Kings and Prophets 14-08-28a

In an oddly sort of prophetic way, this is the 28th day of August, 2014. You'll see why I say that shortly. We're in the book of 2 Kings.

We're in chapter 9, verging into chapter 10. And we're stepping back to take a look at the ways that God has used a second language, if you will, to communicate truth in this account. Not only the story itself, the details and the facts themselves, but there is a sort of a second channel here that is available if you've got the right radio.

So we're doing our best to sort of tune in on that station and learn some of the things that God has for us. Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll resume our study. Father, what a blessing it is to know that You are our Father.

You are the God of the universe. You are the creator of all things. And yet, even in that magnitude and at that level of greatness, You have seen fit to be mindful of us and to visit us through the work of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to set us on high and to give us a future and a hope that makes our lives here meaningful and gives us purpose.

We thank You for the truth of Your Word. We thank You for the opportunity to study it together, to be challenged by it, to be edified and motivated. We pray that as we look at this portion of Your Word this evening, that God the Holy Spirit will be our teacher, will illuminate it for us, and help us to understand it, to remember it, and to apply it at the pertinent times and in the pertinent ways that will please You and reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus.

We pray it in His name. Amen. As we noted last time, in a very unique section of Israelite history, there is a sequence of kings once the nation divides after the death of Solomon, Jeroboam, Rehoboam.

And as we have seen up in Israel, the sequence of kings down to the time that we are looking at is Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri. You remember that's a pretty quick succession there. Then Ahab and then Ahaziah.

And that's a total of eight kings covering 86 renal years if you add them up in the account. But we've seen that there's a reason why that is actually 79 years. And this brings us down to a time when we have Jehu coming on the scene.

And Jehu kills both kings, the king in the north and the king in the south, and a whole lot of associated hangers on and party goers are all killed by Jehu. Jehu is a really interesting figure in the purpose and plan of God. He doesn't seem to be particularly spiritual, but he is the sword of the Lord at this time.

And events associated with this time period that begin with Jehu are significant in a unique way. So that brings us down and we had the 79 renal years, actual years for those eight kings. And

then Ahaziah reigns in reality for about a year.

And then you have Joram. And Joram has a reign of 12 years. Now we're going to be paying attention to some numbers.

And let me tell you that I've been working on this section and on this study for weeks now. And the numbers can just swarm on you. So I'm only going to point out a few.

You are going to see others that commend themselves to your attention and feel free to look at them. But I'm just going to point out a few that are suggestive and I think are helpful in sort of getting our bearings on what is going on here in terms of superstructure or of something more than meets the eye in this account. And one of the first ones is, and you can write this down, what is the length of Ahaziah's reign? It is, by the non-accessionary reckoning that Kings uses, 12 years.

And God gets the flexibility to pick the number that He wants to commend our attention by using these various times and kingdoms and ways of counting. So number one, what precedes the section we're looking at? We're starting in 841 when Jehu erases the board and God starts drawing some fresh things. What preceded that in Israel? A 12-year reign.

A 12-year reign in Israel precedes it. Okay. So, with the death of Ahaziah, we have the introduction of Jehu, I'm sorry, Joram.

Joram follows Ahaziah and it's Joram's reign that is 12 nominal years, 12 years counting the way they count them up there. Alright, that is Joram. Now, he's got a doppelganger name-wise down in the south, right? You've got Joram and Jehoram and both of them, Joram is called Jehoram, Jehoram of Judah is called Joram, the names are very confusing, but we've got this doubling.

And when there's a doubling in the Bible, just as a suggestive motif, it suggests identity or a splitting of the path. There's a movie that I have not seen, and I don't know if I want to watch it or not because it's on the Woman's Lifetime channel or something, but I do know that, I believe it starts Gwyneth Paltrow and it's called Sliding Doors. And my understanding is that at some point she is going through a sliding door and then the movie shows two different outcomes depending on something that happened when she was going through the door.

