Kings and Prophets 14-08-22a

This is Friday, the 22nd of August, 2014. We prosecute our study of Kings and Prophets tonight by resuming in 2 Kings in the vicinity of chapter 11. Let's ask God's blessing and cultivate the presence and power of his Holy Spirit in our individual souls so that the time that we spend tonight will be profitable and that we'll all receive a blessing.

Shall we pray? Father, thank you for this time of opportunity where we can set aside the tasks and the requirements and the responsibilities and the distractions of this life and focus our attention on the divine truth that you have treasured up for us and made available in your word. We thank you for these Old Testament scriptures and the grace by which they have been preserved down through the centuries for us. We thank you that despite their existence for so long, they are just as alive and just as powerful as every other part of your word.

We thank you for the opportunity to spend this time of fellowship together without fear and without possibility of persecution, and we pray that we can maximize this opportunity by learning the things that are here and assimilating them into our souls in a way that will result in our living more closely in the pattern that pleases you and that prepares us for the future and that glorifies the Lord Jesus. We pray these things in his name. Amen.

It is not my usual practice to spend a lot of time talking about current events or to make much reference to the things that are going on around us, but it does occasionally seem useful to me to at least make a quick survey and perhaps to draw conclusions from things that happen. And I doubt that there is anybody that hasn't given some thought to the recent suicide of a real well-known celebrity here in the United States, Robin Williams. And I'm sure endless amounts of illustration and observation and application have been made from that.

I'm not going to elaborate on it except to ask this question. Why are we here tonight and why are we doing what we are doing? We're studying the Word of God and people come to Christian faith and they come to some semblance of church life or Christian fellowship or whatever by a variety of means. Sometimes you're just born into it.

It's convenient because everybody in your family, some of you have the particular providence of having been born into a family of strong believers and from the cradle, perhaps even in the womb, you've been hearing Bible teaching and it's something you largely take for granted. Others came to it in youth or in early adulthood or even in mid-adulthood and were suddenly struck by the realization that these things really are important. Well, the alternative, of course, is either in presence or in absence, meaning you can be sitting right here in Bible class and really it just kind of flows along like the sound of the voice is not irritating, it's not dissonant, it isn't grating or abrasive, so I can let that kind of bounce off the walls of my inner mind for an hour and a half or so and I'm none the worse for it.

I didn't have much else I really wanted to do. If I did have something else I really wanted to do

by, of course, I wouldn't be here. But at some point, it is intelligent to think about higher things.

What's the point? If you're sort of thinking like a puppy or a cat, then the immediate sense of gratification is what you're after. I just want to be happy right now. I'm hungry, so please feed me.

I have an urgent feeling, please let me outside. I am stir crazy and it's boring in here, let me out so I can go chase lizards or bark at the moon or whatever. Well, hopefully, as human beings with sentience, with the gift of higher thought, we're a little beyond that.

You can live your life that way and you can spend all of your allocated time that way, go to your grave, rise up and face the judgment, never having thought ahead. And the consequences are eternal. Ideally, as is the case, I think, with the people who bother to pursue an understanding of the Word of God in almost all cases, we figure there's really something more.

And if you think about someone like Robin Williams, you realize that he is one of a rather large set of people who have exhausted what is available outside the realm of spiritual life. Tell me something that guy didn't have, didn't experience, couldn't obtain or didn't have access to with his level of wealth, fame, approbation, reward, and yet he felt it necessary to take his own life. And you ask yourself, why is that? And I think probably one of the first few thoughts that went through your mind when you heard that he had taken his life is, seriously, that guy? Why? Why would he do that? If I were in his place, I'd be getting the fastest car out of the garage.

I'd be taking a trip. I could embark on a new project. The world is your oyster.

What opportunity could he not pursue? Who doesn't like him? Can he not go out and find approval and applause and appreciation all over the place? One of the best loved, most liked celebrities in the whole pantheon of celebrities. Self-admitted flaws that he had sought to overcome. People admired him for that.

And you think, well, why would the guy take his life? And it raises the question. Anybody that gives any serious thought to larger things at a funeral, if you've attended a funeral recently as I have, you always start thinking, one of these days, it's going to be my corpse in the box. One of these days, my conscious life here will be over.

