

Kings and Prophets 15-05-14a

This is Thursday, the 14th of May, 2015, and nobody is more surprised than myself. We continue our study in Kings and Prophets. We'll be resuming tonight in 2 Kings Chapter 14, where we back up a step to resume our coverage of history in the southern kingdom of Judah.

Last week we completed the rather dismal spiraling down the drain of the northern kingdom, and we pick back up at the time of the prophets that we studied, Jonah, Hosea, Amos, and Micah in the days of Jeroboam II in the north, with Amaziah in the south. So we'll take a moment at the outset to dedicate our time and our fellowship to the Lord, and we'll resume. Father, we're grateful for this time of study and of refreshment at the oasis of Your Word.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will superintend in both the delivery and the reception of the truth of Your Word, that it will be meaningful, encouraging, and fortifying to our souls, and give us a clearer insight and perception of our place in Your plan and the opportunities that You present to us each day, so that we can leverage the time that we spend in this life preparing ourselves for the next. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

You will remember if you look at, just kind of glance through the first part of 2 Kings Chapter 14, we're kind of rewinding a bit. We're going back to the mid-8th century B.C., the 750's B.C., and at the end of Chapter 13 of 2 Kings, Elisha died, and you remember that fascinating episode where they're trying to carry a guy's body, and raiders come, and they jump in Elisha's tomb, and the guy opens his eyes and says, what's going on? Who am I, and why am I here? As a precursor of the Lord Jesus Himself, and that's what we're looking at, Elijah, Elisha, foreshadowing, I will send you Elijah the prophet, that was the John the Baptist ministry, and then Elisha, you have the law and grace, you have the judgment and the sort of discouraging attention of God toward sin and toward man's fallen condition, and then you have Elisha who was the up-building, constructive prophet. Even the bear thing was not really his doing.

God brought that on. Elisha didn't say, call forth the bears. It was the retribution of God on those who were mocking the prophet, and the same is true, the Lord Jesus from the cross said, Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.

It's God the Father who is rendering judgment on those who reject His Son. So that was the Elijah, Elisha picture that we studied in great detail. That's a review in a nutshell.

And then the recapture of the cities and the expansion of the northern kingdom that we saw at the end of chapter 13, and then in chapter 14, in the second year of Joash the son of Jehoahaz king of Israel, Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah became king. Twenty-five years old and he became king, reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoadam of Jerusalem.

He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, but not like his father David. He did everything as his father Joash had done, but the high places were not taken away, and the people still

sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, but it was not complete obedience.

This is much as we saw last week, the repeated pattern of returning to the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat who caused Israel to sin, that ringing bell, king after king, assassination, change of dynasty, everything in the north. It was a fairly consistent pattern all the way through. In the south, and if there's one thing you remember from this evening as we pick up in the southern kingdom of Judah, this is the pattern.

He did pretty good, but. I don't think any of us want this to be the summary of our lives at the judgment seat of Christ. Well it did pretty good, but.

If one of these kings could have seen his career summarized in this way in the word of God, you wonder if he would have chosen a different path, tried a little harder to eliminate these practices. Worship on the high places, idolatry in Judah, commingled with doing what was right in the sight of the Lord, commingled. This is the thing you figure, well, you're either dedicated or you're disobedient.

You are either committed or you're callous. You are either faithful or you're frivolous. You're one or the other.

Don't you like those alliterations? One or the other. And this admixture is such a detriment. And you will notice that the trend of the southern kingdom of Judah, they do what's right in the sight of the Lord, mixed with not getting rid of these bad practices.

What's the trend? Well, it's good and it's bad, so it stays the same. Is that what happened in the southern kingdom? It's bad mixed with good and the trend is down. If you pollute and corrupt the worship of God and the service of God, you don't maintain a status quo.

We think we're maintaining a status quo. We think all is well. Well, I don't see the Assyrians gathering on the border.

I don't see the Babylonians massing to take us into captivity, so I must be doing okay. We're not doing okay. There's a way that seems right, but it leads to death.

We deceive ourselves if we think that God looks with tolerance on our incomplete obedience. And that's the principle. God does not look with tolerance on incomplete obedience.

