

Kings and Prophets 15-06-25

This is Thursday, the 25th of June, 2015. We resume after a couple of weeks of vacation. Our study of Kings and Prophets will be in 2 Chronicles, Chapter 29.

2 Chronicles, Chapter 29. Let's take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer, focus our concentration, and clear aside any clutter that needs declutterification so that our time will be well spent. Shall we pray? Father, it is always humbling to come before you and realize that we are men made of dust.

We exist by your will. We survive and are kept by your power. We're saved by your grace, and we are made acceptable by your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for Him. We thank you for the privileges that we enjoy. All undeserved and yet woven into the fabric of your plan is the means by which we can reflect your glory and be useful and serviceable in accomplishing your purposes.

We pray tonight as we study your Word that God the Holy Spirit will enable the delivery and the reception of the things that we find in this history of your people so many years ago, and yet the timeless principles and application for our faith is readily apparent. We pray that as we spend this time of fellowship together that each one will be blessed, will find enablement and encouragement and strength for ministry, for the function of priesthood before you, and for ambassadorship to the world. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. We've had some review over the past few weeks via the broadcast from a study we did some years ago in the epistles of Peter, and I enjoyed the chance to go back and be renewed in my memory of things that were covered in that study. But we return now to kings and prophets, and a quick bookmark we can turn to in our minds is to remember that we have covered the history of the Northern Kingdom in its entirety, although we gave the last few kings a relatively light touch, because as we now rewind a bit and go through the history of Judah, we will see the parallels, because so much of this final history of the Northern Kingdom is related to the incursions by Assyria, and those incursions affected both kingdoms.

And so we will see names like Menachem and Pekah and Rezan, and all the way down to the grisly end, recurring as we now trace this time period through the record of what is going on primarily in Judah. Having said that, last time we really looked at two primary things in 2 Chronicles chapters 26 through 28, one of them being the internecine, the intramural conflict between the Northern and Southern Kingdom, the sparks that flew and the attacks going one way and the other, with restoration of captives, oddly enough, by the Northern Kingdom, which was found in chapter 28, about halfway through. And King Ahaz sent to Assyria to help him.

Now this is an interesting little come to pass, and I didn't really fill in all of the history of why they are taking sides. Here's just a real quick background. Assyria has been on the rise as a nation for some years, but their attention for many decades has been on their northern border.

You know where Assyria is? What's the capital of Assyria? Nineveh. And what's north of Nineveh? In those days it was called Ur-Artu. Ur-Artu.

We know it today, at least regionally, as Armenia. Well, the Armenians didn't like the presence of this growing aggressive force to their south, so they got tangled up in warfare with Assyria. While Assyria was busy putting the threat from Ur-Artu-Armenia to rest, they had no designs down south.

This is that period of time of prosperity, that respite from judgment that we've been talking about, that allowed the Northern Kingdom to expand back to hold territory they hadn't had since the days of David. You remember all that, right? Same thing, economic prosperity, territorial prosperity, peace in our time, and God withheld the rod of judgment. Parents know this.

There's a time to inflict harsh discipline, and there's a time to withhold it in the hopes that your child will reflect and come to the conclusion you want them to come to without the inflicting of harsh measures. You can let us reason together. Let us come to a conclusion and come to an agreement and enter into covenant and keep faith with each other kind of thing.

So God holds back, and these are in the days of King Ahaz, and they don't take advantage of it. Well, this is a picture, I think, for us, and you remember a few weeks ago I was talking about how sometimes it might seem difficult to say, well, Ahaz and the old citizens of Judah and the people up in the Northern Kingdom and the Assyrians and whatnot, I've got an iPod, and I have a phone, and I have an Xbox, or I've got a job, I've got a washing machine that sings songs when it's done. These new washing machines, I like the old buzzer.

I mean, forgive me for carping, but you remember when a washing machine would slosh and rock and bang and make all kinds of noise, get to the spin cycle, and you say, well, it's just about done. Hear that knocking sound? It's about to go through the wall. And then when it would finish, it would make this big, ugly, noxious buzz.