I don't know if she bumped into somebody, she got caught in it, I haven't seen it. But it's an intriguing idea and there's been other fictional treatments of what happens if one little thing changed. What would the course of events be if one little thing changed? Or there can be an identity, especially with the Lord Jesus.

For example, you have two birds that are used in the ritual of cleansing for a leper. It's actually a ritual that represents or ritually cleanses a healed leper. The ritual does not heal the leper, the guy has been healed.

The ritual restores him spiritually to the life and fellowship of Israel. In Leviticus 14, if you remember, the priest has got two birds. He breaks one of them open, killing it.

Blood drips into a bowl full of living water. The other bird is daubed with this and set free. Well, two birds.

Both birds, there is an identity there. God couldn't go around resurrecting birds every time they got killed for a cleansed leper. So, he used two birds.

One dies. Same thing with the scapegoat. You've got Azazel, the scapegoat idea.

There is a sacrifice, there is blood that is placed on the scapegoat and the scapegoat is turned loose in the wilderness. There is an identity there. So, we start looking at Israel.

This is the majority area. This is where your ten tribes are nominally located. Joram has a 12-year reign.

The Bible says 12 years. Twelve is the number of Israel. It's the number three times four.

Four is the universality on the earth. Three is the perfection of God. God's people, God dwelling with His people.

God with the Shekinah, God in the tabernacle. You've got three which multiplies the four and that gives you 12. That's the 12 tribes.

But even in the 12 tribes, there is a little hint that there is something more coming because you've actually got how many tribes in Israel? If you start naming every tribe you can name in Israel, what's your total? Thirteen. Kind of reminds you of accession year and non-accession year, doesn't it? There's 12, but there's 13. Because in addition to the original sons of Jacob, the double portion goes down to Joseph and that gives you Ephraim and Manasseh.

And oddly enough, one of those doubled tribes, one turning into two, lends its name to the entire northern kingdom. It is called Ephraim. And you think, well, Ephraim, he's... Somebody could argue he's not even a real tribe.

It ought to be the tribe of Joseph and it shouldn't be Ephraim and Manasseh. And remember the crossing of the hands. And even more so, he ought to be an unlikely choice because he was the younger and the hand was crossed and he became the elder and Manasseh loses out.

On top of which, who is Ephraim's mother? Quick now. Bible trivia. Who's Ephraim's mother? Well, who's his father? Joseph.

Who's Joseph's wife? Egyptian lady. Daughter of? Not daughter of Pharaoh. Daughter of? Egyptian priest.

She's a priest's daughter. The whole Asenath, Penea and all that. So, how many strikes does

Ephraim have against him? He's like the... Would have been the 13th tribe gets promoted to the 12th tribe.

And who sort of moves out of the way so that Ephraim and Manasseh occupy a place in the 12 landed tribes of Israel? Who gets moved out of the way so that that all makes sense? Who doesn't? Why are there only 12 land divisions? Who is the landless tribe? The priests, right? The Levites. Levi doesn't inherit land. The Lord is their inheritance.

And so, all of this is wrapped up in and packed into the number 12. When you think of 12 as the number of Israel, many of these concepts suggest themselves. What does Joram's or Jehoram's name mean? We talked about this several weeks ago.

Do you remember? Remember what Ram means? Yeho, Ram. Lifted up. High and lifted up.

The Lord is lifted up. The Lord is on high. So, the Lord lifted up and on high in a 12 year reign in Israel precedes our section.

Just for geography purposes, that's a helpful context. So, that gets us down to 841 in the north. In the south, who was king when Ahab was doing his thing and then Ahab dies and he's still the king? And then you had a really long reign down in the south after Rehoboam, Abijah, and King Asa.

Who followed Asa? Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat. The fourth king.

The fourth king in the south. Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat. How many years does Jehoshaphat reign using the accession year reckoning, which by some accounts takes one year away.

You know, you don't get credit for the first part. How long is Jehoshaphat's reign? Well, let me back up a little bit. That whole time period for those four is the 79 years, right? And you find over in 1 Kings chapter 22 some information about Jehoshaphat.