And it has within itself, God doesn't have to do anything. We begin to self-destruct with incomplete obedience, partial attention to the plans and purposes of God, because we are His people, and even more so in this age, even more so now. We are the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are His presence, His physical manifestation on this earth today. You, walking around in your sneakers today, are a part of the presence of Jesus Christ on this earth. He was filled with

the Holy Spirit.

We are filled with the Holy Spirit. He existed to glorify His Father. We exist to glorify our Father.

We have no other meaningful purpose here. If we think that we are here to do anything other than that, we have been deceived. We have been led astray.

You think, well, but look around. Everybody's pursuing happiness, career, education, accomplishment, entertainment. That's what everybody does.

This is what they said in Judah. Well, everybody goes down and throws a few scraps to the idol when it's planting season, you know, praying for a good crop. That's what everybody does.

We have to be different. God hasn't called us to be the world. But that's the picture, and that's what we're going to see as we rehearse now the last 120 years of the southern kingdom of Judah.

We've backed up now to circa 750. By 600, we're going to be in the closing days of the prophet Jeremiah. These next 150 years, and in particular the last 120 years, those last three generations, are what we are going to be seeing.

So, excuse me a second because this thing is going to keep making noise unless I tell it to stop. So, stop. All right.

In 2 Kings chapter 14, we see that Amaziah comes to the throne. Now, just by way of review, look at verse 5. It happened as soon as the kingdom was established in his hands, he executed his servants who had murdered his father, the king. But the children of the murderers he did not execute according to what is written in the book of the law of Moses, in which the Lord commanded, saying, Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers.

But a person shall be put to death for his own sin. This is the latter part of Deuteronomy. You know, the father has bitten the sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge, and they said, We're not going to do that.

He killed ten elephs of Edomites in the valley of salt, and took Sila by war, and called its name Jokthiel to this day. Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us face one another in battle. Does this ring a bell? Do you remember this? He did a couple of things right.

He is real pleased with himself for following the letter of the law in adjudicating the conspiracy that resulted in the death of his father. He didn't let revenge run amok. He's not a Jehu killing everything in sight.

He killed the responsible people. He didn't wipe out their families. And he rightly cites Deuteronomy 24 in doing this.

So he says, Look, I'm off to a good start here. I'm off on the right foot. I have followed the law of God in my kingly adjudication of this issue.

He also goes forth and addresses military enemies. That was internal. This other is external.

He goes and defeats the Edomites. Now, it doesn't say that he called on God. It doesn't say that he consulted the man of God.

But he goes against the Edomites and God's not happy with the Edomites, as you recall. And he defeats them. So with these two proprieties under his belt, he sticks in his thumb and pulls out a plum and says, What a good king am I. He now falls victim to hubris.

Neither one of those things does it say he consulted God. He called in the priest and said, What would the Lord have me do? He's doing what is right in his own eyes. And these first two things you could justify on the basis of the word of God.

This next one you cannot. He apparently got the idea that he could reunite the kingdom. I have taken care of internal politics.

I've taken care of external threats. Now I'm going to reunify the kingdom. It's not in God's agenda.

God is the one who divided the kingdom. Remember? Whose idea was it to split the kingdom? God. If the kingdom is going to be unified again, that idea needs to come from the same source.

Well, Amaziah gets the idea that he can do it himself. So he goes up there to Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, and says, Let's duke it out on the battlefield. I'm feeling like I've got this general of the armies, commander-in-chief deal under my belt.

So he goes to face him. Jehoahaz says, Look. And he gives him that little thistle of Lebanon story.

Look, little guy, don't get too big for your britches. If you come up here, I'm going to hurt you in a nutshell. So if you skip down to verse 12, Judah was defeated by Israel, and every man fled to his tent.

So Jehoash, king of Israel, captured Amaziah, king of Judah, the son of Jehoash, the son of Ahaziah. Why does it give this list? How many generations is this? Count the generations. God has blessed this line up to this point.

But if you break the path of Amaziah, your pattern of blessing is not going to continue. So in this case, it gives us, he is the son of Jehoash, the son of Ahaziah. He's the third generation here.

