

Kings and Prophets 14-07-25a

This is 25 July 2014, otherwise known as the beginning of the last week of July. We continue our study in Kings and Prophets. We're in both 2 Kings 11 and 2 Chronicles 22.

We'll take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and then resume our study of the career of Jehu. Father, thank you for the blessings that you bestow on us each day, the provision you make for us, the protection you provide, the challenges and opportunities that you put in our path to serve and to both be a blessing and be blessed through the fellowship that we enjoy with each other and the opportunities we have to reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus in this world. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word this evening that each one will receive a blessing both individually and an enlightenment for future application.

We pray that as we look at these things that the Holy Spirit will lead us into truth and help us to see the pertinence and the applicability of this portion of your word to our lives before you. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

If you remember, the Great Commission of the Old Testament, which is the one that God gave to Elijah back in 1 Kings 19, is still unfolding in its consequences. As many times as we have looked at that, I'd like you to look back just again at the specific instructions that were given by God to the prophet Elijah in that commission. You remember the occasion.

Elijah is standing on the mountain in verse 11 before the Lord. This is one of those big moments. God basically put a little Hollywood into this.

It isn't just a still small voice. It's not an angel visiting and eating a short meal and delivering a message. This is very dramatic.

The Lord passed by a great and strong wind, tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord. What does that remind you of? Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a what? Hammer that does what? Breaketh the rock in pieces. But the Lord was not in the wind.

After the wind, an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire.

But the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire, a lesser sound. Remember, voice and sound are the same thing.

Now, just by way of review and reminder, how many manifestations does Elijah see here? How many types of phenomena? What's the first one? Great and strong wind. What's the second one? Y'all are not helping me here. I can't do all the work.

What's the first phenomenon here? Strong wind. What's the second one? Earthquake. What's the third one? Fire.

Wind, earth and fire. Almost the name of a famous band, right? Wind, earthquake and fire. Now, is there a difference in category of those three things? They are, right? Wind, that's atmosphere.

This is the movement of air in a violent fashion. That this wasn't just a little breeze fluttering his curly, hairy suit, his little camel's hair robe. You know, a few little hairs moving.

This was a mighty wind, yes? Secondly, you have an earthquake. It partakes of a completely different medium, doesn't it? And then finally, fire. Which takes stuff that sits on the ground and turns it into something that floats in the air, right? Smoke.

Changes its nature completely. And there is a specific order of these things. You have the mighty wind first.

You have the earthquake. And then the fire. Now, which of these would you expect to damage the rocks? And if not the earthquake, what's the second most likely to damage the rocks? You can make them brittle.

You can heat them up. You could melt them. You could, right? What is it that damages the rocks? How much wind do you need to blow boulders off of mountains and break them? This is a big wind.

This is a significant movement of air, right? And that happens first. And you get the idea that maybe these continue. You start with the wind.

Rocks are flying around, cracking and breaking. The earth begins to shake. I don't think that necessarily there's any indication that the wind stopped.

It began with the wind, moved into wind plus earthquake, and ended with wind plus earthquake plus fire. Now, what do you think of when you think of earthquake plus fire? Thank you, my co-ed earth sciences A student wife. Yes, volcanoes, right? Aren't these concomitants? Pompeii, Herculaneum, Krakatoa, east of Java, if you look at a map, right? Hawaii, et cetera.

Well, three different elements, all of them destructive. You don't say, well, sure, hope we have an earthquake tomorrow because that will do wonders for my road system and my buildings. Wouldn't it be great to have an enormous fire go through here and leave me with a great blessing? Aren't these all destructive? A wind, you know, watch any program on nature's violence.

And when you see these things, it is destructive, not constructive. Then after that, there is just a little bit of sound. So Elijah heard the sound.

I'm guessing this is sizzling noises. You know, water hitting fire, hitting rocks, still rolling down the thing. So when Elijah hears, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave.

Suddenly a voice speaks to him saying, what are you doing here, Elijah? What are you doing here, Elijah? He says, I've been zealous for the Lord God of hosts because the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, killed your prophets with the sword. How many things does Elijah list? How many things have God's people done? They have done three things. They have forsaken your covenant.

They have torn down your altars. And they have killed your prophets with the sword. The thing about the covenant is, like the wind, it is invisible.

It's conceptual. It's not really tangible. I mean, you've got the tables of stone, but that's not the full covenant.

The covenant is conceptual. It is forceful, but it is invisible like the wind. Where do you put an altar? On the ground.

What is it made of? Rocks. It's made of that which comes from the earth. But the children of Israel have torn down the altars.

