Kings and Prophets 15-10-08

This is Thursday, the 8th of October, 2015. We continue our study of kings and prophets. We are short a whole kingdom now.

We're just looking at the Southern Kingdom. And we are about to study the first king who never saw the Northern Kingdom, and that is the well-known, redoubtable, and infamous King Manasseh. He had no experience of a northern neighbor as the ten tribes have gone into captivity and have been exported to Assyria to be replaced by vast numbers of foreigners.

So there is a different kind of climate that will prevail when he comes to the throne. We have a little bit left to cover with King Hezekiah, the close of his reign, and a couple of interesting details that are not well known. But we have a very marked and salient biblical emphasis as this time in the history of Judah comes to a close under Hezekiah, and that's what we'll look at.

But let's take a moment as we begin to dedicate our time and our study and our fellowship to the glory of the Lord Jesus as we go to God the Father in prayer. Father, it is such a privilege and a refreshment and an encouragement to remind ourselves of the favored position that we enjoy in Your grace because of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are held securely in Your hands.

We are permanently related to You through Him. We have so many opportunities and potentials and future hope as well as present sustaining grace and Your generous and compassionate watch care over us. We are so grateful and so thankful for these things.

We thank You especially for the food for our souls that comes from Your Word and the ongoing ministry of Your Holy Spirit who not only enables us to understand it and see its pertinence and meaning, but to remember it and put it into application at the point of need. We pray that as we together look at this portion of Your Word that each one will receive a blessing and be motivated and instructed as we see that although these things happened many centuries ago, they live and breathe Your truth and Your power into our lives. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, we have tried to honor the extent and emphasis given to Hezekiah's reign in the Scriptures recorded in 2 Kings, in Chronicles, and in Isaiah as well as alluded to a couple of other places. It is signaled, it is significant.

I think it was something that was in the mind of the Lord Jesus as He reflected on His heritage in the line of rule from David in the tribe of Judah. These are His forebears. These are useful historical lessons and spiritual grist for the mill, as it were, when you look at the possibilities, the options, the tests, the decisions that are made, and God's response either in blessing or in judgment based on how those are executed.

And the king, of course, is a reflection of the people. He is the head. He is the embodiment in many ways of the attitudes and the priorities of the people in the kingdom.

And when they follow His lead, it is because they are willing. They are not dragged against their will into worship of God or into worship of false gods. This is something that is a reflection of what's already in their hearts and not someone else's fault.

So we find this to be the case in the days of King Ahaz, who was an exceedingly wicked king and had sort of set a new standard in Judah for not since the days of Athaliah had there been such animosity and antagonism toward the worship of God and the word of God. People would long for the days that they had heard about of Jehoshaphat when the word of God was taught and people were streaming in from other places to be encouraged and to grow in grace and knowledge of God through that instruction and the wonderful flourishing culture and blessing that attended their faithfulness and their diligence and their enthusiasm for God. And then to see it fade and wither and blow away in the wind and sort of reach a nadir under Ahaz.

But then you have a bright new morning with Hezekiah and on his first day, in his first year, he begins to sweep things clean and restores temple worship, commissions the priests, they celebrate the Passover and are inclusive and encouraging and there's a wonderful momentum and a fresh breeze in the air. And Hezekiah is compared to David with his heart and with his enthusiasm and with his energy and with his dedication to God and he begins so well. But many times our beginning and the things that we do so well in the beginning aren't sustained over time.

And while you're listening to the tones of my voice, think about this. Many of us were very encouraged and enthusiastic and motivated as we began to see the wonderful things that are in God's Word, how powerful, how meaningful, how detailed, how inspired, how helpful, how fruitful our lives can be as we learn and grow in the study of God's Word. And we've done that perhaps for years in different places and under different methodologies perhaps.

Sometimes we might have attended a brick-and-mortar church, we might have been studying on tapes or over a remote, as some are even doing as I speak. Somebody will be listening to this recording perhaps at some point in the future. And that's the way we do it.