Amaziah, son of Jehoash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth Shemesh. And he went to Jerusalem, broke the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, 400 cubits. He took all the

gold and silver, all the articles that were found in the house of the Lord.

This is a humiliating come to pass for a guy that was on such a roll. The rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did, his might, how he fought with Amaziah, king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? Jehoash rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. Jeroboam, his son, reigned in his place.

Amaziah, the son of Jehoash, king of Judah, lived 15 years after the death of Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel. And there was a co-regency involved here because when he went up to fight the northern kingdom, he put his son on the throne. And if you start counting years and things, you'll find out that this is the reconciliation of that issue.

And this brings us basically down to verse 18. The rest of the acts of Amaziah are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of Judah? They formed a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem. He fled to Lachish.

They sent after him to Lachish and killed him there. Then they brought him on horses. He was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David.

All the people of Judah took Azariah, who was 16 years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah. He built Elath and restored it to Judah after the king rested with his fathers. So that's how our next king in Judah that we're going to look at comes to the throne.

He's only 16 and yet he apparently had been operational in the palace during the time that his father was prosecuting this campaign up in the north. Skip now to chapter 15. Here's where we pick up now with the history in the kingdom of Judah.

You saw that we're skipping over Jeroboam II up in the north. So in the 27th year of Jeroboam, king of Israel, Azariah, the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became king. He was 16 years old when he became king and he reigned 52 years in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father Amaziah had done, verse 4, except that the high places were not removed, the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. Then the Lord struck the king so that he was a leper until the day of his death.

So he dwelt in an isolated house. If you keep your finger here and turn over to 2 Chronicles chapter 26, we get a little bit more detail and some of this is review. The people of Judah took Uzziah, this is our Amaziah, 16 years old, made him king instead of his father Amaziah.

He built Elath, restored it to Judah after the king rested with his father. It's another off to a good start move. But this 16 year old thing, his father is apparently still alive and trying to fight up in the north when they say this guy is on a project that we don't approve of.

We're going to make his son the king. So you've sort of got two kings. You've got his father up

in the north trying to fight and then he's on the throne ruling domestically down in Judah.

So he was 16 years old and he became king, reigned 52 years in Jerusalem, his mother's name Jecholiah again, did what was right. He sought God, verse 5, in the days of Zechariah who had understanding in the visions of God and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper. He went out, verse 6, made war against the Philistines, broke down the wall of Gath, the wall of Jabnah and the wall of Ashdod and he built cities around Ashdod and among the Philistines.

God helped him against the Philistines, against the Arabians who lived in Gerbaal and against the Maonites. Now, what's significant about this? Do you remember the first couple of chapters of Micah? Specifically, the section on these towns. Remember that? What's going on here? I'm a good king, I see the threat, I'm building up the fortifications, I'm ready and what does the prophet say? Remember what we saw in Micah.

These towns are going to become a joke. Their names are puns for all the bad things that are going to happen. Cursed is the man who trusts in man, who makes flesh his strength.

Application, as goes the nation, so goes people in this time. Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that we are basically like Judah. Suppose that if I evaluate myself, I, Sam, looking at my spiritual life, say I'm doing some things pretty well.

I teach a Bible class every now and again. I'm working at my job and collecting my pay. I'm holding my family together and supporting those that depend on me.

I'm doing okay. I'm doing pretty well, as my father did. However, there are areas in my life that are sort of like idolatry.

I have not purged out everything that ought to be purged out. I have some bad habit. I have some besetting sin.

I have some area that corresponds to the high places or the idolatry and I've sort of reconciled this. Men, by the way, are classically good at compartmentalization and we choose to open the door and look in the rooms that we're happy with and we keep the door shut on the rooms that are full of clutter and bad things. At any given moment, we can be in one room and make ourselves oblivious to what's in the other.

This is how guys have affairs, by the way. When I'm in the house and home, wife and family room, I love her, I love them, I'm totally committed and so on. But when I go elsewhere, I've shut the door on that room and I've opened the door to another room and now in this.

