

Kings and Prophets 15-09-17

This is Thursday, the 17th of September, 2015. We are looking at the reign of King Hezekiah in our ongoing study of kings and prophets. You have a fresh handout tonight.

This is the second page of the one that you got last year. Kind of moving slowly through the handout. For those who are joining us remotely, if you want to go to the website and look in the kings and prophets audio folder, you'll see the same name as your first chart, only with a two on it.

And that's the one that we have in a hard copy form. You can get by without it. It's just nice to have.

It's nothing that you can't figure out by listening to the mellifluous tones of my voice. But it's good for reference. And at some point you'd want to get it and take a look at it.

Let's, as we continue our study of King Hezekiah, and in particular, this very significant episode in his life, let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and ask his blessing on our fellowship and on our study. Father, how grateful we are for your continuing grace and faithfulness to us. We are temporary.

We are transient. So many of us come and go in the course of a generation and in the course of history, and it is miraculous. We can easily join our voices with those of the psalmist when he says, what is man that thou art mindful of him or the son of man that thou visitest him.

But we are grateful for reasons largely known only to yourself. You have chosen to lift us up and to bring us to yourself through the Lord Jesus. We thank you for him and for his ministry of intercession and of representation, making our case, defending us against the accusations of the Satan, and preparing a place for us so that we can one day live in your presence in future realms of opportunity and service.

We know that we are here to learn and to be prepared for that future, that fulfillment of hope and promise. We pray tonight as we look at this portion of your word that God, the Holy Spirit will bless it to each heart so that we will be better equipped to serve, that we will be a more perfect sacrifice, sacrifice that we can ourselves bring before you, holy and acceptable as our reasonable service. We pray that each one will find meaning and application in the things that we see from your word tonight.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. The particular part of the history of the Southern Kingdom of Judah that we are looking at right now, the reign of King Hezekiah, the incursion of the Assyrians, the speech of the Rabshakeh, the ministry of the prophet Isaiah, and so on, is both extremely well-documented, as we have seen, and somewhat confusing from a chronological point of view. As we have looked most recently at Isaiah chapter 38, we have seen the record of King Hezekiah's prayer, his psalm of acknowledgement of his problem.

It isn't exactly what you could classify as a penitential psalm, but it is a song composed on the occasion of his near-death experience. And previous to that, in chapter 37, you have the details concerning the incursion of the Assyrians, Isaiah conveying and delivering God's promise of protection and of help. Previous to that, in chapter 36 of Isaiah, you have the Sennacherib invasion and his boasting against the Lord.

You have a similar sort of sequence in 2 Kings and in Chronicles. And here's the basic collection of events. What happens? The Northern Kingdom is ripe for judgment in 721 BC.

That judgment is effected by the Assyrians, right? And this is Sennacherib. This is the Rabshaka and this whole crowd coming down, rolling up Samaria, carting most of them off, sowing eventually the population up there with other settlers and so on. That much we know is a fact.

We know that the Assyrians at that time, in the days of Hezekiah, a few years later, return to try to do the same thing to Judah. And at that time, there is sort of a flurry of events. Just by way of background, flip back over to 2 Kings and look at chapter 19.

Actually, chapter 18. 18 is a good place to start. This is the reign of Hezekiah.

And there's still a king in Israel, the third year of Hoshea, when Hezekiah comes into his own. You remember he's got some co-regency things going on, but he becomes the king in his own right in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah, king of Israel. And this is the first of many threes that crop up in this story.

It's the third year of Hoshea, it's no accident. Third year, third year, third year. We're gonna see some more threes coming up.

He's gonna reign, Hezekiah is, 29 years. And we know that this is broken up into sort of before and after, pivoting on right where we are, his near-death experience, after 14 years, and then he's given 15 more, right? Total of 29. He does a lot of good things.

Verse five there, he trusts the Lord God of Israel, and after him, none was like him of all the kings of Judah who were before him, for he held fast to the Lord, did not depart from following him, and so on. Does a great job for these 14 years, especially at the beginning, rebuilding the temple. We've seen all of that in great detail.

