Kings and Prophets 15-07-30

This is the 30th day of July, 2015. We are continuing our study of Kings and Prophets as we look at the much-recorded, much-discussed, threefold, manifold account of the reign of King Hezekiah. We are variously in 2 Kings chapter 18, 2 Chronicles in the vicinity of chapter 31 and 32, and in Isaiah chapters 36 through 39.

We have three different accounts. Seems to be something important going on here for God to devote this much Scripture space to it, so we're hoping to discover what that is. It seems to be one of the few things that gets the same depth of coverage as the Lord Jesus Himself in many ways, so it's worth taking a closer look.

We're attempting to do so. Let's begin by going to the Lord in prayer and dedicate our time of study and fellowship to the Lord Jesus and to our ongoing effort to be more like Him and to represent Him in this earth until we rejoin Him to serve and to reflect His glory in the kingdoms that are to come. Shall we pray?

Father, what a privilege it is to be in a position to see the windows of heaven literally open, to see beyond this life and beyond the material world, to have the revealing of not just spiritual truth but Your perspective on who we are, why we are here, why the events of history take place, all of them centering and revolving around the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

We thank You for Him. We thank You for our position in Him that confers upon us these many and manifold blessings and privileges and opportunities. We pray that as we look at Your Word tonight, that God the Holy Spirit will teach it to us and cause it to remain in our souls as a supernaturally active and powerful source of motivation and guidance, correction, and instruction.

We pray that each of us, as we look at these things recorded in Your Word, we'll find in them things of personal benefit that will strengthen us and enhance our walk before You, that will more fully qualify us to make those decisions and perform those actions in faith and obedience that will qualify us for commendation at the judgment seat of Christ. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, this King Hezekiah is really something. Beginning with his reign, Scripture just points three different cameras at him. And while in many cases the perspective and the view, the information is similar, in other cases it is quite different.

We've already seen in the book of Chronicles the extensive coverage, and uniquely there, of his many reforms and his spiritual dedication, how he involved the priests and the Levites. We saw how they got a late start, and so they had to celebrate the Passover a month late. If you read that account closely, you find that even in the offerings and sacrifices, they were still in the process of getting all of the priests consecrated and sanctified to the point that when there were so many animals to be sacrificed for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread that followed, and for the people themselves to be sanctified and consecrated, that there weren't enough priests to go around.

So not only did they shift the timing of the feast a month late, and not only did the priests offer the Passover lamb that technically was to be slain by the heads of households because they were not sanctified and had not been ritually purified to be able to do it. And so the priests offered those Passover lambs on behalf of those who wanted to celebrate the Passover but were not qualified. In addition to those two concessions and bending of the rules, if you will, the third one was there were not enough priests to handle all of the sacrifices that were being brought, and they had to employ the Levites.

And the Levites assisted in skinning the animals and disposing of the parts and carrying on the mechanics of sacrifice because there were so many. This is a threefold modification or relaxation of the Law of Moses that was very specific and very detailed. In the past, people that had disregarded those instructions in even a small way had met with very serious consequences, whether it's Uzzah trying to steady the Ark or the Levites who were not priests trying to come before God and offer strange fire, and so on.

Why is it allowable in the days of Hezekiah? Why does God smile upon this? And Hezekiah offers a prayer, and he says, “Lord, forgive us. We're not doing this quite the right way, but the people are so zealous to come before You and celebrate this feast. Pardon us for not doing it according to the specific details of the Law of Moses.” And it says, “God heard his prayer and healed the people.” The word there is healed, healed them, because this could have been a potentially fatal breach of divine etiquette.

So, what is the difference between those early examples who were made examples, just like the man gathering sticks on the Sabbath and suffered a death penalty, and these people? What is the difference? It is the attitude. It is the heart that God is concentrating on.

And you would think that this example, so detailed and so carefully recorded in Scripture, would have informed later Israelites down into the days when they were Jews post-Babylonian captivity, when you began to have the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and you had these who were adding to the Law and creating Mishnah and Talmud and all of the rabbinical interpretations, where to brush your robe to get mud off one too many times was to work on the Sabbath, and measuring the number of steps that was a Sabbath day journey, and thinking that in the careful, strict, and mechanical observance of interpreted Law that this would please God, rather than looking at this example and realizing that God is looking on the heart, and God can overlook an awful lot when one's heart is right.