I was reminded this past week in a conversation that you can have a desire for fellowship and for like-minded believers such as we enjoy here, but it cannot be available. And I personally had what I like to think of as my time by the brook Cherith where the ravens were dropping cassettes on my head for about 13 years before I was in a place where there was sustained and regular fellowship with like-minded believers. And sometimes we just have to wait and look for that.

The days of Jehoshaphat were a wonderful time where it was available and could be accessed and made use of. And then there were the sort of thin and scattered remnants of believers that had that attitude and they might have been few and far between. They didn't have recording technology and Internet and so on other than what they could do in their own minds.

So what do we derive from all of this up to this point? There is feast and there is famine. There

are those times when the freshen of grace from above is like spring rains and we have abundant crops and our fields yield a hundredfold and we're in a great time of prosperity. And then there are other times when we are stretched and we are challenged and we are tested and we have to live on what we've got.

And our fellowship winds up being largely with the Lord Himself through the presence of the Holy Spirit and through the Word of God that we reflect on and that we bring to our mind. And we have to fly solo like Lindbergh across the Atlantic sometimes and just slapping ourselves to stay awake and hoping to land. Of course I wouldn't want to be hoping to land in France but that's all another story.

But we have times of famine. Even in the land there were years of famine and God would provide. You think about Joseph down in Egypt and God saying, Look there's going to be seven fat years followed by seven lean years so you need to be fortified and look ahead and be prepared because lean times will come.

And this happens to you and to me. Sometimes if we are dislocated or relocated or circumstances change and we shouldn't be frightened, we shouldn't be downcast, we shouldn't be discouraged. God is just exercising us in a different way and we persevere, we push through.

The Lord Jesus had wonderful days on the mountainside and on the plains where He would teach and people were responsive and asking questions and you could imagine that He might wonder if perhaps this was the day and that there would be enough people to carry the momentum of the nation and bring in the kingdom that the Lord Jesus was offering to them. And then there were other darker days when there's opposition and there's contention and there's strife and many go back from following Him because they don't like the tone of His words and the content of His teaching and there's increasing opposition and hostility and resentment and death threats and death plots from the leadership and the people who are supposed to know and to be in the forefront of shaping public opinion. And there were many dark days and the Lord Jesus, even in the midst of His disciples, would often go off by Himself and spend time alone communing with His Father in Heaven.

So we see these ups and downs particularly as we look at the kingdom of Judah, the good guys, the ones down south that last the longest and where David was from and where he reigned, the first to recognize him and the last ones to really depart from the worship of God, the place where the temple was and the presence of God at the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat. So we should not be discouraged. We can look around and think in our day there's such a dearth and such an absence of community seemingly with believers who really understand biblical Christianity.

I get discouraged looking around and I'm pretty hard to discourage but it's just depressing. Every place you look, and I don't mean to be critical so maybe I won't go too far down that road, but it can be discouraging. However, we don't look to websites.

We don't look to what everybody else is doing. We have our personal relationship with the Lord. We have those that God has provided in our near periphery or by whatever means.

Sometimes it may just be Elijah watching for the birds to show up and drop the chow and the brook is slowly shrinking and shriveling and Elijah I'm sure scratched his head and said, well, what's going to happen when there is no more water? But God always has a plan. So one of the reasons I review this a little bit is Hezekiah began well but we saw that at the great time of challenge after he's built such a great foundation and was off to such a good start he really seems to founder and to struggle and to fail. When he is doing and there's a clear task of accomplishment, look at this temple.

It is closed and shuttered. The priests aren't doing their job. I can fix that.

And he just goes at it, hammer and tongs and gets that accomplished. It's a physical task and he knows it's right. His heart is in it.

He wants to please the Lord and all of that is great. But sometimes we have difficulty when there isn't that task anymore. A very loose analogy would be parents, husband and wife who have a marriage and then their children come along and while they're raising the kids and facing the challenges of supporting a family and doing all that, everything is great.