What's the third thing they have done? They have killed your prophets with the sword. Do you remember the commissioning of Ezekiel? How was he commissioned? What did the angel do with the tongs? Took a burning coal from the fiery presence of God and did what? Touched his lips. What is the message of the prophet? Is not my word like a fire? And so the three manifestations are God indicating, I think, there is a correspondence between the wind and the covenant, between the earth and the altar, between the fire and the prophets.

And God is angry. And Elijah understands the source of God's anger here. However, instead of thinking about the fate of the nation, Elijah is thinking about the fate of Elijah.

I alone am left and they seek to take my life. The upshot of all this is they're going to kill me. Not the upshot of all this is your chosen people are not fulfilling their destiny.

Your glory is not being shown forth. Israel is not shining as a light to the Gentiles. Elijah says, well, and the worst part is they're about to kill me.

So good observation, not so hot interpretation and application on Elijah's part. And I tremble as I say this. I'm not wanting to be the guy to step up and criticize Elijah, but it looks to me like he kind of missed the point.

He got the observation. This is like going to Bible class and taking really good notes and having a great grasp of what was presented, but not turning the corner. What needs to happen with this demonstration of God's awareness of these things, Elijah's awareness of these things? What's the plan? Well, Lord, I'm in fear for my life.

That's the big conclusion from all this. Not sure that's the best conclusion. So the Lord says, go return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.

And when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria, and you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. Now, again, a set of three. And you would think, well, if we're at all on the right track, seeing a correspondence between the first two sets of three, maybe there's a correspondence going on to this third set.

So what was the first manifestation? Wind. And let's suggest that it corresponds to God's covenant. What is the final judgment from God that He specifically stated back in the law if Israel forsook the covenant? What would happen? Judgment by foreign nations.

Yes? You will be taken over. You'll be driven out of the land. You'll lose your inheritance.

You'll be scattered among the nations, right? Instead of one of you putting to flight a thousand, one of them will put a thousand of you to flight. It's military defeat. It's economic disaster.

It is loss of nationhood. So then in this set of three, what is the first anointing that God assigns to Elijah? Hazael. The only instance I know of where God formally anoints a foreign king.

He's going to talk about later on, Cyrus is my guy. The hasty Assyrian is the rod of my anger and the staff of my indignation. But this is a formal anointing.

This guy is actually divinely commissioned as an enemy of God's people. We've already seen in chapter 10 of 2 Kings some of the things that Hazael will do. He's going to trim off pieces of the kingdom.

He's going to reverse the successes and the victories of Israel's previous kings, David in particular. So you can see that there might be a thread running through the wind, the covenant, and Hazael as a judgment for breach of the covenant. The second thing was the earthquake and the altar, right? God's altar, legitimate worship of God.

Who gets anointed? Jehu. What's Jehu most famous for? After he wipes out the house of Ahab, what's he going to do? All you Baal worshippers, come on, we're going to have a big feast of Baal. And there is judgment on false worship in the land through Jehu, right? You could make a link there, I think.

How about the third? The fire corresponding to the prophets that they're killing, corresponding to whom? Elisha, the double portion prophet. So there's structure here, there's significance here. We're moving into this graphic communication.

And so it makes it all the more disturbing that Elijah does not accomplish these anointings. As far as we know, he didn't do any of them. He did find Elisha, but there's no record that he anointed him.

He kind of persecutes him on the day that the mantle finally falls and the fiery chariot hauls Elijah off into summer retirement. But these anointings are nevertheless going to take place.

And the judgments that they represent are what we are now studying.

It kind of makes sense. It's sort of an easy way to remember and to organize and to focus on what's happening in this portion of God's Word, I think. It's helpful to me to look at it in that way.

God knows what he's doing. God is not fooling around. And those who know God, have a relationship with him, in this case through the first covenant, are accountable and responsible for what they do under that covenant, with that relationship.

And it has physical consequences in terms of nationhood, in terms of the land and the inheritance and physical security and temporal blessing represented by the loss of those things through Hazeel, the mighty wind blowing what seemed to be secure and immovable away, mighty rocks being dislodged and broken. Who would have thought that this seemingly immovable thing would be lost through violation of the covenant? But it is. Look how strong this wind is.

The loss of access and relationship to God through worship, not honoring God in worship, God is going to do something about that. You have the earthquake shaking the earth. You have the altars that the people have torn down and the solution to that is Jehu.

And notice, even the solutions are of a kind with the problem. God doesn't say, I'm going to send my angels down to slay you or I'm going to send an army of prophets down because you have violated the covenant. You want to act like the nations? I'm going to use the nations to judge you.

