

Kings and Prophets 15-10-15

This is Thursday evening, the 15th of October 2015. We're continuing our study of Kings and Prophets. We're resuming in 2 Kings chapter 21, looking at the opening of the reign of King Manasseh.

We will take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and then begin. Father, we are grateful. We are thankful for the many blessings you bestow on us day by day, the mercies that you renew to us every morning, the provision that you make for us and the opportunity that we have now to reflect on your truth, to have God the Holy Spirit be our teacher, and to remind us of those invisible and eternal truths that define us and that shape our motivation and our hope and are the substance of our faith.

We pray that as we look at this portion of your word that each one will find in it a blessing, meaningful and pertinent, things that can be applied that will make a difference so that we can together and individually reflect your glory and bring credit to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name. Amen.

We closed looking at the reign of Hezekiah last time. And as always, I just have one or two more notes on the end of Hezekiah's reign. In particular, you remember that the Assyrians back in chapter 19, after the Rabshakeh speech, after the letter that Sennacherib sent, Hezekiah's faith sort of falters and he winds up sending the bribe despite God's promise, despite the signs that God gave.

He just can't make it a reality in his mind and he folds. And in your New King James it says that he cut the gold off the temple doors and the pillars. But you notice the gold is in italics and a better translation there for the word, which does mean cut, is to strip, to peel off, to take the overlay and the gilding.

Obviously the doors were wood. If you had a golden door, it would pull the whole wall down when you opened it. So this is a wooden door overlaid with gold.

These pillars are strong pillars of stone or wood and then they were overlaid with gold as well. So he peels off, he strips, he cuts off that gold and sends it as a bribe along with some other stuff out of the treasury. Well, this displeases the Lord and that goes a long way toward explaining why he is suddenly out of nowhere sick unto death and God is greatly displeased.

But as is the case with many other kings, the smallest turn, the smallest expression of repentance, God's grace is right there. And God turns Hezekiah around in the entry hall to go back and deliver a word of God's change of plan on his behalf. And despite the fact that like Moses striking the rock, he malfunctions at this point, God creates the deliverance anyway and fulfills His promise.

So you will recall in chapter 19, verse 35, it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the

Lord went out and killed in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000. And when they arose early in the morning, there were the corpses all dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home and remained at Nineveh.

And given the timing of this attack, I've told you that there are two ways of understanding both the biblical account and the Assyrian records. The Assyrian records are silent on the second part of this, but there is some implication or you can construe some of Isaiah's prophecies and some of the words that are said here that maybe Sennacherib left and then came back about 10 years later and attacked again, and that there were two campaigns. So there's two schools of thought.

There was one campaign, that's my school of thought, or two campaigns, which is not supported in the Assyrian records and is just by inference and by implication, people say, well, it seems like it would make more sense. One of the arguments for the two campaign theory is that this campaign, the first one, is in the vicinity of 701 B.C., right around that time. And we know from extra biblical records that when Sennacherib does return home, and remember God said he will die in his own land, they'll kill him there.

Well, we know from historical records that this doesn't take place until about 680, about 20 years later. People say, well, that's an awfully long time. But if there was a second campaign, then his death and the prophecy that he would die in his own land and the slaughter and so on would be associated with that second campaign.

I just tell you that it changes none of the application. It changes none of the understanding of God's work, Hezekiah's failure of faith, and the reasons for his illness. Here's another, I have two more observations on this before we leave it and move into the reign of Manasseh.

I mentioned last time that if you work backward from Manasseh's grandson Josiah, we know very clearly from his interactions with Pharaoh from Egypt and one thing or another, we know the end of his reign. He dies in battle. We know the date of that battle firmly.

Working back with his years of reign and then the two-year reign of his father Ammon, then that leaves us 44 years, 45 years basically to fit the reign of Manasseh in after the death of Hezekiah, which we can also pin down pretty closely because of the reign, because of the 721 B.C. going out of the Northern Kingdom and so on. You can figure it all out if you really want to labor through it. When you work forward from Hezekiah and backward from Josiah, you figure out that there can only be a roughly 45-year reign for Manasseh.

