

Kings and Prophets 14-11-07a

This is Friday the 7th of November 2014. We're continuing our study of Kings and Prophets. We're soon going to be seeing a new prophet arrive on the scene, and an old prophet leave the scene.

But we'll be resuming our study tonight in 2 Chronicles chapter 24, parallel to 2 Kings chapter 12. Let's take a moment to go before the Lord in prayer, dedicate our time and our concentration to a better understanding of these things that God has for us. Hopefully we'll find in this particular section things that are helpful to us, even though we live in a much different time, a much different age.

But the timeless truths of the human soul and God's provision, both in blessing and in judgment, are evident. Shall we pray? Father, it's a wonderful thing to rest in your gracious provision and to advance in the strength of what you provide for us by way of our daily bread. We thank you for your promises.

We thank you for your faithfulness to us, even when we have trouble being faithful. We thank you most of all for the Lord Jesus and for his work on our behalf, his ongoing intercession and representation on our behalf, and the ever closer time of his return for us to take us to and through the transition into the ages that are to come. We know that this is a time of preparation.

It is a time of training and a time of challenge. And we pray that as we study your word together this evening, the things that we see here will be evident and be manifest to us in terms of what it means for us, why you have preserved it and delivered it to us for our edification. We pray that we can be a blessing to each other.

We can reflect your glory and serve to the fullest and most effective extent in the light of what we learn here tonight. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, there's the ongoing flow of history, just as we have in our own modern day. We've just had a midterm election. We've seen balances of power shift.

We've seen the affairs of men in their splendor, so to speak, paraded across our screens. And people think that this is what makes history go. It's who gets elected, who is in charge, what policies are passed, what court decisions are made.

And yet, in reality, these things are subordinate to and a reflection of greater spiritual truths. It is very apparent and very evident in biblical days that God is in His heaven and that He controls and oversees the affairs of men. In our day, we tend to think, well, there's pretty much this random, chaotic, forward tumbling of events.

And God is kind of in the midst and in the cracks and at work with individual people. Not so at

all. He is engaged and active in the individual lives of people.

But He continues, as He has always done, to oversee the big picture. And this should give us comfort. It should be a part of our consolation and our peace.

God is in His heaven. Nothing happens that catches Him unawares. If you look around the world in recent centuries and recent decades, empires have come and gone.

Governments have come and gone. Centers of power have come and gone. But all of these are monitored by and ultimately controlled by our Father in heaven.

Nothing happens without His permission. Nothing escapes His notice. Nothing gets out from under His control.

And the fact that He lets the causes, conditions, successions, and relations play out isn't a sign that He isn't in control or that He doesn't have power. It's a sign that He does. And He is making a point.

God allows the God of this world to do His thing. Take His best shot. And necessarily there is going to be disease.

Necessarily there is going to be warfare. Necessarily there is going to be abuse, persecution, oppression. It has always been this way.

This is one of the arguments that is lodged against the existence of God or the power of God. If He can stop evil and He chooses not to, then He's a bad God. If He isn't powerful enough to stop evil, then He's a bad God.

Which is a very limited human view of God. God is both able and willing in cases where it suits His purpose. But His purpose is to demonstrate for all eternity that sin and evil left to itself inevitably corrupts, inevitably destroys, inevitably is a malignancy that cannot be left unchecked.

To the extent that He lets it function, we see the devastating results. God can fix all of these results. There are Christians in Africa who are dying under persecution.

There are children in oppressive nations and corrupt regimes that are starving. Yes, there is evil in the world. There is evil functioning in the area of Israel, both the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom at this time in history.

It is detailed for us here. It is described here. And we say, well, why doesn't God intervene? Why doesn't He send the prophet? Why doesn't He throw some lightning bolts and stop the madness and get His people back on track? It is representative of what God has done throughout history.

God chooses when and where and how to intervene to make specific points. Other times, He

chooses not to intervene, not to interfere, not to interrupt, and let sin and evil run its course. If God stopped it, this is sort of the weird thing that people expect.

Well, if there really was a God, He would never allow a child to be abused or to starve. So what we would have is a world where there were constant supernatural interventions, where any time somebody got ready to do something awful, they would be mysteriously frozen in place. That isn't God's purpose.

