

## **Kings and Prophets 15-04-24a**

This is Friday the 24th of April 2015. We're pursuing our study of the Kings and Prophets of the Old Testament. It's been a very fascinating study.

It's becoming something of a lengthy study, but we knew that going in. It's a multiple century span in the history of God's people, beginning from the days of the close of Solomon's reign and extending all the way down to the return from exile. We will eventually be able to survey Ezra and Nehemiah and look at the gap between the Old and New Testaments.

But we currently find ourselves in the reign of Jeroboam II. We've been looking at four prophets thus far that ministered during this time in the 700's B.C., beginning circa 750 or so. And we have seen many of these prophets in Jonah, Hosea, Amos, and now Micah.

We left off last time in Micah chapter 2, and that's where we will pick up this evening in the vicinity of verse 10. In fact, precisely at verse 10. This is where we left off last time.

Let's take a moment and let me just say in advance that we do have some pretty lively thunderstorms going on. So if those of you joining us from a distance suddenly find yourselves staring at a test pattern or the equivalent, it will be because we had a near strike here. It's also my excuse for our late start.

But we'll get with it here just as soon as we go to the Lord in prayer. Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for the ways that you have provided opportunities for us to apply and experience it firsthand, the truths that we have been learning from your word in both our Old and New Testament studies.

We pray tonight as we look at these portions of your word from the prophet Micah that God the Holy Spirit will minister them to each heart, implant them within us so that as we arrive at the point of remembering them and putting them into practice, they will be a living and present influence on our thinking and on our actions. We pray that as a result we can achieve more maturity, we can lay hold of more righteousness by faith, and we can be more fitted and prepared for the service and work that you have called us to and that you expect from us both in this life and in the kingdoms that are to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well we know the situation, don't we? We know that both kingdoms, both collections of God's people are on something of a downward spiral and it's a bit depressing. It started off well, great conquest under Joshua, entering into the land of rest.

But as we resume tonight in Micah 2, verse 10, you remember that we saw the sequence of towns that the Assyrians are predicted to come through. If nothing changes, this is one possible future. It's not the only possible future, but it is one and it is presented as a reality to the people in Judah.

Micah primarily speaks to the southern kingdom of Judah. It's where he's from. It's his home bodies down there.

And in chapter 1 we saw that incursion, the predicted route of attack through those towns and the word play on their names where they were supposed to be fortresses and places of refuge and places of strength and places of opportunity, of application and growth. Instead, their names are sort of turned on their heads and what they had started out to be is not what they become. And this really is the theme of the book of Micah, opportunity lost, potential fumbled away.

And as we resume tonight in chapter 2, verse 10, look at that verse. Micah says, arise and depart. He is quoting the Lord God here.

You can see the quotation marks at the beginning in your New King James. Of course, they don't exist in the original, but we understand from the content, do not my words in verse 7 do good to him who walks uprightly. And that's a capital M on my.

Again, this is in our English. We don't have capitalization in the Hebrew. In fact, just as an aside, capitalization of pronouns referring to deity and other signs of reverence that we have in our New King James text, really didn't become common practice until the 18th century.

The early 1900s. And that became more complex than what people really expected and it has largely been abandoned. Most of the modern translations, you will find pronouns referring to deity are lowercase.

And as someone who works with this issue on a daily basis, I can tell you that even though I have been a fan of uppercasing pronouns that refer to the Lord Jesus and have done it both in my schoolwork and in my private notes and correspondence, I can see why it was abandoned. It begins to get unwieldy and even awkward if, for example, someone says, the Lord Jesus is our Redeemer. Would you capitalize Redeemer? Probably so.

One of the common titles and alternate names of the Lord. He is the King of Israel. Would you capitalize King? Probably so.

If you say David was King of Israel, Solomon was King of Israel, it would be lowercase. But the Lord Jesus is the divine and millennial King and because He is the God-Man, we would probably capitalize King. But suppose I say the Lord Jesus as He is seated at the right hand of the Father is our Redeemer and our intercessor and our friend and our advocate and our partner and our brother.

And I begin to string a long list of nouns and you start thinking, boy, that looks kind of funny capitalizing every one of those when many of them are not common titles of the Lord and actually Comforter, you could call the Lord Jesus our Comforter, but that's really a title of the Holy Spirit and if you capitalize, it really begins to get complicated and awkward and I've, by virtue of long experience and requirement, have actually almost gone to the other side of the

fence. The original, when Paul wrote, when Moses wrote, when the prophets wrote, there is no reverence attached to pronouns or titles referring to the Lord God and this is something that we have done artificially in our language and it really can become unwieldy. However, in verse 10 here again, chapter 2 of Micah, arise and depart for this is not your rest because it is defiled, it shall destroy.