Why is this important? Why am I telling you this? The Bible says he was 12 years old and when he began to reign, he reigned 55 years. That includes this 10-year co-regency. Now because of that, the oft-repeated and I have repeated it myself, the oft-repeated canard that, well, if Hezekiah had died when he was supposed to, Manasseh would never have been born, in the light of that is not so.

Because Manasseh was 12 about 5 years into the 15 years of the second term, if you will, which means that at the point that Hezekiah was sick and near death, Manasseh was about 7, which means that at the point that his father stripped the gold off the temple and off the pillars and displayed this great lack of faith, Manasseh was old enough to see and understand. Remember children matured much earlier then, that's why they were bar mitzvahed as men at the age of 12. So 5 years later, he's going to start co-reigning with his father, but at the age of 7, he sees his father do this.

And to me, this is a much more powerful lesson to draw from this whole set of circumstances and episodes, because think about, it's one thing if Manasseh is pretty much a boy and doesn't really start paying attention until the last few years of his father's reign, it's something else if he not only co-reigns with him for 10 years, but was old enough to see and understand what his father did in a time of crisis, and that his father's heart wasn't really in his faith at that point. And the observation I would suggest here is the example of faith that parents set in a household is important. We don't set the example to be setting the example.

You know, they talk about modeling good behavior. Well, I've got to pose good behavior so that people will observe it and learn from it. We're not talking about that.

But one of the motivations to pursue our faith, whether it's as parents in front of children, whether it is as believers who have been longer in the faith, this is parents and grandparents, one of the motivations to persevere and stick with it and not give up and give in and give out is recognizing that God has given us the opportunity to be a positive influence. And what a blessing it is, what an opportunity it is, and by God's grace, what a privilege it is to do that, to be that consistent, faithful example, push all the way to the end, all the way to the tape, however many days God gives us, whatever circumstances He gives us, and sometimes the days aren't the end of our life, sometimes it's where we are. We live in a place and we have associations and fellowships and friendships, then we're dislocated or they are relocated.

And those contact points only last for a time. What is the memory? What is the example? And what is the encouragement that we are able to be to other believers? And I can look back over my life and I can look back in my present associations now and see many people, past and present, who probably have no idea, but their faith and their attitude and their forwardness in their relationship with God is an encouragement and an inspiration. Every time we meet you look around and you see people who recognize the importance of God's Word and what a central place it has in our lives.

Hezekiah seems to have lost sight of that opportunity with his own son. Remember how it said at the beginning how much like David he was? Well, here's another way that he was like David. He not only had some of David's strengths, he had some of David's weaknesses.

And David got so busy ruling and reigning and doing other things and looking over the palace window at Bathsheba and one thing and another that he neglected the opportunity to be a positive influence with Absalom and with Amnon and some of the other members of his

household, Adonijah. He had three bad sons that we know of, those three. He had a fondness for starting names with the letter A, so you get Absalom, Amnon and Adonijah.

It's only Shlomo that turns out okay. He should have switched letters, he should have figured this out and changed the naming scheme. But it appears, and this is something of an inference, I don't mean to do Hezekiah an injustice, but the way his son turned out, he certainly didn't seem to get any help from his father's example.

And it's just something to bear in mind, it's something to observe as you sort of correct the chronology here and so I offer that to you. And then one final correction here out of chapter 19, not so much a correction but again a suggestion on my part. I brought this wonderful book by the way, this was a gift to me from my brother Matt, The Early Prophets, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings.