And you say, okay, clothes are done. Now, we've got this quiet, gentle, you go in there to see if the thing even started, and it's the laziest washing machine I've ever seen in my life. You know, these side-loading washing machines now, you put your clothes in there, it puts about a half a cup of water in, and then it rolls, and then it sits, and then it rolls, and then it sits, and then it just sits a while, and it rolls a little bit and sits, and I get bored watching it, and so I go away, and then when it's all finished, all of a sudden I hear this, da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da, and it sings this little Japanese song from somewhere, and you're supposed to hear this elsewhere in the house, and you come and put the clothes in the dryer.

Well, I don't really know why I got off on that, except that our life today is so different than it was in those days, and you think, well, all of these Hebrews doing their thing way back 2,750 years ago, So, what does it mean? And we talked about that there are principles of application. Well, here's one of them. That's my big long introduction to an observation here.

Think about the placidity, the time of prosperity and opportunity in these two kingdoms, circa 750 B.C. How did God bring this about? Did God send down a mighty angel to bring rain clouds in their season, to water their crops and did he reroute rivers and put plagues on the enemies? You know what he did? He stirred up the Urartuans, the Urartians, the Armenians, stirred them up and made a bee's nest out of them that occupied the biggest threat of the day, largely invisible. I doubt that there was any editorial being published in the newspapers down in Judah saying, well, you know, the reason we have this problem, they're just saying, you know, we must really be doing something right because look at the blessings of God that are descending on us. Good people are blessed.

Bad people are cursed. Look at those Assyrians and all their troubles if they even heard about it. But God uses something invisible, something far away to change the course of history and you can't necessarily see it.

You may not understand it, not know the cause and effect. There's just this time of opportunity. Well, when they do not avail themselves of it, guess what happens? God grants victory over the Urartu people to Assyria.

They dominate, subjugate, and eliminate that problem on their northern border. And they stick their thumbs in their Assyrian belts and they do an about face, 180 degrees or 300, 200 miles if you're an artilleryman, and they look to the south. And what do they see? A wonderful, prosperous, booty rich, gold, silver, crops, land, tribute money just ripe for the pickings because of this time of prosperity.

And there is no wall of fire. There is no defense. There is no warning from God and there is no prophet of God saying, rise up and go meet them and behold, God will drive them before you.

One of you will put to flight a thousand. None of that is in place. They have had Ahaz with his military experience and they think they've got fortresses and they think they have trained armies and they think they have the ability to defend themselves.

They are as helpless as that giant baby that the guy goes out and washes in his driveway because it's actually his car. Have you seen that commercial? Everything that people love is actually a big, giant baby in a diaper. And so he's washing his car, but it looks like he's washing this great big 19 foot tall baby.

And it's, well, you'll see it at some point. So everything that they are putting their faith in, everything that they love, everything that they have focused on in this time of opportunity is about to be taken away. And there is no defense.

It's as defenseless as a little child. Not because they lack courage, not because they lack weapons, not because they lack resources. It is because, and here's the point, they lack obedience and faith.

Faith and obedience brings God into the equation. If God be for us, who is going to be against

us? If God is not for us, it is Shakespeare suffering the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. I don't understand.

We thought we were ready. Who dropped the ball? Who left the gate open? Who betrayed us and let the guys in the secret passage under the walls and opened the gates? Who rolled in the Trojan horse? Whose fault is it? Finger pointing, blaming as they're marching off into captivity. And slavery.

Well, this is the situation. But think about just this big dynamic. You can spend all day long on the history.

I have read more history in this last week of this time. You can just drown in it. And we don't need to drown in it.

We just need to know enough to be dangerous. And this is the main dynamic. God is moving in history.

And it affects individual people's lives. God doesn't have to intervene directly. You've heard this thing about a butterfly flaps its wings in China and there's a hurricane over here or some such thing.

Someone sneezes one place and there's a tidal wave somewhere else. Well, that is a bit of a stretch. But God elegantly, he knows exactly where to make a small change.

You move one pebble at the top of a mountain and that tiny little trickle takes a different course that becomes a creek, that becomes a stream, that becomes a river, that becomes a bay into an ocean. And God did it all with one pebble because he's infinitely wise and he's infinitely elegant. He doesn't waste anything.

