint his successor who will take his place while he is still alive. That's the import of these words.

It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill. Whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. Hands up, everybody who can immediately think of an occasion where Elisha killed someone.

Yeah, me either. Yes, Elizabeth? Bears? I don't remember the bears being killed. Nice try, though.

You get a star for effort. But I believe the bears walked away the victors in that particular scrape. Yet I have reserved 7,000 in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.

God has a remnant even in this very degenerate kingdom. So, verse 19, and we've seen this before, Elijah departed from there, went to Damascus, and anointed Hazael king over Syria. He returned and anointed Jehu, and then he came back and found Elisha.

Never went to Damascus, never anointed Hazael, never came back and found Jehu and anointed him. He says, well, I'll do the easy one. Because Abel Meholah is real close by, I'll grab

this guy and anoint him, and my work here is done.

By the way, there is a hymn, there's a classical tune, in what language shall I borrow to thank thee, dearest friend, for this, thy dying sorrow, thy pity without end. Lord, make me thine forever, and should I faithless be, Lord, never, never let me outlive my love for thee. Wouldn't you think it would be better to finish strong, than to live a life before God, where you do a lot of wonderful things, and then you coast.

You sit down, your pack slides to the ground, you set your weapon aside, and you say, well, I think I've done enough, let's let the youngsters carry the load, and we don't finish strong. Another passage in Ecclesiastes, it is not the tall spirit that stands upright at the beginning of the race, it is the long spirit, who perseveres, who endures. You have need of endurance.

After you have suffered, you receive the promise. Run the race with patience. Paul says at the end of his, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I finished strong, I sprinted to the end.

We get the impression here that Elijah does not do this. You get the idea that some of these kings we're looking at, can begin well, can do well, and then, but they don't complete the task. He did this and that, but he did not take away the high places.

He did not get rid of the golden calves. He did not push to the end. He didn't complete the mission.

He did some of it, and then he laid back, became complacent. So he finds Elisha, the son of Shaphat, plowing with 12 yoke of oxen before him. You find the pass of Elijah encountering the active Elisha.

He doesn't find Elisha sitting under the shade of a tree. Elisha is out plowing, and he's got 12 yoke of oxen. Just that scene, that contrast.

If I was a movie director, that would be one of my primary scenes, is old Elijah, perhaps, shuffling along at a very slow pace, and here is Elisha getting after it. What you do, do heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men. In this regard, I want to read you something from one of my favorite presidents.

There is a huge number of citations from which you can quote in this, but here's the one I'm interested in because it reflects what I think is a good spiritual priority. He said this in 1900, and if you know your history, you know that President McKinley had Theodore Roosevelt as his vice president, and then when he was shot, Roosevelt became president. He wasn't elected in his own right until later.

Here's what Theodore Roosevelt said. Get action. Do things.

Be sane. Don't fritter away your time. Create.

Act. Take a place wherever you are and be somebody. Get action.

I'm going to read that again a little bit more quickly, but think about Elijah. Think about Elisha. Get action.

Do things. Be sane. Don't fritter away your time.

Create. Act. Take a place wherever you are and be somebody.

Get action. The Lord Jesus Christ has secured for us so many wonderful privileges, has given to us so many tremendous resources. There is no reason for us in our spiritual lives not to get action, do things, and be somebody.

Finish strong. Don't relax. Don't relent.

Don't coast. Don't become indifferent or apathetic. Don't assume.

Get action. It is God who is at work in our midst to will and to do for His good purpose. He has thoroughly equipped us not for every good status.

He has thoroughly equipped us for every good work. Every good work. Get action.

By the way, a similar thing He said about 17 years later, nine-tenths of wisdom is being wise in time. What you do with your time, how you spend your time, what your priorities are with regard to time. Nine-tenths of wisdom is being wise in time.

For a believer, spiritual wisdom is investing time in reflection, in thought, in processing what we learn in Bible class. You cannot organize your spiritual life during Bible class. We get the information in Bible class.

We process it. We prioritize it. We decide what to do in its light at other times.

If you don't spend any of that other time, we're not being wise in time. And any action we get is going to be inefficient, human energy, fraught with failure and disappointment, which then just discourages us and leads to a downward spiral. Nine-tenths of wisdom is being wise in time.

Well, this passage in 1 Kings 19 is significant for where we pick up tonight in 2 Kings 9. You remember that we had the death of Joram and his son Ahaziah comes to the throne in Judah. He was 22 when he became king. He reigned one year in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri, king of Israel. It actually says daughter in Hebrew, but they know that this means granddaughter. He walked in the way of the house of Ahab and did evil in the sight of the Lord.