This is a translation and Matthew and I had found this, Everett Fox before he did this did the five books of Moses and it's really fascinating because it's a very careful, literal and very colorful expression of the Hebrew into English, bringing out the nuances and the subtleties that the Hebrew language embeds. The ones we talk about when we go through our English, well a lot of them are in here and it's really fun to read and it's always good to compare. And I checked Everett to see what he did with what I'm about to tell you and he didn't make any changes, which discourages me a little bit but not enough to not tell you.

But anyway, there are a few books that I recommend carefully because some of them aren't cheap. But Everett Fox's translation of the first five books and this one that Matthew gave me, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, really good. It's just fun to read.

You can just pick it out and read it and it just brings alive and brings out a lot of the subtleties that you normally need some guy that knows Hebrew to explain. So I like it. It's sort of an amplified Bible but more straight out of the Hebrew.

Speaking of the Hebrew, once again I direct your attention to the end of chapter 19. It came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out and killed in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000. And then you have people, it just says when they arose early in the morning, there were the corpses all dead.

They in the near context would seem to suggest the Assyrians awoke and found all of these corpses. It's not the entire Assyrian army slain because obviously Sennacherib packs up and goes away with what's left of his army. But there is an interesting note here from the Hebrew that I will just pass along.

This particular translation that you have in your New King James and your King James and pretty much all English translations is influenced by the Septuagint. The Hebrew here is somewhat different. Let me bring this up and read it to you, if I can get my recalcitrant copy of this to show up.

Hebrew here gives the 100 and then it gives the 85 and then it gives the, I'm sorry it gives the 80, it gives the 5 and then it gives the 100. And each of those is separated by a wow. And what's odd about that is that's not the normal way to present a Hebrew number.

And so this is, it says, ma'e shemanim v'kamshe elef and the elef is last. And remember we've talked about elef before, that that's something of an ambiguous term. But the numbers here, if you read this literally out of Hebrew, it is 180 and 5,000.

That's the way it reads. Khamse is 5 in Arabic. And this khamse here in Hebrew is the 5. And the numbers here, so you have 5 elef.

And ahead of that you have the shemanim, which is the, well you have ma'e which is the 100 and then the shemanim which is the 80 and then the 5,000. So honestly probably what this number means is 5,000, 5,000, 5,000, 5,000, 5,000, 5,000, 5,000, 180. Now if you stop and think, the largest army that Sennacherib ever fielded in any records was 120,000 when he attacked like Carchemish or someplace.

He was battling somebody a lot bigger than Jerusalem, and he had an army of 120,000. For there to have been 185,000 troops in and around Jerusalem, and for them all to die, just the, you think about how many people each citizen of Jerusalem would have had to bury of all of these corpses, and to try to rescue the supplies from the midst of these heaps of, you think about 185,000 people. This is bodies stacked as high as the horse's bridles.

They would have covered innumerable acres. You think about the film you've seen of large crowds at Woodstock or listening to the Pope or, you know, Concert in the Park for Paul Simon. I mean, it's a tiny fraction of that.

Here's what happened, in my view. There are people whose pious instincts want to try to add glory to God. They want to gild the lily.

They want to make God's accomplishments even bigger than they are, and this is another suggested point of application. Exaggeration for a believer is almost never a good idea. The truth is enough.

The truth is enough, and many times God has a reason and a purpose in that truth. I am acquainted with a fellow who did some wild game hunting in Africa, and when he first came back, shortly after he came back from that trip, he was sharing his experiences, and he brought back and had stuffed a tiger head, and it's on the wall of his office to this day. And when he first came back and he was telling the story of this tiger, he was out with these guides and bearers and so on, and they said, oh, you know, wanna wherever, get down, you know, we see the, you know, with binoculars, he was off in the bush, and there was this tiger.

And they could just see the edge of the tiger's body and could kind of tell where his head was. And so this fellow had his long-range, long-powered rifle with a big scope, and he shot this tiger and brought it back. Well, that was the story.

It was at a great distance. It was behind a bush. He shot it at almost the range of the rifle.