But once the children leave, it can happen where they kind of look at each other and say, well, the tasks are over with and what are we going to do now? And sometimes they kind of start fighting and split the blanket and go their separate ways because they had a task and a mission and a purpose that helped to unite them and absent that, when it is completed and finished and the kids are off on their own, it turns out that they were too much invested in that and not enough in the actual substance of their relationship. And I wonder if that isn't kind of what happened with Hezekiah. That as long as he had something he could do for the Lord, he was all about it.

But when it was accomplished and he sort of began to coast, the actual, the kind of Davidic love for God and meditation in his word and fruitful anticipation of future things, you just don't seem to find that in the later years of Hezekiah. And once everything is furnished, he sort of coasts and it seems that the fire gets banked and the coals are under the ashes and it's still there. He still knows God and loves God, but it just isn't what it was when he began.

So we want to watch for this. We want to be careful to nurture and stimulate the fire that is in our souls in the positive sense, not the fire of judgment, but the fire of enthusiasm and of dedication and of commitment and of growth and opportunity and watching and waiting and being ready to serve and ready to speak and ready to advance and not flagging. You remember there are some letters in Revelation 2 and 3 to churches that lost their first love and got distracted and ended up basing their priorities on material things and didn't realize that even though they were materially prosperous as Hezekiah becomes, they were actually poor and miserable and blind and naked from a spiritual point of view.

So that's one of the major lessons we get from looking at this reign of Hezekiah in overview. But as we pick up tonight in 2 Kings chapter 20, after the shadow, the wonderful sign, and by the way, you know the principle of signs. When does God use signs? Who seeks a sign? Who needs a sign? When are signs prevalent? It is in the infancy of a thing.

It is when there's not, and sometimes it's necessary, the inception of the church age, nobody is a master of the new dispensation and the new truth. It is unfolding. People are learning and growing.

Everyone is an infant. The apostles are infants in the new dispensation. So there are signs and there are miracles to fill the gap and to assure and to qualify messengers in the minds of the hearers.

This somebody here is from God. They have been, this is their ID card. Signs are an indication that the power of God is accompanying this message and because we don't have enough information to verify the message, God is verifying it.

Jesus said this when He was performing miracles. He said, if you don't believe my words, believe the works because the works testify that He was from God. Same thing in the early days, but it is always in the inception of a thing.

When the beginning steps are being taken and when a time of maturity comes, these things cease. They are unnecessary because God operates at a higher level. They are baby steps and you would think if there was ever a time for signs, it would be at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, not when he is at death's door.

But this sign of the shadow retreating is a little bit of a clue that God is having to go back and at such a time as He should be a teacher, He has need of one to teach Him again the first principles. These things that He knew 14 years before. So, the shadow went back 10 degrees or 10 steps on the staircase of Ahaz.

And we have these constant references back to Ahaz, his very wicked father. It's not an accident. It isn't the steps of Jehoshaphat.

It's not the steps of David or of Solomon. They are the steps of Ahaz. And the sign moving up and down on the steps of Ahaz should have been a little bit of an alarm bell.

Should have been a little bit of a drumstick beating on the football helmet here for Hezekiah that, Hey, do you realize that you're not what you were? I'm talking to you in terms of your father and it's a warning. Well, look at verse 12 of 2 Kings chapter 20. This is where we pick up tonight.

At that time, Beradac Baladan or Meradac Baladan, the bait and the maim in the square Aramaic script look so similar that they're often confused. The guy's name is actually Meradac Baladan, but here you have Beradac. We'll call him whatever it calls him here.

He's the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick. So now this is Babylon. Babylon at this time is just a province.

It's a sub satrapy of the great Assyrian Empire. They're just, this would be sort of like the state of Texas in the United States. They are something, but they're not independent.

They're not brawny and ready to do anything, but they've got ambitions. And Meradac Baladan really would like to get out from under Assyria, and he's got visions of world conquest and doing what Assyria has done. He thinks Assyria's got cracks in the facade, and he's sniffing the wind and looking around at targets of opportunity to see if he can't make Babylon far more than what it is, which is merely sort of a sub state at this point of the Assyrian Empire.