When you come before Him, going all the way back to the prayer of Solomon and God's response to him, "When My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, seek My face, I will turn, I will heal them," and that word heal is repeated here specifically because this is the spirit in which they have come, and God doesn't bother to invoke scruples. "Well, technically, this is a Levite skinning this sacrifice instead of a priest."

It harks forward to the days when the Gentiles are going to be included, when it is not a matter of who is circumcised or uncircumcised in the flesh, but who is circumcised or uncircumcised in the heart. And we anticipate from our vantage point the later days when the dispensation will turn and where God's plan will become much more inclusive to anyone and everyone. It has always been that way. It was just that in the Old Testament day, anyone and everyone who was positively disposed and who wanted to seek God and come to know God would come to Israel and do it through those ritual forms and functions.

And in the latter days, those were fulfilled, not so much set aside or abrogated, but fulfilled. The Lord Jesus said, "I have not come to destroy the Law; I've come to fulfill it." And as He fulfills all of those types and those foreshadowings, the Law has accomplished its purpose, which was to teach the work of Jesus Christ.

And this is what we are seeing in our Sunday study of Christ in the sacrifices. So much of what Christ would do was so well taught in the shadows and the types that there's not a great deal said about the work of Christ in the Gospels. It is left to the Apostle Paul to look back at the crucifixion with his Old Testament background, steeped in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, as a trained Pharisee with a diploma signed by Gamaliel, and say, "Let me tell you what Christ did. I know this because He fulfilled everything I spent my youth studying and understanding in the Old Testament."

It is the Old Testament that actually teaches what Paul explains for the Gentiles in the New Testament about the work of Jesus Christ. Well, so here is Hezekiah, and it is wonderful to see the initial support and momentum, the gifts that are given, the enthusiasm with which people from the Northern Kingdom come down during the days of King Hoshea. They come down to celebrate this Passover in the first year of King Hezekiah. Wonderful thing, great momentum.

And I ask myself, why these three accounts in Chronicles, in Kings, and in Isaiah? And one of the things that occurs to me is we have wonderful tools today for doing comparative analysis. I have a book here which has served me well. It is a Synoptic Harmony of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. There are several of these. There is another one by a different guy that is in the Logos Library. There is one that is online. There have been a number of these harmonies done because people have noticed that Samuel overlaps with Kings, Kings overlaps with Chronicles, and some of the prophets are interleaved.

Isaiah is mentioned several times in these accounts, and it is helpful to see what is included, what is left out, what is parallel, what is almost verbatim. In some cases, it is so verbatim that a textual corruption in one can be corrected. You can see where the scribe misread a letter, but it has been preserved in the other account, and so they have been used to correct each other.

And in those cases where they are identical or nearly so, it is very instructive to see. You can learn a lot, and God has done this. I think some of these parallel accounts, you know, the Song of Moses is in the Law and then it is also over in the Psalms, and God has done this. Why? Why would God repeat Himself? One of many reasons: A, the content is obviously important for God to repeat it. B, He has given us the tools to solve mysteries and to answer questions where there is text that seems to be strange. We can look at parallel examples

of where a beth has been misread as a mem, or where a dalet has been misread as a resh, or in the ancient Hebrew alphabet, in the Proto-Semitic alphabet, similarities of letters there.

And some of the oldest mistakes, you go to the Proto-Semitic alphabet, the one that is used on the Hezekiah Tunnel inscription, which you will be able to see on Sunday. It is in the process of being healed. My copy, like the original, has been broken into pieces. But these are the things that God does.

So here we are with Hezekiah, and we have these multiple accounts. As I suggested last time, it is a lot like the Synoptic Gospels, where because people up until recent days did not have these comparative analysis tools—it has only been in the last few hundred years that anyone had the ability to do this and put it in front of the general population—I am of the mind, therefore, similar to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, that these accounts, rather than being constantly put in columns and compared—what is the same and what is missing—people historically have not been able to do that. What do they do? You take one at a time and go through it.