Well, over the course of the years, as that story was retold, pretty soon the tiger was out in the open and just 100 yards away. Well, a couple of years later, when the story was told, the lion was 50 yards away and running toward him. And the last telling of the story that I'm familiar with, the lion had leaped into the air and was about to come down on him, and he just had to fire by instinct to shoot the lion or tiger, whatever it was, blind, because it was so close he didn't have time to aim.

There's only one such animal on the wall, but the story has grown in drama over the years. And sadly, this is part of a pattern for this particular individual, and it is a discredit, because now when you're talking about other things that are more important, your credibility has been impugned by your own mouth. And so people tend to take everything you say with a grain of salt.

And the point of exaggeration is to try to blow yourself up larger or blow something up larger, and what you end up doing is diminishing it. And this is one of the texts that critics of the Bible have used to say, see, here's another impossibility. I mean, it's not a matter of can miracles happen? It's a matter of what Assyrian general ever fielded an army that could afford this kind of loss and still have enough left to return.

And it happened in the days of the Septuagint, because the Septuagint takes this number and reads it as 185,000. Everybody says, well, given a choice, I'll take the bigger number, because that glorifies God. Look how many he slayed.

The angel of the Lord slew in one night. The facts are always best. And honestly, when we get to glory, we'll check it out.

But I am confident, and I would bet whatever shekels I have, that this is 5,180, still larger than the brigade of midshipmen in Halsey Fieldhouse, which was 4,300. And that's the biggest crowd I've personally witnessed in one place that I can imagine. And it's way more than that.

And that's a lot of people in this day and at that time, and plenty. And all it would take is that many to have died overnight, and they're all dead. None of them are wiggling.

None of them are gasping or coughing. They're dead in one night. When the rest of the troops wake up, if you don't think that maybe one out of every five or one out of every six men in the army had died overnight, and they're looking over at the monk next to them, and the guys already got rigor mortis, the rest of them didn't even pack.

They fled. And they left and made tracks. And that's when they come out and say, wow, look at all this stuff.

Let's take it in, and we're not under siege anymore. Anyway, the Hebrew here, and by the way, we have other occasions like this. You remember, the same construction is used in 1 Kings 4,

verse 32.

Remember in 1 Kings, we were finishing up the reign of Solomon, and it said, he composed chamseh v'aleph psalms or songs, proverbs. And it's translated 1,005. It's not translated 5,000, because we have the collection, and we know about how many proverbs there are that he collected, and you can count them.

And so it's rendered 1,005. They understood it when they translated Solomon, but when it got to these Assyrians, it's inflated, and it's unrealistic. The terrain, you could never feed and support that many guys.

Their logistic trains would have just been nightmarishly large. It would have quickly evaporated everything and every edible piece of vegetation for just miles. So I would suggest to you that this was actually 5,180 that died, sufficient to strike terror and fear in the heart of the Assyrians and send them that same night away.

And ultimately back to their land. So again, point of application, let your yea be yea, and your nay be nay. I recently reviewed the passage where Jesus was talking about those who swear by the temple and by God's throne and swear by heaven.

And he said, look, you're trying to add weight to your word. Your word should be sufficient. When you say yes, that should be as strong as any oath anybody ever took.

When you say no, that should be as powerful a statement as your hand on a stack of Bibles and God himself witnessing your words. Let your yea be yea and your nay be nay. Your word ought to impress people as being enough.

If he said it, if she said it, I believe it, and I have no need for reinforcement, for exaggeration, for piling on, for I swear to you, I wouldn't lie. If I'm lying, I'm dying. You know, cross my heart and hope to die and all the other, I don't know what all things people try to, usually people do it like Peter and reinforce it with oaths now.

Remember when he was in the, at the campfire and the girl said, you were with him. And he says, not only was I not with him, but he began to swear and use epithets and oaths. That's always a bad sign.

So little note there, but we return now to, as I said, chapter 21. Manasseh was 12 years old when he began to reign as co-regent. His father dies 10 years later.

