Kings and Prophets 15-07-23

This is Thursday, the 23rd of July, 2015. We continue our study of Kings and Prophets. We're going to be in three places at once tonight.

We'll begin in 2 Kings, chapters 18 and 19. From there we will demonstrate great agility by going in turn to 2 Chronicles, chapter 32 and Isaiah, chapter 37. Let's take a moment as we begin our time of fellowship in God's Word by going to the Lord in prayer.

Father, thank you for another opportunity to find refreshment and nourishment and strength for our souls in your Word. We thank you for the Lord Jesus who has bridged the gap between our fallen and hopeless condition and the realms of glory in which you dwell and to which we are now destined to travel at the end of our lives. We thank you for this intermediate time of growth and training and the opportunity to fit ourselves for service now and in those times to come.

We pray that looking at this part of your Word tonight that the Holy Spirit will be our teacher and will help each of us to understand it and see its pertinence and meaning to us individually as well as in our larger groups, our church, our families, the places we work and carry out our endeavors, all we hope in a way that is pleasing in your sight, that glorifies the Lord Jesus and reinforces the things that we see in your Word as we return to it day by day to reflect and to have it illuminate our path. We pray that each one here will receive a blessing, that we will all be guided aright by the truth of your Word and we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

In the preceding weeks we've seen King Hezekiah. We are down now in the low 700s B.C. Remember in the early part of his reign, and it will be reviewed in our passage tonight, the northern kingdom goes out. And as I said, we're going to begin in 2 Kings 18-19.

And we've seen, and you remember just by thinking back, Hezekiah comes out at a full sprint. Hezekiah comes right out of the gate. He is full bore, full speed, full steam ahead.

Day one when he calls everyone together and says, let's get the temple cleaned out and furbished and equipped and get the priests and Levites sanctified and get everything squared away. They get that done in about a month to a month and a half and they're ready to celebrate the Passover a month late and get the feast schedule cranked back up in Judah. And for a number of years thereafter he, with great vigor and great momentum, restores and rebuilds everything to which he turns his eye and his hand.

And he is greatly commended in Scripture. We've seen two chapters of description of the wonderful things that he does to revitalize the spiritual life in Judah. And it's great.

He has a commendation almost unmatched and unrivaled in the Old Testament Scriptures. Well, looking, and we saw a lot of that in Chronicles. Let's look now at 2 Kings 18, verse 7 and following.

The Lord was with Hezekiah, prospered wherever he went. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. He subdued the Philistines as far as Gaza to its territory and watchtower.

It came to pass in the fourth year, look at verse 9, this is 2 Kings 18, 9. Hezekiah's fourth year, which was the seventh year of Hoshea, the son of Elah, king of Israel, Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came up against Samaria, besieged it, and at the end of three years, they took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hoshea, king of Israel, Samaria was taken in the sixth year. Started in the fourth year, took it in the sixth year.

Then the king of Assyria carried Israel away captive to Assyria and put them in Halah and by the Habor, the river of Gozon, and in the cities of the Medes. Remember later on when we did Ezekiel, he was by the river Kabar, and when they were all taken away by the river, we hanged our harps on the willows and so on. Well, this river of Gozon is sort of the equivalent for the northern kingdom as they are carried off.

Why? Look at verse 12, because they did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed His covenant and all that Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded, and they would neither hear nor do. Important summary of the fate of the ten northern tribes, they would neither hear nor do. Now it is possible to hear and not do.

It is worse if you neither hear nor do. And in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. Hezekiah the king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish saying, I have done wrong, turn away from me, whatever you impose on me I will pay.

Now, seven years earlier, he saw what happened to the northern kingdom. That much time has passed again and he is facing this dilemma. Now, let's just think back a little bit.

Let's think back to the days of Moses on Mount Nebo looking far off and not able to enter the land. He dies and the Lord buries him and Joshua takes over. The priests and Levites gather up all the accouterments of the tabernacle and they march down to the banks of the Jordan, the east bank of the Jordan, and as soon as the sandals of those ark carrying priests hit the water of the Jordan, it backs up and they cross on dry ground and they take the stones out of the center and they heap them up on the far side as a memorial.

When your children ask you what are these stones, you can tell them how with a mighty hand God delivered the nation out of Egypt and brought them supernaturally across into the land of promise, the land promised to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob. We have been reviewing those promises looking at Christ and the sacrifices on Sundays. So, once they got across and they started to face armed opposition in the land, I seem to remember that an armed party came out from the United Kings of the Amorites there and Joshua said, well, I know you guys' history, so whatever you want me to pay, I'll pay.

