

Kings and Prophets 15-05-07a

This is Thursday, the 7th of May, 2015, and we are continuing our study of Kings and Prophets. Just checking to be sure all the tech is teching over there. You look a little... pay no attention.

This is the 7th of May, 2015. We are continuing our study of Kings and Prophets. You can be turning to 2 Kings chapter 14.

We have departed from the historical account long enough to survey the writing prophets who begin their ministry at this time. You remember who they are and what they said, so we will be able to pick up in the narrative where we left off in the reign of Jeroboam II. We will take a moment at the outset to give each of us a chance to lay aside the various distractions and things that beset us on every hand and ask God's blessing on our fellowship as we study His word together.

Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful for this opportunity to spend time in fellowship, in refreshment, in renewing our spiritual perspective and commitment. We thank you for this opportunity and we pray that your Holy Spirit will be with us as we hope to gain a better understanding of this portion of your word. We pray that each one here will be blessed with insight and encouragement and motivation as we look at these things, even though they come from scriptures that were written so long ago.

We know that your truth is never dated, it is never out of fashion, it is never not pertinent or not helpful. And we pray that we will find those things that will illuminate our path and reflect light in our souls so that we can live our lives in a way that pleases you. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, you'll remember that we left off as we came to 2 Kings chapter 14 with Jeroboam II. Jeroboam II.

Now, he is the 13th king of the Northern Kingdom. Lucky 13. And you remember that very few dynasties last very long in the Northern Kingdom.

They seem to have a problem with continuity up there. And just by way of review, once Solomon's kingdom divided upon his death, in the Northern Kingdom, you remember there was Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Jeroboam in the North, Rehoboam in the South.

Rehoboam being, of course, Solomon's son. But in the North, immediately you have a non-Davidic king. And you don't have the line of David at all in the North from the outset.

So, we started out with Jeroboam, then Nadab, then Baashar, then Elah, then Zimri and Omri, and Ahab. Remember the Omride dynasty, Omri, and then Ahab, and then Ahaziah, and then Jehoram, or Joram, depending on which part you're reading. Then Jehu, and then we had Jehoahaz, and then Jehoash.

Another one of those Jehoash, Jehoash deals. And now we have come down to Jeroboam II in 2 Kings 14. The break-over from 1 to 2 Kings occurred between Ahaziah and Jehoram, or Joram.

So, here we are now with quite a bit of history having taken place. And as you recall, there had been this tremendous increasing cycle of judgment in the North. Why? Aren't they worshipping God up there? Aren't they faithfully sacrificing? And what kingdom am I talking about? I'm not talking about the North, am I? That's where you've got the golden calves, and Dan and Bethel.

You've got overt, prolific idolatry, and Asherah poles, and high places, and temple prostitution with all kinds of idolatrous practices. And God sent prominent prophets. He sent Elijah and Elisha.

Previous to that, we'd had a number of other prophets. Think about the prophetic tradition. Who's the first prophet to Israel that you can think of? The very first.

It's a little bit of a trick question, but not much. The very first prophet to Israel. It's Moses.

I will send another prophet. God will send another prophet like unto me. Of course, in your New King James, it's capitalized P because they think that's a Christological prophecy, a prophecy of the Lord Jesus.

He'll be another prophet like unto Moses. But Moses, if there's another one like him, and he's a prophet, then he's a prophet. And, of course, much of the law is, in fact, prophetic.

And many of the things that Moses pronounced in his Song of Moses and in his blessings were prophetic in nature. So, technically, Moses is your first prophet. But coming down to the time of the judges and then into the pre-dynastic, pre-monarchic times, who's your first prophet? Just greet me.

Samuel. Samuel. That's me.

Shmuel. Samuel really begins the prophetic tradition in the days of Eli. Hophni and Phinehas aren't going away, coming back.

You remember that? Samuel. Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. Remember that? The whole thing.

And then Samuel prophesies and tries to encourage Israel to be a theocracy. He is sort of the prototypical mediator between God and the nation. And, of course, what is the great outcry toward the end of Samuel's reign, and especially when Samuel's own sons turn out to be rascals? What do the people say? Give us a king.

And because the idea may be sound, but the timing is bad. Isn't this what happens to us a lot of times? We have a good idea, but the timing is not quite right. God does intend for Israel to have a king, a human king, but not yet.

But they rush the thing. God intended Abraham to have a son, but Abraham rushed it and ended up with Ishmael. And look at all of the historical outcomes of that one bad decision.

We have to be patient. Wait on the Lord. Be of good cheer.