It'll be done. It's whatever my highs and lows, my ups and downs, my loves, my hates, my who liked me, who I liked, who I didn't like, who didn't like me. It's all moot.

Go to the antique store. Wander up and down the aisles until you find a box of unlabeled photographs. Pick them up and here you see a guy with a long mustache sitting next to some gal.

It's black and white, late 1800s, maybe a couple of kids. Who are they? Where did they live? What did they do? Apparently nobody knows now, including their family, because their picture is sitting here unlabeled, unknown. And the only record that I know of that they even were ever

here is this unlabeled, unmarked, unappreciated, unowned photograph.

You know, a hundred years from now, somebody going to stumble across some image of you on the whatever passes for the web in those cases and say, well, I wonder who that was? And off it goes. I say all of that to say this. These accounts in the Book of Kings, what we're about to cover tonight and next week, it's going to take us two weeks to cover it.

We'll start tonight. Lord willing, we'll finish next Friday. It's challenging.

It's not simple. It's not on the surface. It's not three points in a prayer.

It's not a refrigerator magnet or a little logo. You can put it on a coffee cup. This is going to require something of us to grasp.

And so I asked myself, well, why would anybody bother? We've got young people. We've got people that, you know, short attention span. I myself look at it and think, is it really worth the work to go through all of this? I mean, at the end of it, so what? Am I going to live my life any differently? Will I be drawn closer to God? What's the point of figuring some of these very fine details out in the bigger scheme of things? So the theme, my introduction tonight is what do you think about the bigger questions of life? If you're ignoring them, you're foolish because the sand goes through the hourglass for all of us at a measured rate and nobody knows how much is left.

I don't care how old you are. I don't care. Of course, if you're really old, you can say, well, I'm guessing I haven't got another 50 years.

Fine. But how how much time remains? You can get waxed by an 18 wheeler before you get out of this neighborhood. You can clutch your chest and fall over at any moment.

Healthiest people in the world are at some of the service academies and and people there just doing laps fell over dead. No hint of it. Nothing in their physicals and all of their you just don't know how much time is left.

And so you think, well, this time is given to me. I can think I can learn. I can make decisions.

Is it just happenstance? If so, why are you a Christian? If you believe in God and if you believe in Christ, then this time has been given to you. Well, and whether you do or not, it's a truth that this time has been given to us as potential and as an opportunity. So do we waste it? Do we squander it? Are we going to be the prodigal and waste our whole inheritance and come back? The guy got a calf dinner, but where's the rest of his inheritance? It's still spent.

All of that inheritance is still wasted and gone. The father didn't say, Oh, by the way, I've got a whole nother inheritance. You know, it's kind of like Job.

Job lost all his kids, but here's another set just like him. No, even the prodigal son, when he came back, he's restored a relationship with his father and he's there. There's a welcome and a

celebration.

He gets a steak dinner and a robe, but the inheritance is still gone. You want to be two things. You want to be the son that stays home and you want to be a son with a better attitude than that son who stayed home.

There's two things you can learn. Don't be the son that ran off and squandered everything and don't be the son that stayed home and then got sour grapes and ended up being almost as big a failure as his brother. Both of those are negative examples.

It's not like there's a good son and a bad son. The father's got two sons that need work. One of them actually gets started before the other and he's the one that seems to be the worst.

Here's my point. We're going to look at some things tonight and this is going to be taxing. It's not easy.

It's not simple. You're going to think at a certain point, seriously, can't we just, you know, lightning from heaven, Philistines dying, parting of seas, cracking of thunder, spewing of fire, give me something simple. Do you remember that in recent weeks as we have looked especially at the history of northern Israel and at the function of the prophets in northern Israel, what was God reduced to doing? Did He send a prophet with a detailed message like Ezekiel or Isaiah? Was there a book of Isaiah or a book of Ezekiel that got dropped into the lap of the people in northern Israel? How did God communicate with them? Cartoons.

Cartoons. King sticks out his hand, it shrivels. He gets scared.

The man of God invokes the authority of God and God heals him. There's big, broad object lessons. Why? Because they're stupid.

Stupid in the original sense of the word. If you look up stupid, if you've seen it in its context, it's not just the insult like we use it today. You can be stupid with fatigue.