I believe that's how the conquest started. Joshua said, can't we come to a peaceable arrangement here? Can't we compromise where I give you money and you don't decimate us and carry us all off? Any way you slice it, saying just tell me what you want and I will pay you, I don't think is going to be engraved on the walls of the new Jerusalem and the annals of victory in human history. What a great mighty triumph of faith it was when Hezekiah paid off the enemy to not attack.

I mean, can you cast it in some kind of a light where it comes off better than that? Well, keep your finger here and turn to 2 Chronicles chapter 29. We've been kind of following along in Chronicles, the history of the, and this is my impression, this is not an inspired observation by any means, but it just seems to me that this particular part of the history of Israel, the history of the southern kingdom of Judah is kind of important. Why do I think that? Well, what's the most important thing in the whole Bible, bar none? The single most important thing that the Bible records in terms of history is what? The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? So where that's recorded, how many accounts do I have? I've got four separate accounts.

I've got the three Synoptic Gospels and John, right? So I'm thinking this is a pretty important thing. Now, of all the history of the northern and southern kingdoms, we've got these two kind of tag team accounts between Kings and Chronicles. But here, when it comes to this particular time in Hezekiah's reign, a third account mysteriously appears.

And those of you that went through Isaiah, and that was a man, manfully undertaken study, was it not? We took, doing Isaiah verse by verse is no mean feat. We did it, and it took a number of years. I can't even remember how many years.

It's like almost 10% of my whole life going through Isaiah. But if you remember that, remember we talked about the Isaiah 66 chapters like 66 books of the Bible, and that there's a hinge point. It's like the spine of the book.

So you start with chapter 1 and you get to chapter 36. Then it seems like you have the spine. You have 37, 38, 39, and 40.

And then 40 through 66 kind of corresponds to the New Testament, first 39 books, Old Testament, second the New Testament. And we had that spine there of 37, 38, 39, and 40. Do you remember what is in those four chapters? This.

This is the spine of the book. This is what unites the first part and the second part of Isaiah in that view. You can divide Isaiah different ways, Deutero, Trito, Isaiah, and all the rest of it.

But in broad strokes, this sort of constitutes the end of the Old Testament, if you will, chapters 1 through 39. The last four chapters are this. So we have three accounts of Hezekiah, three accounts of the Rabshakeh, three accounts of his illness, three accounts of what happens afterward.

It's pretty important, wouldn't you think? So we're going to try to be sure that we glean what is

here. Because at first blush, you say, well, it just seems pretty much like the other Bible stories. Well, the first thing that impresses me as I come to this is the terrific turbocharged beginning that Hezekiah has in his reign.

And these first years are especially commendable and are commended by God. And he gets a lot of credit in Scripture for that. Well, you just saw this account in 2 Kings 18, after the fall of the Northern Kingdom.

In the 14th year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against the fortified cities. Well, when you turn over to 2 Chronicles 29, you see Hezekiah cleansing the temple for 17 verses there. You see him restoring the temple in another big chunk of verses.

You see him keeping the Passover in chapter 30. You see the wonderful reforms that were reviewed last time in chapter 31. That's a lot of space devoted and full credit.

The Lord is not unmindful of your work of faith and your labor of love, tells us in Hebrews. The Lord tracks that. It's written down.

It is always there. But take a look at chapter 32, taking nothing away from all the wonderful things that Hezekiah does in those 14 years. After these deeds of faithfulness, and I'm already beginning to hear the background music change from a major to a minor key.

After these deeds of faithfulness, you almost get the impression that maybe the deeds of faithfulness are about to end. These chapters of faithfulness, and I have reviewed it consciously on purpose tonight because Scripture points you back to that. These deeds of faithfulness, after them, you would think, well, this guy is going to be the first one to walk on water before the Lord Jesus ever gets around to it.

He is such a great man of faith. But after these deeds of faithfulness, all of which was infrastructure, internal spiritual worship, internal fortification, internal organization, He absolutely slam dunks that. After this, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and entered Judah.

He encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them over to himself. Now, just keep your finger there. Turn back to 2 Kings.

What did I read in 2 Kings chapter 18? In Chronicles it says he is thinking to take them to himself. In 2 Kings it says, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. Chronicles, he is thinking about taking them.

Kings, he took them. It is my impression, looking at these three accounts, that they each have a different perspective. We have seen this three perspective thing before.

We saw it in the Synoptic Gospels. Luke presenting Jesus as the Son of Man. Matthew presenting Him as the coming King.

John presenting Him as the Son of God. Mark presenting Him as the one who comes in

immediately. Each with a different perspective.