He will strengthen our hearts. Wait, I say, on the Lord. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They that don't wait upon the Lord are going to dissipate their strength. Well, they didn't wait, so they got King Saul. Very good looking.

Triumph of form over substance. Looked good, head and shoulders above. Good fighter.

Bad judgment. Worse spiritual life. And then the king, after God's own heart, succeeds Saul.

Because Saul and his good son, Jonathan, and his other sons are slain at Mount Gilboa. And you end up with David, God's anointed. And in the days of David, you have another very prominent prophet.

We're talking about prophets now. Our study is kings and prophets. These are the kings.

Who's the prominent prophet in the days of David? Nathan. Nathan the prophet. What's his most famous prophetic communication to David? Right after Bathsheba, tells the story of the poor man that had the lamb, the rich man that had the flocks.

A stranger comes visiting the rich man. He goes and takes the poor man's lamb. Slays it for the visitor.

David says, well, this guy ought to be severely judged and punished. Nathan says, what? You are the man. And this is quite a startling development for David.

And it is what the Word of God should do for us. We study it. We look at these ancient happenings.

We look at the history of Israel, history of Judah. And hopefully at some point, when we see God's dealings with his people, the God who does not change, operating and promulgating his standards, which do not change, if the teaching of the Word of God is sound, and if our understanding and grasp of it is accurate, we should be having those moments from time to time. I am the man.

And I need to take this to heart. I need to turn at God's reproof so that I do not die like the house of Israel. So Nathan.

So what prophets have we named so far? First prophet, Moses. Second great prophet, Samuel. Sort of the archetypal national prophet.

Then Nathan. Who else? One of the lesser remembered but very influential prophets was Gad.

Gad the seer.

Gad the prophet. Also sort of under the radar but important was Ahijah the prophet. We saw him in the earlier chapters of Kings.

And then of course, coming to great prominence, Elijah followed by Elisha. And that symmetry of Elijah, Elisha, Old Testament, New Testament, John the Baptist, Lord Jesus, we've seen in great detail. We've seen some other anonymous or unnamed men of God that have played a role, usually in a single episode of communicating to kings.

But what have we most recently seen in this 8th century time frame when Jeroboam II comes to the throne? What happened? What started happening prophetically? Two things really. The one that we've noted and have been spending time on is that prophets and their prophecies started operating in a written context, a written form. The prophets' prophecy is written down.

And one of the reasons it is written down is that instead of episodic and personally directed prophecies, who does Nathan prophesy to? David. Who does Elijah prophesy to? Ahab. Jezebel.

These are sort of individually directed prophetic utterances or to the woman with the son, the widow and so on. But one of the reasons these prophecies start taking written form is that they are national. The prophetic ministry takes on a national character and the prophecies pertain to the nation as a whole.

And this hasn't really happened since Moses. So in a way you come full circle. Moses, of course, his legislation and his prophetic ministry was to all 12 tribes and then with the judges and the early days of the monarchy you had this other.

But now in the 8th century you have these writing prophets and their prophecies are written. Why do we care about this? Why should you take note? Why should I take note? What is our rubric? What is our standard saying relating the Old Testament to us? As goes the nation in the Old Testament, so goes the soul of the believer in the church age. We have a fairly well-established observation, interpretation, application.

Now, the fact that you know this puts you in a less than 1% bracket in all living Christians on the planet at this minute. Practically nobody, and this includes seminaries, this includes Bible schools, this includes any Christian think tank that you want to name. Almost nobody understands.

And by the way, this isn't unique to me, this used to be sort of a commonplace and everybody knew it and it has just been fumbled and dropped and lost. Not only has the ball been fumbled, it has apparently rolled out of the stadium and nobody can find it. But it is an absolute biblical truth that the dealings of God with the nation of Israel, even in its divided form, and in its divided form you have sort of, here's how God deals with recalcitrant, disobedient, apathetic, indifferent, outright rebellious believers, and here is how God deals with those who are struggling, maybe not successfully, to live a meaningful life before God.

That's Judah, the former being Israel. But God's dealings with the nation in the Old Testament are directly observable, interpretable, and applicable to the individual believer in this church age. Lacking that understanding, Old Testament studies in the church today are largely just Aesop's fables.

Well, better obey God or you'll get eaten by a fish. You'd better obey God or you'll get swallowed by the earth, or fire will leap out from the altar and toast you, or you'll be drowned in the flood. It's just little surface, aphoristic interpretations instead of in-depth, detailed understanding of God's dealings in redemption, in forgiveness, in restoration, in up-building, in making a future possible, investing time in this life in the eternal future.