Verse 41, Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab, king of Israel. He's tied to the fourth year of King Ahab. That's when Asa goes away and Jehoshaphat comes in.

So you've got the number four conveniently put in there. He is the fourth king. He comes to rule in the fourth year of King Ahab.

So the number four is sort of being pushed at us in the reign of Jehoshaphat, right? Now we're down in Judah. We're in the south. We've got the Joram and the Twelve and the Lord high and lifted up in the north.

We've got Jehoshaphat, the fourth king, in the fourth year of Ahab. He is 35 years old when he became king and he reigned 25 years in Jerusalem. He reigns 25 years.

That's the length of his reign. He gives us his mother's name and it's interesting to me and if I can remember we'll come back to that shortly. But only certain people are their mother's names given and when they are given it is usually significant.

When you look at Azuba and I can't remember if I gave you the meaning of her name before, but any gloss, any standard Hebrew Bible dictionary will tell you that it comes from a root that suggests the idea of being forsaken. Azuba means forsaken and this is the lead in to the history in the south is Jehoshaphat. What does his name mean? Yeho Yahweh Shaphat is judge.

God judges. His mother is forsaken. Her name is forsaken.

Kind of reminds you of the American Indians where they had these running deer, running bear, stalking moon. So Azuba and she is the daughter of Shilhi and this is another significant word because it has the idea of having your weapons in your hands. Of being prepared for conflict or battle.

So with these two ideas we have the context and this is what we are doing right now is giving context leading up to this very important section that we are looking at that begins in 841. So what's going on in the north? Joram, 12 year reign. In the south we back up a little bit to Jehoshaphat and his very long reign as the fourth king.

And he actually has a couple of extra years. Who is Jehoshaphat's father? This is a little bit of Bible trivia here just to exercise your mind a little bit. Who is Jehoshaphat's father right here in the context? Asa.

All of these kings there will be one particular thing that kind of stands out and is associated with them. In the New Testament, Judas who would betray him. Judas who would betray him.

There is always that thing. Each of these kings there will be one thing that is particularly attached with them. Asa was a good king, did a lot of things.

But what do you remember about Asa? How did he finish up? Diseased in his feet. When you do the calculations, you find out that Asa developed this foot problem in his 39th year. In his 39th year.

Just before he gets to 40 years, he loses his wheels. His feet get diseased. There is a co-regency and this is what adds years to Jehoshaphat's reign.

The Bible doesn't specifically say it, but when you work it out, the co-regency begins in Asa's 39th year. So there is sort of an explanation there. The king is gimped up to the point that he cannot effectively rule and Jehoshaphat effectively takes over in that year.

So there is already a stumbling going on in Judah. Now, here is another interesting thing related to Jehoshaphat. We have talked about this, but we didn't make this connection.

Two things happen in Jehoshaphat's third year. Two things happen in the third year of

Jehoshaphat. One of them is in Chronicles and one of them is in Kings.

You will remember the study in Chronicles. We had a good portion of the chapter dealing with the people that he sent out into the land to teach Bible classes. It gives their names, tells where they went and so on.

What is interesting about that, keep your finger here and turn to Deuteronomy 31. We will just be in Deuteronomy for a moment. Deuteronomy 31, beginning at verse 10.

If you look at the context, up in verse 9, Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests. If you go back to the beginning of the chapter, Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. I am 120 years old today.

I can no longer go out and come in. The Lord has said to me, you shall not cross over this Jordan. Who is his protege and already his co-regent, if you will, in Israel? Yeshua, right? Yeshua has been taking over more and more of the duties.

Now Moses is 120 years old and he says, I can't do it anymore. So he sort of gives his blessing. In verse 7, he calls Joshua and says, Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them.

You shall inherit. So verse 9, Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord to all the elders of Israel. Now, this is a pretty big deal.

This is a wrap-up. Moses has lived three 40-year generations in a row. 40 years in Egypt and then he leaves.

He is 40 years in Midian and at the age of 80 he comes back and for the next 40 years he leads Israel through the wilderness to the threshold of the Promised Land. 120 years old. Joshua is his successor and so that's what this is talking about.