And it's a very childish and shallow view that says there can't be a God, because if there was, He would stop every act of evil in its tracks. That isn't God's purpose. His purpose is to let sin be shown as sin, to let the corruption and the destruction and the suffering and the misery play out.

Why? Because having seen it and done it once, we never have to go through it again. God isn't going to have to limit our chooser in the eternal future. This is what He is doing with His people here.

God could easily send a glowing prophet. He could let everybody see the chariots and horsemen of the armies of God. He could send angels throughout the land to rebuke and cajole and instruct and call people back to God.

He could resurrect Moses. He could send the prophet Samuel back. He could bring King David out of the tombs of the kings and have him walk forth and say, My people, what are you doing? Why does God not do that? His ways are much better and higher than our ways.

And He is letting people experience what a godless existence is, what an existence based on no standards and no presence and power of God is. The record is preserved. We're reading about this in detail 2,700 years after the fact.

It is a teaching point. And we see reflections of the same problems today. So that is the background.

If we stop and say, because this account in the next few chapters is going to get really messy and really ugly. And we don't see much by way of divine intervention. Where is the prophet? Where is the call to repentance? Where is the presence and power of God in and among His people Israel? It just seems to be lacking.

And everybody seems to start doing what's right in their own eyes. And kings are running amok. They're setting up Asherah and worshipping Edomite idols and all kinds of things.

And you think, well, where is God? God is exactly where He wants to be, doing exactly what He needs to do for our edification. For every generation to realize that this is what you get when you reject God. Anybody that has ever raised a child or worked with children knows that there are certain things you just can't tell them.

And they will take it as gospel. Don't be reckless on that bicycle. You're going to fall over and skin yourself up.

You're going to hurt yourself if you're not more careful. There's at some level an academic acknowledgment that, yeah, I know you're worried about me. But, hey, I'm going to pedal this thing as fast as I can.

I'm going to go as fast and as far. And I'm going to try to jump over this little ramp I made for myself. There's just not an appreciation of the reality of what the parent knows.

Because when the parent was a child, the parent tried the same thing, fell over, skinned their knees. It hurts a lot. I'm trying to spare you the pain that I went through.

Well, God knows that in some cases we as human beings, this generation, had to go through the consequences and the results of their disobedience, their apathy, their attitudes. And that's what we see in this next couple of reigns in both the northern and the southern kingdoms. We're going to have some bad kings.

And the question that we might ask up front is, why doesn't God intervene? Because it is not God's purpose to intervene. It is God's purpose to teach. It is God's purpose to let us learn by experience what we refuse to learn by instruction.

I say again, if we do not learn by instruction, God is going to teach us by experience. I, myself, long ago decided as far as I am able, I want to learn by instruction. I don't like learning the hard way.

I don't like finding out that you really ought to wear gloves if you're using that tool for very long or you're going to have blistered hands for four or five days. I really don't like finding out that if you don't use the wrench the right way, it's going to slip off and you're going to bark your knuckles on cold, hard steel underneath your Volkswagen van. I don't like finding out the hard way.

I would rather watch a YouTube video, see some other guy do that, and say, you know what? Let's not do that. But many times we're just thick. We're hard-headed.

We don't want to listen and we don't have sufficient respect for instruction. And God says, fine. It isn't that the Lord's arm is shortened and He can't save.

It isn't that His ear is heavy and He's not willing to listen. Your iniquities separate between you and your God. Your sins hide His face and it's on you.

You want to learn the hard way? Fine. I'm not going to respond. I am not going to appear.

I am not going to intervene. I say all of this by way of introduction to this next section. This is what is coming up in 2 Kings 12, 2 Chronicles 24.

This period is a hard, hard time in both kingdoms. And we're not going to see much by way of divine intervention. Elisha is soon going to go to his heavenly reward.

And there's going to be very little by way of divine word. And there's going to be very little by way of response to that word. And God is going to let the consequences play out.

He has told people time and time again. Remember all of that instruction that Jehoshaphat gave to the people of Judah? They know this. You can know a thing and not heed it.

You can know you shouldn't eat the entire pan of chocolate cake, but you eat it anyway. And you find out the hard way that what you knew academically and didn't heed, you should have. There's a warning on every pack of cigarettes.

