

Kings and Prophets 14-07-11a

This is Friday, the 11th of July, 2014. We are resuming our study of Prophets and Kings after a hiatus last week. We'll be picking up in the vicinity of 2 Chronicles, Chapter 22, by way of 2 Kings, Chapter 9. We have to catch up a little bit of material in both of those areas.

We'll take a moment before we begin to give each of us the opportunity to go before the Lord and ensure that our time is well spent, that we can be blessed and be a blessing to each other as we fellowship in God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, thank you for another opportunity to dine at the table that contains the spiritual nourishment that you have provided for us in your Word through the presence and power of your Holy Spirit and through the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus Christ for us. We thank you for the age in which we live, the status that we enjoy as His body and His future bride.

We thank you for the challenges and the tests as well as the blessings that you give us, knowing that these things all work together for good and are a part of our preparation and our enablement for service now and in the future. We pray that this portion of your Word that we look at together tonight will contribute to those goals, that each of us will find something pertinent and meaningful for our thinking and our decision-making, our application of your Word and our walk through this life. We pray that we will be blessed and be a blessing to each other and to those around us, shining as lights in the midst of a dark day and a dark world, so that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is your perfect image, can shine to them.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Two weeks ago, when we last looked at this, we saw the rising up of Jehu in the northern kingdom in 2 Kings 9. This is in accordance with an earlier instruction of God to Elijah that Elijah did not fulfill.

Elisha does it by proxy, and we saw that story. And there was a detail that I left for a future session, which was in the instructions that the young son of the prophets gives to Jehu in the inner room in secret before he makes his escape and flees. And you think, what a contrast this is to, say, Elijah on Mount Carmel or the fearless proclamation of the Word of God in public that has taken place in previous episodes.

We saw cases where there is a king offering a sacrifice and here's a prophet that confronts him in public. Here it's furtive and secretive, and the young man seems to be in fear for his life, and he is instructed to so do. And he does not stick around.

He's not going to be there for advice or for reference or as a conduit or an intermediary for Jehu to consult with the Lord God about his future actions. He is given a mission which he is going to fulfill, but he's not going to fulfill it because he's zealous for the Lord. He's going to fulfill it because he sees the opportunity as someone with a great amount of self-interest.

And this suggestion is going to be followed and this mission is going to be fulfilled because it pleases him. And he says, well, the Lord is using me for something that I would like to do

anyway, which kind of reminds me of the Pharaoh in Egypt as a negative example where God says, for this purpose I have raised thee up to show my glory in thee. God has purposes that go beyond the simplistic one-ply thinking that we so often engage in.

And God raised up Pharaoh and knew that there would be a hard-hearted Pharaoh. What if the dynasties had been slower in turning over and the generations had been a bit slower and the Pharaoh who honored Joseph had been on the throne in the days of Moses? And Moses had come and said, let my people go. And he would have said, well, I've got great respect for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so you guys need to go head on out.

Well, where would we be? We wouldn't have the plagues. We wouldn't have the glory of God. We wouldn't have them coming out under the blood of the Passover lamb.

It would be a whole different story. God places people in history and appoints them their authority and their time. And the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord, not to twist it and to change someone's mind.

God didn't prevent Pharaoh from coming to faith. People always say, well, look, that's sovereignty. Look at God for ordaining Pharaoh's hardness of heart.

God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Well, you set clay out in the sun and it's going to harden. You put butter out in the sun and it's going to soften.

There are two different qualities and the sun brings out those qualities. The sun doesn't make clay into something that hardens. That's a property of the clay.

The sun doesn't make butter something that softens. Butter is something that softens in the presence of heat. And the sun brings out that property, that quality that is inherent but not necessarily visible while it's sitting in your refrigerator or while the clay is moist and cool and out of the light.

So God will reveal himself and reflect his glory as what is inside someone's heart comes out. When this opportunity is given to Jehu, you find out what the heart of Jehu is like because he does this with great enthusiasm and great energy. His wild chariot driving is visible at a great distance because that's just the kind of guy he is.

And this aggressive devil may care, you see people who drive this way on Central Expressway. So we want to be careful to note that even though God will give this mission to Jehu, it isn't necessarily so much that this is the judgment will of God. This is the retributive.

Did God really want to kill a bunch of first born babies in Egypt? Was God just up in heaven saying, you know, haven't killed any babies in a while. Let me just find some down there that I can slaughter. It has a purpose.

It serves a purpose. And while I'm on the subject of dead babies, let me offer you a thought or a

perspective because one of the most common criticisms that you will hear from atheists has to do with the mean old God of the Bible telling Israelites to go in and slaughter women and children. And instances in the Old Testament, one or two instances where this took place.