In Revelation, we, at least in my view, the seals and the trumpets and the bowls are not seriatim. They are three different perspectives on the same set of events. The seals, this is man's view.

Seals made of clay. Seals made of earth. Things from the ground.

The ground perspective. The man on the ground. Boots on the ground is the seals.

The trumpets reverberate in the air. The prince of the power of the air and the angels who hold back the winds. The winds blow in the atmosphere.

The trumpets. And then the vials or the bowls, if you were going to pour out judgment from a bowl, you've got to get above everything. You don't want the judgment to skip anything.

You don't get right on the ground and just tip it over. You get up high and pour it all over. Seals, trumpets, and bowls.

Three different perspectives all, by the way, pinned together at the end by not a great earthquake, the great earthquake. You remember that thing? Well, it is my suggestion. It's my opinion that here with Hezekiah, this is so important.

We have a similar three perspective view. And what I think is funny about this is, not funny haha, but interesting to contemplate. We're people with two eyes.

We're people with that's what gives us depth perception, stereoscopic vision. If you've played with 3d stuff, movies or these little diagrams, you know, there's just gobbledygook and you cross your eyes and you can make 3d dogs, you know, it's all in a pattern. But now they've got the glasses with the Polaroid or the red and blue and you, you get 3d, but you get a different perspective in each eye and the slightly different view in each eye gives you depth.

And human beings in the material world have the right eye view and the left eye view. And between the two, you are able to perceive fairly well. Many people think that one of the contributing factors to the success of our nation is the two party system.

You've got the left view and you've got the right view and there's right and wrong in both of them. And it is the combination of the two, the push and pull and the tension between them. The compromise is made that have been a part of the success of our national experiment.

Well, I think of this in terms of you and me as believers because we have the benefit of stereo view, the left eye and the right eye, plus we have a third input, a third source of knowledge, information, perspective, wisdom, understanding, and that's the spiritual. And mankind has recognized this a long time. You know, the goofy people over in Eastern mysticism have the third eye.

Why is that? They understand the same thing we do. They just haven't got that eye functioning. All they can do is draw it on their head.

They don't actually have that perspective. And I think it's nowhere more fully justified, vindicated, and ironic than the band called Third Eye Blind. Exactly.

Couldn't be more apt. You've named yourself well, go play your music. You know, your third eye is blind.

Anyone who doesn't have God the Holy Spirit providing that divine perspective is having to operate simply in the material world and the things that block our vision that are fully naked and open to Him with whom we have to do. Man looks on the outward appearance. The Lord looks on the heart.

So that third perspective is so critical. And we have three different perspectives for Hezekiah. So this is my rather lengthy introduction to say we are going to look at these three accounts not only for what they all three tell us, but for what each one uniquely tells us that the others do not.

And like the seals and the trumpets and the bowls, we are going to find that they represent different kinds of conclusion, different kinds of observation, different kinds of perspective that are available to you and to me. And I'm going to suggest right off the bat that the, and there'll be sort of a memory aid for this, but Chronicles is just like a newspaper called the Chronicle. This is the public view.

This is the official story. This is, you know, the Chronicles were read out loud to the gathered population. Let's review the Chronicles.

It doesn't mean that it isn't inspired and it doesn't mean that it isn't true, but it does mean that it is the story told to the masses. You can have a newspaper that's totally accurate, but maybe it's not giving you the whole story or it's giving you the facts that are kind of like government news releases. Even when you have a really good solid government with a lot of integrity, they don't tell the common population everything.

Why? You can create a panic. You can compromise safety of your surreptitious agents functioning hither and yon. So it is important to have an official story that you deliver to the people at large.

Nothing wrong with that, especially when you understand that. I know when the government gives me news that they are giving me what they want me to hear, and I hope that it's all true, but I don't expect it to be revealing top secret information and classified information that a lot of other people know and need. I don't have a need to know, and I'm content with the official story.

That's fine in most cases, especially when you're dealing with a source that has integrity like the

Lord God Himself. If He's going to give me a popular view, fine. Chronicles, that's the newspaper version.

Public consumption. Kings. The book of Kings is the book of the kings, by the kings, and for the kings.

Son, here's my diary. Here's what I had the scribes, Hilkiah, and these other guys write down. You may need to refer back to this.

A lot of places, especially in the military, have a turnover file, and if you've been in a place three years and you've got a history of what you've done, and we had to fix this, and this particular thing broke down, and here's how we fixed it, and just so you know, I don't need to tell the civilian population about all of this. All they need to see is a lot of smartly dressed, sharp, all the heels hitting the deck at the same time, and column left march. That's great.