Like the house of Ahab, he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab. He went with Joram, the son of Ahab, to war against Hazael, king of Syria in verse 28. Now this is mirrored over in 2 Chronicles chapter 22.

It picks up in 2 Chronicles 22 verse 4. He did evil in the sight of the Lord, like the house of Ahab. They were his counselors after the death of his father to his destruction. He followed their advice and went with Joram, the son of Ahab, king of Israel, to war against Hazael, king of Syria at Ramoth-Gilead and the Syrians wounded Joram.

Now, remember 1 Kings 19. What was the word of the Lord given to Elijah? Anoint Hazael. Whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will slay.

Whoever escapes Jehu's sword, Elisha will slay, right? Well, even though Hazael is not yet king, he's just the general of the Syrian army, in the field, his sword strikes these kings. Joram is wounded in battle against none other than Hazael. So he returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds which he had received at Ramoth.

He returns to Jezreel. The vineyard that Naboth owned, that Ahab coveted and Jezebel secured for him through the murder of Naboth is located in what town? Jezreel. So he goes to Jezreel.

Didn't know his Bible very well, did he? To recover from the wounds he had received at Ramoth. Now, notice it says Ramoth, and up above it says they were fighting at Ramoth-Gilead. Ramoth is one of two things.

It is either an alternate name for Ramoth-Gilead. They say that it's a rare name for the same town. Or it's a case of a scribal slip because Ramoth and Ramah, the only difference is the final letter.

And He and Tav look very similar. There's just a difference of a little gap at the top. And it's real easy to confuse the two.

And Ramah is such a common name. But if this was a scribal error, it happened very early because it is repeated in both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. They both say Ramah here.

So it could also be an alternate name for Ramoth-Gilead. But it's the same town, same place. This is not the Ramah of Samuel.

That's the point. It's not that town. It's not anywhere near here.

The wound that he had received at Ramah when he fought against Hazael, king of Syria. Notice it repeats again that he was fighting against Hazael when he was wounded. Why? Well, we're still in the period of Elisha.

Everything gets told to us twice. We even have two accounts here. One in Kings, one in Chronicles.

We're told twice that this wound was received at the hands of Hazael because this goes back to the 1 Kings 19 prophecy. The sword of Hazael is being used as a scythe for God's judgment in Israel and in Judah. So Azariah, the son of Joram, king of Judah, went down to see Joram, the son of Ahab, in Jezreel because he was sick.

Now doesn't Jesus say, visit the sick? Isn't this a good thing? Couldn't you justify colluding and commingling and having fellowship with someone? He's your fellow king. We used to be a united kingdom and now we're divided, but hey, can't we just all be brothers here? This is his in-laws. This is his close relation because he's all intermarried.

So isn't this a good thing? No. His going to Joram was God's occasion for Ahaziah's downfall. If you look at the word downfall in Hebrew, it literally means crushing.

He is going to be crushed. He's going to be destroyed through this visit, through the means of this visit. He's not supposed to be there.

He shouldn't be allied. He shouldn't be intermarried. He shouldn't be sympathetic to.

He shouldn't be up there fighting the Syrians with. And he's doing all of these things. There is a time for unity and fellowship.

It's based on a criteria, a set of criteria. It's based on a single criterion of like-mindedness in faith, like-mindedness in obedience, like-mindedness where you are being drawn closer together because you're being drawn closer to the Lord. If someone is being drawn to the dark side, you don't want to be in fellowship and in close personal contact with somebody who's going the wrong direction.

And this is his crushing. This is his downfall. For when he arrived, again 2 Chronicles 22.7, when he arrived, he went out with Joram against Jehu the son of Nimshi.

Now he's already faced the first sword in the prophecy, the sword of Hazael and was wounded. There's been a wound inflicted on one of these two kings, right? But in direct disregard of the word of the Lord which was known. Look, it's written down in the book of the kings.

He's a king. Does he not have access to the book of the kings? I think he does. If he wanted to know, he could certainly find out what the word of the Lord was to Elijah that's been recorded but he doesn't.

So now he went out with Joram against Jehu the son of Nimshi whom the Lord had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab. Now how did this anointing take place? Well, we're going to pause right here at the end of verse 7 because 2 Kings gives us the details of how this anointing came about and it's a long section and the reason it's long is because the details are important. So we'll pause here and take our break.

When we come back, how did this anointing... I thought Elijah never did anoint Jehu. Well, at this point Jehu has been anointed. How did that happen? Why did it happen the way it happened and what is the significance? Not only in history but what is the significance for us? We'll see that when we come back from the break.