This is going to be the transition, the handover. You would think there are these huge issues. We're not going to be getting down into minutia or, oh, by the way, don't forget to wash the goat before you sacrifice it or whatever, right? But look at what happens here starting in verse 9 and moving through verse 10 through 13.

Gave the law to the sons of Levi, bearing the Ark of the Covenant to all the elders of Israel. Look at verse 10. And Moses commanded them saying what? At the end of seven years at the appointed time in the year of release at the Feast of Tabernacles when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which he chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

Everybody needs to hear the law in a Sabbath year, a sabbatical year. This is the original sabbatical. Every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles, what do the spring feasts

foreshadow? First Advent, first coming of the Lord Jesus.

You've got Passover, firstfruits and all the work that Jesus did in his first Advent. Fall feasts foreshadow his second coming. There are those three assembly feasts.

Two of them are in the spring. One is in the fall. Which one do they get the law read to them? In the fall, Feast of Tabernacles.

When is it that God is going to write his law on the hearts of his people? A new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah in that day. I will take out their heart of stone. I will give them a heart of flesh.

I will write my law in their hearts. And this every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles, there is to be a formal instruction in the law. The whole law is to be promulgated to everybody that has come.

A guy that spends at least 40 years in his adult life is going to hear the law read six times. Six times seven is 42. So you could expect in an adult life that goes at least into your 50s or 60s that you will hear the law read six, perhaps seven times on these sabbatical years.

What's interesting is it appears that Jehoshaphat recognized that his third year was a sabbatical year. And this may well have been the motivation for sending these guys out in his third year. Why not in his second year? Why not in his first year? Why not in his fifth year? But in his third year, he says, I'm going to send these guys out and I want the law promulgated all through Judah.

And that's what he does. So it seems to resonate with the Sabbath year idea. If that is the case, it's interesting because his third year is 866-867.

That would be a sabbatical year. And you can start counting sevens backward and forward from that to find other sabbatical years. It's just an interesting note.

Why do we need to know the year that he sent these guys out? Why wasn't it just a continual program? It says it was in the third year that he did it. And that's the only year that it's mentioned in his 25-year reign. That's the only time it's mentioned that he sent these guys out.

So, just interesting. Another note that his third year, which would be 866-ish, is likely to have been a sabbatical year. All right.

We're just turning over our puzzle pieces and kind of saying this one is an edge, this one is a sky. So if it seems a little scattered, just bear with me. Right now we're establishing context.

This is what happened before 841. This is what happens before Jehu. And in the southern kingdom, you have Jehoshaphat, the Lord Judges.

And his mother's name is mentioned probably for two reasons. She was a great lady. Who is

she married to? King Asa, right? She's Asa's wife.

Asa's a good king. Jehoshaphat's a good king. She was apparently a good queen, a good woman, a good mother.

And so her name is mentioned. But oddly enough, her name means forsaken. You have all of this potential.

Here's my point. In Judah, the home court of David and Solomon, the location of the temple, the place where the Word of God is proclaimed, where apparently he's remembering the injunctions and the exhortations that are a part of observing the Sabbath, and certainly sending the Word of God out to be proclaimed. All of this is in Judah, but there's ominous music playing in the background because the Lord judges.

Forsaken, who is the daughter of, he's got his weapons in his hands. Armed guy, armed man. So what are you going to do with this opportunity? You can be insensitive to it.

You can say it doesn't really matter. Or you can redeem the time before the days get really, really evil. All of that is taking place ahead of time.

Now, if 867-ish, 866-67, if that's a sabbatical year, what's the next year, counting backwards by sevens? From 867, what's the next year? 860. And what's the next year after that? 853. Fourteen years after Jehoshaphat sends the orders and mandates the instruction of the Word of God in Judah, you're at the year 853.

This is the year. It is exactly 14 years after that third year of Jehoshaphat. This is the year that Jehoram becomes co-regent in the same way that Jehoshaphat became co-regent with his father because his father got disabled.