So he hears about Hezekiah being sick, and it doesn't say that he heard about the sign. It doesn't say that their son went the reverse direction and he's coming down to see. There have been people who speculate that, well, why would he be interested that some king down south and west would be of interest just because he got sick and got well.

But obviously the story with the supernatural elements was told. He was absolutely a death store. Everybody believed it, but the Pultus and the prophet and the sign, and he is suddenly alive and well, and he was healed in a matter of days.

And plus, it had to have come to his ears that mysteriously the Assyrian army was turned back and did not take Jerusalem. Everybody was expecting the news that Jerusalem was going to fall like everybody else had fallen, and suddenly they haven't. And Hezekiah's sickness and miraculous recovery is almost metaphorical for the sickness and miraculous recovery of Jerusalem, and by extension, Judea.

Everybody just thought, well, that's a done deal. These unstoppable Assyrians are going to just smash them and there will be no more. And suddenly they hear, well, the king is alive and well, the city is alive and well, Judea is coming back, and they seem to be doing great.

And so, he wants to come and find out how did you beat the Assyrians? How did you, what went on that you didn't die and your city wasn't taken? I mean, this whole thing is just astonishing. He's interested. So, he sends a present to Hezekiah, let's be friends, because maybe you'll share with me your secret.

I would like to know how these Assyrians can be, you know, thwarted. And Hezekiah was attentive to them. Hezekiah is just as flattered to hear from them as they are anxious to hear from him.

So, everybody's hail fellow well met because, you know, pretty much everybody else is subjugated by Assyria and Judea is kind of standing alone there. Well, now here's somebody else that seems sympathetic to them and is not sympathetic to Assyria. And Hezekiah says, boy, I've been wondering when I would ever get an ally that would be meaningful.

You know, Egypt was a bust and so Ahaz had looked to them and later on they're going to look to them. So, it's a match made in heaven. They just think this friendship is going to be beneficial in both directions.

So, he's attentive to them and showed them all the house of his treasures, the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, all of his armory. Of course, when you show the armory, now you know how many troops the guy can equip. Here's how many chariots we've got, here's how many shields, here's how many spears.

I mean, this is like a free recon of stuff that would be classified top secret and no foreign and all the rest of it in military. He just opens wide because he thinks this is all friends and, you know, if Meredith showed up, they'd just become blood brothers and he thinks this is great. But this is actually a sly... He not only wants to exploit Hezekiah's knowledge and information, but he wants to absorb him and have this as a part of his campaign of world domination.

There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them. No secrets, no closed doors, nothing hidden, nothing held back. What is the... And we know that this doesn't turn out well.

This is going to be a bad thing. Isaiah comes in verse 14 to King Hezekiah and says to him, What did these men say and from where did they come to you? Isn't this always God's way to start with a question? Isaiah already knows where they came from and he knows that Hezekiah showed them everything. He knows this.

God knows it. But God sends Isaiah and says, So, where were these guys from? And what did they say? What did you say? So, Hezekiah said, They came from a far country, from Babylon. He's already making excuses.

Well, it's not like I gave away something that anybody could hurt us with. They're not just on the border. They won't come attack.

They're far, far away. It doesn't hurt to tell them because they can't do anything with the information. He already knows he goofed.

He's already making excuses. Far country. Isaiah says, What have they seen in your house? Of course, he knows the answer to this question.

Why are you where you are? God says to Adam and Eve in the garden. Where is your brother? God says to Cain. The blood has already been crying from the ground.

What have they seen in your house? Hezekiah answered, They have seen all that is in my house. There's nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them. Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord.

Now, Isaiah's already got this word. It isn't coming to him. He's not an autodidact or something.

He's not just a typewriter. It's not a teletype, you know, spitting out a fresh message. Isaiah got this word from the Lord.

God came to Isaiah previously and said, Go tell Hezekiah the following. Ask him these questions. Give him my message.

So he says, Hear the word of the Lord. Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and what your fathers have accumulated until this day shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the Lord.

You showed it to them. They are going to possess it. Everything you showed them.

