

Kings and Prophets 15-01-02a

This is Friday, the 2nd of January, 2015. We're continuing our study of Kings and Prophets after something of a hiatus. We've pretty much missed the whole last month of the year for one reason or another, but we're going to be picking back up in the vicinity of 2 Kings chapters 14 and 15 and they're parallel in 2 Chronicles 25 through 27.

If you can remember back a ways, we were looking at the kings in the north and in the south. We had focused most recently on the kings in Judah, Amaziah and his son Azariah. And this time frame is extremely pivotal both in the history of the divided kingdom and in our study.

So we're going to take a moment as is our custom to go before the Lord in prayer, prepare ourselves for the study of this portion of God's Word. Father, what a blessing it is for us to begin the new year looking forward to the provisions and the possibilities that you set before us in your eternal plan and purpose through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for all of the ways that you have drawn us and taught us and edified us in the months and the years gone by.

We are grateful to be brought to this place by your grace and through your faithfulness, your promise and most of all through the Lord Jesus Christ who has made our salvation possible, who ever lives to intercede on our behalf and to represent us before you. We thank you for him. We thank you for our position in him and the tremendous privileges that we enjoy because of the suffering that he endured, the penalty that he paid, the atonement that he secured on our behalf.

We thank you for the lifting up and out of the mundane world that we experience through the ministry of your spirit and the power of your word. We thank you for this portion of your word tonight from the Old Testament and we ask your blessing on us as we study it together. May each of us find here those truths that partake of what is timeless and what is eternal, what is beneficial to us and meaningful to us as we seek to live our lives in a way that pleases you.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. So if you have not already done so, you can turn in your Bible to 2 Kings chapter 14.

We're going to back up just a little bit since it's been so long that we've gathered to look at this. I just want to remind you quickly of Amaziah. This is 2 Kings 14 parallel in 2 Chronicles 25.

He is the son of Joash, the southern kingdom Joash. This is the Joash that was rescued as a child. I'm going to try to see if I can go the whole night with calling him baby Joash.

Oh, oops, too late. But it's helpful to me to distinguish him from the northern Jehoash or Joash by that particular episode in his young life, preserved by God with such promise, such opportunity, and he missed it. And one of the things that we see as we step back and look at this study in general, and as I said in the introduction, we are at a really turning point in our

study, and you'll see why in a moment.

But what is going on? Why are we looking at the book in the Hebrew Bible of Kings and the book of Chronicles divided into two volumes in our English? But Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, each are single books in the Hebrew text. So we have this record of the United Kingdom under Saul, under David, under Solomon, and then the divided kingdom, beginning with Jeroboam in the north and Rehoboam in the south. And this continual history beginning in the 900s with Solomon and going all the way down to 721 for the northern kingdom and 586 in the southern kingdom.

And we have all of these details and there are internal wars and assassinations and goings on, much of it an abomination in the sight of the Lord, idolatry, departure from the law of Moses, departure from obedience and faithfulness, and also warfare and incursions and excursions dealing with surrounding countries, Moab, Edom, Syria, the Philistines, eventually Assyria. It's a lot to take in. It's a huge amount of material.

And so if we stop just to remind ourselves in our study of kings and prophets, what is the big idea? The big idea is, as goes the nation of Israel or nations of Israel in the Old Testament, so goes the individual believer in his life, both as a person and as part of the church in the New Testament. So as we look at the careers of the various kings in the northern and southern kingdoms, as we look at the ministry of the prophets in those kingdoms, we understand that these are parables, not that it isn't literal history, but its value to us is in the telling of the story, in the recounting of the events, this bears on, illustrates, and reflects truth that pertains to us. The kingdom, whether it's the northern kingdom or the southern kingdom, with its king, this represents the decision-making, the policies that are set and followed in our own souls.

We essentially rule the kingdom of God that is within us. And I don't mean that in a blasphemous sense, that Jesus isn't the king of his own kingdom or that God the Father is not the king of his kingdom. But for the purposes of comparison, we are parallel to these kings.

We have authority to decide. We have a call and a responsibility that has been assigned to us by God, just as these kings did. We have the word of God delivered to us, just as these kings did.

We have responsibility to fellow believers, both in our immediate periphery and in our extended sphere of influence, just as these kings did. So in studying the kings, we are studying the process of determining what the will of God is and how best to pursue it and to fulfill it. And in particular, we have illustrations of what happens when we fail.

These are largely and sequentially kings that in one way or another fail and fall short. We know what the ideal is. We know that it would be great if we could make no mistakes.

One of the few individuals in the Bible that you find no real failures recorded for is Joshua. Why would that be? What's the man's name? Yeshua. He foreshadows and pictures.

There's another individual that we find virtually no significant negative record for. Joseph. Why

would that be? How beautiful and wonderful and extensive a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ is Joseph slain, or so it would seem, by his brother.

And yet through that supposed death, deliverance and salvation comes to his people. There is forgiveness. There is reuniting.

There is prosperity. There is not only deliverance, but prosperity granted. Another individual for whom you find really no record of failure is Daniel.

Daniel. Not so much do we see a parallel between him and the Lord Jesus, but in his prophetic function, he paints the picture of the future role, ministry and coming of the Lord Jesus. Daniel chapter 9. It doesn't get any more succinct, any more powerful, a picture of the Lord Jesus and his faithfulness in the face of adversity, in the face of persecution through a long life.