It means dull, slow, physically so, insensate, insensitive, just not alert, not strong, not competent. And why would you want to be at that level? Well, hopefully we're not. If you have been following this study and you've seen some of the wonderful things that God has put by way of treasure in this particular area of His word, you know that this is very dense and very rich.

Well, it is really that. It is very much that. But there always comes a question.

I was reading about the Spiro Mounds up in Oklahoma. Have you ever heard of Spiro Mounds? It's a town called Spiro and there were some mounds north of the town. It's like, I don't know, 8, 10, 18, a whole bunch of mounds.

Well, these things have just been there forever. And back in the 1930s, 1930, 35, just before World War II, some people realized that these were burial mounds. And so they went up there

unauthorized, they were thieves, they were pilferers, they were grave robbers basically.

They tunneled into these mounds and they found all kinds of stuff. Wonderful crafts made of feathers and fine woven cloth and baskets and things like that. Well, of course, that's not what they wanted.

They were looking for gold. They were looking for treasure. They were looking for artifacts that they could sell.

So they threw all this stuff outside. It had been preserved for century upon century upon century upon century in these carefully constructed tombs up in Spiro Mounds. Well, they threw all that stuff out.

They robbed the graves, took anything they thought, you know, statues and anything that looked like an artifact, hauled it all off and sold it all over the world. Well, these weren't Indian burial mounds. They were much older than that.

This is the pre-European civilization that lived here in America, about which we know practically nothing. And thanks to these goons, we still know practically nothing because 90% or more of what was in those graves has been destroyed or scattered and not recovered. They've recovered a few things.

And if you look this up, you can see just a glimmer and just a hint of the extensive, sophisticated, technologically advanced civilization that was here when the Europeans first landed, which they then proceeded to wipe out both vertently and inadvertently, inadvertently through the germs they brought, which wiped out better than 80% of everybody living on this continent in the space of a few years, which is why when they first landed, they said, wow, the land looks like parks and we find these villages with skeletons laying all around. What's the deal? And within a generation, it was all overgrown. And they said, oh, it's a wilderness.

It's manifest destiny. Let's come and take it and we will settle it. They were resettling it.

It had been settled, but we lost all of that history. And when there's a few opportunities to recover it, you've got the greed squad up there wrecking it. I say that to say this, to find those clues intact, to bring them out and to study them is to give yourself information, to give yourself the opportunity to learn something that has been largely hidden.

But it takes effort. You can't go in there saying, well, let me find the biggest statue and go sell it. And that's going to be it for me.

It's a different approach. It's more intelligent. It's more rewarding.

It is ultimately more fruitful and a blessing to more people. If you can recognize that here is a mound and there is treasure in it, let's go slow. Let's do this the right way.

Let's take it apart carefully, find what is there, understand it, learn the implications of it. People

are constantly trying to accuse Christians of being dumb and believing old Hebrew myths and, oh, your Bible is a collection of stuff written by... Somebody told me this last week. Your Bible was written by illiterate goat herds.

And I said, take a minute. If you can think for that long, take a minute and think about what you just said. Written by illiterate goat herds? Yeah.

And by the way, all of the contractions and possessive pronouns were mixed up, so you're believing a Bible and it's Y-O-U-R. You're accusing... The goat herds have got it all over you, man, for literacy. But this is the kind of superficial criticism that is leveled at Christians, and in some cases it's true.

If you look at what passes for and what calls itself Christianity today, it is shallow. It's quick satisfaction, you know, sing me a song, make me feel good, send me home with a buoyant spirit. If you are interested in God, if you truly appreciate the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, then it's just like when you appreciate someone that is near to you and you love them and you want to do something for them.

You want to get them a gift or you want to do something for them. You think it out. You take your time.

It's enjoyable because of the relationship you have with them. Hopefully that describes us. Hopefully... See, I'm setting you up because this is a difficult passage.

I've been working on this thing for three weeks. Three weeks. And I still feel like I've got a mountain lion by the tail.

But there are some really, really fascinating things here. If you've got the nerve, if you've got the objectivity, if you recognize that it is worth it... Why is it worth it? Because it will turn the corner into genuine perspective in this life, genuine application. We can learn how the Lord Jesus knew what He knew about Himself and made the decisions that He made and had the insight that He had because He wasn't drawing on His divine second person of the Trinity sonship to do that.