We've got a wonderful military. We support them. We back them, but they don't need to know all the gory details of what goes on inside.

Kings is like the turnover file of the kings. This is common knowledge in the palace. More detailed, not necessarily things we're just going to share with the population at large.

A little different perspective, kind of the in-house perspective. Everybody's got this. Even our houses have an in-house perspective.

You know, this is where you get the expression, don't air your dirty laundry. You've got to find a private place to take care of that. You have plants, and paint, and stuff on the outside of your house.

You do the laundry in the laundry room. You dress behind closed doors, things like that. And that's what humanity typically has.

You've got the official story, and you've got the inside story. Inside edition. Our reporters have gone in and gotten the scoop, right? So if there was a third perspective available for believers, where do you think you would find it? Would it be in the chronicles and in the kings? How about in the book of God's prophet, Isaiah? God's perspective.

Now there's going to be common elements in all of these. They're going to greatly overlap, but like your classic three-circle Venn diagram, each of them is going to have a lobe where they've got unique information unto themselves. So this is my suggestion to you.

This is how it appears to me. Nobody dropped that on a piece of manna out of heaven, but it's the way it appears to me. So watch for that as we move from account to account.

So the first thing you see, let's look at chronicles. Let's read the public consumption version first. Well, I'm going to call it anyway.

So when Sennacherib comes, after his deeds of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, entered Judah, encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them over to himself. We're not going to depress the population by saying, well, they're all a lost cause, all taken. You know, I only I am left, Jerusalem escaped to tell thee.

He's thinking to take them. They're under threat. When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that his purpose was to make war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his leaders and commanders to stop the water from the springs which were outside the city, and they helped him.

Helpful to explain to the population why your official people from the government are closing the wells and damming up the brooks so that the water can be guarded and not available to the enemy. You need to let people know that. So they helped him, and many people gathered together who stopped the springs and the brooks.

Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water? He strengthened himself, built up all the wall that was broken, raised it to the towers, built another wall outside. He repaired the millow in the city of David, another kind of fortification, made weapons and shields in abundance. He set military captains over the people, gathered them together to him in the open square of the city gate, and gave them encouragement, saying, once again, think about the perspective here, encouraging the people, be strong and courageous.

Do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that is with him, for there are more with us than with him. This is great practical preparation, right? We are going to deny resources to the enemy, we are going to allocate resources to ourselves, we are going to beef up the defenses, and we are going to keep up morale. With him the enemy is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.

And the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah king of Judah. After this, Sennacherib king of Assyria sent his servants to Jerusalem. He and all his forces were laying siege against Lachish.

To Hezekiah came Judah, and to all Judah that were there in Jerusalem, saying, Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria, and then you get this piece of demoralizing propaganda. This, of course, is coming from a pagan general of a pagan army, serving a pagan king in a pagan cause. By pagan I mean godless.

And what do you trust? That you remain under siege in Jerusalem? Does not Hezekiah persuade you to give yourselves over to die by famine and by thirst, saying, The Lord our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria? Has not this same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, You shall worship before one altar and burn incest to it? You can see the information is faulty. I am going to make these points, but I am going to come back to them, so pay attention. That is a point right there.

Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands in any way able to deliver them out of my hand? Who was there among all the gods of the nations that my fathers utterly destroyed that could deliver his people from my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand? Now therefore do not let Hezekiah deceive you or persuade you like this, and do not believe him. For no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you from my hand? Furthermore his servants spoke against the Lord God, and against his servant Hezekiah.

He also wrote letters to revile the Lord God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying, As the gods of the nations of other lands have not delivered their people from my hand, so the God of Hezekiah will not deliver his people from my hand. He called out with a loud voice in Hebrew to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten them and trouble them that they might take the city. Now just a couple of quick points and we have to hasten.

First of all, his pitch while effective is misinformed. He doesn't really understand. And I am thinking of the attacks on the Bible today, so many of which are based on faulty perceptions and faulty assumptions about the Bible.

And where Christians answer in kind, you are off on a completely useless tangent because that isn't even what the Bible says to begin with. And to even deal with the argument that says, well Hezekiah, why would, even if you believed in your God, that God wouldn't help you because Hezekiah has offended him by taking down his high places, it's inane, it does not pertain, it has no relevance, it isn't even true, you don't even know what you are talking about. And to even bother to refute that is a waste of time.

And it is a point that we might take to heart in dealing with those who want to attack Christianity in general, Christ in particular, and Christians personally such as ourselves. Points that are made that have no traction at all because they are based on misapprehensions of what Scripture says. Like how can you believe in a 6,000 year old earth? Scripture never says the earth is 6,000 years old, why would I spend my time trying to refute that or trying to defend a 6,000 year old earth when it never says that? In fact there are places in the Bible that suggest that the earth is far older than that.