There's people that smoke the things anyway. There are all kinds of cautions. People are told don't drive crazy.

But young people drive crazy. And in many cases, either they or somebody else pays a price. I just saw another conflagration on the highway coming home today.

Somebody driving irresponsibly, and everybody pays. Everybody is delayed. Everybody is held up.

And there's misery and loss involved. So that's what's coming up here. You remember that we saw in 2 Chronicles 24, beginning at verse 15, that Jehoiada, the priest who had put Joash on the throne as an 8-year-old, died.

And everything went to racket run after that. And eventually, Joash, after his superficial external restoration of the temple, but nobody's heart really got changed. There wasn't revival.

There wasn't renewal. There wasn't a return to dedication and to worship of God. It was an external.

It was a superficiality. And it showed in the latter days of the reign of Joash. And he ends up slaying the son of Jehoiada in the temple precincts, in the shadow of the temple that he rebuilt.

He's murdering God's voice. He's murdering God's witness outright. Cold-blooded murder.

He himself is going to be murdered. If you shed man's blood, by man will your blood be shed. This is the law of God.

And this is something that God allows. God could have warned him if he had been paying any attention. It hadn't killed the man of God.

The man of God could have given him a warning. You've got people that are going to conspire against you. He doesn't do that.

So in verse 22 of 2 Chronicles 24, Joash did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada,

Zechariah's father, had shown him, but killed his son. So when Zechariah is dying, he says, May the Lord see and avenge. And the Lord is going to see that that takes place.

So following kind of parallel in 2 Kings 12 and 2 Chronicles 24, there is a conflict. The Syrians go and attack Gath, which is a Philistine city, as you will remember. And he's got that, and this is sort of a flanking position.

This allows him to go in across easier territory to attack Israel. And they come up against Judah and Jerusalem. So in 2 Kings 12, 18, Joash, king of Judah, took all the gifts that Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, the king of Judah, had dedicated, and his own gifts, all the gold that was found in the treasuries of the house of the Lord and of the king's house, and sent these to Hazael, king of Syria.

And Hazael went away. He basically bought him off by sending him everything. Now, there is going to be a replenishment.

Remember, people are still going to bring their gifts and so on, and very soon there's going to be some more gold. We know this because there's going to be another big buy-off in the not-too-distant future. But Hazael went away from Jerusalem, and if you follow along in 2 Chronicles 24 at verse 23, he destroyed the princes and the people from among the people in Judah, and sent the spoil to the king of Damascus.

The army of the Syrians had come with only a few men. This was a fairly small raiding party that gets all of this booty and all of this loot because the promise of God was, when you are doing what you're supposed to do, one of you will put to flight a thousand. When you're not doing what you're supposed to do, one will put a thousand of you to flight.

And so this very small Syrian band achieves a complete victory in Judah, takes spoil, and destroys the princes of the people from among the people. This is 2 Chronicles 24, 23. They don't tell you this in Kings, but in Chronicles, the leadership is destroyed.

Why is the leadership destroyed? They're accountable. They're responsible. How come these leaders are not leading the people back to God? How come they are not holding the king to account? Because of this, they're destroyed.

The Syrians, in verse 24, had come with few men. The Lord delivered into their hand a very great army because they had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers, and they executed judgment on Joash. This is circumstantial judgment.

This is loss of protection and prosperity and blessing in circumstance. Point of application. When we disregard what we know are proper spiritual priorities, when we slack off, when we are apathetic and indifferent and even disobedient, when there are certain things we just refuse to bring before the Lord, we don't live in the light of our identity and our citizenship.

Remember, as goes the nation in the Old Testament, so goes the believer in the New

Testament, and judgment will come. Now, not every bad thing that happens to us is a judgment. Many times, when we're doing what we're supposed to, bad things still happen, but it's in a different category.

It serves a different purpose, and it can be the means of God strengthening us, giving us opportunities to lay hold of righteousness by faith, turn cursing to blessing, manifest His strength in our weakness. It's a completely different thing. The same bad thing could happen to two believers, and for one, it is a means of blessing, it is a means of growth, it is a means of laying hold of and storing up treasure in heaven.