So his sole reign of 45 years begins when he is 22. He overlaps with his father for those 10 years formally, because Hezekiah knows exactly when he's going to die. And so he brings the young prince in as soon as he's bar mitzvahed at the age of 12 and schools him and trains him.

And you can see what good it does by reading. And before we read it, I just want to quickly review the content of chapter 14. I think the drugs I'm on are messing up my, my eyesight here.

18, that's, that's an eight, 18. Hezekiah reigns in Judah. He came to pass the third year of Hosea, the son of Elah, king of Israel.

Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, king of Judah began to reign. He was 25 years old when he became king and he reigned 29 years in Jerusalem. There's his mother.

He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places, broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image, broke in pieces the bronze serpent Moses made. That's, that takes some hubris.

That takes some cheek. Things been around. Uh, this is a circa seven 20 or so, uh, seven 30.

So that's a 700 year old bronze serpent, give or take. Right. And he busts it up.

What do we have that's 700 years old? What like, this would be like taking, you know, the Nina or the Pinta or the Santa Maria or something and just taking an ax to it and burning it for kindling, uh, something from the 1400s. Right. Is that my math? Right.

Or even the 1300s. So anyway, this is, this is brave, this revered antique, but he knows that the thing is taken on such mystic. This is like the finger bones of the apostle John and all the rest of this that the Catholics have as relics.

You know, you need to crush that stuff up and get rid of it because it distracts people. That's why God hasn't let anybody find Noah's Ark on Ararat or the rest of it. Now you contrast these, these wonderful great running start that Hezekiah has with Manasseh.

He did evil 21 to in the side of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel. You couldn't get farther from the heart of David than this. He rebuilt the high places, which Hezekiah, his father had destroyed.

He raised up altars for Baal. He made a wooden image as Ahab king of Israel had done. And he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.

This is the, the Ashtar, you know, our word star, Estrella, and so on. Easter, all of these come from these ancient forebears of Ashtar and that's the starry host of heaven. And served them, didn't just worship them, but served them.

This means that there were oracles who said, well, Ashtar says you should do thus and so. And he heeded their priests. To serve means to obey.

Well, what kind of commands do these hosts of heavens have? They have whatever their little funky priests tell you. Oh, the, I just got a revelation that you should give me, you know, a thousand shekels so I can build a new altar to Ashtar. Okay.

So here, here the money goes out of God's treasury. He also built altars in the house of the Lord. You remember hearing about altars in the house of the Lord when we did Ezekiel and the

Holy Spirit lifted him up by the hair of the head and dropped him in there and there was weeping for Tammuz and there were all kinds of altars and, and bad stuff going on.

Well, this is the beginning of, of that attitude, which the Lord had said in Jerusalem, I will put my name. Now in Jerusalem, I will put my name. What's that got to do with altars in the temple precincts? When God said he would put his name there, what's he really talking about? I will put my name.

That is his presence. That is his place in the worship life of Israel. That is his place as their covenant God, the actual king, a theocratic ruler in Israel, right? In this place, I will put my name.

You think about this verse when you get to Matthew 28, 19 and 20, as you go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name. It's not just an inscription. It's not just saying the word, the father, the son, and the Holy Ghost.

That doesn't do God any good. Being baptized into the name is this kind of name. It is presence.

It is influence. It is worship. It is place in the hearts and thoughts and priorities of the people.

I will put my name there. I will dwell there. I will be the God that is worshiped, that is served, that is known, in which people place their faith.

That is God's name. In Jerusalem, I will put my name. He, Manasseh, built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord, the outer court and the inner court.

The outer court is where people would assemble. This is where sacrifices were prepared and so on. Then we would go to the inner court.

That's where you have the altar and the laver and so on. This is all full of altars to other gods now. You just think about the heinous travesty of it.