And that's what he's doing with these kingdoms at this time. So there ought to be warning music playing in the days of Ahaz and in the days of the Northern Kingdom up here where you have Pekahia and Pekah and so on. If you remember the incident with, and I won't go into all of this, but when you look at the parallel over in 2 Kings chapter 15, we haven't looked at it.

Just flip over there right quick. Keep your thumb here. I just want to show you real quickly another example of this same idea.

2 Kings chapter 15, this is another run at what's going on in the Northern Kingdom. Because remember, they are closer to Assyria. There's the Northern Kingdom, there's Syria, and there's Assyria.

Well, when it becomes clear that Assyria, the sleeping giant or the preoccupied giant, is now getting interested in coming south, everybody is scrambling to find a solution. What are we going to do about these powerful, newly victorious Assyrians that obviously are now getting interested in coming south toward us? So back in chapter 15, you can see that Azariah is in

Judah and Shalem is reigning in, you have Zechariah reigning in Israel and then Shalem reigning in Israel. Just look at your big headers there.

Zechariah and then Shalem and then Manachem. What these guys have decided to do, this series of kings, just broad brush here, they've said, Look, Assyria is going to become a problem real soon. Let's form an alliance with Syria and anybody else we can rope in, let's talk to Edom, let's talk to Ammon, let's talk to anybody in the area.

We'll form a coalition that can stand up and push back the Assyrians in the north. Did they pray? Did they claim their covenant promises? Did they listen for the voice of a prophet? Did they appeal to the Lord God? Did they say, you know, this threat is probably because we've abandoned our spiritual identity and priorities and responsibilities? No. It's all going to be engineered by this brilliant diplomatic solution.

We will confederate, we will pool our resources and together we will outnumber, outmaneuver, outflank, out-army, out-general the Assyrians. Well, this, they don't know it, but it is doomed to failure. So, as we come down to our time tonight, because we're fixing to get into the reign of Hezekiah, remember Ahaz after all of his stuff and he burned some of his kids and the heir to the throne, remember Maasaiah that was in the army getting groomed and getting fit and tanned and ready to become the heir apparent, and then he gets killed in this conflict.

And so, not the oldest son and not the one they thought was going to be in line ends up being the next king. And he's going to be the next king for 29 years. And his son is going to rule for twice that.

So, that's what we're leading up to here. But how did this happen? Why did we have Ahaz having his defeat, having his people captured, going up to the northern kingdom and then having them returned? You remember that? That the prophet, the man of God comes out and says, you had not to do this. And they said, well, actually, you're right.

So, one of the few times in the northern kingdom they actually listened to the voice of the man of God and they turned the prisoners back, gave them clothing, sent them home. Remember? Well, what is the dynamic for that? Big picture. Assyria in the north, northern kingdom and Syria, Pekah and Rezin confederate.

This is going to be the issue that Isaiah addresses in the first several chapters of his book. And he says, unto us a son is born, unto us a child is given, before he knows his right hand from his left. This confederation, and he's talking about Pekah and Rezin, is going to dissolve.

It's smoking wick and all of that. We're laying the background for that Hezekiah, Isaiah prophecy. What is the context for that? All we think of now is Christmas.

But at the time, it was a sign. It was God making one more approach to the southern kingdom, to King Hezekiah saying, look, I am moving these big pieces around and I decide based on your response or reaction, how I'm going to move those pieces. I can move them for good and

blessing and prosperity, or I can move them for judgment and defeat and slavery.

What are you going to do? That's the background. Well, how did this happen? Why isn't everybody all against Assyria? When Pekah and Rezin confederate, when the northern kingdom and Syria ally, they come down to Judah and say, join us. Ahaz says, I don't want to join you.

I don't like you. I think I can do fine by myself. They say, you'd better join us.

And he says, no, I'm not. And they said, we'll make you join us. That's, he says, you can't make me.

I'll come up there and teach you a lesson. But the source of the conflict between the northern and southern kingdom in this battle is the issue of are we all going to get together and resist Assyria. When it becomes clear that they are violently opposed and fixing Syria and the northern kingdom are fixing to come down to Judah and take their stuff to help them fight Assyria, Judah sends to Assyria and says, hey, these guys want me to join them against you.