So that's the first point, this attack, even though it isn't founded on good facts, is nevertheless aimed at discrediting. So he wants to discredit Hezekiah, discredit God, how does he discredit God? You notice he doesn't say anything about all of the well known victories that the God of Israel accomplished in this same land a few hundred years earlier and even as recently as a few generations earlier where entire armies were defeated, where fire and brimstone and hail out of heaven came, where there have been mighty victories. He doesn't mention any of that, all he talks about is his victories in the recent past.

Well who knows if those stories are even true? The same kind of attack is launched today. Well the Bible is just a bunch of myths and legends, where is God now? And there will be mocking

and derisive references to healing and I'll tell you what, if we both have a disease I'll go to the doctor, you sit there and pray and let's see which one of us gets healed first. I see no evidence of your miraculous God today, why doesn't God do teeth? Why doesn't he restore missing limbs? Why doesn't he take people that have had pieces of themselves blown off in combat and put them back on? If he's this miraculous God and if he allegedly did in the past, why is he not doing it now? This is as old as the Rabshakeh, it's as old as Satan in the garden talking to Eve, misrepresenting what God has said, misrepresenting what God has done, misrepresenting God's purposes and denigrating and attacking at a personal level.

Do you not know what I and my fathers have done? This is the scientific argument today. We're scientists, we made airplanes, we're scientists, we invented microbiology, we're scientists, we invented the polio vaccine, we are Jonas Salk, we are Galileo, we are Newton, it's science, science works. Sitting around praying to your God, you're just fooling yourself.

What we do works. I and my fathers look at all these nations that we have rolled up, well, which of those nations has any relevance to the one nation that God has chosen for himself, the one nation that God delivered out of Egypt, the one nation that God entered into a covenant with at Sinai, that God entered into a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that God made promises to David, it does not pertain. In the same way today, attacks made against our faith and comparing it to science are completely off the mark.

A, science was invented almost exclusively by Christians. Galileo was a Christian, Newton was a Christian. Charles Darwin was a Christian.

He kind of fell off his wagon or off his ship or on his island, but he was a Christian. You'll see Darwin in glory, and he's going to rue the day that he published his book and led so many people astray and became an enemy of the cross and so on, but he's a believer. He'll be there.

He'll be camped next to Cain and Balaam and these ne'er-do-wells that are nevertheless saved, yet so is by fire. But you can see the same elements. Look at this attack.

And then he goes on to, Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. Any of your leadership that invokes your God are lying. They're lying to you.

They are deceiving you for their own purposes. And this is the same kind of attack today. It's an ad hominem attack.

What's the matter with you that you would believe this or be persuaded by it? Verse 17, He wrote letters reviling the Lord God of Israel and to speak against him. And he's the God of Hezekiah. He's not the God of Israel.

He's not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He's not the God of the covenant. He's not the God of Joshua.

He's not the God of Caleb. He's not the God of the mighty victories of David. He's the God of

Hezekiah.

Hezekiah is unproven in battle. Hezekiah spent all his time building temples and stopping up water sources and so on. But when has Hezekiah ever been tested in battle? The God of Hezekiah, the no contest God, the no experience God.

And it's a complete misrepresentation. But it's effective if you don't stop and examine the premise. If someone is going to make an argument and before they draw their conclusion, examine the premise.

Wait a minute. Before you build a conclusion on what you just said, let's test the truth of what you have just said. Does God anywhere in the Bible ever say, behold, I am the God of Hezekiah? No.

Not once. God never identifies himself as the God of Hezekiah. The Rabbi Shaka identifies him that way.

And in the same way, watch out when people start characterizing God for you and telling you who God is and what God is when we have a third and much better source of information. And so they spoke against the God of Jerusalem as against the gods of the peoples of the earth, dragging God down to a human level. Well, if God created everything, then what created God? Who created God? God isn't at the level of this universe.

God doesn't need an origin. And if he had an origin, we couldn't understand it anyway. He dwells in a realm that is so far above us, it would be like trying to explain to your dog your financial plan.

Try that sometime. That's the ad hominem and ad deum argument against God and against man. They insult Hezekiah, they insult the Lord God, and they use rationalization.

Look at everybody else. Nobody else has been able to stand. Why should you be able to stand? You've got a king with no military experience, and you've got a God that does nothing.

Misinformation. Because of this, King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amos, prayed and cried to heaven. So the Lord sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valor, leader and captain in the camp of the king of Assyria.