This is sort of a reverse. What was God's promise to Abraham when he left Ur of the Chaldees and finally pried himself loose from Haran and came down? What did God tell Abraham? Every place you set the sole of your foot. Any place your sandal touches, that's yours.

You just walk around and as soon as you walk into it, it's going to be yours and your descendants. I give you the land of promise everywhere you put the sole of your foot. Well, this is sort of a reverse.

Everything that you showed these people, they get. You know, it would have been good if you did not show them some stuff because that you would keep. But because you've showed them everything, they're getting everything.

Now, why is this a bad thing? Why does God sort of pronounce this judgment on Hezekiah? Was he just not thinking? Was he unwise? What is the sin here that is resulting in this judgment? Well, this is the reason we dwelt upon in preceding weeks the shift in attitude and the change in priorities and the failure in Hezekiah's thinking because this action of talking to the Babylonians is of a piece. Isaiah delivered God's promise and Hezekiah didn't believe it. And he stripped the gold and tried to buy off the Assyrians.

He did not believe the promise of God. When Isaiah comes back and says, okay, you're going to live and not die, he doesn't believe that either. You've got to give me a sign.

Make something supernatural happen. It can't be something ordinary. It's got to be something supernatural.

I'm not going to believe the promise of God. And yet God fulfilled His promise anyway. Think back to Moses when the people have no water and God brings them to a rock and He tells Moses, go and strike the rock and water will come forth and Moses does so.

Then, years later, there is another time of thirst and there's another rock and Moses goes to God and says, these people are clamoring for water. What shall I do? God says, speak to the rock and water will come forth. Well, Moses gets a little full of himself and he does what he did the last time.

He takes his rod and he strikes the rock. He is disobedient. He is angry.

Must we bring water forth to you from this rock? And he smacks it. Well, it spoils the picture because that rock was Christ. They drank from that spiritual rock, it tells us in the New Testament.

And the Lord Jesus is only struck once. He is the suffering servant once. The second time, He is the conquering king.

We speak in faith and provision is made. The Lord Jesus isn't an annual Passover. He is not a repeated sacrifice.

He died once for all. And Moses goofs that up because he is short-sighted and he is not careful to be obedient. And there is some lacking element of faith there because faith and obedience are two sides of the same coin.

And where you see disobedience, there is a failure of faith. There is a failure of dedication. There is a failure of commitment.

There is a failure of watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. And that's what happens with Hezekiah. Well, why is this such a sin? Why is this judgment pronounced for showing the Babylonian envoys everything he's got? What is his purpose in doing so? People say, well, he was proud and it's his pride.

That could have entered into it in the same way that anger may have entered into Moses' action at the rock. But the fundamental failure here is I don't know that God can keep on delivering us. I need an ally.

I want this guy to know that we're a worthy partner. We've got assets that we can bring to an alliance, that we can bring to a treaty relationship. I want him to know how many troops I've got and how much armament I've got and how much wealth we can bring to support a conflict.

If the Assyrians come back, we can be partners. And he's cultivating, he's doing the very same thing with Babylon that he tried to do with Assyria. I will use wealth to solve the problem.

I will use physical assets. I will use human relationships to solve potential problems. I'll rely on this relationship with man rather than relying on relationship with God.

Well, he's the king of Judah. It is his God-given responsibility to rely on God, to recognize his anointing from God and to be an example to the people of reliance upon God. And there's no more public example of not relying on God than defacing the temple to buy off the enemy.

Who could not see that? It's on the Temple Mount. It's in view from the entire city. And when he strips the pillars and strips that door, it is a public pronouncement that, well, we've got to use this wealth to buy these guys.

And he's doing the same thing here. He's using his wealth and his possessions to try to influence the Babylonians to come on board and be his allies. And God says, you've done this one too many times.

And everything that you've shown them is going to be theirs and it isn't going to help you. In the same way that you sent all that stuff to the Assyrians and it didn't help you, it was God's deliverance. God slays the 185,000.