What is the lesson from this account? What is the emphasis in the Gospel of Matthew? Talking about Jesus as the Messiah and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, that is the emphasis you find in Matthew. In Mark, it is the eruption of God into human history. Immediately, over and over again, immediately Jesus did this, immediately He did that, and it is an action story. And it is the shortest and most punchy of the Gospels because it is the actions of the Lord Jesus.

In Luke, you have Jesus as the Son of Man, as one who sympathizes with our weaknesses. Luke was a doctor and understood human weakness, and his view of the Lord Jesus seems to be emphasizing His identity with us in His humanity. And then, of course, John presenting the Lord Jesus as the Son of God. And you can see these things reflected in the four faces of the cherubim and in the four directions in the camp of Israel in so many different ways, the wonderful manifold revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But we have done those Gospels pretty much seriatim, and we have not typically gone to a story and then borrowed the details from the other Gospels to try to fill it in, because God has a purpose in that narrative, in the way that narrative flows, what it includes, what it leaves out. In one Gospel, you have a single Gerasene or Gadarene demoniac, and then you go to the parallel account and there are two. Well, there is a reason why both guys are in one, and there is a reason why just the single man possessed of the legion is in the other.

And it is really better, in my view, to respect what God has done in separating these accounts and giving them each a perspective and a sequence and a unique content, and look at it that way. So I was a bit slow in coming to this conclusion because it is just so fascinating to look at them all. But we began in Chronicles looking at the reforms because that is the earliest and fulsome account of the first days of Hezekiah's reign.

And so if you turn to Chronicles now to pick that story up, I suggested last time that Chronicles, like a newspaper called the Chronicle, is sort of the account that would be pitched to the public. This is the broadcast general account. And so, beginning in 2 Chronicles chapter 29, we have Hezekiah's good reign and his restoration of temple worship. The Passover we covered in chapter 30, and as I just mentioned in verse 16, the priests who had removed the altars and destroyed them and slaughtered the Passover lambs on the 14th day of the second month, the priests and the Levites, it says, they were ashamed. They humbled themselves in verse 15, sanctified themselves, brought the burnt offerings to the house of the Lord. They stood in their place according to their custom.

We've detailed this. This was fulsome in its detail. And I ask myself why. Why? I'm going to suggest something to you. I could save it as a punchline at the end, but I'm going to suggest it at the beginning because I think it is helpful to organize this material and think about it thematically.

We have three accounts of Hezekiah, and as I have said, I think Chronicles presents it from a popular public or humanity-at-large perspective. I think the Kings—and remember, these are one book. Chronicles is one book in the Hebrew canon. Kings is one book in the Hebrew canon—and Kings is literally the king's diary. The temple and palace were side by side by this time up on Zion, and so this is sort of the insider view. There is more detail about the discussions and what did the king say to his counselors, and what did the counselors say to the king, and what are some of the king's actions that weren't necessarily publicized.

And then you have the prophetic account. And in many of these cases, the prophetic account has been almost entirely separate from the historical, as we saw in Hosea, as we saw in Amos, as we saw in these other earlier minor prophets. But now we come to Isaiah, who is the great pinnacle major prophet, and his collection of

prophecies that spans the 66 chapters of that enormous scroll is interrupted in the middle. Chapters 36 to 39 are here in the reign of Hezekiah, and you have Isaiah's account. Isaiah took notes, and some of this has been pulled over into Kings, and it's almost verbatim. But this would be the spiritual, the priestly, or the perhaps more divine perspective on it from the standpoint of the man of God, God's representative, God's spokesman on the earth.

So that's one way to look at these three accounts. I would like to suggest to you a second way to think of these three accounts. That first one, I take nothing away from that. I think it is helpful, especially when you see what is included in and what is included out—what is excluded. This second way of looking at it is at least as helpful, if not more so.

There are three waves. There are three directions. It might be a better way to put it: three vectors here for the reign of Hezekiah. This is very unique in its coverage. Hezekiah is a unique king in his faithfulness to God. Anybody after David, you've got to look hard to find anybody that even approaches Hezekiah. There are a few close contenders, but Hezekiah is highly commended, and the detail is given of what he did. He didn't just do a few things; he did a lot, and we have these chapters, especially in Chronicles, detailing that.