I don't want to do that. Why don't you help me resist them? And they actually try to make an alliance with Assyria. Well, in the big picture, what happens is Assyria says, you're all a bunch of pipsqueaks.

And they come down and they roll up Assyria, they roll up the northern kingdom, and they attack Judah. And after all of the tribute that got sent, they said, well, hey, thanks for the loot. We're still going to stomp a mud hole in you.

So that's the big picture. That's about as much of the history as we need to put these biblical records into a historical context. You can read more about it, but that's the big picture, okay? Assyria, Syria, northern kingdom, southern kingdom.

These guys come help us. No, I'm going to go to the guys that you're trying to go against. And Assyria, with their thumbs in their girdles, say, we'll roll all of you guys up.

And they nearly do. And it is only the intervention of God because of Hezekiah and because of the faithful believers that are left in Judah that they aren't rolled up. And it's really miraculous because you think about they've already defeated Armenia.

They've already defeated Syria. They've already taken the northern kingdom. Taken, I mean, they've defeated them and they're fixing to come down.

And the fact that little old Judah isn't taken, this is the 186,000. We'll get to that. But that's the big picture.

The point being, how much trouble do you want to go to to try to solve the problems of life? May have an employment problem, might have a school problem, might have a social problem, a personal problem, a health problem, a economic problem, a tension here, there, and yon. Whatever the pressure is, whatever the challenge is, think of it like these nations. Well, how am

I related to Syria? Well, they could be my friend, but they're a dangerous friend.

And if I don't make them my friend, they're going to be my enemy. What about the northern kingdom? Well, I'm related to them, but we've got this tension and they've done one nice thing for me. Do I owe them for that? And what about this far off and much more dangerous threat, the looming possibility of destruction? What about with this? What about that? What about the other? In trying to parse all of the factors and decide what is the best course of action, it's for you and me as believers, it's much more simple than that.

You do not have to be a geopolitical expert. You do not have to track all of the political currents in the nation or around the world. You don't have to figure out if global warming is anthropogenic or not.

You don't have to figure out all of the dynamics of, well, if they pass this marriage law, this, and if they say we can't preach about things that the Bible labels as evil, that. That's too many for most of us. And here is the biblical solution.

When it all starts getting complex, when there are multiple options and none of them seem to be one shining good and all the rest are bad, they all seem to be mixed and intermingled, and I don't know the causes and effects, take all of that, lay it to one side, go to the throne of grace, concentrate on cultivating relationship with God. Don't try to figure it out. Don't try to reinforce.

Don't try to take a bunch of elbows and knees solutions as the first course of action. Steps to be taken will come. We don't just let go and let God.

But the first priority is not to start trying to find all of the handles on these problems and start shuffling them or juggling them like bowling pins. Set it aside. Do what these people did not do.

Go to the Lord. Ahaz didn't do it. Pekah doesn't do it.

Menachem doesn't do it. Obviously, the other evil kings in the north, the whole Omri dynasty, Ahab and the rest of them, they didn't do this. Once in a great while in a terrible extremis, they would turn to God and God would immediately honor their brief spark of repentance as an encouragement.

You've got a spark. Hey, let's see if we can, you know, it only takes a spark to get a fire burning. You can God, God would meet them more than halfway, but they didn't sustain it.

It was a, it was a passing fancy. Well, I've tried everything else. Let me try God.

But they didn't, they didn't stick. They didn't persevere. They didn't make it a policy.

It was just an option exercise briefly. So go to the Lord. God, when things are tough, when things are difficult, when things are unclear, can you imagine what a muddled mess all of this was Egypt down in the south? They're a player.

They can see Assyria coming. Assyria has got designs on going all the way down there if they can. Here's Judah and the Northern kingdom in the middle ground.

Here's Syria. That's a buffer. Is there anything left in Armenia? Can we pull them back off and get them to go to the north? What about Edom? What about Ammon? What about Moab? What about any of the other ites that live around there that have any kind of an army? What should we do? And it's incredibly complex.

How many times in our lives do we find these complex situations, circumstances that are just wrapped in complexities and interconnections? The wonderful thing is for God, it's trivial. He knows the end from the beginning. He looks at it all as history.