So he returned shamefaced to his own land, and when he had gone into the temple of his God, some of his own offspring struck him down with the sword there. Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every hand. Many brought gifts to the Lord at Jerusalem.

There's a little text issue there we don't have to worry about. Presented to Hezekiah, king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations thereafter. That's the newspaper

account.

Sounds great, doesn't it? Big threat, mean-spirited, largely false attack, trying to persuade the people, trying to undercut, kind of like they did with the mob when the Lord Jesus was on trial, to incite the mob to violence, to get them to turn, to undercut and undermine their loyalty and their perspective and their understanding. And these kinds of things can be very effective for people who don't have a strong relationship with God. Now, should they have a strong relationship with God? They should.

Why? They've had 14 years of restored, revitalized worship, and the people don't buy this. They don't form a mob and say, lynch King Hezekiah, let's go be the servants of Assyria, that we do not die. So they hold.

But it sounds like, well, in the face of this, Hezekiah and Isaiah went together before the Lord, prayed, God said, good prayer, I'll fix it, sent the Assyrians packing. Now, that's Chronicles. Turn back to Kings.

This is the in-house. There was a little bit more to it than that. In 2 Kings chapter 18, in the 14th year of King Hezekiah, this is verse 13, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them.

Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish saying, I have done wrong. Turn away from me. Whatever you impose on me, I will pay.

The king of Assyria assessed Hezekiah king of Judah, 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasuries of the king's house. He went first to the house of the Lord, took everything out of the Lord's treasury, all of that furnishment, all that wonderful rebuilding and revitalization, took all of that and sent it to fob off this lying, attacking king.

At that time, verse 16, Hezekiah stripped the doors of the temple of the Lord and the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid and gave it to the king of Assyria. Now that wasn't in the Chronicles account. Behold, Hezekiah and Isaiah prayed and God said, good job, I'm coming to fix it and he went back to his own land and was killed by his offspring.

The inside account is, here's what we really had to do to delay the attack of the king of Assyria and all it does is delay it. Because the king of Assyria then sent the Tartan, the Rabsarus and the Rabshakeh, he triples his attack, doesn't just redouble it, he triples it. Remember that rule of three, you get three different perspectives.

The Tartan, that's the general, the Rabsarus, he's the head prince, saris, you get zar from this, rav means great or high, so the Tartan is the chief of the Pentagon, he's the chairman of the joint chiefs, he's the general of the armies, he's Omar Bradley and you've got the Rabsarus, the highest prince in the land, one step below the king himself and the Rabshakeh and this is the Rabshakeh, this is another title, he's the head diplomat, he's the head of the political side. In

friendly terms, he would be an ambassador but he's kind of an ambassador of evil here. With a great army against Jerusalem to King Hezekiah, they went up and came to Jerusalem.

When they had come up, notice how effective the bribe was, not much. They went and stood at the aqueduct from the upper pool. This is a strategic place to stand.

What is the aqueduct? What had Hezekiah very carefully tried to deny the enemy? Water, because water is life. Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This guy is standing at the aqueduct, he marches right up to the aqueduct as much as to say, I can come take this and cut you off anytime I want.

At the pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field, we covered this in detail a few years ago in Isaiah, when they had called to the king, Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to them. If you think about the kingdom of your own soul, who are these three guys? You can divide yourself into functions. We think, well, I've got emotion, I've got intellect, I've got will, I've got memory, people that try to map out the soul, here's my old sin nature, here's my volition, here's my memory center, here's my norms and standards.

You just map it out kind of like a cell with all the little parts, the nucleus and the ribosomes and all the rest of it. Notice the king of Assyria is not there, his functionaries come. King Hezekiah doesn't come out, his functionaries come.

When you see this happening, this is a detailed view, this is the up close, and so this is what we meet our problems with. What do we meet our problems with, the way Hezekiah does? Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, is over the household, this is the administrative authority, this is the decision maker for internal affairs, this is the chief of staff. Shebna, the scribe, he's the data center, he's the information source, he has access to the records and the treaties and he's literate, he's the internet, he's where you go to get information.

And Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, this is where we're keeping track, this is our grip on current events, I'm writing everything this guy says down. Why do we have this detailed account? Because Joah wrote it down, he took shorthand notes. Can you read back the minutes? A court reporter, can you read that back? Where do we actually stand? What did he say and what did he not say? Is there a loophole, is there not? What can we do? So I'm getting as much information as I can, I'm trying to retain it all on the front burner, I have access to historical records and treaties and things that have happened in the past, including, by the way, the scriptures from the scribe, right? And you have the guy who is the chief of staff who has authority under the king to sort of make decisions and speak to the people, don't speak to the people, let's come, let's go, let's do whatever, he's the XO, so to speak.