But now look at verse nine. Second Kings chapter 18, verse nine. Now it came to pass in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hosea, the son of Elah.

Makes sense, right? Is four significant? Is seven significant? For the number of completeness on earth, the four directions, four dimensions, this is any fullness of times of a sort. It's in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, and it is the seventh year of Hosea. Seven means it's over, it's finished.

Time's up, the week is complete. Something new is going to follow. Fourth year of Hezekiah,

seventh year of Hosea.

Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came up against Samaria and besieged it. He's of course the king, Sennacherib is the general, and Rabshaka is the minister of foreign affairs or the senior staff member that's gonna come down and actually talk. And came up against Samaria and besieged it at the end of three years.

They took it, which is the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hosea, king of Israel, Samaria was taken. How many years did it take? Three, another three. Then the king of Assyria carried away Israel, captive to Assyria, put them in Hala and Habor, river of Gozon, cities of the Medes.

Why? Verse 12, look at it closely. 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, period. The word them isn't there.

They would neither hear nor do. Now, verse 13, pay close attention now. Where are we as we look at Isaiah chapter 38? Where are we when Hezekiah comes down with the thing that requires the poultice of figs, Isaiah shows up in the whole scene there where he turns his face to the wall.

What year is that in the reign of Hezekiah? 14th year. Where are we in verse 13 of second Kings chapter 18? 14th year. In the 14th year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them.

Sennacherib comes up from doing some army stuff to being the actual king. He came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. Now, in case I didn't just review it, let me review again.

What year does this take place? The same year that we're now in. The fortified cities of Judah, do you think this happened in a day or a week? This takes place over a series of weeks. I mean, just to physically move your army from place to place and take each city, all the fortified cities of Judah are taken in this 14th year of Hezekiah.

Not some of them, not a few of them, all of them. There's only one city left and that's Jerusalem. All the fortified cities of Judah were taken.

Now, this is a real stretch. Have we at any time in the recent past looked at any sort of a list of these fortified cities? Did we have somebody make some remarks about these fortified cities? Did I give you a map, which by the way, is also in that same folder where our second page of the chart is. Give you a picture of the Shephelah, the hill country of Judah that contained these cities.

Who, here's the hard part, who was the prophet that talked about these fortified cities of Judah? What was his name? Close, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah. There you go.

You knew it all the time.

Micah, Micah, also Micaiah. Micah is just a contraction of Micaiah. Me, Ka, Yah.

Me is who, Ka is like, Yah is the Lord. So what does Micah or Micaiah, what does it mean? Me, Ka, Yah. Hebrew is such a great language.

Who is he? He is she, and me is who? Who is he? He is she, and me is who? So me, Ka, Yah. Who is like the Lord, Yahweh, right? Micah. So Micah, Micah talked about this.

14th year of King Hezekiah, 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. King of Assyria, what year is this again? Just by way of review, 14th year. What happens in the 14th year? Hezekiah gets really, really sick.

Sick unto death. God says, you're going to die. This is all in the same year.

Do you think he sent to Lachish before or after all the fortified cities of Judah were taken? After. He's next, right? So how much of the 14th year is likely to be left here? This is all coterminous. This is all of a piece.

14th year, 14th year, 14th year. Don't forget. I have done wrong.

Turn away from me. Whatever you impose on me, I will pay. So the king of Assyria, Sennacherib sends back and says, I want 300 talents of silver and I want 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. At that time, 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. So if you were going to summarize two things, two components of this action that Hezekiah performs on this occasion, what would they be? What are the two verbs here? He confessed and he gave an offering.

You may remember that in the entire song that he composed when he was sick, is there ever any acknowledgment of wrongdoing on Hezekiah's part? Did he, you know, on many other occasions where there's a crisis, you see a prophet or someone else coming before the Lord, oh Lord, we know that we're not worthy. We have sinned. You have prophets who confess the sins of the nation.

You have Nehemiah who is grieving and he says, Lord, you know, we've really screwed up. But can we please go home? But to whom does Hezekiah confess that he has done wrong? Does he ever make any similar statement to God anywhere? But he does to Sennacherib. Oh, Sennacherib, I have sinned against you.