He used the Word of God and the Spirit of God just like you have, just like I have. Wouldn't it be great if you could have the confidence and the insight and know what to do and when to do it? Is today the day you purge the temple? Is today the day you go down and confound the doctors at the age of 12? Is today the day that you walk on the water? Is today the day that you heal the sick? Or is today the day that you only go to the pool of Bethesda and heal one guy and leave the rest behind? Or the day that you say, I need to go to Samaria? Or the day that you set your sights on Jerusalem? Or the day that you say, you know what? I'm going to go to Perea. I'm going to go up to Galilee.

I'm going to hang out in Nazareth for a while. I'm going to go around to the other side of the lake. How did Jesus know when and how to do those things? And we say, well, it was just sort of

a mystical, you know, He was the Son of God.

He just kind of knew. He just sort of knew. He's given to us as an example.

We've got four different camera angles to show us how the Lord Jesus lived. You know why there's four? Because we need four to see the way He lived His life in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit under the guidance and knowledge of the Word of God. That's what you and I have.

And that's what we're doing right here. Here's the Word of God. He had it.

We've got it. Here's the Holy Spirit. He had it.

We've got it. And we can be as confident and as guided and as sure that we are in the will of God doing what we should do if we follow His example. Well, how detailed was His knowledge of scripture? How much time did He spend thinking about it? People say, ah, you know, I just don't know that whole Christianity thing.

I mean, you know, is it life? It's got to be lived. Seriously? Ask Robin Williams how that turns out. Ask any one of innumerable other celebrities that have gone as far as you can go with everything the world has to offer and come up empty.

The only reason we don't come up empty is a lot of times we don't get as far as they did, and we keep thinking, well, you know, that next fence, the grass is going to be over that next fence. We hop that fence, you know, further and further from the Word of God, and we say, oh, you know, I hear it's going to be this. This is like the high that people chase after the first time they try drugs.

The first time you do drugs is going to be the best time, the best feeling that you ever get from them because your body is unprepared for it. And remember I told you about those little buckets in the brain that are full of this feel-good chemical? Well, when your system is unexpectedly hit with the drug, all your buckets dump, and you have this tremendous, euphoric, wonderful experience, and two things happen. Your body says, wow, I can't have that happen again because that really knocked me for a loop.

I've got to strap some of these buckets down so they don't dump like that again. And secondly, you get an insatiable craving to relive that first experience. Well, it's mutually exclusive.

You will never again feel like you did the very first time you did it, and you have bent your brain. So the next time you do it, well, that was good, but not quite as good. Maybe if I up the dose a little bit, and the pattern is over time you wind up wrecking your life trying to get back to this momentary, euphoric experience that does nothing for you except pass the time.

It passed the time, you felt great, and now all you want to do is find more ways to pass the time and feel great. It's unproductive. It has no future.

It has no benefit. It gives you nothing to carry forward. It's an expenditure of time to get a feeling that you actually can never recapture.

And this is how people destroy themselves with all different kinds of substances. So as the alternative, the alternative is not, gee, I just pop a pill and I feel great, or I take a shot and I feel great, or I slug something back and I feel great. The alternative is an investment of time to get a return.

Do you want to buy a lottery ticket that's never going to hit, or do you want to do some work that pays? Which one is more likely to achieve a satisfactory and long-lasting result? Well, we want to do the work. So that's my introduction to this because you're going to say at some point, eh, come on. Well, if you will hang with me, if you'll bear with me on this, there is treasure after the digging.

You know, if you remember Columbus sailed and sailed and sailed, the sailors are all saying, we're going to kill you. And then there's Hispaniola, they finally sight land. Well, just about the time you're ready to kill me, we're going to sight land.

So I just tell you that in advance. On with our study. If you have started in the vicinity of 2 Kings 8 and looked forward, if you've read this, what I did, and I know Ken said this and a few others of you, if you take your, your go Bible, your word of promise Bible, and start playing this and just listen to it, just listen to the account in Kings.

Start in chapter 8 or so, chapter 8, chapter 9, along in there, and just listen forward all the way through down to the time of Jeroboam II. And then just go back and start it over and listen again and listen again. Pretty soon you start to say, wait a minute, I'm hearing patterns and I am seeing the repetition of numbers that remind me of other things.