So here's my suggestion, and I give it to you up front. I think there are three directions. There are three points of impact for the Hezekiah story, and therefore we have these three separate perspectives. The first one is to record the events themselves. Like the history of the Exodus, like the other historical accounts, the book of Samuel, the book of Kings, the book of Chronicles, they exist to record the narrative because these are things that God draws out of history for instruction. These things were written for our instruction. So it's written down, and it is a record of that moment, that event.

And in the first dimension, if you will, in the first point of impact, what do we do with historical narrative? When we see the David and Bathsheba story and we see, in the days when kings go out to battle, and David is back home, Joab is out fighting the battle, David is at home, he's walking on the rooftop, he's in the wrong place at the wrong time. At the time of evening when he ought to be indoors, he's outdoors, and he becomes sort of a peeping Tom, and he sees another man's wife bathing, and trouble ensues.

Well, these historical narratives, whether it is Moses, whether it is Joseph, whether it is Daniel, whether it is David, are wonderful accounts. As we observe these men, we observe, we interpret, and we apply. I should endeavor to not be in the wrong place at the wrong time, beginning to think the wrong thoughts and having it snowball in my life the way it did with David, the way it did with others in the Old Testament account. I need to be sure that I pay close attention in my personal life and that my personal life is squared away, like Moses on his way back from Midian to Egypt. Before I can fulfill a commission to help others, I need to be sure that I help myself, as Jesus points out with the beam and the mote idea in your eye.

Moses is trying to go back in and be God's deliverer, and his own sons are not even circumcised, and God's about to kill him on the border. And you remember that whole scene. And so these historical accounts are parables in the sense that you look at the story, you observe, interpret, and apply. And if that's all they did, they would be tremendously valuable. That's dimension one. That's point of impact one. These are written for our instruction. We observe, we are educated in it, we see the spiritual truth that it reflects, and it is beneficial to us.

In the second case, there is a spiritual dimension that transcends the historical narrative, and this is where we look at the kingdom in Israel and/or in Judah and we say, “This is the spiritual kingdom that is now in my soul. I am the king, sometimes I am the priest, sometimes, and I am the prophet, sometimes. I receive the word of the Lord just as the prophets did, and it needs to be broadcast and put into application in the kingdom. The king needs to listen to the word of the Lord that comes from the prophet.”

You are functioning in a prophetic mode right now in the sense that—and all of us are—we are being exposed to the word of the Lord. The word of the Lord is coming to us. Well, if the prophet hears the word of the Lord, what does he do? “Well, that was an interesting dream. That was quite the vision. How about that voice from heaven that I just heard?” What is the prophet in Israel supposed to do when he hears the word of the Lord, when he has a communication from God? Is it just for him? Does he just sit and think about it and say, “Well, that was just great”?

What is the function of the prophet? He is to use that word of the Lord in communicating it, in broadcasting it, in prophesying it, to make change, spiritual change, in the land. Hearts of people need to change. The king needs to heed the word of the prophet. Think about Nathan going to David after the Bathsheba incident. Nathan got the revelation from God and knew what had happened in the palace. But Nathan didn't say, “Well, that's not going

to be a very tactful thing for me to bring up. I think I'll just sit on that and enjoy it in the comfort of my own prophetic hut here." He went and communicated it, made a difference. It affected the heart of the king. It enabled and brought about the occasion for David's repentance, David's change of mind, David's change of policy. David's—although it did not result in a complete evaporation of the consequences—it made a difference.

In the same way, in the second blush, the second point of impact, the second vector, whatever you want to call it here, the second purpose and mission of this account is for us to see in it beyond the simple application that comes from looking at narrative, to think of the spiritual kingdom that is being reflected, to think of the spiritual responsibilities that are echoed as we watch prophet, as we watch priests and Levites, as we watch the king and the administration and the leadership of the land. And we say, the things that are happening that are good and the things that are happening that are not good, I need to be making an application beyond just the first dimension. I need to think about my soul as the kingdom and myself variously wearing these three hats, fulfilling these three functions.