Yes, with utter destruction. Well, what are we talking about here? Arise and depart it says. The Net Bible, the New English Translation says get up and leave for this land is not secure and many of us have started to have that feeling even here in our own land, haven't we? As there is greater and greater hostility toward Christianity, as there is more and more of a witch hunt, if you hold biblical values particularly with regard to certain issues having to do with political correctness, political women's issues, homosexual agenda issues and so on where to state the biblical view is as much as your life is worth.

So, we have a real sympathy when it says get up and leave for this land is not secure. It is still early in the persecution of Christianity and the country but it is coming. It is growing.

There is an ever increasing hostility and thankfully we live in a state where this will be one of the last bastions. If you were either on the left or the right coast, you would have far more awareness of this. But what does it mean when it talks about rest? Keep your finger here and turn in your Bible back to Deuteronomy chapter 12.

We know when we go to Deuteronomy we are in the books of Moses and Deuteronomy, this is going to be during the sojourn in the wilderness preparing to enter the land. And in chapter 12 it begins by saying, these are the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you to possess. That is a good contextual marker there.

Moses says this is the law. Remember Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy means second and the name is the law, the restatement of the law that began to be delivered in Exodus and Numbers and so on. Deuteronomy is a recap, a restatement of those things.

But look at the next several verses there talk about the place of worship. You will destroy the altars and high places of the Canaanites and you will worship where God designates. You shall not worship the Lord your God in verse 4 with the altars and pillars and wooden images and gods and so on of the Canaanites.

But verse 5, you shall seek the place where the Lord your God chooses out of all your tribes to put his name for his dwelling place and there you shall go. What place is that? What place is it? It's Jerusalem. That's the place where God chose to place his name in the days of David.

David took the town and at the threshing floor of Araunah the place became known where the temple would eventually stand. There, verse 6, shall you take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your free will

offerings and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. Just as an aside for those of us that rub elbows a lot with Baptists or who grew up Baptist as I did, the Baptist church and others are big on tithing and they say, well, this is something that transcends the law of Moses.

But notice what tithes are collected in with here in this verse. Your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your free will offerings and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. All of that is very clearly part of the ceremonial sacrificial law and so are tithes.

As each man purposes in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, not exaggeratingly, not according to a formula, not out of necessity. God is looking for those who give because they recognize an opportunity and they are cheerful in recognizing that opportunity and wanting to contribute to it. And by the way, all of these things, the offerings, the sacrifices, the different things that are mentioned here, including the tithe, were taken where? To the priests at the tabernacle and later the temple, given to the priests.

Today, people like to say, well, the church has taken the place of the temple and the tabernacle. What do we know from our studies that has taken the place of the priests and the temple or tabernacle in the church age? Where does the priesthood function? Is it at the church? Am I your priest? Is it valid to go to a Catholic church and recognize a priesthood down there? Let no man call you father, Jesus said, but everybody gets called father down at the Catholic church. The Catholic church is just the most egregious extension of what actually takes place in many, if not most, Protestant churches, and that is assuming the mantle of priesthood.

The pastor, the deacons, the elders, whatever they want to call themselves down there, are not the priesthood. Where does the priesthood function in the New Testament? Within. You are a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Who is the high priest in that order? Your pastor. Oh, wait, no, sorry. Who is the high priest in the order of Melchizedek? The Lord Jesus Christ.

Who is between you as a priest and the Lord Jesus as a high priest? Nobody. The function of priesthood goes from you through the Lord Jesus in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit directly to God the Father. Your pastor is in no way involved in that chain.

Your church is in no way involved in that priestly function. Now, there is certainly a lot that goes on in your church, but it is not in any way entangled with priesthood. We as individual believer priests represent ourselves before God.

We function in worship Romans 12, 1 and 2. We present ourselves living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God. We don't walk down to the church and present ourselves to the church for service, nor do we take money to the church and present it as a tithe in a priestly function. What each one chooses to give to their local assembly, it's a wonderful thing.

God bless the people that do it, but it has nothing, I say again, capital N, capital O, capital T-H-I-

N-G, nothing to do with your priesthood, nor does it in any way fulfill, reflect or in any way relate to the tithes of the Old Testament. There are people who choose to give 10%. God bless them.

That's between them and the Lord. If that's what you have decided on before God, great. It's wonderful.

It's a great thing. And wherever you choose to send that tithe is great. It's wonderful.

You can send it wherever you want. You have no obligation to tithe to a local church. You have no obligation to give to your local church.

It is purely free will. Purely if you are part of a local church and you believe that God is distributing blessings in and through that assembly and you choose to support it, that is a wonderful thing. And God will be pleased with that because that is the spirit with which you give it.