You want to go into false worship? I will use false worship to judge you. And you look at Jehu, we've been kind of, it seems to me that Jehu is kind of a puzzle because on the one hand, we saw last time, he's quoting the word of the Lord right and left and yet he doesn't seem to be a genuine man of worship. He's not another Joshua.

He's not another Moses who enjoys the presence of the Lord. It's like, well Lord, I certainly appreciate that commission and that permission because I'm going to go wreak havoc and destruction. It suits me.

I like what your word says and I'm going to go do it. But it doesn't seem to be out of dedication to God. It's a, you know, the enemy is my friend kind of a thing where God's goals line up with Jehu's goals and so Jehu will accomplish God's goals.

But Jehu doesn't seem to be doing it for God. And yet he knows the word of God and he uses the word of God which reminds you a lot of formal religion. You could say Jehu has a religious zeal in carrying out his commission.

He goes kind of above and beyond in some cases citing the word of the Lord to accomplish these goals that are also conveniently lined up with Jehu's own ambitions, right? And then we

come to the third, which is the fire and the destruction of the prophets and then you have Elisha. And we know that these are judgments because of what God says in 1917 of 1 Kings. It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael.

It doesn't say Hazael is going to build an economy that's going to have effects beyond its borders and rising tides are going to float all boats. The issue in anointing Hazael isn't God wanting to bless Syria. It isn't God wanting to do anything other than put a sword in his hand.

It's a sword of judgment, right? Whoever escapes the sword of Hazael. Now, let me ask you this. Who is in danger from the sword of Hazael? It says whoever escapes the sword of Hazael.

Well, is everybody a target for Hazael's sword? Who's Hazael's sword aimed at? Think back to this alignment. Who has God commissioned Hazael and anointed him to destroy? Those who have trampled the covenant of God underfoot, right? They are the ones who have to worry about the sword of Hazael. Is there a faithful remnant? Both in northern Israel and certainly down in Judah.

Are these people in danger of the sword of Hazael? Does it pose any real threat? Is God sloppy in judgment? Is he just, well, you know, I don't know which one of you did it, so I'll judge you all. God knows them that are his, right? You remember the marking angel in Ezekiel that went through and said, look for the ones who sigh and cry over the evil and the bad things that are happening. Mark them for preservation.

God sent his marking angel in, individually marking people before judgment. And that is the case here. So the sword of Hazael is specifically aimed at certain ones.

And I think it is in Ezekiel chapter 9, verse 4. Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it. That's Ezekiel chapter 9, verse 4. So the sword of Hazael, but the sword of Hazael is not going to get them all. Some are going to escape the sword of Hazael.

So God says those who escape the sword of Hazael, what's going to happen? Jehu will kill. Jehu will slay. And these are ones who are primarily in line because of what? Their sin of the high hand in boldly and promiscuously worshipping false gods in the midst of God's covenant people and in the midst of God's promised land.

And Jehu is going to do a mighty work of destruction in eliminating great numbers of those people. And whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. Now, hold up your hand with fingers to indicate the number of people that the Bible says Elisha killed.

Goose egg, zero. There's no record of Elisha killing anyone. And I ask myself, ah, come on, Hazael, he's slaying them by the thousands.

Jehu, he's slaying them by the thousands. And if they escape those two, Elisha will get the rest.

Where is Elisha's battle total? Where is Elisha's belt full of scalps here, silhouettes on his fuselage? Killed deal.

And what, did it just, what happened? Because Elisha is the only one that Elijah even manages to get launched. And he doesn't kill anyone. How does this work? Well, let me offer you a thought here.

And I owe my erstwhile roommate some credit for this because he was talking about something that got my mind running on this trail. But think about that alignment now in 1 Kings chapter 19. You have the covenant.

You have the word of God in the mouth of the prophets. I'm sorry, you have the worship of God, the formal worship of God represented by the altar and the priestly system, if you will, also under the covenant. And you have the prophets with the word of God on their lips like as a fire and a hammer that ought to be breaking the rocks in the souls of people into pieces.

And Jesus said when the soil is rocky, the seed isn't going to take good root. So you've got those three things. You think about the, if you back up, I'm just thinking of this in terms of backing up and thinking about this paradigm in a larger sense, which is going to help us in interpretation and application of this in our own lives.

We don't have to worry about whether or not we built an altar or whether or not we're worshiping Baal, right? Not those specific things. But we are in a covenant relationship with God. And you remember what it says in Hebrews chapter 10.