I have done wrong. How can I make it right? Well, send me 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold. That'll be a start.

And he does it. Where does he get it? From the house of the Lord, from the doors of the house of the Lord and from the pillars that he set up as monuments to the Lord. He takes what has been given to the Lord and gives it to Sennacherib.

Now, what year was this again? I forget. 14th year. Now, here's the million dollar question.

Did this happen before or after Hezekiah got sick? Before. Before. Now, there are sequence issues that you can actually sort out if you pay close attention to this text.

The material in 2 Kings chapter 18, chapter 19, and chapter 20 are not in chronological order in Kings, nor are they in chronological order in Chronicles, nor are they in chronological order in Isaiah chapter 38. Remember, in Isaiah 38 is the clue. You have the song, then you say, oh, by the way, this was because Hezekiah was sick and oh, by the way, he asked for a sign, right? And Isaiah 38 says, notice how I'm giving you this information out of order and that's a clue.

It's out of order everywhere. It's out of order everywhere. How do we know? 14th year.

It's in the 14th year. Why does Hezekiah get sick? You shall die and not live. It's in the next chapter.

2 Kings chapter 19. When King Hezekiah heard the speech of the Rabshaka coming down and saying, we're going to roll you up, none of the gods of the nations could help them, and that big, long speech that we've seen in some detail. Have the gods of the nations, 1912, delivered those who my fathers have destroyed? Gozan and Haran and Rezeph and the people of Aden who were in Talasar, who knows who these people are.

They are long gone. They've turned to dust and ashes long before now. Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, verse 14.

Read it. He went to the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord. Hezekiah prayed before the Lord and said, O Lord God of Israel, who dwells between the cherubim, you are God, you alone of all the kingdoms of the earth.

You made heaven and earth. Incline your ear, O Lord, and hear. Open your eyes, O Lord, and see.

Hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. Truly, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were not gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, therefore they destroyed them.

Now therefore, O Lord, our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you are the Lord God, you alone. This is before what we just read. This is

before.

All the cities have been rolled up. Having been rolled up, here comes the Rabshaka. And speaking in the Hebrew tongue, he says, we're gonna roll you up just like we have done everybody else and everything else.

You cannot stand, your God will not protect you. So to his credit, Hezekiah goes to the Lord and brings this problem before the Lord. No payment has been sent.

No price has been negotiated. The Rabshaka doesn't come down and say, do you really think you can buy us off? Do you really think that a little bit of gold and a little bit of silver is going to stop us? It's not mentioned, why? Hasn't happened, has not happened. Hezekiah comes before the Lord and says, here's the deal.

Then verse 20, Isaiah, the son of Amos, sent to Hezekiah saying, thus says the Lord God of Israel, because you have prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard. This is the word which the Lord has spoken concerning him. The virgin daughter of Zion despises you, laughs you to scorn.

The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head behind your back. Pretty difficult to say this if you've already sent wagon loads of gold and silver to the guy, right? Wouldn't make any sense. Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy one of Israel.

By your messengers, you have reproached the Lord and said by the multitude of chariots, I've come up to the heights of the mountain, to the limits of Lebanon. I will cut down his tall cedars and destroy Cyprus trees, exterminate his borders, for I have dug and drunk strange water, all the rest of this. All of this boasting.

You should be for crushing fortified cities into heaps of ruins. Habitants of power, dismayed, confounded, grass of the field, green herb, grass on the housetops, grain blighted and grown. Verse 27, but I know your dwelling place.

You're going out and you're coming in and your rage against me. God says, I'm taking this personally. You come against my people.

You're coming against me. Because your rage against me and your, by the way, this is still true. People who have a rage against God will have a rage against God's people, will find fault, find an issue, want to go ad hominem, want to diminish, denigrate, belittle, mock, deride, impugn, fill in your synonym here.

That's what they will do. It's rage against God. In some ways you don't really have to take it personally because you can say, well, there's somebody with a rage against God.

Jesus said, they hated me. They're gonna hate you. Same thing.