Do you notice anybody missing here? Isaiah, maybe? Somebody to represent God's perspective? Get all your human tools here, all your human resources. Anybody to speak up for God? Is Joah the guy who is going to say, the Lord hath said? No. So the Rabshakeh says to

them, say now to Hezekiah, thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, what confidence is this in which you trust? Once again, his information is kind of wrong.

He says, you're foolish to trust in Egypt. Well, they are foolish to trust in Egypt, and when you read Isaiah, Isaiah has been pestering Hezekiah throughout saying, don't make an alliance with Egypt, you're going to regret it, they're a rod that's going to bend and pierce your hand. Well, here's this guy sort of chiming in.

There is a problem with the notion of trusting in Egypt, right? That's not good. Notice that the problem has been identified by a secular pagan emissary, and yes, he sees the problem and identifies the problem. Bad idea to trust Egypt.

But the reasons that he gives are wrong. His analysis is based on a completely faulty footing. He thinks in human terms, it's a bad idea to trust in Egypt because Egypt is going to fold.

Egypt is unstable. They're going to roll up Egypt like they've rolled up all the other nations, and it's a waste of time to ally yourself with somebody we're just about to beat. It is a bad idea to trust in Egypt, but not for those reasons.

Isaiah gives the right reasons. Can you go to human viewpoint, secular material analysts, and get an identification and diagnosis of your problem? Yes. Are they going to necessarily understand why that problem is a problem for you, or much less how to fix it? Probably not.

Anything that goes over into God's realm. Now, if your plumbing is broken, and he's a godless pagan plumber, but he knows how to fix pipes, bring him in. God makes no claim on plumbing.

But if this is a perspective issue, if this is a policy issue, if this is a priority issue, if this is goals and values and direction in life, and what I am and am not willing to compromise with, what I am and am not willing to be a part of from a moral standpoint, from an integrity standpoint, from a character standpoint, relationships, God does claim that. And in areas where God makes a claim, it is dangerous to consider seriously the advice of the Rabbi Shaka. The Rabbi Shaka is not the guy to talk to about whether or not to ally with Egypt.

Why? God has a claim on the preservation of Israel. It's a direct covenant claim. When you are faithful and obedient to me, one of you will put to flight a thousand.

I will give you military victory. I will expand your borders. I will prosper your economy.

I will protect you. I will build a hedge around you. God has claimed that territory.

And this is, I think, a really helpful thing for us to observe that there are times in life where my carburetor is gummy. I don't care who fixes my carburetor. Find the best guy that knows carburetors.

But if I have relationship issues, if I have a problem in an area that God lays claim to, am I going to counsel with friends who had a similar experience but have no close walk with God? I've got

problems with parents or I've got problems with children or I've got problems with spouse or I've got problems with this, that and the other. Does God lay claim to our personal relationships about unity in the faith, about brotherhood, about respect for authority, about wives and husbands and children and parents? Does God lay claim to that? Do I have any business going to Dr. Phil if I'm a believer? Now, Dr. Phil is going to get some things right just like the Rabbi Shaka gets some things right, but he's not going to get it right for the right reason and he's not going to have the answer for the right reason either because Dr. Phil does not incorporate divine viewpoint into his analysis, diagnosis or prognosis or advice. And he shouldn't.

God lays claim to that. So it is helpful for us to identify this is an area where God prevails. And I better go find Isaiah if I want to figure out what to do about Egypt.

I better be listening to the spiritual authority that lays claim to that. I'm going to get misinformed. I'm going to get distorted viewpoint from the Rabbi Shaka.

He doesn't know why the high places were destroyed because that was also a spiritual issue and he's blind to it. Alliance with Egypt, Egypt, does Egypt have any theological significance to Israel at all as the place of slavery from which God delivered them with a mighty hand and identifies himself as the God who delivered you out of Egypt and now you're going to go back and ally with them? Does it have a spiritual significance? Of course it does. So, it's useful for us to look at what Hezekiah does and does not do here.

In Chronicles, well, like everything else, Hezekiah got with the prophet, prayed before the Lord, the Lord answered and it's all good. Not so much the internal account. This really threw us for a loop and we bought the guy off and that gave us a little time and we stopped up some more wells and built up some more walls, but he came back, didn't solve it, didn't end it, just delayed it and in some ways it's now three times worse.

So, and once again, we get a rehearsal of all of these. I wish we had time to do a detailed analysis because if you read this and think about it a little bit, and I encourage you to do so, you will see the very same elements as you find in modern attacks on your faith, on the faith of your children when they go to school and they're in classrooms. It's the materialist view.