He can change it. He can modify it. He can move big pieces and small.

He might move a pebble here. He might move a nation here. But he knows every action and reaction.

He knows all the causes, conditions, successions, and relations that there are. So you know how it is when you have a car problem and you know a guy that's really good with cars, or you have a computer problem and you know somebody that's really good on computers, you have a construction problem, you know somebody that's really good in construction. Well, for life problems, you know who's really good with those? The Lord God in heaven.

Look at the dazzling lack of initiative on the part of the people of God to go to the God who can instantly resolve all of their issues. Why do they not go to him? This is the most stunning thing in the whole last half of Kings and the last half of 2 Chronicles. What's the matter with these people? And as soon as I say that, then I pass a mirror and I say, well, what's the matter with him? Because he's doing the same thing.

So the next time you start analyzing options and realizing that this is complex, what would God have me do? What is the best course? Just set it aside and just concentrate on spiritual status. Have I examined myself to see if I'm in the faith? Am I spending quality time with God in reflection on what I've learned, in prayer, incorporating what I've learned, in being objective and looking out for the interests of others? Well, but I've got to make a decision by, set it down. Do your basic skills.

What are the basic skills? It's priesthood, it's ministry, it is cultivating the fruit of the spirit. It is thinking about and praying in and through what we learn from God's word. God has it all figured out.

And we know this academically. The trick is to do it in the moment, to think it through in the moment, to have the ability to decide, I am going to do what the old hymn says, burdens are lifted at Calvary. Jesus is very near.

He's our mediator. He's our intercessor. He is seated at the right hand of the father.

He has walked in our flesh. He knows what it's like to have complex things. You remember when they were trying to make him king? Isn't that why I came? To be the king? Doesn't Mashiach mean the anointed one? Doesn't son of David mean king? Here's a bunch of people.

I gave them some bread. Now they're ready to make me king. Father, is it time? Is this the beginning of a movement? Is this something I should encourage and say, well, you know, you get a few more people, let's do this thing.

We'll have a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. You people come and meet me on the outskirts. I'm going to Bethany and we'll march on in.

Let's get this bandwagon going. How did Jesus know that when the people were trying to make him king, and he is the king, and he came to be the king, that it's not the time. It's not the people.

It's not the motive. How did he know? Because he was a man of prayer. He was in constant communion with his father.

And he could sort these very fine, subtle nuances of circumstances because God the Holy Spirit, at the behest of God the Father, gave him that wisdom in his humanity. He's our example. He knows what it's like for us to try to figure these things out.

So when you think about this time, the Northern Kingdom, since we've rewound a little bit, is in its final few decades, and they're scrambling. They see their prosperity slipping through their fingers. They see their national security and their personal security slipping through their fingers.

And they're trying to figure out what to do, how to fix it. They look everywhere except up. And they're the people of God.

There's no other nation on earth except Israel that is the possession of God, that has a covenant and a set of promises from God that they can claim, that they can cash in. Why do they not do that? They're not interested. They're not focused.

They don't remember who they are and why they're here. And this is the lesson for you and for me. Remember who you are.

Remember why you're here. You're a child of God. You belong to the royal family that has the Lord Jesus Christ as the firstborn eldest son, and he is the firstborn among many brethren.

That's us. We are related directly to God through Christ, and we have promises we can claim. And we are not here just to live a life, just to get the bills paid and have a little fun along the way.

We are here for a purpose. We are in training. We are here to mature.

We are here to learn how to bear fruit so that we can continue to bear fruit in the thousand year kingdom of the son and in the infinitely long kingdom of the father. This is our boot camp. This is our training ground.

And how do we do that? We've got to master the skills. We've got to practice the procedures. And we've got to remember that that's why we're here.

Um, have you ever put something on to cook, uh, or you turned on a hose because you just wanted to fill something and you walk through and somebody's got the television on and you suddenly say, Oh, what, what's that about? And you get engrossed in it. First thing you know, there's smoke boiling out of the kitchen or there's water running down the street or, you know, you, you get distracted and something you were in the middle of overflows, gets undone. Uh, you mix up epoxy and it sets.

I've done that a couple of times. You know, the phone rings and it's something I really needed to discuss. Yes, my car's in the shop.