Number one, this is not a regular policy. It's not the 11th commandment. Oh, by the way, when you see babies that aren't Israelite, slaughter them.

These instructions specifically to Joshua and the Israelite army upon entering the land of Canaan, the land of the Amorites, where for 400 years they had had the testimony of the Lord God and had instead run into the arms of Baal and Molech and these awful cults with their heinous practices and their abusive child slaughtering sacrifices, putting, they have found these bronze ovens shaped like Molech. You open Molech's tummy, you put a living baby in there, there's a fire underneath and you cook the baby alive. This was a regular worship practice.

And what were they doing? They said, well, this child sacrifice will bring down the blessings of Baal or the blessings of Molech or whoever they're sacrificing to on my crops. It will make my life better. It will make us more prosperous, which is exactly the same reason that hundreds of thousands of babies are aborted all over this nation.

My life will be better if this child isn't around, if this child doesn't make a complication in my life. Well, the rationale is there's very little distance between those. I'm looking for my optimum life and prosperity and it's worth it to me to not have this baby in order to have this alleged prosperity, which of course is a false promise.

There was no Molech and there was no Baal and all they did was murder these babies for no good reason. The same is the case when pre-birth children have their lives taken. And whatever else you want to say, I don't see a great distance between smothering a child in the crib and decapitating it in the womb.

What's the difference? Either way, a child that would have been alive and growing isn't around and it's just a fact. Whatever else you want to say about the debate, pro and con, if you think it's okay to snuff them in the womb, why isn't it okay to snuff them in the crib? Why not? What is the material difference? Either way, on their first birthday, they're not around, right? So what's the difference? It's just semantics at that point. It's either okay to snuff someone out before they get a start or it's not.

And this false distinction, well, they haven't come out of their mother's body. I think that's a complete rationalization for the purpose of evasion. And this is what happens in the heart.

And what is in the heart is going to be revealed at some point. God puts obstacles in the path. If you want to find out the value of a resistor that's laying in a box, maybe the paint got worn off or it's not coated or whatever, you take it off a circuit board and you don't know what it is, how do you find out the value of that resistor? You run some current through it, put some electricity through it and measure.

And you find out, ah, this is a 10 ohm or this is a 10,000 ohm resistor. By itself in a passive mode, you really can't tell, you know, electrically. But you pass current through it with a meter, now you can tell exactly what the resistance is.

God passes current through us. And what we're made of and our nature is exhibited. When this message comes to Jehu, it is delivered furtively, secretly, hurriedly.

It's a one shot, here you go, oil on the head. When he comes back out, as someone pointed out last time, when he says, oh, you know that babbler, what I didn't think of, somebody astutely pointed out is, he's sitting there with olive oil running down both sides of his head. Come on, why is your head all oily now? He had the oil of anointing and when Jehu comes back out, it's dripping off of him.

It's a symbol. And before they can grab the guy, you know, he's out the door. Anyway, part of what the instruction that the young man delivers in verse 7 of 2 Kings chapter 9, 2 Kings chapter 9 verse 7, you shall strike down the house of Ahab your master.

This is an instruction. Now notice, there has been no, he doesn't say take it before the elders of Israel and hold a trial, have a defense lawyer, have a prosecuting attorney, have a judge, do it in the city gate. This is pretty much an instruction to assassinate.

This is an assassination instruction from God to Jehu. You say, hmm, this doesn't seem to partake of any of the legal structures that the law of Moses had enjoined that were further expanded and codified by David and Solomon and the early kings who set up the governmental structure in Israel. This is completely outside of that.

Jehu is just a general and he is told to go take the lives of these individuals in the house of Ahab. Doesn't give a specific list of names. Anybody in the house of Ahab, and notice, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets and the blood of all the servants of the Lord at the hand of Jezebel, for the whole house of Ahab shall perish, verse 8, and I will cut off from Ahab all the males in Israel, both bond and free.

Bond and free. And I asked the question last time, why doesn't it just say that the ones who have his hereditary blood relationship, the slaves, there's been battles, they took captives, these guys may have been purchased from caravans or whatever to serve the royal palace, but the slaves, the bond men in the house of Ahab are to be slain. Why? Well, it goes back to the purpose of the instruction to begin with.

Why does God say this command is given? You shall strike down the house of Ahab, your master, your boss. Why? That I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets and the blood of all the servants of the Lord at the hand of Jezebel. Jezebel has been sending out assassination squads to kill the sons of the prophets.