Which of the gods of the nations have ever stood up against us? Science, mighty science rolls forward. It's only the material that can offer you valid functional solutions. This spiritual, you know, God off in the heaven somewhere is useless to you.

Buy into the functional world, the proven world, look at our track record. Well, I love science. I have a piece of paper hanging on the wall that says I am a gentleman and scientist of a worthy order of a ballistical computational artilleryman.

It says it all, all of it. I'm a scientist and all privileges pertaining to a gentleman and scientist of this worthy order are mine. So I've got a piece of paper that says I'm a scientist.

I love science. We should all love science. Science is great.

Science gave us air conditioning. But the temperature of the air is not a spiritual issue that God lays claim to. God hasn't made any promises about how hot or cold the air around me is going to be.

He talks about the peace in my soul. He talks about the fruit of my life. He talks about a lot of other things.

So we differentiate when we, and so what is the, what is the practical outcome of this? What's our point for tonight? As we look at our decision points, as we look at the issues that face us, fun, positive, useful projects, challenges, deep, uh, earthquake type issues in our lives and in our souls and in our relationships, this is a useful differentiation, distinction to make. To what extent is there a spiritual component here? To what extent does God have a claim on my thinking, my behavior, my actions, my policies, my goals, my priorities in this particular area? To the extent that God has a claim, I need to be looking in prayer to God, to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the illuminating ministry of God's Holy Spirit, the truth that is stored in my soul. I need to be functioning as a spiritual person in this regard.

If I've got plants that are dying, take them to Calloways. Take them to somebody that, that knows plants. I see no spiritual issue in whether the plants live or die.

I just don't. Gray paving stones or pink paving stones, it's not a spiritual issue. Car's not working, air conditioning compressor's ground itself to powder, find somebody that can evacuate the thing, put a new one on, charge it back up, be sure and put the dryer in, and air conditioning is fixed.

It's, other than, than my peace of mind during that process, it's not primarily an area where God has provenance. But where He does, and remember we've been asking the last couple of weeks, if Hezekiah started out so great, how did he drop the ball? This is how he dropped the ball. He did not identify the spiritual issue in this situation.

He treated it like a material. I can throw troops at it. I can throw preventive measures at it.

I can send my staff out to listen to it and process the information and make a record of it and see if anything like it happened in the past and delegate human resources against it. There's no Isaiah. Now, is He going to pray? Is He going to take the letter and spread it before the Lord? Yes, He is.

There is a kind of spiritual acknowledgement, but it's not first. Even in this notice that He gives the people, the first thing He says, don't be alarmed. There's more of us than there are of them.

That's what He leads with in talking to the people. Then He says God is with us, and He gives all the standard pitch. But the first thing He says is a material confidence.

Well, we'll continue our analysis of this next time. It's very fulsome, and it is very helpful and practical as you look at the intense similarities between this and what we face, what our

children face in the world today. We are increasingly under attack as public policy goes more and more in an evil direction, and the freedom of believers is more and more circumscribed, what you can say, what you can support.

It is important for us to recognize where our strength is, where our guidance is, to not make the mistake that Hezekiah makes, because it starts small, but he is going to end up tragically mishandling things from now on. He's never again going to be what he was in the first 14 years. From this point forward, he never approaches that greatness, and it's as long or longer than the first half of his reign, and it would almost have been better if when he turned his face to the wall, he had breathed his last.

Look at what a great record he would have had to go into eternity. As it is, he drops it. Internally, getting things squared away is great, but when he has to start making application to outside influences and outside pressures, he looks at it like any other pagan king.

Well, you know, they're right. I'd better bribe them. He doesn't fall on his face before the Lord God.

Why didn't he take the first message to the Lord? Instead of stripping the gold from the temple, taking money out of God's coffers and sending it into oblivion, it doesn't do anything except delay the problem for a short time. Well, we'll see this as we move forward next time, but the confidence we have is that if we see this example and don't want to follow it, God will answer our prayers and will illuminate our path. Father, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit.

We thank you that as we bring our decision points before you, you are faithful to provide for us, to guide us, to strengthen us and encourage us with so many wonderful truths from your Word with the ever-present Spirit, with the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, with those that we see in the pages of your Word. It is so helpful to us to know that we are not left as orphans. We have your fatherly care day by day.

Your mercy is renewed every morning. We thank you for that and we pray that as we think about these things in the days to come that they'll be meaningful and helpful to us and enable us to grow in grace, to bear fruit in keeping with righteousness that is reflecting of your glory and builds us up for future service. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.