But make no mistake, the local church that browbeats its members for either offerings or tithes is unbiblical in adducing or referencing any Old Testament scripture related to the what happened in Israel. It's a completely different system. As goes the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, so goes the individual soul of the believer in the new, not the church.

So in case there is any fuzziness about that, that's how the cow ate that cabbage. And you can see it here in Deuteronomy. These tithes are just as much a part of the Old Testament law for the nation of Israel as animal sacrifices.

And if you are going to do one, then you really ought to do the other if you are going to be biblically consistent. You can't pick and choose. Well, there you shall eat before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice in all which you have put your hand.

This is verse 7 of Deuteronomy 12. You shall not, verse 8, at all do as we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes. For as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you.

God is giving the people of Israel, one day to be the nation of Israel, rest. When you cross over, verse 10, the Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and he gives you rest from all your enemies round about so that you dwell in safety. It is a blessing of the land.

It is a blessing of inheritance to be in the land, to have rest, and to dwell in safety. What is the analog to this inherited land of blessing, rest, and safety for us? How do we live in safety? How do we observe, interpret, and apply? This is a place of security, safety, and rest in our souls. You can't run down to the church and, you know, arm up with all of our collected .45s and .38s and rifles and shotguns and what have you and say, well, we've got safety in our church.

Our church is the land of rest. No, our souls, we inhabit a secure dwelling place. He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of my God, He is my refuge and my fortress, my buckler, my shield. In Him I will trust. He will deliver us from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence.

We take refuge under His wings. That's the shelter particularly now. So that is rest.

Now turn back to Micah 2 and look at verse 10. Arise and depart for this is not rest. This is not safe.

What has happened? The fulfillment of those cycles of discipline we looked at a few weeks ago. Again, over in Deuteronomy, if you are not obedient, if you are not faithful, this is what is going to happen. You are going to lose everything God is giving you in the land.

Turn your sky to iron and your dirt to brass. It's going to be drought. It is going to be a thousand of you put to flight by one single enemy.

It is going to be sickness and illness among your flocks and herds and in your own families. It is going to be death and destruction where you should have had milk and honey. It is going to be hard times where it should have been inheritance and blessing.

That's Old Testament Israel and it is literally being fulfilled in the days of Jeroboam II in both kingdoms. What is the equivalent for us? We are going to lose our peace. We are going to lose our contentment, our stability in times of challenge, in times of testing, which in reality are times of opportunity.

Our tests and our challenges are opportunities to convert what we have learned into gold, silver, and precious stones that will survive the refining fire of God's judgment when the Lord Jesus returns for us. This is capital. This is wealth.

This is treasure in heaven. This is inheritance. This is qualification for future service and future capability.

This is access card through one of those gates, one or more of the gates, into the New Jerusalem to dwell there, to serve there, to function there, to reflect the glory of the Lamb there. We fritter it away when we become subjective, self-centered, materialistic, distracted, caught up in this life. It is a sad thing that it is actually promoted as a virtue now to be materialistic, to think in material terms, that it is all eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.

It is the heritage of the scientific view that, well, if physics can't measure it, it doesn't exist. And yet they are all too ready to accept things that they don't understand and can't measure. I was watching a special about dark energy and dark matter.

They are celebrating the Hubble, and the Hubble is going to fall out of the sky here before long.

They are frantically trying to get all the data they can before it decays into the upper atmosphere. They say the only thing that is going to survive when the thing hits the atmosphere is the mirror.

The last trip that went up there, I think in 2009 is the last time anybody visited the Hubble, according to this deal, was to put a candle on it so they can drag that thing into an atmosphere. The mirror splashes into the ocean and doesn't come down on populated areas because that is going to be an ugly scene if that thing hits land. But the pictures that it has sent back, and they celebrate as though they invented the galaxies, and they celebrate as though they invented the subatomic particles that they are now discovering, and they celebrate as though they somehow designed and built the incredible diversity of biological life.

They try to take credit for the genome. The genome was designed and built long before these people managed to get a peek at just a glimpse, a very crude and primitive understanding of how it works. The thing has been operating for centuries in the various forms of life at God's command and at God's behest, fulfilling God's commands to be fruitful and multiply and fill.

Science says, well, it is all there. Even your sense of God is genetic. It is built into your brain, and it is a leftover from the days when you would survive better if when the breeze rattled the bushes you thought there was something there and ran away.

Anything that you do not understand you are going to attribute to a higher power, and so on. They have an explanation for everything. Well, here is the thing.

All you have to do is read the Bible. The Bible says, you are never going to get to me by building a tower on the ground. You are not going to reach to heaven by building Babel.

God intentionally has removed himself from materiality. He is not interested in people that can reason their way to God. He is interested in people who will believe their way to God.