We function as prophets, and we speak the truth first of all to ourselves, and then when our kingdom is squared away and we are sanctified and we are justified and we are in a position, then we can speak the truth to one another. Once the beam is out of our eye, God may use us as words fitly spoken, like apples of gold and pictures of silver. This may be something that reflects the glory of God to someone else, that helps someone else. But we have to tend to our own kingdom first. You can't become king of Judah and go marching up to Northern Kingdom and say, "We are going to square you guys away," when there is sin in the camp, when there are unresolved issues at home, and when it is done for the wrong reasons, in the wrong way, and for one's own glory.

So this is the second. The first is the simple parable usage. The people do this in the secular world with Aesop's fables or morality tales: don't do what this guy did. But secondly, for us in the Church Age, all of the Old Testament is a window into spiritual truth, things that are of the immaterial realm, and we are educated in this second dimension. It gives it depth. It gives it materiality, even though it is immaterial. It is the immaterial reality that we see.

Thirdly, you say, "Well, what else could there be?" There is the narrative and what happened in the day. There is my understanding of it in terms of my responsibilities before the Lord, in the captain of my ship and master of my soul, in operating as a priest before the Lord in the order of Melchizedek, as dealing properly with the word of the Lord first to myself and then hopefully qualified to speak to others and be a blessing. What's the third?

The third I find very, very interesting because, and I will suggest to you that there is an anticipation of the millennial kingdom here. This is prophetic for the nation of Israel. It's good for all of God's people in dimension one. It is particularly useful to Church Age believers in dimension two. And then it is going to be a very illuminating third point of impact, third vector, third mission and purpose when it comes to the millennial kingdom.

Why do I say that? When is it that you are going to have prophet, priest, and king materialized in the physical world operating? It is when the Lord Jesus Christ and the sons of David rule in Israel. It is when the temple revealed in Ezekiel is going to be built and functioning, when the sacrifices in the millennium are taking place. Now, are those sacrifices sort of on a different basis and offered on a little bit different set of rules than the Law of Moses? Yes, they are. We saw this when we went through Ezekiel. It's the same, but it's different. It's alike, but it's unique. It overlaps, but instead of anticipating the Lord Jesus Christ, in the millennium those sacrifices and that temple ritual—and it is a ritual—is going to be review. It is going to be looking back.

And the same purpose that the anticipation accomplished, which was to give the details of the Lord Jesus' work of atonement, redemption, propitiation, sanctification, the conferring of life through death, resurrection pictured in the scapegoat, resurrection pictured in the bird that was slain and the other one that is set free, dipped in the first bird's blood, and so on—these ritual Levitical pictures were anticipating. The ones in the millennial kingdom will look back.

Well, you see that in the Hezekiah account, and part of it is based on this "it's different, but it's okay" section in Chronicles. God says, "I authorize this. I recognize this because it is worship from the heart." What does prophetic Scripture say about the day of the millennial kingdom? "I will take out your heart of stone. I will give you a heart of flesh. This will be My covenant with My people in the latter days." It's going to be based on your heart. People with a heart of stone could observe the Levitical rituals, but in the millennium it is going to be the

heart of flesh. “I will write My word on your hearts. I will pour out My Spirit on your flesh. Your old men will see visions. Your young men will dream dreams,” and so on.

Dreams and visions, that's in the heart. That's the immaterial. They are going to be promoted up to where we already are. We, the younger son, have received the inheritance first, but Israel will catch up, in a sense, in the millennial kingdom, where the ministry of the Holy Spirit that we enjoy will be poured out on them.

Now, the reason I'm broaching this now is we are about to move into the section of Hezekiah's reign and the account of his reign where things change. He could not have gotten off to a better start. Kind of like the millennium. Kind of like us right after we are saved, especially if we are older and we realize what has happened to us. If we are mature when we come to faith, we say, “There are some changes that need to be made here. I want to start going to church. I want to have fellowship. I want to drop my old associations, and I want to drop my old bad habits. I want to cleanse my life of sin and evil. I want new associations. I want to be with God's people. I want to learn God's book. I want to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to aim for the straight gate. I want to tread the narrow road.”