It's in the Old Testament in greater detail than in the New Testament. All of these things were written for our instruction upon whom the ends of the ages have come. They were written for us.

Did you ever stop and think about the fact that the Old Testament is doing Old Testament believers absolutely no good, and has done them no good for the past 2,500 years? Old Testament believers are not reading the Old Testament. So why has God preserved those 39 books? Only for you and me. It's not like, well, we'll just sort of dip in because they happen to still be laying around.

This is like Grandpa's old 1948 Field and Stream magazine. It's just kind of a curiosity and a leftover from an earlier time. God has preserved it and presented it for you and me.

We are supposed to be steeping ourselves in these Old Testament scriptures. So that's what we're trying to do. We always try to keep one study in the Old Testament.

So that's what we're doing. That's why we're looking at this. And we have covered a great deal of the history all the way down to circa 750 B.C. from the inception.

The kingdoms began formally around 1000 B.C. in the days of David, Saul and David. And so we've covered a good 250 years in almost verse-by-verse fashion. So we're doing okay.

It's taking a while, but it's a lot to cover. That's two and a half centuries of history in two different kingdoms. And along with that, we have now covered four of the writing prophets.

And their prophecies are important because they are national. Why did God not preserve the book of Gad the Seer? Or anything that Nathan wrote down? Or anything that Samuel wrote down? Because it is the national prophecies that carry weight and freight forward for you and me. We should be looking at Hosea and drawing conclusions for ourselves and Amos and Jonah way beyond just the fish story.

The attitude that Jonah has, the way that God deals with him, God's attitude toward the Gentiles, the enemy Assyrians in their capital of Nineveh. This is the idea. We should learn from that.

And same thing in Micah, which we have just completed. So that's a refresher on where we are and where we're going and why we're doing it. So we pick up now in 750 B.C. with Jeroboam II.

Again, we'll read through this. We've read it before. We'll read it again.

2 Kings 14, beginning in verse 23. In the fifteenth year of Amaziah, the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, became king in Samaria and reigned 41 years. Now remember, he was actually a co-regent with his father.

You remember when Judah decided to come up and attack and both kings kind of put their sons on the throne in case they didn't come back. So there was a co-regency involved there. And you have the overlap there that can somewhat confuse the chronology.

But in the fifteenth year of Amaziah, he comes to the throne. He did evil in the sight of the Lord. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin.

That's his spiritual legacy. However, his actual reign was probably the high point of the northern kingdom. As we find out here, he restored the borders of Israel to near Solomonic extent.

He moved the boundary on the east and the north all the way back to where it was in the days of David and Solomon. This means he went through Transjordan. Remember when they were trying to get territory back from Hazael that he had stolen over in Gilead? Well, Jeroboam got that back and he extended the northern border almost to Damascus because the Assyrians were having internal trouble at that time.

And it doesn't say how he did it. We have this cryptic reference to the fact that he fulfilled a prophecy of Jonah. In verse 25, he restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel.

This was God's, let me try a different tack. I'm going to restore your prosperity. I'll give you back wide areas of the kingdom.

I'll give you border security. I'll give you peace. Jeroboam fought battles here and retook this territory that none of the preceding kings of the north had been able to take.

He took it. But he doesn't really get credit for those battles in the Bible because the only things that count are what we do as unto the Lord. And he was evil in that respect.

That's why verse 24 tells us he did evil on the side of the Lord. Even on the side of the people, he was one of the greatest kings in the material sense that the northern kingdom ever had. He was more militarily successful.

He gained back ground that hadn't been seized and held in the northern kingdom in centuries. He got it back. Look at how far it goes.

Hamath all the way to the sea of the Arabah according to the word of the Lord that he spoke through Jonah. The Lord saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter, verse 26, and whether bond or free, there was no helper for Israel. And the Lord did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam, the son of Joash.

Nation in the Old Testament, believer in the New Testament. Point of application. However bad we fail, however severely we augur ourselves into the ground, it is not the will of God that we be blotted out.

If we are still alive and still breathing, God still has a plan for our lives. He is still supernaturally able to turn cursing to blessing. He can renew.

He can forgive. He can restore. And many times He will take the first step into the no man's land that separates us.

Our iniquities have separated us from God. Our sins have hidden His face. But rather than stoically waiting in heaven for us to wise up and turn, which sometimes we can't even figure out which way to turn, God many times will move more than half the distance toward us.