What if you were still a faithful believer and you tried to walk in there to bring your whole burnt offering or your grain offering that we've studied in Leviticus 1 and 2, understanding what those mean and trying to meditate on the symbolic weight of each of the elements and each of the details of the procedure. In the meantime, somebody is ululating over here to some host of heaven God. There are other priests with other robes and other ideas and other procedures and this racket going on as multiple altars.

There is not one altar where everybody focuses on one sacrifice at a time, by the way. It's not, well, we've got so many people now that we're in Jerusalem, let's have 12 altars, one for each tribe. It's one altar.

That means the offerings are offered seriatim so that each and the people standing and waiting and so on can observe one at a time. Everybody focuses. Everybody listens.

To me, it's like line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book. We all look together at the truth of God. We don't have multiple circuses, but that's what Manasseh introduces.

All the hosts of heaven in the two courts, they had so many altars they wouldn't fit in one court. He had to start putting them in the outer court as well. He made his son pass through the fire.

I guess he was glad his daddy didn't make him pass through the fire, but he passes his son through the fire. Obviously not Ammon, but some other son gets roasted alive as a human sacrifice. He practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and consulted spiritists and mediums.

He's listening to the priests of all of these gods. Anybody that's got a boogaboo and a whisperer and a peeping and muttering poltergeist demon whispering in their ear, they're passing this in. Manasseh is just all ears.

He's ready for any spirit wind that blows. The rulers of the darkness of the age have free reign with him. Of course he can be manipulated by smart people who use this sort of mysticism and spookiness to work their will, to get their policies passed, to eliminate their enemies, faithful people, good people, kicked out, executed, exiled.

One of the first things people do when they find this kind of power is they get rid of their competition and they get rid of people of genuine faith. You can only imagine. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

You think about the implications and the consequences of Manasseh encouraging this and letting it all run amok. It's chaos. It's disaster.

You can only imagine those faithful Levites that had been restored to service and function 24 years earlier, 29 years earlier by Hezekiah and had functioned for many years. Now it's all gone into the handbasket. He even set a carved image of Asherah that he made in the house.

This is in the temple. I don't think he put it in the Holy of Holies, but he must have gotten at least as far as the holy place with it. In the house of which the Lord had said to David and to Solomon his son, in this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever.

Once again, the second reference to God's name. This is God's place. This is His reputation.

This is His standing. This is His worship and respect and honor in the nation of people that He called out. And I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from the land which I gave their fathers, only if they are careful to do according to all that I have commanded them and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.

Remember it was a conditional covenant. Our promises from God, the promises that you and I claim, are conditional. They are conditioned on faith and obedience.

When we start letting things slip, and one of the great, I mentioned this before, but one of the great emerging trends in Christianity today is the quote unquote victimless crime, the victimless sin. It doesn't really matter what I think. I can fantasize.

I can rationalize. I can do whatever I want because nobody got hurt. Jesus talked about that.

What you do in your heart counts. And what you do in your heart is taking fire into your bosom and you will be burned. And it denigrates the Lord God.

We are His covenant people now. We are the body of Christ now. And when we are lackadaisical, when we are faithless, when we serve other gods and set them up in an important place and bring despot to the name of Christ and the name of God our Father, there are consequences.

The covenant promises of God are abrogated. They are canceled. He will not keep you in perfect peace because your mind is not stayed on Him.

He will not build a hedge around you and allow only those things that will work together for good. He will break down the hedge. He will allow you to do things by yourself.

Fine. See if you can make your way in the world without divine provision, without divine protection, without divine guidance, without divine intervention, without divine blessing, without divine provision. You are just going to do it all yourself.

You got the host of heaven you are going to serve. And what is our host of heaven? Well, just type it into Google and there it is. Whatever it may be, you will find it online and that is our new host of heaven.

Let me ask you this. Wouldn't it be interesting if for one day, one day, every time somebody put their phone to their face it was a Bible open to a pertinent passage of scripture. Every time they looked, when they are in their car and they wanted to go text somebody, instead there is the word of God.