We are full of vim, vigor, and vitality, and many times saved later in life, we make sweeping changes, noticeable changes. People turn and look and say, “What happened to you? You are different. You are transformed. I don't know you anymore.” And sometimes people's marriages end over, “I just don't know who you are anymore.”

Well, that's the way it is when we look at it in the second arena, the second dimension, the second point of impact as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we realize that this is going to set us apart, that we are going to be dropping old ways that maybe even our father Ahaz instituted. We've got to break with the past and walk before the Lord the best we can in the light of God's Word and with intelligence, with an aggressive attitude.

This is what's going to happen in the millennial kingdom after Armageddon, after the seven months of burying the dead and marking the radioactive bones and all the rest of it that takes place. The millennial kingdom is going to begin with wonderful temple worship, with the Lord Jesus Christ and the sons of David on the throne doing the administration. You can't get a better king than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. That's the best king there is. He is also the high priest, and the priesthood that functions in Ezekiel's temple in the millennium is going to be Melchizedekian.

Will there be Levites involved? I'm sure they are, but they are going to be promoted into a new and higher order of priesthood. Will there be prophecy? Yes, there will. If it says, “I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh, and your old men will see visions and your young men will dream dreams,” it tells me that there is age difference in the millennium, that there will be young ones who are born, who may be the child playing by the hole of the asp and leading the lion around, or the lambs and so on. And as they get older and grow up, some of them are going to be prophetic, and some of them are going to be teachers and prophesiers, prophets in the millennial kingdom. You are going to have all three of those functions.

So the sad thing is, as we look at the reign of Hezekiah, what happens? There is an external threat that worries a lot of people in the internal kingdom. This is the Assyrian threat from the north. Well, those Assyrians sure have a pretty impressive won-loss record. They are like 13 and 0 here, and we are coming up against them. They are coming down, and they actually begin to take the fenced cities of Judah, the defensed cities. We put up a defense, and they took us anyway.

And I ask myself, if everything is going so well in Hezekiah's kingdom, how is it that these cities got taken? How were they defeated? If everybody is sitting on all eight cylinders spiritually and everybody is loving the Lord and all of this great momentum and sacrifice and cleansing and sanctification that took place in Hezekiah's first reign—first year of his reign—when does this incursion happen? After a number of years have gone by, and the initial high spirit and wonderful flag-waving, shouting, “Hosanna, blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord,” is all kind of worn away.

Now reality seems to be setting in in their minds, and, “Well, you know, God is in heaven and the Assyrians are on earth. I got this invisible putative reality, and I've got the visible actual reality. You know, God may have won many battles in the invisible past that I wasn't here for and that I've just heard tell of, and that may be record or it may be legend or it may be myth or it may be exaggeration. Maybe there were Egyptians. Maybe God brought Moses. I don't really know about all that. All I know is right now there are living, breathing people being slaughtered by living, breathing Assyrians, and now they are living and breathing right outside our gates.”

And it is the impact of this that causes their hearts to turn to water, that causes this great initial burst of enthusiasm to fail. What's going to happen in the latter years of the millennial kingdom? The same thing. Everybody is all gangbusters in favor of Jesus and the sons of David and the priests and the temple worship and everything in the first years of the millennial kingdom. But what do we know happens toward the end?

When God says, “Let me just take a magnet and draw it through the sand here and see how many iron filings are hidden in the pile,” why does He keep Satan on ice for 999 years? He is God's magnet. And what has been happening through all of these decades and centuries of the millennial kingdom? Children being born, young ones growing to maturity, and they don't buy in to daddy's religion and the status quo. When have young people ever thought the status quo was a really great thing? There is almost always this nascent, incipient desire: “I can do it better.” This goes back to Lucifer and the first sin: “I think I can do this better.”

And this builds. It is suppressed. There is a rule with a rod of iron, and anybody that sticks their little clay head up too high is going to get shattered. However, you can't impose on the outside what does not exist on the inside. Lesson to parents: you can't push your faith into your child from the outside. I don't care how much of a pressure cooker you've got. I don't care how much of a vise you've got. I don't care how many bottles and cans you've got. You can't bottle your faith. You can't can your faith. You cannot get a giant hypodermic and inject it into your children. It has to be chosen. It has to be adopted. It has to be believed from the inside.