Because your rage against me, verse 28, has come up to my ears. Therefore I will put my hook in your nose and my bridle in your lips and I will turn you back by the way which you came. Now, does God send an angel or a prophet or a messenger of any kind to Sennacherib or to the Rabshakeh to deliver this message? Who gets this message? Hezekiah gets this message from Isaiah because it's not really for the Rabshakeh.

It's not really for Sennacherib. Who is it for? God's people. God says, listen to me while I talk to this guy.

And then God proceeds to read the Assyrians, the riot act. It is for the benefit of the people in Judah. They hear this message.

Have you ever done this? Have you ever been talking to one person but you're really talking to somebody else? No, you've never done that. Yes, you have. Now, God basically turns having delivered this message for the benefit of Judah to the Assyrians, he's now gonna address the people in Judah directly.

Keep in mind the timing now. I will tell you how I know this. I will show you how we know this momentarily that this is the sequence.

Just trust me for now. Hezekiah hasn't gotten sick and the gold of the temple has not yet been stripped at this point. I will show you and tell you how we know this directly.

Take my word for it now because God now turns and addresses Judah directly. Look at verse 29 of 2 Kings 19. This shall be a sign to you, my people.

How many threes have we already seen in this account? You shall eat this year such as grows of itself. Things are tough. The outlying cities have been taken by the Assyrians.

The harvests and grains that would usually be brought in on wagons and sold in the marketplace aren't coming. You're just gonna have to forage and find the food that is growing of itself because the Assyrians have blanketed the land and have essentially cut off. This is the beginning of a siege.

This is the beginning of starving out a city. We've taken everything around you. We're gonna starve you out, right? God says, this will be a sign to you.

This year, you're still gonna be able to eat but you'll have to forage for it. You'll eat such as grows of itself. What springs from the ground? In the second year, what springs from the same? You're not only going to find enough to eat but you're gonna have enough left over that it will seed itself and grow up in the second year.

So the first year and the second year are gonna be tight but survivable. You're gonna have to scavenge and forage but there will be enough forage and scavenge in the first year and in the second year. You won't get it all and it will seed itself and grow back up and you'll be able to do

the same thing in the second year.

It will grow and you'll have enough. In the third year, you will sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. What does that tell you? Nobody is controlling the rest of the nation of Judah.

The fortified cities are gonna be your own again and people are gonna be free to leave the walled cities, go out, plant, cultivate, harvest and sell. That's what it means. Now, God says, I am going to put a hook in the nose of the Assyrians and drag them back to where they need to be and they're not gonna take you and by the end of three years, you will be fully recovered from their invasion which is really quite amazing when you think of what a large army can do to a land.

You look at reconstruction in the south and how long that took. God says, you know what's gonna be assigned to you? This gigantic invasion and overwhelming force that has come into Judah and taken all your walled cities, eaten everything in sight like locusts. Within three years, you'll never know they were here.

You'll plant vineyards and fields just like you always have. It will be a miraculous recovery from what seems to be a hopeless situation. This will be assigned to you.

Sound familiar? A sign? How many elements of time are involved in this sign? How many years? Three. The remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward sticking with this agricultural motif. For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant and those who escape from Mount Zion, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

That's God's promise and that's God's sign. Now, what's the problem with a sign of this length? How long do you have to sustain your faith and your trust in the word of God? Three years, right? The sign is three years long. By the way, remember Hezekiah's father's name? Who is Hezekiah's father? King Ahaz.

Was there anything involving a sign involving Ahaz? You remember the early chapters of Isaiah where there was a promise of deliverance? What sign would you like from the Lord? Oh, I wouldn't presume to ask the Lord for a sign. This shall be a sign to you. A young woman will conceive and bear a son.

And before that child knows it, remember all this? Before he knows his right hand from his left, curds and honey and all of that. About how old does a child have to be before he can start eating solid food and distinguishing what's going on around him? About three years. Roughly the same.

But the number is purposely not given there because Ahaz is a different guy. Here's Hezekiah, who ought to be able to parse the number, who ought to know what it means, who ought to be able to put this together and say, you know, there seems to be an awful lot of threes going on here. At any rate, as should we.

So, thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria in verse 32, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor build a siege mount against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return. And he shall not come into this city, says the Lord, for I will defend this city to save it for my own sake and for my servant David's sake.

That is the proclaimed fate and deliverance of the city. Right? Now, what do you suppose would happen if King Hezekiah can't grasp this promise and treat it as reality? If the sign is not sufficient for him, if the promise is not substantial enough for him, and he instead sends messengers to Lachish and says, what have I got to do to keep you from coming in? Send me 300 talents of silver, send me 30 talents of gold. How many hundreds? How many hundreds of talents of silver? How many tens of talents of gold? See, unusual preponderance of the word three here.

What is the number three supposed to suggest? What do the angels proclaim in the presence of God? Holy, holy, holy, the perfection of God, the Trinity, the triangle, strongest geometric shape, the heavenly perfection of God. Three, the number of perfection in heaven. Four, the number of perfection on earth.

Three, the number of perfection in heaven. You add them together and you get seven, which is perfection of the plan of God in heaven and in earth. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth for as it is in heaven. Three, right? So, how do I know this? How do I know that this all occurred before chapter 20? There are multiple lines of evidence. In the mouth of two or three witnesses, a thing is established.

Our first witness is in chapter 20. In those days, in those days, not afterward, not before, it says in those days. In those days, Hezekiah was sick and near death.

Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amos, went to him and said to him, thus says the Lord, set your house in order for you shall die and not live. Now, why would this message come? You can say, well, his time was up and because his life is extended, all kinds of bad things happen. Taking nothing away from that, why this message in those days? If Hezekiah was a monument of faith and trust and leadership and exemplary behavior before the Lord, why would he not live to see the fulfillment of the sign? This shall be a sign to you, right? How long was the sign? How is Hezekiah gonna see the sign if he dies this year? Does that make any sense? This shall be a sign to you, but you're not gonna live to see it.

Make any sense? If you stop and think about this, wait a minute. You just got through saying, you know, the land and the king represents the land. Herod represents it with John the Baptist.

We know that. Here's Hezekiah. Well, is he Moses on Mount Pisgah or something? He's gonna look over and see the land, but you will not enter.

And if so, why was that? You know, you struck the rock. That's why they're going and you're not. But why is it that God gives a three-year sign and then tells Hezekiah, you're dying shortly? Because the sign wasn't good enough for him.

The promise wasn't substantial enough for him. And what did he do? Kind of like when God told Abraham, your seed will be as the stars innumerable as the sand on the beach. Well, let's do the Hagar thing.

Sarah, it's okay with Sarah, but you know, my wife gives me permission. So here I go. Fleshly solution to a problem God has already claimed to solve and has already got a promise pending, right? That's why Hezekiah gets sick.

You don't believe the promise. You don't think the sign is valid. No point in you sticking around.

Put your house in order. You're checking out. You sent 300 talents of silver, 30 talents of gold, stripped from my house, capital M, sayeth the Lord, after receiving this promise.

Pack your trash. You're going home. You're out the door.

That's why this happens. How many times does the Bible give you a summary and then go back and fill in the details? Genesis chapter two, Genesis chapter three, Genesis chapter one, for that matter. On the sixth day, he created man in his own image after his own likeness, male and female, created them and so on.

Then you get into the details of the rib and so on. Same thing here. Now, how do I know this? How do we know this? When he turns his face to the wall and prays to the Lord, remember now, oh Lord, how I've walked before you in truth with a loyal heart and have done what was good in your sight.

Hezekiah wept bitterly, conveniently sort of overlooking the truckload of stuff he just sent to the Assyrians. And it happened before Isaiah had gone into the court. The Lord tells him to turn around, tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, thus says the Lord, the God of David, your father.

I've heard your prayer. I've seen your tears. Notice Hezekiah had turned to the Lord and brought the Assyrian problem to him.

God gives him an answer. The answer doesn't stick. He doesn't have enough faith to take God at his word.