Daniel to me is kind of the Old Testament Apostle John. Very long and faithful ministry. Just as in the New Testament, you really don't find any failure ascribed to John.

Even when all the disciples flee, you find out that John fled to the place where Jesus has been arrested and he gets himself inside and he is observing and staying close, even though he's somewhat out of sight. So these are reminders to us, especially the Old Testament pictures, that all of these things have been written for our instruction. So as we get into the career of these individual kings and we say, oh my goodness, look at this king that in the hubris of his accomplishments decides that he can go in and offer sacrifices, you know, Azariah and he develops the leprosy.

As we see Amaziah and his pride in his armies and thinking, well, I won one victory, I can go win another. And we think, well, you know, what a foolish king. The reason it is in scripture, the reason we are looking at these things is there but for the grace of God go I. And it is for our warning, it is for our preparation, it is for our instruction so that we do not make these mistakes.

So as we look at the kings, as we look at the nature of their success, he followed God but not with a whole heart, not with a loyal heart. He was obedient at the beginning but he spun out at the end. This to me is one of the scariest things that could happen.

You begin well, like Paul writes to the Galatians, you began well, you were running well, who hindered you? How did you get distracted and deflected? What threw you off stride? And your early good start doesn't count if you don't finish well. Your great start and performance doesn't count if you are disqualified. I, during the time of my vacation here this past month, saw a documentary about, and I had never really understood what all went on with Lance Armstrong and the Tour de France doping scandal.

And people were saying he was on something, he was saying he wasn't, I didn't know. I thought, well, you know, they test those guys and he says he's not and who knows. I didn't really pay much attention.

But there was a documentary that went back and interviewed guys that had been with him from the beginning and were on the team from the beginning. And the guy was using all of these steroids and human growth hormones and other kinds of stuff from the beginning. Every single Tour de France that he won, he won by beefing himself up.

And once he started lying about it, he couldn't not lie. And he was trapped within the lie. And he had to just get more and more bald faced and more and more seemingly arrogant in the telling of this story until he's almost sociopathic about his teammates and ensuring that they don't leak the information and that they're either on the team and they participate in the doping or they've got to get well away and they better remain silent.

People are getting anonymous phone calls. In the middle of the night, their wives are being threatened. You know, bricks are coming through windows and and just the most nefarious things.

And the guy was a really talented athlete, had so much potential. But all of his titles and they showed the film of him grinding up and down these hills and and and you know how it got started. He was in one of the earlier races and somebody else from a international team was on this stuff and blew by him on one of the final hills.

And it just he couldn't stand it that these guys were winning. And he said, well, two can play that game if that's what they're doing to win, then that's what I'm going to do. And it made sense to him.

Well, we've got to level the playing field. You know, if some people are doing it, then everybody needs to do it. And this is the kind of rationalization that we find in these kings.

This is the kind of disqualification that we see in the kings. And it is so important for us to heed, to hear, to listen to the warnings, because nobody thinks that they are going to fall and fail and lose everything when they make these kinds of decisions. You look at the economic things, the Bernie Madoff's of this world and the the people who use whatever method to prosper and to get ahead.

They will cheat. They will lie. They will do all kinds of prevarication and and unethical behavior.

And they seem to succeed for a time. But in the justice of God, there's no gaming that system. There's no beating the omniscience of God, the justice and the righteousness of God.

And there is such wonderful accomplishment, such amazing peace. In fact, one of the things Lance Armstrong said after it all finally came out and he went on, I don't know, Oprah or something and answered all these questions. Yes, I did.

Yes, I did. Yes, I did. And they interviewed me and said, you know, it's the first time in nine years or however long it was that I've actually had peace because living in this lie was so stressful and trying to constantly prop it up and make sure no holes got poked in it that when he finally got

outed, he was able to relax.

And he's got other problems. But and by the way, you know, he was such a poster boy. He started a foundation because he had testicular cancer and was the comeback kid.

And everybody said, oh, he's such an inspiration. He was an inspiration for thousands of people. And he felt like he one of the ways he justified his continued lie was he didn't want to let all these people down that were looking to him for inspiration.

You know why he got that cancer? The drugs that he was taking, they produce cancer. And the reason he had that to overcome is because he had already been doping for so long. And that is one of the known side effects.

And so his whole persona was a lie. And this is the way many of these kings come across. They begin well.

They follow God at the beginning. They heed the voice of the counselors and the the priests and the prophets. But pretty soon the nature asserts itself.

There's greed. There's pride. There is hubris.

There is a grasping for things that are not a part of the plan and purpose of God. There's no real heart to glorify God and to please God. And this is the downfall.

And it's here to warn us. So by way of reminder, if you look at 2 Kings chapter 14, second year of Joash, the son of Jehoahaz king of Israel, Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah became king. 25 years old when he became king.

He reigned 29 years. His mother's name was Jehoadam of Jerusalem. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like his father, David.

He did everything as his father, Joash, had done. Well, how did his father, Joash, do? Started out well, listening to Jehoad of the priest. Remember, they rebuilt the temple, but he started working on exterior things, external accomplishments.

Joash ends up murdering Jehoad, his son. We're going to go ahead and pause here and take our break and I'll get my voice back.