Now, who would these people be that went out and performed these assassinations? Whose servants are they? Who agreed to do this? I mean, God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, and what

did Jonah do? Jonah didn't like the assignment, so what did he do? He went the other way. These guys could have escaped and tried to flee, but instead they carried out these orders. So part of the answer is, in all of these assassinations over the years, many of the bond men in the house of Ahab are complicit.

They have been a part of either by delivering messages, by arranging, by fooling these prophets into showing up in a place or actually carrying out these assassinations. Secondly, there are different kinds of monarchies. There are hereditary monarchies, which is what pertained in Israel, but is Jehu going to be a hereditary monarch? Is Jehu descended from David? He's not.

So he's going to be king, and he's not a Davidic king at all. What kind of monarch is that? This is a non-hereditary. This has happened elsewhere in history.

You can look up instances where, for example, Philip of Macedon had a son, Alexander. He's king of Macedon. He goes on to take the Greeks and create the Greek Empire.

Well, Alexander dies at a young age with no heirs and his sons, and so who does his kingdom go to? Well, no one guy can take it, so it gets split four ways. And you have Seleucus and you have Ptolemy and these other guys, and the kingdom goes to these four. None of them hereditary Greek monarchs.

They are generals. Well, what this tells you is that in the absence of a viable hereditary heir, it's whoever is most closely associated, whoever is in a position to step up and take the throne. God says, kill everybody so that his trusted right-hand man, his steward, his second-in-command, his XO, any of his cabinet ministers, anybody that serves in his house, down to the guy that draws water out of the well and washes the feet, wipe them all out, there will be nobody left in the house of Ahab with any sort of claim to the throne.

And so it achieves, I think, multiple purposes. The house of Ahab has blood on its hands, the blood of the prophets of God, the blood of the servants of God, over the course of many years. And these people, by staying there, and you say, well, they were bond slaves.

What else could they do? Well, that's their problem. Now, suppose that there's somebody who is like Naaman's house servant that tells him that there's a man of God in Israel. Suppose there's a believer there, and they get caught up in this purge and slain.

You say, oh, that's just terrible. Well, think about it. If they're a believer in the Old Testament sense, and they are slain, what happens to them? Is death a horrible tragedy for them? They're living in the house of Ahab, one of the most evil environments that has ever existed, and when they're slain, what's their next experience? Millennial kingdom.

So we always look at, oh, somebody was killed. That's an awful thing. But not always.

You think about, my uncle recently passed away. He was in his early 90s. He had lived a long,

full, very wonderful life in the sense of service, in the sense of being appreciated by his family, and by those who knew him, by his church, and so on.

He had health problems. His mind wasn't working right anymore. And we say, well, that's not so bad.

Why? Because his situation now, his next conscious experience, he's free to resume service, to avail himself of everything that he learned in this life over the course of 90-odd years, and all of the encumbrances and all of the frailties and all of the bodily failures drop away. He's in his resurrection body, and we praise God for the deliverance and for the release and for the—well, think about these bond slaves. All of us, in some sense, are bond slaves, and death for a believer is a release.

Death is an interesting come-to-pass in the plan and purpose of God. We don't know that this has any pertinence in the angelic realm. It seems to be unique to human existence, to this planet and the biological life upon it that things die.

And death does several things. It removes those things that are deleterious to forward progress, and God can use it as a judgment to get rid of bad things. He can also use it as a blessing to promote good things and to transfer them into the eternal future.

And death has quite a different value in the plan and purpose of God. We think a long life is a blessing, and it often is, because God can use it here in the mundane realm. But if your life is cut short—I think I mentioned this before.

I can't remember where. I know I've mentioned it recently. But you look at the investment that the Lord Jesus made in the disciples over the course of His earthly ministry—let's say three and a half years—daily teaching, daily inculcation, bringing them through all of the ministry venues, the parables, the walking on the water.

Who goes up on the Mount of Transfiguration? Who's up there? Peter James Stone. Who's in the upper room? Talitha Kumi. Who's the first disciple to die before the church age really even gets underway? James.

So what does that tell you about the finality of death or that it's a tragedy if someone gets transferred early? I think James is a wonderful example of somebody that—he was probably the quiet brother, you know, John and Peter, a little more vocal. You don't hear James, the son of Zebedee, saying much at all. But he must have been one of those quiet, I-got-it-the-first-time guys.

And God says, you know what? I don't even need to run you through the early generations of the church. I'm going to transfer you now. Because all of the lessons you've learned and all of the things that the Lord Jesus inculcated into him are ready for use.