So he does his own solution. God says, put your house in order. But to his credit, Hezekiah goes back to the Lord in prayer.

And God says, good enough. You're at least turning in the right direction. Now, return and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, thus says the Lord God of David, your father.

I have noticed the Lord, the God of David, your father, not the Lord, your God. We talked about this before. I have heard your prayer.

I have seen your tears. I will heal you. On the third day, you will go up.

Since your faith isn't strong enough to last three years, let's try a three-day, you know, can you watch with me for one hour? Can you trust me for three days? You can't trust me for three years. Let's try three days. I will add to your days, 15 years, I will deliver you.

Notice, here's our confirmation. I will deliver you and this city. The city has not yet been delivered, right? The fate of the city is still in the balance.

I will deliver you and this city. This is still confirmation of the promise that God gave before Hezekiah sent the money. I will deliver this city.

It's all one occasion. It's all one thing. Isaiah says, take a lump of figs.

What's the deal on the lump of figs? To draw the poison out of Hezekiah. So that Hezekiah can live, so that Hezekiah can continue, the figs have to absorb what it is that is killing Hezekiah. You apply the poultice of figs, figs, fig tree, always talking about Israel, Judah in this particular case.

And so the poison that infects Hezekiah is drawn into the figs. Because Hezekiah is going to live, the poison that is killing him in this severe infected boil or whatever it is, the infection is going to be drawn out of Hezekiah into the figs. That's why it's not just any old poultice, it's a fig poultice.

And it's drawn into the figs. What does this mean? Hezekiah is going to live, but Judah is going to be infected with the same thing that is causing Hezekiah's death. Hezekiah said to Isaiah, what is the sign? I can't trust Him for three days.

Couldn't trust Him for three years, can't trust Him for three days. I need a sign and I need it now. He says, fine.

The shadow on the steps of Ahaz. One of the things the Bible says about God, God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. So it doesn't say that the light of the sun is going to traverse the steps or reverse its path.

It's the shadow, the shadow of Ahaz. Ahaz, good king, bad king. Extremely bad, enormously bad.

The shadow associated with Ahaz, which has come to a consummation here and God is ready to judge Judah will go back. God will delay it based on Hezekiah's weak, anemic response and return to God in prayer. Even Ahab turned to God at one point and God backed off of judgment.

Remember that? King Ahab, are you kidding? The slightest positive response God will honor.

That's what he does here. What is the sign that the Lord will heal me and that I shall go up to the house of the Lord the third day? The house of the Lord with its much reduced glory, with its unglamorous doors.

Isaiah says, this is the sign to you from the Lord that the Lord will do the thing which he has spoken. You want the shadow to go forward 10 degrees to go backward 10 degrees. Hezekiah says, it's an easy thing for the shadow to go down 10 degrees.

Let the shadow go backward 10 degrees. So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the Lord and he brought the shadow 10 degrees backward by which it had gone down on the steps of Ahaz. No accident of all the possible landmarks.

It's the steps of Ahaz because he's walking in the footsteps of his father Ahaz. And he is descending the steps of his father Ahaz. And we've talked in detail if you go back and pull the study of this about what the 10 steps represent and so on.

We did that detail when we did Isaiah. Now, finally, how do I know this? Turn in your Bible to Jeremiah chapter 26. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jeremiah chapter 26.

This is a later time. You remember, Jeremiah prophesies in the final 40 years of Judah. Remember that? King Josiah, last good king, last chance, last gasp.

Jeremiah for 40 years, four decades. Time of testing, time of trial, time of opportunity. Put up or shut up, 40 year ministry of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah chapter 26. This is the time of threat. Look at verse 13.

Jeremiah says, now therefore amend your ways and your doings and obey the voice of the Lord your God. Then the Lord will relent concerning the doom that he has pronounced against you. Sound familiar? Return, repent, and he will relent concerning the doom he has pronounced, just like he did with Hezekiah.

As for me, here I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and proper to you, but know for certain that if you put me to death, this is what they are contemplating, killing Jeremiah. Don't like the message? Slay the messenger.