All day long I've held up my hands to disobedient and stiff-necked people. If we have any spark of repentance, any attitude at all of turning, God will meet us more than half way. This is His attitude.

You look at the grotesque sinfulness of the Northern Kingdom, the sinning of the high hand that has taken place up there for decade after decade, dynasty after dynasty, king after king. And yet look at what God does. And this is just 30 years before He has to take the nation clear out.

God moves in their direction. He clears a path for repentance. He tries everything.

He tries severe judgment and discipline. And He tries taking away all of the pressure, all of the foreign incursions, and granting them prosperity and peace and an opportunity to stop and reflect. Nobody can say, well, if you had only taken my problems away, then I would have turned.

Or if you had only judged me and let me know how far away I was, then I would have turned. God has spanned the gamut from pegged on full to pegged on empty and everything in between, trying every measure to get the people in the Northern Kingdom to turn. And that's what He does with us.

God is not willing that any of us should perish. He wants all of us to change our minds and be restored and renewed. It doesn't matter how many pigs the prodigal son wallows with.

If he returns to his father, he is welcomed, he's washed, he's given a robe, fatted calf is slain.

That's God's attitude then and now. God does not change.

In Him is no variance or shadow of turning. He's always the same. Nation in the Old Testament, believer in the New Testament, don't forget it.

You're the few people that know this. Try to find that truth spelled out anywhere. I challenge you to find it.

Nobody talks about this. And without that understanding, Old Testament study just doesn't have any traction. Therefore, it doesn't take place.

Therefore, three quarters of the Bible doesn't get studied. And to me, it's just tragic. So much so, that now that we have finished our Laodiceans study, on Sunday mornings, we're going to do the first seven chapters of Leviticus.

The title of the study is going to be Christ in the Sacrifices. We like to have a New Testament study and an Old Testament study always. Well, this is a New Testament study out of Leviticus 1 through 7. So, if anybody asks, are you still doing New Testament? Yes, we are.

It's in Leviticus. But we need a review. You think about those Levitical offerings.

The daily communication of God to the nation. He didn't give that detailed legislation and the details of sacrifice until there was a nation to give them to. Look at all of the patriarchal sacrifices.

Build an altar, kill an animal. What are the details? There are no details. And so, the Christology, because at that distance, it's, I see him now, but not near.

But as you get closer, and as God fleshes that out, the details of Christ and his ministry, his person, his work, are so elegantly laid out in the sacrifices. And it was daily. People in Israel, especially people in Jerusalem, if they paid any attention at all, could not help but know all of the fine details.

And it's been lost in the church the way much of the Old Testament has been lost. Ask anybody you know. Ask any Christian you know.

Even if they're in a seminary. Even if they're a seminary professor. There might be a couple of those if they do Old Testament that we'll know.

Ask them if they know the difference between a whole burnt offering and a trespass offering. Do they know the difference between a fellowship offering and a sin offering? Do they know the difference in the offerings in Leviticus 1 through 7? And do they remember what the differences in the ritual are? Do every one of them have the blood poured out of the base of the altar? Do every one of them say that something should be done with the legs or the skin or the head? Which ones have what details? This was second nature knowledge. This is like knowing what the three colors in a stop sign mean to people in Israel.

And we've lost it in the church. And part of it is that there was an anti-Semitic bent that took place in the early centuries of the church, capital C, which morphed into the Catholic church. And because of that, things Jewish were pushed into the background and nobody paid attention to the feasts and the feast calendar anymore.

The feast calendar maps out God's plan for human history. So we in the church, this is church truth. It's New Testament age truth that we find built on the foundation of the Old Testament rituals and sacrifices.

Christ said, I did not come to destroy the law. Well, if He hasn't destroyed it, how come we don't know it better than we do? What did Jesus say about the law? I've not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. If He's the fulfillment of the law, then knowing the fulfillment of the law is knowing Christ.

And that's us. So that's going to be our study for the next several weeks on Sunday mornings. The Old Testament is important.

It's been just fumbled away and lost in my observation. Well, in the days of Jeroboam II, he recovered for Israel, as you keep going here, both Damascus and Hamath that had belonged to Judah. Look at verse 28.

All that he did, how he made war, and how he recaptured for Israel from Damascus and Hamath what had belonged to Judah. Now, this never belonged to Judah, the southern kingdom. This is Judah, the united kingdom.

What had belonged to, and it's an interesting turn of phrase, but this never belonged to the southern kingdom of Judah. It belonged to the united kingdom. He restored the borders like they had never been restored before.