During the course of the millennial kingdom, what happens? More and more and more people are tares growing in the field. Can't tell them apart from the wheat until it's time to examine the fruit. “Lord, somebody has sowed tares in Your field.” “Let them grow together until the harvest. If you root them out too soon, you're going to damage the wheat. Let them grow together until the harvest. At the time of harvest, we'll separate the stuff out.”

“Lord, there's a lot of bad fish in this net.” “Pull the net in anyway. We'll sort them at the end. You're going to lose good fish if you start trying to pick bad fish out before you've brought the catch to shore to do the sorting.” Parable of the good and bad fish, parable of the seed and the sower, parable of the wheat and the tares, parable of the sheep and the goats. All of these communicate the same thing about the kingdom as application, as so many things do elsewhere in God's plan, elsewhere chronologically, but primarily focused on especially the wheat and the tares, the good and bad fish, the sheep and the goats. It's the end of the millennial kingdom.

Hezekiah's reign is a picture of this. So we can learn not only by looking at the past in the first dimension, not only by realizing that this is a picture of our spiritual kingdom, priesthood, and that God is interested in our hearts more so than our nitpicky legalistic rule-keeping—not to say that if we know the rules, we shouldn't try to live by them—but why do you do what you do? That is the ultimate standard by which we are judged.

But thirdly, when we studied the book of Revelation, what's the first thing we established? It's useful to study Revelation 4–22, which is future. Why? Just like the record of the past, it is useful to us for observation, interpretation, and application. And the reign of Hezekiah here tells us, in the same way that it tells us things about our spiritual kingdom, it tells us things about what is going to happen in the literal millennial kingdom and why that kingdom is going to come to an end.

What's the difference? What's one major difference, perhaps the primary difference, between the kingdom of the Son and the kingdom of the Father, between the millennial kingdom and the eternal kingdom, New Jerusalem, new heaven, new earth? What's the fundamental primary difference? I'll tell you. That's why I'm here.

The fundamental primary difference between the kingdom of the Son and the kingdom of the Father is, in the kingdom of the Son, it starts off great, just like Hezekiah, but there is leaven in the lump.

Sin has not been purged. That's why there is still a temple. That's why there is still sacrifice.

That's why there is capital punishment. That's why the king has to have a rod of iron, and why there are clay vessels that get shattered. Why the nations are kept under the ruling sandal of the Davidic king and bring their tribute from around the world to Jerusalem. Why? That kingdom needs ruling. It needs strong authority, military presence, quelling rebellion, control.

Why do you need that control? If everything is harps and wings and angels and clouds, how does Satan, when he is released, and when that magnet is drawn through the sand pile, why are there so many iron filings? Do you realize that at the Gog-Magog rebellion that is described at the close of the millennial kingdom, there are enough

followers of Satan to surround the camp of the saints? Now, if you surround a thing, typically there is more in the outside ring than there is in the bullseye. When you are printing targets, it takes more ink to print the ring than it does to print the bullseye. Why? More of them.

By the end of the millennial kingdom, the actual faithful servants of God get surrounded by—and this is why God saves Satan. Why didn't God just throw Satan in a lake of fire at the beginning of the millennial kingdom and be done with it? Because God works all things together for good. And amazingly, God even works Satan together for good.

And God is going to use Satan as His giant magnet, and He is going to pull all of those people thoroughly and perfectly out. They are all going to leave the camp of the saints and go to the darkness which is outside. They are going to surround the camp of the saints with the idea of destroying it. And God is going to reverse that outcome and destroy them so that at the beginning of the kingdom of the Father, there is no leaven. All things that offend have been removed. The great white throne judgment at the end of the millennium has taken place.