If you put me to death, you will surely bring innocent blood on yourselves, on this city and on its inhabitants. For truly the Lord has sent me to you to speak these words in your hearing. So the princes, verse 16, Jeremiah 28, the princes and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, this man does not deserve to die, for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.

Then certain of the elders of the land rose up and spoke to all the assembly of the people saying, Micah of Moresheth, Micah of Moresheth, prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, King of Judah, and spoke to all the people of Judah saying, thus says the Lord of hosts, Zion shall be

plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins and the mountain of the temple shall be like the bare hills of the forest. Did Hezekiah, King of Judah and all Judah ever put him to death? Did he not fear the Lord and seek the Lord's favor and the Lord relented concerning the doom which he had pronounced against them? The king and the city, God relented. Micah of Moresheth.

Where was that? Turn over to Micah. Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezekiel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah. Our final passage here, the book of Micah.

Now you saw the part that they quoted in Jeremiah, right? It'll be plowed up like a field, Jerusalem will become ruins, the mountain of the house as a high places of a forest. You remember that? Turn to Micah chapter three. Here's how I know, here's how we know that our construction is correct.

What's the subtitle of chapter three in your New King James? Wicked rulers and prophets. Wicked rulers and prophets. Very quickly, here now, oh, heads of Jacob and you rulers of the house of Israel, is it not for you to know justice? You who hate good and love evil, who strip the skin of them and the flesh from their bones, who eat the flesh of my people, flay their skin from them.

You look at your text note there, it doesn't say strip the skin from my people. It says strip the skin from them. What has Hezekiah just stripped? He stripped the skin of the doors of the temple.

He stripped the skin off of the pillars he had dedicated. This is pregnant language. This is what have you really done? The temple is the meeting place between God and his people and stripping the skin from it is to tell the people relationship with God, worship of God, meeting God at his house is not important.

When need be, we'll strip that. You're flaying the skin from them, breaking their bones, chopping them in pieces like meat for the pot. How did they transport all of this gold and silver that they stripped? They had to chop it up and he says, you're chopping up the flesh of my people when you do this.

This stripping the skin is no accident. This is Micah prophesying as a result of what Hezekiah has just done to the doors of the temple. We can't read all of this, you can look at it.

Verse five, thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who make my people stray, who chant peace while they chew with their teeth, prepare war against them, put nothing in their mouths and so on. There are people saying, look, if you just buy them off, they'll go away. Just buy them off, they'll go away.

That's the path to peace and Hezekiah listens. Verse eight, truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, justice and might to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin. This is all of the land in particular.

Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity. Zion and Jerusalem, that's not the Northern Kingdom. This is Hezekiah.

Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay and her prophets divine for money. Any of that going on in the modern day? You think God's happy about that? We've got a real profitable ministry going here. Yet they lean on the Lord and say, is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us.

Therefore, because of you, Zion shall be plowed like a field. Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins and the mountains of the temple like the bare hills of the forest. This is Hezekiah's day.

This is Hezekiah's time. This is Hezekiah's sin that Micah proclaims. The people in Jeremiah's day quote it.

Didn't Hezekiah hear these words? Did he kill Micah for saying it? No. This is the day. This is the time.

This is the hour. That's why these things happen. What is the application for us? God makes promises to us.

Maybe the fulfillment is not near at hand. Maybe it is gonna be a three year span of time. Maybe it is gonna be a three day span of time.

How wise is it to say, oh no Lord, I need to see some deliverance now. I need to see some results now. Show me that you're here right now.

I can't trust you over any lengthy period of time. I can't go for three days. Let me ask you this.

We've compared this petulant prayer of Hezekiah in its response to the threat of death to what the Lord Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane. What would have happened if the Lord Jesus could not trust God for three days? After two days, he will raise us up. On the third day, we shall live again, which was an Old Testament prophecy.

What if the Lord Jesus couldn't trust God for those three days? What if the Lord Jesus could not have trusted God for the three years of his earthly ministry? Count the feast days, count the trips to Jerusalem. It was a slightly over three year ministry, right? What if the Lord Jesus couldn't trust him for three years, much less trust him for three days? Hezekiah is given both of those opportunities and he fails them both. The Lord Jesus was given both of those opportunities and triumphed in them both.