Meaningful passage, pertinent to what they are doing and what they are saying and what they are thinking and what they are trying to decide. Wouldn't that be something? Every screen that comes up, it is a passage of scripture. Every screen that comes up, it is a word from the Lord.

What kind of havoc do you think that would wreak? Well, God had promised, I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore. What is the author here setting us up for? Very soon the feet of Israel are going to wander. The northern kingdom is already out and we are now down to 685 or so and in two generations they will all be gone.

They will be driven out of their heritage, lose their inheritance. Verse 9, they paid no attention and Manasseh seduced them. Notice, how did they get seduced? Did Manasseh seduce them and then they paid no attention? What is the order here? The people that God warned through

all of that good teaching, all of that priestly function in the early days of Hezekiah, what did the people do with it? This is still in the living memory of nearly all of these people.

They paid no attention and that is how Manasseh seduced them. They lost sight and focus on the Word of God and so the next great seducer to come along, they fold, they fail, they fall. This is the order and it is here for a reason.

Our faithfulness, our diligence, not just to come to Bible class and listen but to carve out time to reflect, stop and think. Take an early morning hour on a Wednesday and think back, what did we cover last Sunday? What do I need to refresh in my mind for tomorrow night that we covered last Thursday? Maybe I've got it in my notes, maybe I just go back and read the passage and it will come to my mind what we studied last time. What does it mean to me? Why did God give me that message at this time and in this place? Should I be doing anything any different? Should it factor into my thinking at all? If we don't do that, I am telling you now, this is the warning and when we don't do that, we will be seduced, we will be led astray by our desires, we will be led astray by smooth talkers, we will be led astray by happy news and happy policies and false communications all over the place.

You cannot believe how the news is distorted and twisted and falsified that you get out of every outlet that it comes from. If you are not there, anything that gets reported, you need to take with a grain of salt because you cannot believe the stuff that is not reported. It will come out days later after all of the attention has dwindled and been diverted and the actual truth and the rest of the story that Paul Harvey used to share with us, only a fraction of people get that.

They get that first blush, they get the spin and they get the twist and they get the propaganda version. God the Holy Spirit will give us an instinct for the truth, a taste for the truth. You will know it by its taste, whether you get any accurate reporting or not, you will know that there is something rotten in Denmark.

It is God the Holy Spirit witnessing with our spirit to be cautious and be careful and not to act on that information. Spending your time with the truth gives you a taste for it. People know this, if you go off salt for a long period of time, pretty soon you get to where even a little bit of salt is just too salty.

You get to where you like your food less salty. Go off sugar pretty soon, you enjoy your food less sweet. You eat healthy pretty soon, healthy food tastes better to you and the rest of it you just can't hardly tolerate.

You acclimatize, you accustom yourself. I told you before I went to Okinawa, there is no air conditioning over there and after a couple of weeks, air conditioning is way too cold. I couldn't wait to get out of the PX or the commissary and get back in the 105 degrees because I was freezing in there.

You acclimatize, you adjust. Regular review, regular reflection on the truth gives us a taste for

it. We know its flavor, we know its substance, we know what it is like and God uses this to guide us.

These people totally lost that so Manasseh seduced them and led them astray to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed. What do you think God's attitude is when his own people are worse than the Amorites? They are worse and we know about all the Molech worshipping, Baal worshipping, child sacrificing. These people were worse and remember like a dog returning to its vomit, the end of that man is worse.

It would be better for that man if he had never come to repentance than to come and then fall even further. So the Lord spoke by his servants the prophets. Notice here a very interesting detail, verse 10, God spoke by his servants plural, the prophets plural.

There were other guys beside Isaiah on the scene and these men of God came and spoke because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations. He has acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him and has also made Judah sin with his idols. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle.