And well, how much is it going to cost? I come back and the toothpick is stuck in this lump of useless epoxy and I have to start over, but that can be our life. A lump of hard epoxy or an overflowing pool or a burnt dinner. If we let ourselves get distracted and forget that God has a purpose and when things get complex and things, you know, you, you wish you could phone a friend like that millionaire deal.

You, you wish you could get some help. We have the best help in the world and it is secured by promise. These people had covenant promises they did not claim and they weren't qualified to claim them because they themselves were actively daily habitually breaking their side of the covenant.

So for us, if we want access to that grace, if we want to enjoy that blessing and accomplish that purpose and be pleasing in God's sight and stand as a reflection of the glory of Christ and the glory of God at the judgment, then we have to start with ensuring that we're qualified to claim those promises. That means don't have idols and high places and, uh, the Canaanite worship going on in our souls. Who is our God is, is the first place we turn to solve our problems, uh, Google, or is it the Lord? Uh, we need to remember who we are and why we're here.

Well, as you think about this big picture and Ahaz and his spectacular failure now turn to second Chronicles chapter 28, we're just going to read the first couple of verses preceding this 20, 28, 27. Ahaz rested with his fathers. They buried him in the city in Jerusalem, but they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel.

You know what Ahaz reminds me of? He's like a believer that has furthered ways. Inheritance has been disobedient and he's outside with the dogs and the fornicators and all those who love and practice a lie. And he's outside where he ought to be.

He ought to be in with the other Kings, but he's outside. He's just buried in the, in the city

where the common people are buried. He's not in with the Kings where he belongs.

He forfeited that by getting distracted and, and ultimately being pretty wicked. Hezekiah, his son reigned in his place. Hezekiah became King when he was 25 years old.

He reigned 29 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abiyah, the Lord is my father. Abiyah, remember Jesus? We cry out Abba, father.

Abiyah, the daughter of Zechariah. Zachar, remember, remembrance. Remember the Lord.

Your father as a nation is the Lord. Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord. Hezekiah did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done.

Wow. When's the last time we saw a King get that accolade? He did it the way David did it. Wow.

In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Why did he have to open the doors of the house of the Lord? You remember in the preceding chapter, Ahaz shut the doors. Remember he took the vessels and chopped them up and sent them off.

He opens them. And when did he do it? As soon as they laid the crown on his head, in the first month of his first year, it's the first thing he did. Does he have his priorities straight? We have got to get the spiritual life of this nation back on track, and we can't do that without the presence of God and access to the presence of God in the temple.

So he opened the doors in the first year, in the first month, and repaired them. Then he brought the priests and the Levites and gathered them in the east square. What's significant about the east? That's the morning.

That's the direction of hope. That's the direction from which the glory of God is going to return. In Ezekiel, it departs heading east, and it's going to rush back across the Mount of Olives.

It is sunrise, not sunset. This is where the grace of God is going to come. The wise men came from the east to find and worship the Lord Jesus.

It's a place of hope and opportunity. So they're in the east square. And he said to them, hear me, Levites, sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry out the rubbish from the holy place.

What a great command. Look at the three parts of it. What's the first thing they do? Sanctify yourself.

Got a problem? Got problems with people? Got problems with issues, circumstances? We start with ourselves. We need to be qualified. We need to be qualified to claim God's promises, qualified to act according to God's purposes.

We square ourselves away first. How many times do you see this in Scripture? Get the beam out of your eye before you start picking moats, etc. So, sanctify yourselves.

Sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers. It's a reminder of the covenant. Why does it always say the Lord God of your fathers? Who signed up for the covenant? Who said yes when God said, will you? The fathers.

You inherit the covenant. It's an inheritance. It's a legacy.

And carry out the trash. Clean up yourself. Clean up the house of God.

And carry out the trash. Get it out. Don't want to see it anymore.

For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the Lord our God. They have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the Lord, and turned their backs on Him. They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule and put out the lamps and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel.

They've not been keeping up their end of the covenant. In those rituals that represents our responsibilities for confession of sin, cultivation of the fruit of the Spirit, ministry of the Spirit, presence of the Spirit. These are things we are supposed to do.