You and I are given this opportunity to trust God for the span of our life and to trust God in the hour of our death. The Lord Jesus is our example. Hezekiah is the counterexample.

Is he a believer? Is he gonna be raised up? Is he gonna be delivered? Yes. And that 15 extra years speaks of 1500 years, which is gonna be the 500 years of life that Judah is gonna have

from the time of Esther when the temple is rebuilt and restored, Ezra and Nehemiah go back and the people actually come into possession. You remember we talked about what is the 69 weeks of Daniel? When does that clock start? It's not the decree of Nehemiah and Ezra's day.

It is the decree of Esther's day that is commemorated in that Feast of Dedication, the Feast of Lights. That's when the clock started ticking. That's why you don't have to do tricky math and change 365 day years into 360 years and do all kinds of complicated calculations to arrive at the time of the Lord Jesus.

From the time of Esther, which is circa 470 BC until the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem in 70 AD, 500 years, 500 years. And then you're gonna have a thousand years in the millennial kingdom. That's 1500 years corresponding to the 15 years that is granted to Hezekiah.

They're going to get another shot. Despite their captivity, despite their brush with death in the Babylonian captivity, you would think, well, they'll never return. Northern kingdom never came back.

Southern kingdom did for another 500 years of autonomy beginning in the days of Esther. That's why the book of Esther is so important. That's why her willingness to risk her life, a daughter of Judah willing to risk her life before Ahasuerus Xerxes gives them 500 more years and the Lord is gonna give them a thousand more years in the millennium.

That's the 15 years and 1500 years. But can we trust God the way the Lord Jesus did? Or are we gonna trust him the way Hezekiah did? Saved yet so as by fire, there but outside the walls, there but barely. We make that choice.

God makes us a promise. Is it substantial? Is it definitional? Is it real to us? Or have we got to have some short-term quick results? It is an evil and adulterous generation that seeks a sign. What is adultery? Well, I'm with you in making protestations of love today, but I'm gonna be elsewhere tonight.

I'm keeping up the sham of my marriage by day and I am quote unquote working late tonight. Adultery, betraying a relationship while pretending to maintain it. It's an evil and adulterous generation that seeks a sign.

God will give signs to people on His initiative and as a confirmation that His messenger is genuine, that His message is real. But that's God's choice of a sign in God's time. He gives them a three-year sign, they can't trust it.

Gives them a three-day sign, he can't trust it. He says, fine, what do you want? Shadow, go backwards. Give me something supernatural right now.

That's the only thing that'll convince me. Shame on Hezekiah and that those 15 years, just like the 1500 years, how much does Judah get accomplished in that? How much does Judah get done? How ready are they for the Messiah toward the end of those 1500 years? Not at all. How

ready are they for the return of Satan at the end of the thousand years? There's a tiny camp of the saints that's surrounded by all of the chaff, all of the goats, all of the ones who immediately respond when Satan is released at the end of the millennial kingdom.

How successful is it? Does it overwhelm the earth? Is everybody evangelized and everybody's on board with God? No, the tiny camp of the saints is surrounded at Gog Magog. And all of those surrounding greatly outnumber that tiny camp and have to be destroyed by fire from God. Where's the faith? Where is the evidence of things not seen? Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

And Hezekiah lost it. Given a promise of God, instead he tries to buy off the enemy and he nearly loses his life in the process. Well, it's a powerful object lesson for us, isn't it? Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you that as we ask and seek and knock, your truth is revealed to us and how powerful it is in the hands of the Holy Spirit within us to fortify us, to motivate us, to rebuke, correct and instruct us, to give us the wherewithal to rise above our flesh and the sin that so easily besets us and run patiently the course that you have set before us following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus to be overcomers, to be worthy in this life and the one to come for service, to exploit opportunities and to reflect your glory. We pray that all of those things will take place as we spend time reflecting on this truth.

We pray that all things will redound to the praise of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. And we pray it in his name. Amen.