This is what distinguishes souls. You are either for God or you are against Him. If you are against Him, you will use every excuse in the book.

Well, that is what these people are doing. They have adopted the materialistic explanations and gods of the Canaanites. Well, guess what? In so doing, they have lost their peace, and they have lost their rest, and they have lost their blessing.

Now they are assailed on every side. They are no longer protected by God as was promised in Deuteronomy. When you go into the land, if you are faithful and if you are obedient, I will give you rest.

Jesus returns to a nation that is oppressed by the Romans with hundreds of years of history that presage what is going to afflict the people of God, the Jews, for centuries to come. He says, Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Rest is the spiritual heritage of God's people.

Rest is the unique gift of God. You can't get it out of a pill bottle. You can't get it out of a shot.

You can't get it out of reading scientific tomes. Ah, I have such peace now that I understand more about the Big Bang. I have such inner contentment and fulfillment now that I know about quarks and genetic markers that are associated with various diseases that we still can't cure.

Ah, but give us time, and we will. Give us time, and we'll put the last brick on the top of Babylon. We will have reached to heaven, and we will have achieved all the things that people used to get from God.

It never happens. Atheism gives you communism, which gives you Pol Pot, which gives you Mao Tse Tung, which gives you Stalin and Hitler and all of the materialist atheists who have slaughtered millions trying to achieve rest. Let us kill enough people, and we'll have rest.

We just got to get rid of the ne'er-do-wells. It will come in this country. We've just got to get rid of the remaining, you know, benighted God-fearers so that we can have the utopian world.

It has been tried world without end. Satan has tried it generation after generation, century after century, millennium after millennium. Look at the history of the world.

Look at the history of South America. We'll slaughter enough people and have their blood run down the ziggurats, the pyramids, and we'll achieve a great civilization. They wiped themselves out.

History is littered with the detritus of Satan's failed attempts to achieve rest without God. And here are the people of God handing away their rest, fumbling away their rest. Arise and depart.

This is not your rest. You've given it away. Well, you think about us spiritually speaking.

This is our precious gift from the Lord Jesus Christ. Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you, not as the world gives, because the world can't give lasting peace.

The proclamation at the birth of the Lord Jesus is peace on earth to men who choose well. Men of good will is men who choose well. Choose well and the Lord Jesus is going to give you peace.

He pronounced it on the last great day of the feast. The one who comes to me out of his belly will flow rivers of living water. It's a picture of the future throne of the Father and the kingdom that comes after the millennial kingdom.

There is a river of living water that flows out from the throne of God. That's the presence of God. That's the Holy of Holies.

That's the temple, the tabernacle in our soul. And rivers of living water. We can begin to enjoy the peace that pervades the kingdom of the Father now.

It's unique. Never in history has God made that promise. It's ours.

And if we do not heed the warning of looking at what happens to the people of God when they choose badly and fritter away their inheritance for the pottage of momentary satisfaction, we're going to end up just like these kingdoms, obliterated. I was thinking about what we looked at last week and we talked about that there can be areas of our kingdom that are faithful and others that are not. And it reminds me of the capital of the northern kingdom.

What's the name of the capital of the northern kingdom? Samaria. If there's some area of your life that isn't as it should be, I knew Dan would appreciate that. But you think about it.

The northern kingdom is our warning. And we have to look at these different parts of our function. It could be priesthood.

It could be ministry. It could be ambassadorship. It could be stewardship.

It can be relationship. It can be authority orientation as we've seen in Ephesians. We've got to look at all of the different areas and don't let any fall to the ground.

It's obedience in all of these areas of responsibility and accountability. Remember when Jesus evaluates the seven churches and He says, here's what you're doing well, but I have a few things against you. Here's where you're not doing well.

It tells us that we've got to break it down. We can't just say, well, I think I'm doing pretty good. We need to break it down.

That's what the Lord Jesus does in evaluation. There's only one church out of the seven that doesn't get a criticism and that's the suffering church. That's Smyrna.

Remember myrrh is at the heart of the name of that church. It's the ointment. It's the salve for those who are wounded or those who have died.

It's also a spice used in the embalming. It's mentioned in connection with the preparation for burial. That's one of the reasons it is associated with the birth of the Lord Jesus because He came to accomplish that death on our behalf.

We want to remember this as we look at verse 10. It's very potent. You may as well get up and go because you have lost your safety.

It's not restful here. It's not safe here. It's their own fault.

The promise of God was security, safety, rest, peace and prosperity. Why is it not being fulfilled? It isn't that God's not powerful enough. It has been given away.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back we'll move forward and look at, in a little bit quicker pace, some of the rest of what Micah has to say in this prophecy.