So I'm going to introduce that tonight, but to do so, here's the, here's the, here's the liver pate that starts it all. I have to explain the way this book counts the reigns of kings. So and so came to the throne in the year such and such of the other king.

He reigned for so long and then he died. This guy became king. And in the second year of king so and so, this guy became king and he reigned for so and so.

It's just filler. Get to the good stuff. When's his arm going to fall off? When's the prophet going to, you know, make a prophecy? When's there going to be a battle? You know, shoot him in the chariots, arrow sticking out the front.

All right, now we're back to the good stuff. Blood in the chariots, dogs licking the skulls. Now we've got, listen, these numbers are not accidental.

Think about it. Why would it be here? Why do we just gloss over to keep going? It's like the genealogies. Why do we gloss, you've seen what the genealogies do, right? Remember when we started parsing those genealogies and figuring out the meaning of the names and

comparing the line of Seth and the line of Cain and looking at the names and what happened? It just explodes.

And you think, what is the upshot of it? God is not kidding around. God is not fooling. This thing is carefully thought out.

You think about the galaxies in space and you think about the complexity of DNA, God is equally detail oriented at the macro level and at the micro level. And I am here to tell you and I will show you tonight the beginnings of it. We're just going to lift the corner of the lid and look inside and see God is just as sophisticated and just as detailed in every single word of scripture.

These kings didn't rule as long as they ruled and didn't get succeeded by other guys by accident. It is exact. It is precise.

It is calculated. It was determined ahead of time. And God recorded it just the way He recorded it for a reason.

Now we have got to do some necessary legwork to appreciate it. If you're willing to do the work, it is transformational. If you're not willing to do the work, you're going to be bored for the next couple of weeks and you're going to be waiting for the next spear to go through the two people on the ground or some more blood and dogs and chariots and we'll get there.

That's coming up as well. So don't give up. Hang in there.

There's blood and gore to follow. But I'm telling you, if you love God and if you are the called according to His purpose and you want to really enter into the way He thinks, this that we're about to cover is amazing. But you don't get amazing in your soul without some work.

We're going to pause here and take our break and when we come back, well, I'll give you this much. Here are the kings in Israel starting with Jeroboam and we come all the way down. We got these guys all the way down to Ahab and you remember that, right? Joram up there.

You end up with Athaliah, right? Jezebel, you know, they have a daughter and she goes down south. You start in the south with Rehoboam and you've got just a couple of kings. You've got Asa and you've got Jehoshaphat and one other guy in there and then you come down to the same time.

You've got eight kings in the north while you have four kings in the south. Here's the initial problem and I'll just pose it now and answer it right after the break. If you follow the account of the kings of northern Israel from Jeroboam down to where we are right now, this is, remember Solomon's kingdom divides after his death.

Jeroboam and Rehoboam. In the north you've got Jeroboam. You've got Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, Ahab with Jezebel, Ahaziah their son, right? Now if you follow that account and people have done this and they said, oh, your Bible is all full of errors because if

you add up all of those renal years, guess how many years, you don't have to guess, you could add them up if you want to go dig it all out of scripture.

If you total up all of the years of reign that are given in the Bible for those kings, the total from 932 BC when Jeroboam and Rehoboam each get a piece of the kingdom down to where we are with the death of Ahab and so on, it's 932 years. I'm sorry, it starts at 932 BC and if you add those up, it adds up to 86 years. Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, add it all up according to the Bible, add up the years that they reigned, it's 86 years.

If you go to the southern kingdom and start with Rehoboam and all you have is Abijah, Esau and Jehoshaphat to get to the very same part and by the way, the eight kings in the north and the four kings in the south end in exactly the same year. It's the year we're looking at, it's Jehu. Remember that? It's a reset.

This is why we're covering this now. This is one of the biggest press the reset buttons in the Bible. Everything changes in 853 BC.

We started in 932 and now we're at 853 and guess what? You get that number by adding up the reigns of Rehoboam, Abijah, Esau and Jehoshaphat and when you add those up, what should I get? 79 years. One of my favorite numbers. 79 years.

How can I get 79 years in the south and 86 years in the north for the exact same period of time starting with Jeroboam and Rehoboam and ending in the year of the Jehu who kills everybody in sight and then some? If you add it up in the Bible, take the Bible numbers, it's 86 years in the north, it's 79 years in the south. I'll answer that question when we come back from the break.