I love this floozy and I'm all enamored with her and I'm just oblivious to what's in the other room. This is the way the male mind is built and I don't totally understand it, but that's how it works. And Dr. Phil and lots of other people will confirm what I've just said.

The male mind is built to compartmentalize. This is how we get things done. We

monomaniacally pursue one thing and we ignore others almost to a fault.

Put a pillow over that thing. So this is the difficulty that we have. So let's say for the sake of argument that I have this problem.

I don't know that I do, but let's say that I do. I'm going to use myself as an example. If I look at God's dealing with the kingdom of Judah, this would be a good example for me to use as a light to examine myself and see if I am in the faith.

Why? Some things well, off to a good start, but have not purged out what needs to be purged out. What is the lesson we are going to see as we look at these kings? Beginning with Uzziah. You begin to decide that you've really got it wired.

Remember what he does here? He made war against the Philistines. God helped him against the Philistines, verse 7 of 2 Chronicles 26, against the Arabians who lived in Gerbaal and against the Maonites. Also the Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah.

His fame spread as far as the entrance of Egypt for he became exceedingly strong. God blessed him. He has success.

He does well. So Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate at the valley gate and at the corner buttress of the wall and fortified them. He built towers in the desert.

He dug many wells. He had much livestock in the lowland and the plains. He had farms and vine dressers in the mountains of Carmel.

Highly successful. How many Christian ministries do you look around today and see that they are highly successful? We are on satellite. We are on television.

We are on the radio. We sell books. We don't sell them.

We give them away in exchange for love gifts and so on. We are huge. We are everywhere.

We are notorious. We are spreading the gospel. We are doing all these wonderful things.

Many people benefit. Many people get saved. There is a lot of good content.

Nothing inherently wrong with the message that they put out. It is mainstream Christian faith. There is a lot of biblical truth in it.

However, Uzziah had an army of fighting men that went out to war by companies according to the number on their rolls as prepared by Jeziel the scribe and Masaiah the officer at the hands of Hananiah, one of the king's captains. The total number of the officers of the mighty men of valor was two elephs and six hundred others under their authority. An army of three hundred and seven elephs, five hundred, that made war with mighty power to help the king against the enemy.

So Uzziah prepared for them, for the entire army, shields, spears, helmets, body armor, bows and slings to cast stones. Now keep in mind this is in the time of Jeroboam. This is just a few decades before the Assyrian incursion.

By the time, and you would think well this is just going to be armies for the ages. This is fortification. These guys are going to be set for a hundred years.

In practically no time the Assyrians are going to be knocking at the gate and poor king Hezekiah, just a generation or two forward, is going to be at his wits end. Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength. In all of this does it say anything about buttressing the spiritual life of the nation.

This is kind of like I'm building my bank account. I've got my IRA. I've got my retirement all figured out.

I've got slush fund for savings. I've even done the six months of my salary in the bank. I'm ready for any eventuality and yet not looking to the Lord.

All of these are great ideas if they are done in the light of the Lord. If they are done in faith as unto the Lord. Trusting God to bless it.

Asking God for guidance and advice. In all of this do you see him consulting the Lord God anywhere? No instead what you hear is he didn't take down the high places and he didn't purge out idolatry. He's not looking to the spiritual life and health of the land which is his first responsibility as king.

These other things would have been great ideas if they had been done looking to the God of Israel. If he had called the people to repentance and to obedience. If he had done like Jehoshaphat did and sent teachers throughout the land to restore and rebuild the spiritual fiber.

This is all energy of the flesh. Good ideas. Wise sound.

Build fortifications. But at its heart and at its center it isn't anchored in God. And because of that it is a castle on the sand.

It is fortifications on slime. Look at verse 16. When he was strong and again we saw this many weeks ago.

When he was strong his heart was lifted up unto his destruction. His heart was lifted up unto his destruction. He transgressed against the Lord his God entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.

Now he's going to honor God now that he's done all this stuff. When he became strong after he did the fortifications, after he built the cities, after he manned up the army, after he got all this other done. Now he's turning his attention to God and saying well you know I'd better let God

know what a great king I am.