We're supposed to pray. We're supposed to reflect and think about the truth of God. What do we do when we have a few free moments? Find me something to, find me something on my phone.

Find me something on my earbuds. Find me something on TV. Find me something to, you know, distract my mind.

You and I, does the planet have enough people that can do that? Look on the highways. There's plenty of people that can sit around and text. Plenty of people can sit around and find something on, you know, Spotify.

Where are the people who when they get a free moment will commune with the Lord God? Let's try to be one of them. Those are the people that are going to endure and last. God isn't going to have a big, you know, Pandora streaming radio club that he's going to assemble at the judgment seat of Christ.

Who's he going to look for? Our momentary distractions, our momentary afflictions here are not worthy to be compared with the glory that awaits. Let's get ready. It's like I constantly say about bad guitar players.

The world doesn't need another bad guitar player. So I don't want to be one. The world doesn't need another distracted believer that doesn't know how to act, how to operate.

So let's not be one. Because of these things, the wrath of the Lord fell upon Judah and

Jerusalem, and he has given them up to trouble, to desolation, to jeering. As you see with your eyes, he doesn't say, well, you know, if those Armenians had just put up a bigger fight, he doesn't say if the Syrians were better partners or if the Northern Kingdom was somebody we could ally ourselves with.

If they weren't so contrary, he says, it's us. It's we. We've abandoned our responsibilities before the Lord.

We are the cause of our problem. We have met the enemy and he is us. For indeed, because of this, our fathers have fallen by the sword.

Our sons, our daughters, and our wives are in captivity. Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel that his fierce wrath may turn away from us. Hezekiah rightly identifies what the problem is and what the solution is.

My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that you should minister to him and burn incense. Now, aren't they born into the tribe of Levi? Isn't that kind of automatic? Hezekiah says, no, God chose you to be born in that tribe, to these families, in this time, and to be available to do this work. You are chosen.

It reminds me of what Peter says, to the chosen point of the spear, diaspora Christians. So then these Levites arose, and look at how God takes space in his eternal and abiding word to give the names of these faithful priests who immediately... Can you imagine how vexed and chagrined these guys had to have been all during the reign of Ahaz? When the doors are shut and they're out of a job, when they're not allowed to burn incense, they've got to put up with all this rubble and trash and idolatry and the desecration of things that belong to the house of God. And now they've got a good king, and they are ready to follow these instructions.

So you have Mahath, the son of Amasai, and Joel, the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites. Remember, the Kohathites go all the way back to the days of David. This is a resurrection of function and form and opportunity as it was when David set up the Kohathites, when he set up the Jedithonites, and all of the different functions within the priesthood.

The sons of Merari, Kish, the son of Abdi, and Azariah, the son of Jehalel, of the Gershonites. Joah, the son of Zimah, and Eden, the son of Joah, of the sons of Elizabethan, Shemri, and Jael, of the sons of Asaph. Remember the songs of the sons of Asaph? They're some of the musicians.

Zechariah and Mattaniah, of the sons of Heman, Jeleuel and Shimei. Remember Heman? Well, that's a long story, but you remember, we talked about those groups and the Psalms that were written by them, the Proverbs, actually. And the sons of Jedithon, Shimei, and Eziel.

Look at verse 15. They gathered their brethren, sanctified themselves, and went according to the commandment of the king at the words of the Lord to cleanse the house of the Lord. The priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to clean it, brought out all the debris

that they found in the temple of the Lord to the court of the house of the Lord.

And the Levites took it out and carried it to the brokedron. Notice, they're following protocol. You remember what happened to Uzziah when he went in there and the leprosy broke out? The priests can enter the house of the Lord.

The Levites cannot. And going all the way back to the days of Moses and Aaron, you remember when Levites think that they can do stuff that is only reserved for the sons of Aaron. So the priests go in and clean.

They bring it to the court. Then the Levites can grab it from the court and take it the rest of the way. Very carefully details that they are not only doing what God said, they're doing what God said the way that God says to do it.

There are ways to do right things that are wrong. They're doing right things in right ways. They're careful to follow the words of the Lord.

They began to sanctify on the first day of the first month. And on the eighth day of the month, they came to the vestibule of the Lord. They sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days.