God sends the Assyrian king back to his own land to be slain by his own people. God delivers anyway. Just like the water still came out of the rock when Moses struck it, but Moses pays a heavy price.

They shall take away some of your sons. Look at verse 18. They will take away some of your sons.

And of course, sons in the scripture means descendants. Who will descend from you, whom you will beget, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Name four men who fulfill this prophecy.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. I just purposely never use their Babylonian names. They're all idolatry names.

That's their slave name. I don't use their slave names. I only use their God-given Israelite names and their beautiful names.

We talked about it when we did Daniel. But these four men are the fulfillment in the Bible. There were many others, but they are the ones that are named and that we know about in the book of Daniel that are the exact, precise fulfillment.

Daniel, and Hananiah, and Azariah, and Mishael pay this price. But even though they do, God still glorifies himself in them because there is no judgment that cannot be turned to blessing when there is faith, when there is turning, when there is repentance, when there is trust, when there is response. And even though those four men are a literal fulfillment of this prophecy, God blesses them and their names are preserved as heroes of faith, genuine heroes, not the way they throw the word around today.

Over time, and in a crisis, and in very adverse circumstances, they are faithful. And even though they are a product of this judgment and are emblematic of this judgment, they are also emblematic of God's grace and that God can turn cursing to blessing for those who are the called according to his purpose. And so Hezekiah, in his myopic, nearsighted, selfish way, says what? The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good.

Remember when the word of the Lord was spoken to him last time? You will die and not live? And he turned his face to the wall and he prayed and the word of the Lord changed? This is a pronouncement of judgment of being conquered, of the wealth of the land being eviscerated,

of his own descendants being turned into eunuchs and slaves and servants in a far off land. And he says, well, that's okay. That's not bad.

Because there will be peace and truth at least in my days. You're the king for crying out loud. Are you not concerned at all for the people? No.

He only wants to solve his own problems. This is the direct opposite of what we are encouraged to think and do to look out not only for our own interests but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you, which also is in Christ Jesus, who didn't think his own good situation was a thing to be held on to, emptied himself, humbled himself.

And this is the problem. Yes, there is a pride element here. Yes, there is a selfishness and a self-centeredness that is manifest.

But it didn't happen on this occasion. It has permeated everything we've seen in the last several weeks, everything that's happened in these last couple of chapters in Kings, in Chronicles, and in Isaiah. You get three different views of it.

And God says, you need to look at this. Be warned. The Lord Jesus looked at this in his humanity and was warned of what can happen if you let self-interest blind you to responsibility, to opportunity, to the glory of God, to service and purpose and potential in the place where God has put us.

Verse 20, The rest of the acts of Hezekiah, all his might, and how he made a pool and a tunnel and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? When we have church at our house this coming Sunday, you'll be able to see my cast of the Hezekiah tunnel inscription. I was going to bring it and show it in this class, but it cracked. And I'm afraid to move it.

So you'll be able to see it there at the house on Sunday. Most of you have seen it before, but it's just fascinating to me. It is tangible.

It is a tangible artifact. None of Hezekiah's pillars, the doors of the temple, none of his wealth, nothing of his reign has survived. But this inscription, where there is water brought for the people, what is water metaphorical for and emblematic of? Water will flow out from under the throne of God in the kingdoms to come to give life, to nurture the washing of water by the word.

The one good thing that Hezekiah has left us is a record in the word of God that we can learn from and grow thereby. And so this pool inscription is a tangible artifact from that day. And every time I look at it, it just gives me chills.

It just makes the hair on my neck stand up when I look at it and I think, Isaiah saw this inscription, read it. King Hezekiah saw this inscription, read it. People in and around this time saw this happen, saw the completion of the tunnel.

There was a celebration and there was a dedication and the inscription was made and we can look at it. Are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah at which we have looked? So Hezekiah rested with his fathers, then Manasseh his son reigned in his place. The next verse, chapter 21, of course there's no chapter divisions in the original.

Manasseh was a son of 12 years when he became king and he reigned 55 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. We only have time to make two observations as we begin to look at Manasseh tonight.