The very same thing happens to another believer, and it is, in fact, a judgment, and it is a loss, and it is a rebuke, and a wake-up call, and an opportunity to go before the Lord and turn. Now, how do we know which is which? Well, are we really so oblivious to our spiritual life that we don't know when we're doing what we're supposed to and when we don't? I would offer you this thought. If bad things happen, and you're not sure if it's judgment or if it's suffering for blessing, you probably ought to lean towards suspecting that it's for judgment.

If we're doing what we're supposed to, we'll know it, because we're actively, aggressively pursuing our walk with God. We have an active prayer life. We have an active time of reflection and review of the things that we're learning in Bible class.

We are asking God to show us His will, and when we see it, we're aggressively pursuing it. You know when you're doing what you're supposed to. Think about somebody that's in the military, and they've been assigned a job.

Maybe they're a Humvee driver. I almost said a Jeep driver. We don't have any Jeeps.

Humvee. You're a Humvee driver. Well, what are your responsibilities? If you're driving, you should be familiarizing yourself with wherever it is that you're supposed to drive.

If you're going on an operation, you've looked at the maps. You know the roads. You know the places where it's potential that you might miss a turn, and you're going to be watching for that.

What if it's dark? What if it's a movement at night? Do you know how far you should go before you've got to make this critical turn? What if the guy ahead of you gets lost? Are you content to just follow taillights that are blacked out and just hope that you can see them, and you're just relying on the guy in front of you to navigate? Or do you really know where you're going? Have you done maintenance on your vehicle? Have you been down at the motor pool making sure that all of the proper functions have been carried out on that vehicle? Are you in good communication with the people that you are driving, and you know what you're supposed to have in the vehicle? You know who's supposed to be in the vehicle. You know how long it's supposed to take. In other words, you're actively doing the very best you can to carry out that job.

Now, if you're just a taillight follower, and you didn't really look at the map, and you fell asleep

in the briefing, and you haven't really talked to the commander, and you're not sure what's in the back, and something goes wrong, and now you're out in the boonies, and suddenly you've lost the convoy, and you're in blackout conditions, and you can't radio, and you've got people in the back that are supposed to be somewhere, and now they can't get there because you screwed up. Is there any doubt in your mind? Are you going to quickly blame somebody and say, why didn't they make it more clear to me? If you're honest, and if you're trying to do a good job, you'll know when you have done what you're supposed to and when you haven't. So, when situations as are about to befall the kingdom of northern Israel and the kingdom of Judah, when bad things happen to us, nation in the Old Testament, individual in the New Testament, it shouldn't be hard to figure out, this is a test of my faith, my reliance, my application of what I know, and I'm going to trust God, I'm going to be positive, I'm going to work through this, however difficult and challenging it is, I know whom I have believed, I'm persuaded He's able to keep what I've committed to Him against that future day, I know that my reward is in heaven, my citizenship is in heaven, I have God's Holy Spirit, I have the power and presence of the Word of God in my soul, I want to do what is necessary to reflect the glory of God and to please Him and to show, this is what a believer in the Lord Jesus does when the chips are down, and that's what I'm going to do.

Or, everything is dark and confusing, I don't know where I am, and I'm flailing around looking for human solutions and relying on human strength and trying to figure it out on my own, I don't have peace, I don't have confidence, I don't know what's going to happen next, it's a clue. These people in these kingdoms, in these days, should have awakened to the fact that it is all spiritual, it is all a reflection. Why do you think it's in the Word of God? This is not a secular history book, this isn't the history of the United States with illustrations by some guy, and it's going to be an 8th grade history book.

This is the Word of God, and these things are in the Word of God because every single one of these episodes and events was either a reflection of faithful people working through difficulties in the presence and power of God, or the opposite. If there is a question in your military mind about the nature of the suffering you are going through, that in itself is probably a good clue that it is a call to change of mind. It is a call to a better, healthier walk with the Lord and get back to basics and get back to those things we know we're supposed to do on a daily basis.

If you're doing what you're supposed to do, you will know it. And, hey, I blew a tire, I didn't see that coming, but it isn't for lack of maintenance. I know where I am, I know the map, I know my mission.

I prepared, I did my very best to be ready for this. That's out of my control, I'll deal with it as best I can. You know when you're doing what you're supposed to do, and you know when you're not.