It's going to be such an alarming destruction. I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab. This is recent memory, this happened just 30 odd years earlier, right? A generation hasn't even passed where they saw what happened in the northern kingdom.

He says the measure and the plum line and the measuring stick are going to be the same as what I used up there. Well people were shocked by the carnage in the northern kingdom. I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.

Now by the way this is a message of prophets plural and I ask myself why was there not one great day when Isaiah stood up and delivered this prophecy? And Isaiah does deliver this prophecy many times, it's recorded multiple times in his book. But many prophets, and here's why in my estimation, the pockets of faithful believers had become so few and far between that God couldn't get them all together in one place without them being endangered. Because they are the enemy, they are the ones these guys with the power want to get rid of.

You remember how Haman got the edict passed to have the Jews slaughtered? These people that are whispering in Manasseh's ear can do the same to people of faith so they are scattered and they are under cover. So many men of God would go out to these many small groups and they delivered the identical message to all of them. But there are many prophets going to many small groups and this is under the radar for their protection and their provision.

No matter where you are, no matter how few of us there are, God will always ensure if you want His word you will get it. Whether it is two, whether it is one, if you want God's word and if you ask and if you seek and if you knock, God will raise up a messenger and will get you the

word. It's a promise of God, He will never fail, He will never let a child of His go hungry, ever.

That's why it's prophets plural in my estimation. Because they have done evil in my sight and provoked me to anger since the day their fathers came out of Egypt even to this day. God says, you know what, this people just keeps falling back in it.

Every generation it just seems to get worse and worse. Moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood. See what I'm talking about? Who is the innocent blood? These believers who are trying to assemble and come offer the right sacrifices and they are diverting them to these false God altars and so on.

They can't assemble, they can't worship and when they do, when they are found, they are slaughtered. Manasseh is murdering people of faith in Jerusalem who are trying to come to the house of God. Filled Jerusalem with innocent blood from one end to the other beside the sin by which he made you to sin and doing evil in the sight of the Lord.

Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh all that he did and the sin that he committed, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? Well, you would think out of a total reign of 55 years, there would have been a lot more happenings, but this is what's recorded because this is what counts. Remember Kings is the publicly published diaries of what went on in the palace and yet we don't have much from the inner workings. Why? It's not fit.

God can't use it. So it didn't come into this book. Well, what is our major point of application here? You can be given all the advantages.

You can have every asset, every opportunity. You can have the prophet Isaiah. You can have many men of God in the kingdom who are capable and able to teach and to give the word of God, but it is all a matter of choice.

And Manasseh is arguably at the very bottom of the barrel of the Kings of Judah. Be hard-pressed other than maybe Athaliah to find somebody you could say was more evil than he. Murdering believers of faith in the capital city of God's land.

It doesn't get much worse than that. How many murderers do we know of Ahab? Jezebel really did most of that. And Ahab is a signpost of evil in the north.

Manasseh is an overt murderer of innocent people. Well, we can thank the Lord that we live in the day and time that we do. We are not subject to such measures on the part of our enemies.

Our battles are spiritual. We don't wrestle against flesh and blood. It's the principalities and powers, but the strategy is the same and the goal is the same to deflect us and distract us from daily service, daily honoring of the name of God.

What does God's name mean to us day by day? We carry His name. We carry the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. How high do we lift it up? How far do we go in making sure that when people

know us, they know whom we serve and whose name we bear? And it's a positive reflection.

It's a positive testimony. It's a challenge for all of us. Well, we'll pick up here and review some of the parallel accounts of Manasseh's reign before we leave it next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for how powerfully it instructs us, corrects us, and motivates us to use the time that You have so graciously given us to reflect Your glory, to grow in grace and knowledge, to prepare ourselves for service and for life in the kingdom of Your Son, the Lord Jesus and Your own kingdom, which will follow. We pray that these things will be meaningful and helpful to us in the days ahead, that each of us will receive a blessing, be challenged and motivated by it.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.