On the testimony of two or three witnesses, somebody could be convicted under the first covenant of breach, of disobedience. of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who tramples the Son of God underfoot, counts the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a profane thing, and does despot, shame to the spirit of grace. Hebrews says how much sorer punishment because our covenant is founded on new and better promises.

What if we don't take our covenant seriously? Look at what God did to northern Israel when they breached their covenant. He told Elijah, he showed Elijah graphically what was going to happen. That wind, God's side of the covenant is busting up rocks.

God's attention that he pays to whether or not he is honored and worshiped is important. And that's the second piece. So if you back up and look at all of history and think, well, are these sort of general paradigms throughout history? What happens when people are flip, apathetic, indifferent, uninterested in relationship with God, which always comes through some form of covenant? Not covenant theology, but just because covenants are abused doesn't mean they don't exist.

They are there. There is promise. There is reciprocal agreement.

Jacob does this at Bethel after the ladder incident. You remember, he says, Lord, if you will

preserve me, I will worship you. He entered into a relationship with God.

God walking between the pieces with Abraham. It's all expectation on both sides, commitment on both sides. And if there is a breach, that is evil.

This is the real problem with infidelity when it comes to anything, marriage, parents and children, whatever. Well, that falls under this first example, this first metaphor of the wind that Elijah has to hide from because of its destructive judgmental effect. And that comes in through the sword of Hazeel historically.

But in a larger sense, God will always do this. And there are examples all the way through scripture and all the way through history. And what happens is when you embrace and adopt secularism, this is the last half of Romans chapter 1, God will turn you over to it.

You want to be like the nations? The nations are going to turn you upside down and pound your head into the rocks. This is what Hazeel does. And this is commissioned by God.

Remember, there is an anointing. So just hold that thought. The second one is there is worship responsibility.

There is acknowledgment for obedience on a regular and consistent basis on approach to God. What is the altar? The altar is the meeting place where God is propitiated. Man is reconciled and cleansed.

That's what the altar does. That altar of earth foreshadows the earthly body of the Lord Jesus Christ that will bear our sins and his blood which will be shed. Remember the blood that's splashed around.

Why is it the base of the altar? The blood will be poured out at the base of the altar. It's the connection of the altar to the earth. Earthquake.

If you do not connect with God at the place of sacrifice, God is going to connect with you with a great big piece of earth. You either fall on the rock and are broken or the rock falls on you and you are broken. One or the other.

So it's a strong metaphor. Jehu is the immediate example of the fulfillment of that that Elijah saw on the mountain. Historically, and Dr. Crystal's got a great thing that he says in one of his sermons about this, but historically if you lose your religious faith in the genuine sense of the word, if we lose our genuine Christian worship, God will use religion in the world to judge us.

Religious zealots, religious extremism of all sorts to judge us. And you see that historically. We can see rumblings of it in the present day.

Look around the world. What's the biggest problem for Christians everywhere? Islam. Islamic extremism to be exact and to be fair.

It's not Islam in general, but look historically. When European Christianity fell into mindless ritual, when in the Middle East, in Jerusalem, religion took on all of this, you know, Eastern Orthodox, holy smoke and candles and robes and it all became formalism and symbolism and it was empty of content. What happened? God used another religion to judge.

Century after century, if you turn to the nations for economic and agricultural and political respite, sustenance, security, God will use those nations to judge you because blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord. If your religious practice, if your worship of God becomes empty, sterile, ritualistic, legalistic, God will use religion to judge. What's really interesting is the third element here.

We're going to pause and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see if this holds true in our third thread here from 1 Kings 19. But if this was the only lesson you heard, what would the personal application be? Be aware that because God does this historically, and remember as nations go in the Old Testament, so does the individual believer go in the New, it is a fact, hear me now, don't miss it, it is a fact that God will use the world and circumstances in the world to judge us.

God will use that which calls itself religion in the world to judge us and to judge those around us. So it's the same God in heaven. He hasn't changed his priorities.

He hasn't changed the nature of his judgments. And you can expect to see that when people abandon God in favor of temporal security, earthly security, buying into the world's ideas of what constitutes prosperity, what constitutes security, what constitutes success, God will use those things in the world to judge. It is the sword of Hazeel even now.

When the failure is particularly in the area of honoring God, worship of God, perverting and distorting and corrupting the worship of God, the judgment is going to come in that realm from that same corrupted, distorted, blighted source. It matches. Well, this leaves us with the third element.

And you think, you know, Elisha didn't kill anybody, so what's up with that? Well, I'll offer you a suggestion on that when we come back from the break.