And anything else is just self-deception, and the heart is deceitful. These people think that it's the Syrians, they think that it's just a bad king. It is the spiritual malaise and apathy that is at

issue.

So as we go through this, and we're going to move through quite a bit of material tonight, keep in mind, this is what's going on. This is God's harbinger, this is God's wake-up call. Hey, people, have you stopped to think why this bad stuff might be happening to you, the covenant people of God? So, slaying the prophet of God, slaying the man of God, delivering a warning from God, isn't a real good start.

And so, Joash, the dying request of Zechariah is going to be fulfilled. May the Lord see and avenge. So the Syrians now are coming up.

And a very small band of them empties the treasuries of Judah, puts them all to flight, routes them, takes their leadership away. And the leadership is accountable. You and I are the captains of our ship and the masters of our fate, of our own soul, and that leadership is going to pay the price for accountability and failure to live up to that accountability.

So the Syrians take them and execute judgment on Joash. The rest of the acts of Joash, this is verse 19 of 2 Kings 12, are written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah. But just as soon as the Syrians leave, and they left him wounded, by the way, we find this out in verse 25 of 2 Chronicles 24, and you might as well just keep these two chapters, because we get some information from one and some from another.

So have one of your fingers in 2 Kings 12, have the other in 2 Kings 24. Verse 25 of 2 Chronicles 24, when they, the Syrians, had departed from him, leaving him, Joash, severely wounded. He's already taken a shot from the Syrians.

It tells us in 2 Kings 12, verse 20, his servants arose and made a conspiracy. He's already down, let's finish him off. These are his own servants.

Disloyalty and intrigue in the camp. He's had an outside attack and lost. Now he's going to have an inside attack and lose.

All of God's protections, all of God's blessings and provisions, the warnings, the wall of fire, it's all been taken away. He wants to operate on his own, he's totally on his own. Outside enemies prevail, inside enemies prevail.

He's wounded from enemies on the outside, he's going to be taken out by enemies on the inside. So continuing in verse 25 of 2 Chronicles 24, his servants conspired against him because of the blood of the son of Jehoiada the priest, and they slew him. Their motivation, they take advantage of his weakness and his wounds, but it's because of what he did to Zechariah.

They slew him in the house of Milo on the way that goes down to Silah. And he's in his bed, he's helpless, he's trapped, he's too weak to move, they slay him. Jehoziah the son of Shimeioth and Jehozabad the son of Shomer, his servants, struck him down so that he died.

What's interesting is in Chronicles, beginning in verse 26, those who conspired against him were Zabad the son of Shimeioth. Shimeioth is the mother's name, and Shomer is a Moabitess. One is an Ammonitess and one is a Moabitess.

What do we know about the Ammonites and the Moabites? There is poetry in this judgment, because these are sons of an Ammonitess and a Moabitess. What are these people doing as servants in the house to begin with? Be sure your disobedience will find you out. What had God said about Moabites and Ammonites being anywhere near the house of God? Anywhere near the precincts of leadership in Judah? Anywhere near the Temple Mount? They're not supposed to be there to the 10th generation, remember that? The only exception is somebody like Ruth, who makes a clear and complete commitment to God and becomes an Israelite through marriage and through commitment.

These people are not. And so there's Moabites and Ammonites running around in the kingly house, and a son of a Moabitess and a son of an Ammonitess slay the king and justly so. It's a product of his own bad judgment.

Accounts of his sons and the oracles against him in the rebuilding of the house of God are written in the commentary on the book of Kings. And so Amaziah, his son, is going to reign in his stead. This brings us to 2 Kings chapter 13.

Joash started out as a helpless child, preserved, protected, brought to the throne, given a wonderful opportunity, given godly counsel and guidance, but it all falls to the ground. He comes to an ignominious end. His work on behalf of the Temple is shallow and superficial, and he gets credit for nothing.

He winds up giving away the treasure amassed by three previous generations of kings in Judah, and it's a travesty. The idea of good King Joash and the chest of Joash and the rest of it we've already seen. A life of futility and a death in ignominy, an ignominious death.

It is a lesson for us. What is Amaziah going to do on the throne of Judah? We'll pause and take our break. When we come back, we'll resume in 2 Kings chapter 13.