And so he's going to walk into the priestly precincts. What tribe is he from? What tribe is Uzziah from? Tribe of Judah. How many privileges does the tribe of Judah have in the sanctuary? None.

King David himself could not go in and do what Uzziah is trying to do. Go put incense on the altar of incense which is located where? In the holy place. The altar of incense is right in front of the veil.

Who gets to go in there? Sons of Aaron. Subset of the tribe of Levi only. Of course this is the temple not the tabernacle but it's still the holy place and that's where the altar of incense is.

There's only one altar of incense in the whole precinct and that's the one that sits in front of the veil. He's going to walk in where literally angels fear to tread. His heart is lifted up.

But of course he rationalized and justifies I need to honor God. I've done everything else well I'm going to honor God but he's going to do it according to his own lights. Who was the first guy to do this? Pop quiz.

Who was the first guy to decide that he could approach God on his own terms? His name starts with K and ends with AIN. Remember? I will approach God I'll bring what I think is an appropriate sacrifice. Cain.

And how does he end up? He starts out being a bad sacrificer and he ends up being the world's first murderer. Fratricide. Right? We have to be so careful.

We should look at this example in the southern kingdom. Nation in the Old Testament. Soul of the believer in the new.

This is us. We have to be so careful that we don't start trusting our own lights. We approach the Lord God in heaven through the veil which is the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ and in no other way.

It is the blood of Jesus Christ God's son that cleanses us from sin. And that only happens when we acknowledge our sins. When we examine ourselves.

When we avail ourselves humbly on our face before God. It is the light of the word of God that defines what is proper and what is improper. What is good and what is evil.

We can't call evil good and call good evil. What does Paul say about the latter days? In the latter days men will be lovers of themselves. Lovers of money and then a long list continues.

But just look at those first two things. Love yourself. Love material goods.

That's what money is and does. It's the comforts and the material emoluments of this life. In the latter days men will be.

Well these are the latter days and that is exactly what characterizes even our Christian society. So it is incumbent on us to look at this example and say could this be me? Pray God it's not. And if it isn't that should also put us on our face in thanksgiving to God for the light of His word and the presence and power of His spirit in convicting ministry to keep us on that narrow road that goes through the straight gate.

We will inherit. We will be blessed beyond anything we could imagine where it counts. Which is the kingdom of the Son and the kingdom of the Father.

But for now it is our mission to have this mind in us that was in Christ Jesus. Who emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant. And to put the interests of others ahead of our own.

To look at ways that we can exercise our ministry function, our ambassadorship function as we properly exercise our priesthood function. But it takes daily review. Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud.

And keeping ourselves in the presence of God. What happened to every prophet who found himself in the presence of God throughout the Bible? Did he stand tall and strong? Or did he abnegate himself and put his face in the dust? We can curb our pride. We can keep ourselves oriented to grace and genuine good if we keep ourselves in the presence of God.

And we do that through prayer. This is why prayer is so important. It's not just a grocery list of things we want God to do for us or do for others.

Coming into God's presence properly rather than improperly. I can't help but be reminded of Satan, the guardian Lucifer, the guardian cherub in the throne room. When he corrupted himself, his presence before God, entering into those holy places, resulted in him being cast out.

This king entering in hubris and pride results in him being cast out as well. And he has this permanent mark of leprosy. Much as Lucifer is now permanently the son of darkness.

So Azariah went in with him were 80 priests of the Lord, valiant men. They withstood king Azariah and said to him, it is not for you, Azariah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed.

You shall have no honor from the Lord God. Remember in Genesis the Lord did not respect Cain's offering. He had respect for Abel's and not for Cain's.

Very much the same judgment here. Azariah became furious, had a censer in his hand to burn incense. While he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord beside the incense altar.

They looked at him there on his forehead. He was leprous. Who is it that decides whether or not

you're leprous in Israel? The priests.

It's an immediate diagnosis, an immediate sentence of separation and excision out from among the people. Not only can he not be in the holy place, he can't even be in the congregation anymore. King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death, verse 21.

Well, we'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, this pretty much catches us up now to what we have covered and we'll move forward in the history of the southern kingdom of Judah.