And on the 16th day of the first month, they finished. Took eight days to get the house clean and get all the stuff into the courtyard. Took another eight days to haul all the stuff out of the courtyard and get everything clean.

What's significant about the eighth day? What happens on an eighth day? Tell me something that happens on the eighth day in Israel. It's a day of new beginnings, isn't it? What happens to baby's sons on the eighth day? Circumcised. That's the sign of the covenant.

What happens to a cleansed leper on the eighth day? He goes before the priest and he shaves all the hair off his body and he is restored after he's sat for seven days on the eighth day. He's restored a fellowship. He's like a newborn child.

It's like a rebirth. It's like a resurrection from living death. Eighth day, eighth day.

Paul says, I'm a Hebrew of this Hebrew, circumcised on the eighth day. Well, it is as though the excess and the defilement is taken away and removed. Like the flesh of the foreskin.

Remember, Paul says, circumcise your hearts. Dedicate yourselves to God and do it in the right way. Cleanse yourselves.

So the house of the Lord is like a person cleansed on the eighth day. The courtyard is cleansed on the eighth day. Then they went into King Hezekiah and said, we have cleansed all the house of the Lord, the altar of burnt offering with all its articles and the table of the showbread with all its articles.

Moreover, all the articles which King Ahaz in his reign had cast aside in his transgression, we

have prepared and sanctified. And there they are before the altar of the Lord. They are presented to God.

They didn't haul them all down to the king and say, look, king, we shined all the gold. We shined all the brass. We've restored all of the accouterments.

They presented them to God. This is the key for us in our temple, in our nation. When things are complex, political and economic and social and financial and whatever other greatly interwoven things, go to the Lord.

Concentrate on spiritual life. Do those spiritual fundamentals. I don't know how to arrange for my retirement.

I don't know how to do all the fine points of my taxes and my finances. I don't know how I'm going to necessarily accomplish all the tasks that are assigned to me at my job or how I'm going to get everything fixed at my house. I have to take that a little chunk at a time, a little piece at a time, like cleaning the garage.

One thing I do know, I know exactly how to cleanse my soul. I know exactly how to cultivate the fruit of the spirit. I know exactly how to come before God.

I know exactly how to claim His grace. I know exactly how to grow in grace and knowledge. These are things I know.

Go with what you know. In times of uncertainty, when there's decisions to be made and it seems unclear, go before God and suddenly everything is clear. It is simple.

It's straightforward. And when distraction and worry and concern start to nibble away, push it aside, go back to the Lord. What did the Lord Jesus do in the Garden of Gethsemane facing the greatest difficult circumstance any human being has ever faced? What was He doing as that hour approached? Praying.

And He recruited the best people He could find to support Him in prayer. They fell asleep, but that's what He did. That's what we should do.

We pray and those that are close to us, those that we can count on, we recruit their support in prayer, in faith. This is why our fellowship is important. This is why our assembly is important.

This is why our shared study is important. We encourage one another to grow in grace and knowledge. Well, it's a great lesson.

And Hezekiah really gets off to, you couldn't ask for a better start. How does he do during the course of his 29-year reign? We'll see that as we progress through. But you'll notice that in Chronicles, this is one of those closeups.

We're going to have several chapters on Hezekiah. Plus, he's over in Isaiah. Why such a lens on

Hezekiah? Many of the same reasons that there's such detail on David.

He's a man like David. And because of that, for growing believers, it is instructive to see his successes and his failures. These other guys that are riffraff, they get a paragraph and they're gone.

The ones that are helpful to us, like King David, like King Hezekiah, the Word of God spends time on it, and so will we. But we'll close here for tonight in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You for the wonderful provision that You have made for us in it and in the presence of Your Holy Spirit. We thank You most of all for the Lord Jesus. We know that He is at Your right hand, making appeal on our behalf, interceding for us, representing us before Your throne.

We know that He understands fully the challenges that we face as people of flesh. And we pray that as we think about what we have seen from Your Word tonight, that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to each heart, that it'll be a help and an encouragement and will strengthen us and enable us to live our lives in a way that pleases You and glorifies the Lord Jesus. We pray these things in His name.

Amen.