Death and Hades and all remaining vestiges of corruption have been incinerated in the lake of fire. Now you have what you had before not only the fall of Adam, but before the fall of Lucifer. You have a new heaven and you have a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Well, you see that in the past and you see it in the future. Dimension one and dimension three. My concern now, and I think our concern as believers who want to live to please the Lord Jesus and be commended at His judgment seat, is if I can look in the past at Hezekiah's reign and if I can look at the anticipation that is reflected in the millennial kingdom and see what went wrong, maybe I can prevent that from happening in my spiritual kingdom.

Where did Hezekiah fail? If he got off to such a good start, if the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the government, how many times have I told you that you could elect the Lord Jesus and the apostles to our government and it wouldn't fix the country? Well, what is the matter in the millennial kingdom? What is the matter in the kingdom of Judah, the southern kingdom of Judah, with Hezekiah that his impetus and his reforms and his building doesn't last?

These three accounts in Kings, in Chronicles, and in Isaiah shine a threefold light. You don't get a better picture than when you go to a photographer's studio and they have the primary source of light, they have a secondary source of light, and then they have a filling source of light that makes you look as good as possible. There's never a better football game than when you've got multiple cameras. They've got the camera up on the string showing you the overhead following the running back down the field. You've got one up high looking down at it so you can see the whole configuration. You have multiple camera angles, and it's replay camera one, replay camera two, replay camera three. “Look at this. Here's the reverse angle, and we can really see that tackle and where the fumble took place. Here's the official up under the hood looking at the footage because he's got multiple angles where he can make sure: did the guy cross the line before he lost the ball? Did he cross the line before his knee was down?” Multiple camera angles.

Well, God reserves that for the most important information. What is more important to you and to me than to make sure that our kingdom does not rot from within? That despite good intention to leadership and great momentum at the beginning, that we don't fail like Hezekiah does, like the leadership in the millennial kingdom is going to, like the people of the millennial kingdom are going to, like people historically in every generation have.

We want to be forewarned. We want to be forearmed. We want to take up the full armor of God. We want to use the presence of God's Holy Spirit and make sure that, having done all, we can stand. Stand, therefore, having girded yourselves with this information.

This is why we're taking these accounts, and this is why we're going to take them one at a time, probably one per week over the next three weeks, go all the way through, beginning to end. What does Chronicles tell us? Where are the clues to the failure of Hezekiah? What does Kings tell us? Where are the clues? We know how well he started and we know what it takes to start well. My goal is to do a forensic diagnosis of what went wrong because he actually miserably fails by the end.

And we've actually got some material that's out of sequence, and it's in the Kings because that's how the king views it. The king says, “Well, I may have stumbled, but I finished well.” That's not what Chronicles and not

what Isaiah says. And so we're going to use those two to correct the third camera a bit, or at least understand the record of the third camera better.

And what we're going to see in this is something that is going to be personally beneficial to us. I don't want to fail. I don't want to begin well and end miserably, generating a Manasseh, which is basically your Gog-Magog outcome. Well, the clues are here, and they are fascinating clues. They're subtle, but they are distinct. And we can see the exact point at which Hezekiah's mind changes, where his heart turns.

And when we see that, having seen it in others, it's a lot easier to see it in ourselves. And it will be, I think, very instructive and very meaningful to all of us. So that's where we'll pick up next time.

But this is the overview. This is the context. And as you read these accounts, I encourage you to read them and read them through. Read Kings, read Chronicles, read those chapters in Isaiah and watch for the clues. See if you can find the turning point in his mind, the turning point in his heart. See if you can identify the fatal flaw. You know, every Greek tragedy, there was a fatal flaw. Well, it's here. See if you can spot it. We'll identify it. We'll try to learn from it. We'll have a couple of points of application next time.

But let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for Your provision for us. As a loving Father, You have not only delivered us and provided for us, but You instruct us and You encourage us and You help us to grow and become mature.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will take the truth of Your Word as we see it laid out before us and help us to understand its pertinence and its application in our daily walk, that we will be careful to examine our motives as we make decisions, that we will be careful to look at our spiritual responsibilities, our responsibility to Your Word and Your truth, both internally and externally, and our responsibility in faith and obedience to walk as the lords of our souls under the kingship and under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray that in doing so, we will grow in grace and in knowledge of our Savior, in appreciation for Him, and in preparation for service in the ages to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.