Well, three actually and I have zero minutes left to do it. Number one, Manasseh as you know is an old name. Who's the first person to bear this name? It's not this guy.

It's the son of Joseph. Joseph has two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Who's the firstborn? Manasseh.

He's his firstborn and Joseph explains why he names him Manasseh back in Genesis. And the verb, the maim there, remember how maim turns verbs into nouns and participles and things like that? This is a PL participle from the verb nasa which means actually nasha I think. This is actually Manasseh.

And I was careful to check the dot over my sheen there to be sure I was right about that. I magnified my screen. Matthew teased me about missing the little dots and let me tell you, it gets harder to see them the older I get.

But this is nasha which means to forget. And Joseph names Manasseh his firstborn son because he says, the Lord has enabled me to forget the hardship of my earlier years and being out of the land of my fathers and away from my family. I have a new family here.

And Joseph as a precursor of the Lord Jesus, as a prefigurement of the Lord Jesus, the church is his body and his bride and there is a sense in which God says, I will give you something to make you forget that you were despised and rejected of men, that you came unto your own and your own received you not. You as the son of Jacob in a sense are given a new family and a firstborn son and Joseph looks at him and says, God has made me forget the hardship, the sacrifice, the blood on the coat, the betrayal by my own brothers and has given me this family and this son. And so he is the son that causes to forget, the son that causes me to forget these painful things because it's new potential and new opportunity.

However, there is the crossing of the hands and who ends up getting the blessing? It is not Manasseh, it is Ephraim. And so even though Joseph loves him and sees him as a blessing, he isn't the firstborn. He's not the one, and of course the tribe of Manasseh eventually disappears and the northern kingdom will be known as Ephraim, not Manasseh.

Well, this king's name is reminiscent of potential and opportunity, but why would Jacob cross his hands? There's something about Ephraim that is lacking just as there was something about Jacob that was lacking in Esau. And there is a reason why the blessing goes, just because you're

the firstborn, it's not automatic. And just because you're the product of a curse like Daniel and his three friends doesn't mean that you're doomed.

It is about choice. It is about attitude. It is about a heart that seeks the Lord.

It can overcome anything and the lack of it can destroy anything. Well, Manasseh harks back to this son who didn't have the heart that would qualify him for that firstborn blessing in the same way that Reuben didn't have it as Jacob's firstborn. Secondly, it says he was 12 when he became king and he reigned 55 years in Jerusalem.

And we very often say, well, Hezekiah is given 15 more years, he's 12, so obviously three years into that extra 15 years, Manasseh is born and he comes to the throne when Hezekiah dies. So if Hezekiah had died when he, quote, was supposed to, there would be no Manasseh. I'm very convinced that that's wrong.

So is Edmund Thiel, who wrote this very wonderful book, The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings. And we work back from the reign of Josiah, who is datable and he has a 31-year reign and two years before that is Ammon and the predecessor to Ammon is Manasseh. And the way things work out, there is only 45 years available for a sole reign of Manasseh, which means that he had a 10-year co-regency with his father that began when he was 12.

And Hezekiah dies and Manasseh is 22-ish. Now, why is this significant? A couple of reasons. First of all, the wonderfully convenient lesson that, well, if you died when you're supposed to, you would have had this wicked son, somewhat falls to the ground.

And honestly, the Bible does not make that point, which is interesting in and of itself. But secondly, you can imagine, why would there be this co-regency? What's one thing that Hezekiah knows from the prophecy of Isaiah? He's got 15 years and he's out. And he says, okay, there will be peace in my time.

And so, within just a couple of years, when his son is old enough to be bar mitzvahed, which is 12, he says, this guy is the next king. Just as Solomon became king before David died, he is the heir apparent. He's the prince of Wales.

He is anointed king to take over as soon as Hezekiah dies. And Hezekiah is grooming him to take over and overlaps with him and says, I know I've only got 12, 13 more years from the time that his son is a man. So I'm bringing him into the palace.