Jehoram, sharing a name with the king up in the north, Joram, the lord who is to be lifted up, becomes co-regent. Who is his wife? Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. Jehoshaphat, who should have known better, is thinking about the reconciliation of all debts.

It's the Sabbath. Maybe it's a jubilee. Let's reconcile with the north.

He's got visions of unification. He will cement an alliance by marriage. He marries his son, Jehoram, to Athaliah in 853.

In 853. That is exactly 12 years before 841. Joram comes to the throne in the north in 853.

Jehoram becomes co-regent in Judah in 853. Joram in the north, Joram in the south, same year come to power. It's a little bit hidden because of the co-regency issue.

Jehoshaphat is nominally still on the throne, but Jehoram and his significant other, Athaliah, 12 years. That defines the next 12 years in the south. It defines the next 12 years in the north with Ahab's grandson, Joram, and Ahab's daughter, Athaliah, all in place.

Then you draw the line at 841. 12 years highly significant from 853, which was perhaps a sabbatical year, just like 860 and 867. What do you do with these opportunities? Here's what's happening in the leadership.

The very king that sent the teachers out makes this tragic strategic mistake in his effort to conciliate, his effort to peace and safety. Shalom, shalom. Is it peace? Is it peace? They can't attack us if we're intermarried type of thing.

That's what brings us down to 841. Here is a point of observation and application both for us. God is very attentive in the Old Testament to the circumstances and the situations that pertain to His people.

We have seen it countless times. As goes the nation in the Old Testament, so goes the soul of the believer in the Church Age. We can draw from this a clear understanding that God orchestrates the circumstances, the details, the situations that regulate and affect our daily life.

He is in it. These people didn't artificially concoct who lived, who died, who got married. Some of these things weave in the decisions of people just like our circumstances are largely dependent on what people decide or fail to decide.

But God wove it together into the perfect fabric of His plan. And it lays the groundwork and sets the context for this next session that we're looking at. Don't be deceived.

God is equally attentive in each of our lives. Nothing is accidental. Nothing is unforeseen.

Nothing is a surprise. Nothing is an accident. And these things have a purpose.

It's not just that God knows them. And it's not just that He's got sort of a random series of tests that He's administering hither and yon. It has focus and it has purpose.

It has direction. It has sequence. In any good curriculum, there is a sequence where you learn basics and then you graduate to more advanced things.

You get your basic skills and your fundamentals and then you build on that to more advanced understanding. God does that with us. And when we learn and when we remember and when we apply our basic truths, our basic skills as believers, God can bring us along.

It is tragic that in this day and age so few believers are in that category. And whatever the causes and reasons and whatever else, it's just a fact. Look around.

So if we like to think that we are in that number, if we are, how important is it for us, given the opportunity? We have peace. We have prosperity. We have security.

We have opportunity. We have the Word of God open before us. What do you think is on the line? We can either grasp these things in advance or we can fail them and God is going to be doubly unhappy with us for having squandered the opportunity with so much being given to us

and having wasted it.

From those to whom much is given, much is required. That doesn't need to be a threat. It shouldn't be a negative because I like it when somebody gives me a lot and I can do a lot with it.

And you do too. This is a good thing. I wouldn't trade places with any generation of believers anywhere in human history.

We are at the greatest time that it's ever been to be a believer. And a lot has been given to us and we're not in an area of the world where there's persecution, where there's danger, where it's more than your life is worth to be identified or outed as a Christian. But why do we have this? Why did God put these kings in the North and in the South? Why did He arrange it to where their reigns were exactly 12 years? Why is there bad leadership and evil seeping in from the North down into the South that started so well in the third year of Jehoshaphat and look at where they are by 12 years prior to 841? Storm clouds on the horizon.

Which way do we choose? What do we think about? What do we prioritize? It is critically important and God is revealing to us here the integrity of His plan and purpose and we don't want to miss it. We're going to pause here and take a break. When we come back, now that we've got the fabric of the background leading up to 841, we're going to take a look at these same clues as they pertain, beginning with Jehu in the North and Athaliah in the South.

Let's take our break.