They've got as much opportunity as anybody had had since the days of David in the northern kingdom. Look at what God does for people who weren't even asking. So, this means that the Transjordan that Hazael had taken, and remember they tried to confederate and take it back, and they had all kinds of trouble with Hazael.

Well, Jeroboam got it back, and it's an enormous territory. They start prosperous, they become more prosperous. Jeroboam is a great secular king.

Now, the final observation and application I will suggest from it here is you hear, and we heard again this week, people talking about, well, we've got to humble ourselves before God and then take back the country for Jesus or whatever. Take back the country. We've got to get the country back.

People are driving the train or running it off the rails, and we've got to take it back. We've got to get the government back, get the thing back on track. Jeroboam got things back on track.

Jeroboam restored many, many things that have been lost in the northern kingdom, but without relationship with God at its center, without pleasing God as its motivation, without the glory of God as its result and purpose, it's meaningless. It doesn't matter if you get a conservative Supreme Court. It doesn't matter if your conservatives take over the Congress.

It doesn't matter if you elect Jesus and the apostles to the executive branch. It isn't going to matter if the hearts of the people are not turned toward God. If you want to change the country, don't try to change the government.

Change the people. Reflect the glory of God. Be a light shining in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, not in the midst of a crooked and perverse government, not in the midst of a crooked and perverse policy, or a crooked and perverse economy, or crooked and perverse businesses, crooked and perverse educational institutions.

We shine as lights in the midst of the generation, the people. And the only thing that will turn the country around is a renewal of interest and appreciation in the things of God. And it begins in the church.

The church cannot shine the light of the gospel of Christ, the good news of God's plan and purpose in and through Christ, His body, the church, when the body itself is sick, anemic, and incapable of even feeding itself. And that's where we are right now. We have such an anemic church, it can't do anything.

And all we can do is what is within our purview, what is within our power. And that's our individual lives, lives of our families, training up our children, and being a light in the immediate periphery that we have. That is our mission, that is our task, that is our purpose.

We are the body of Christ on this earth. Where do we look for guidance? How do we know what to do, where to do it, how to do it? We're in it. We're here in these national, prophetic, and narrative passages God's dealing with His people.

And you see that material change, circumstantial change, is not enough. The northern kingdom has expanded and grown and is prosperous like it hasn't been since David. And 30 years later, it's gone.

Less than a generation, it won't be there. The people will be slain or dragged off in chains. It will be replaced with people that weren't even born there.

I'm beginning to think it's happening in our country already. I think we're all being replaced by people from outside just without even waiting for the conquest. We've just become so diverse that in and of itself, that's not a bad thing.

But it does speak to a loss of identity when along with those people comes a diversity of religious faith and practice and a diminishing of Christian identity that used to be one of the hallmarks and one of the identifying signatures of this country. In God we trust is going to be

meaningless if it's going to be a small g or a plural. And whatever else you want to say, the spiritual foundations of the nation as the population is replaced with people of other faiths is going to disappear.

And you can get hung for not being pro-diversity, but I can be pro-Christianity. I can be pro-values from the Bible. And when those are replaced with values from failed cultures and failed countries and failed political systems from elsewhere around the world, they've been tried and they've failed.

And so they're all coming here and trying to perpetrate the same stuff here. Do you think it's going to succeed here where it failed when they had an even stronger base and more historic foundation elsewhere in the world? If it failed there, it's going to fail here. And the only thing that has ever succeeded is what made this country great for the first 180 years of its existence and would succeed again if people turn to God.

Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord. So what is the lesson from the days of Jeroboam II? Why do we suddenly have these national writing prophets who are summing this all up now so we can move forward from Jeroboam? Prosperity, circumstantial benefit, a great king, peace on every hand is meaningless. And your nation can still be destroyed in under a generation when the spiritual element is missing.

If it's the nation in the Old Testament and the believer in the new, what does it mean to you and me? We can be doing well circumstantially. We can be comfortable. We can have peace and lack of financial pressure, lack of people pressure, lack of when we don't really have too much going on.

Maybe we just have testing in a few areas. It doesn't matter. That doesn't mean God is blessing us.

Many people take material prosperity as a sign of God's favor. In many cases, it isn't. There is a spiritual measure that we need to apply to ourselves.

It's the only thing that counts. And we can be facing the Lord Jesus poor, miserable, blind, and naked if we're not careful. Let's pause here and take a break.

When we come back, we're going to pick up in 2 Kings 15 and move forward and see what is going to take place in the Northern Kingdom over these next three decades.