He doesn't need the practicum. One of the happiest days of my life—I've told you this many

times—one of the happiest days of my life is after my first semester of boxing. And I went back to sign up for the second semester, and they said, we're going to give you credit for second semester.

You've done well enough in the first. You don't need to take it. We're going to give you a free pass.

You have validated second semester boxing. You did it so well the first time, you don't have to keep doing it, putting on this sweaty stuff that other guys have used and getting, you know—I mean, I was good at it, but I didn't really like it. And the main reason I was good at it is I was skinny, so I had a light weight, and I had long arms.

And so the guys that weighed the same as me couldn't reach me. And it wasn't that I was any great athlete. It was strictly physics.

But it was such a wonderful thing to be given a pass. You don't have to go do this whole other semester of it. And I'm thrilled.

And I think that's James. I say all of that to say this. We want to be careful when you go to the dead baby question.

Oh, Joshua and the Israelites went in and slaughtered all these Canaanite babies. Where do these babies go? Haven't had a chance to decide right or wrong? Instead of growing up in a child-sacrificing, evil, Molech-worshiping, Baal-adoring, depraved culture, they're going to grow up and get to make their faith decision in the millennial kingdom, as near as I can tell. Which would you rather do? What about all these aborted babies we've been talking about? If, in fact, these are people that God has already assigned a soul and they're getting snuffed out early, I don't know when the soul gets there.

I just know this. If God's in the process of creating a human being, I am not going to be the one to interrupt that process with some rationale of my own. If God's in the middle of making a human, He can decide if it comes into the earth or not.

The last thing I want to do is make any interference with that. So, same thing when they say, oh, these babies that had their heads dashed against a rock. Someone in the Psalms says, blessed is he who takes your babies and dashes their head on a rock.

Why? Because that is what that enemy did to the Israelite children. So, God takes care of the babies. Put them in God's hands.

His reward is with Him. The lambs are in His arms. Where do those lambs come from? What's a lamb? Remember that in Isaiah? He's coming forth and He's got lambs in His arms.

But lamb is a very young sheep, too young to walk very far on its own. And the Lord Jesus is carrying lambs in His arms when He returns at the Second Coming. So, my interpretation of

that is, there are some extremely young Israelites, extremely young, too young to walk, that the Lord Jesus is going to carry into the early days of the Millennial Kingdom.

Why is it that a little child is going to lead the lion? Why is it that the little child can play around the snake den? Where are these little children coming from? I think they are the ones that didn't get a shot at growing to the point of being able to make an intelligent response to the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, the truth of God, and so on. So, bond slaves being killed. One of two things is happening.

They're evil bond slaves and they deserve to be taken out and purged out of northern Israel. Or, they're believers trapped in an awful evil household and they're getting their ticket to the Millennial Kingdom. It's win-win.

There is no downside to slaying the bondmen, or slaying any of the rest of these guys. It's kind of like one of the informal mottos of the Marine Corps is, kill them all and let God sort them out. When you go in, just raise canes.

I mean, there were plenty of believers in the German Army in World War II. Not so many in the Japanese Army, but there were a lot of believers in the German Army. In those European armies there were believers on both sides killing each other.

Well, let God figure it out. Who lives, who dies. To live is good, to die is gain for a believer.

So, we don't have to worry too much about them. The purpose here is to present means, motive, and opportunity to Jehu to serve as the rod of God's anger and the staff of his indignation. God had no love for the Assyrians, but He used them to judge Israel and He said, but these things must come, woe to him by whom they come.

God used Judas to bring about the betrayal and arrest of the Lord Jesus, but Judas paid a heavy price. If you cause one of these little ones to stumble, a new believer, trying to grow, trying to learn about the Lord, trying to grow in grace and knowledge. If you cause them to stumble, you give them false teaching, you give them a false system of spirituality like so many do today.

It would be better for those people if a millstone were put around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. What happens if you have a millstone around your neck and you're thrown into the sea? Do you live or do you die? It would be better to die than to continue to perpetrate evil on the earth. That's what Jesus is saying.

And sometimes the sin unto death is a blessing for everybody concerned because it gets a misfit believer out of the mix who's doing more harm than good and gives them the chance to be cleansed, purged, and sit at a safe distance looking at the glory of God and maybe making some progress, healing of the nations with the leaves of the tree of life. Well, that's what's going on in northern Israel. In the meantime, we have 2 Chronicles chapter 21 and 22 where we have the house of Joram and Athaliah and little Joash.

We'll pause here and take our break. When we come back we're going to catch up on the history and the forward progress of events in the southern kingdom of Judah.