I'm going to teach him everything I know, and this will ensure continuity and so on. Well, those years are added to Manasseh's reign because he can say, well, I've been in the palace since I was 12. So my total reign is 55 years, even though he's only sole king for 45.

And we've seen this as a common precedent in both the northern and southern kingdom that the co-regency years get added to the total years of reign. That's even true for Hezekiah. His years of reign overlap with Ahaz, his father, and are counted.

And Thiel can explain it all if you want the gory details. I won't go into it beyond to say this. The investment that Hezekiah makes in his son doesn't pan out.

Manasseh is going to be a uniquely wicked king in the history of Judah, and it is going to be noted over and over and over again in Scripture that he is wicked. Where Hezekiah was compared to David, Manasseh is going to be compared to Ahab, and he is the only southern kingdom king. Usually they'll say, well, he went back and he was like unto Jeroboam or something like that.

Well, Manasseh is linked to Ahab in the same way that Hezekiah was linked back to David. So part of the problem here is because of the weakness of his faith in the latter years of his life, Hezekiah is a terrible father in the same way that David, in the weakness of his faith in the latter years of his life, becomes a terrible father to Absalom and to Amnon and has trouble in his own house because his own spiritual life is not strong. He cannot inculcate, even though he's got 10-year overlap with his son, it doesn't take.

He can't influence him. And listen, this is the final thing. His mother's name is Hephzibah.

Look at the first part of that. It's Heph-Z, which is actually Kephetz. Kephetz.

If you remember that word, it is the word for pleasure. It is the word for take delight. Kephetz.

My delight is bah, in her. The suffix there is bet, which means in, and ah is the feminine pronoun. My delight is in her.

This is the exact term that God uses for Jerusalem, the daughter of Zion, and God says, My delight is in her. Well, what happened? Manasseh's mother is emblematic of, is metaphorical for, God's hopes and purpose for Jerusalem itself. My delight is in her.

My name is there. My purpose is there. My potential is there.

My people are there. This is the capital where people assemble and worship and where there is communion with their covenant God. But Manasseh does not benefit from his father, Hezekiah, who has started out with a heart like David, nor from his mother.

My delight is in her. He throws it all over. Well, we have a lot more to consider as we move into an analysis of this portion of God's word and the reign of Manasseh, but it is a warning.

Just because you come from parents who have a relationship with God, just because there is an environment of acknowledgement and of, you know, the prophet Isaiah circulating in the area, it doesn't necessarily rub off. It isn't necessarily absorbed. Everyone makes their own choices.

And we rise and we fall. We are blessed or we are judged based on how we choose. It is our personal priority, our personal dedication, our personal relationship, our personal commitment that determines how our life turns out.

We don't ride on the coattails of our parents. We don't survive based on the momentum that might exist or not exist in our church, a momentum toward blessing, a momentum toward judgment. We determine by God's grace which way we will go.

He gives us that choice. We are made in His image and after His likeness and we are free to choose. It doesn't matter if your parents reprobate, you can be godly.

It doesn't matter if your parents are godly, you can be reprobate. We are given opportunities. We are given exposure.

And God the Holy Spirit in this age confronts us and we are accountable and we are responsible. And there are consequences for what we choose. It is the message and the emphasis throughout Scripture.

Choose you this day whom you will serve. Yeshua is going to serve the Lord and we want to follow in that example. We do not want to be Manasseh.

His name is ironic in the sense that He forgets the example of His grandfather that was wicked. He forgets the example of the Northern Kingdom that has disappeared from sight doing the very things that He is going to conceive of and accomplish during His reign. He is going to follow in the footsteps of the Northern Kingdom and He forgets.

He does not remember the consequences and the judgment of God that was pronounced promiscuously by the prophets. It doesn't make a dent. He fails to learn.

And those who fail to learn from history are what? Doomed to repeat it. And Manasseh is going to send Judah with a great big push toward captivity and judgment. Well, we will pick this up next time but we will close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the instruction and rebuke and correction that it provides for us. We know it was written for our benefit.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to each heart in a way that will motivate us and encourage us to faithfulness and obedience in our particular place in Your plan. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.