

Kings and Prophets 15-11-12

This is Thursday, the 12th of November, 2015. We are continuing our study of kings and prophets. We're narrowed down now to the southern kingdom.

Ahaz is dead, Hezekiah is dead, Manasseh is on the throne. Who's that? Oh, I thought you had a word for me. And maybe you did.

But we'll pick up our study here and see quite a bit of material from the Word of God that pertains to this particular stage of Judah history. As soon as we take a moment to go before the Lord in prayer, recognize the essential ministry of God's Holy Spirit, and prepare ourselves for the study of God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, what a wonderful thing it is to be able to address You as our Father, to know that we are held securely in Your hands because of the Lord Jesus Christ, because of His faithfulness and His obedience.

We who were at an uncrossable distance from You have been brought nigh, have been made near, have been entered into relationship with You that is permanent and eternal and provides us so many wonderful potentials and opportunities. We thank You for the truth of Your Word and this portion of it. We pray that these Old Testament scriptures will be meaningful and will live and breathe their fire into our souls under the ministry of Your Spirit as we look at them together and reflect upon them in the days ahead.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we have spent the last couple of sessions on Thursday night looking at the catastrophically evil reign of Manasseh.

It descends below the nadir, the low water mark, if you will, that was set in the Northern Kingdom in the Amorite dynasties. There was the member Omri and then his wicked line sort of culminating with Ahab. And we thought, well, that's as bad as it could ever be.

And God sent prophets up there and there was no end of supernatural manifestation and God calling attention to all of this. The Southern Kingdom folks have witnessed and are well versed in this history and yet they not only do not heed it, they are worse. They are worse.

And we always think of them as, well, that's the land of David, that's Judah, the Lord's going to come from there, this is where Jehoshaphat did all the teaching and we've had such wonderful beneficial adherence. It's the actual line of David down there. Well, this is just the low point, if there ever was one.

And we've seen that in detail and we've seen the nature of it. You remember what it was that Manasseh did that was worse than anybody had ever done since the days of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat? What is it that he did specifically? There have been other times. Ahaz, his grandfather, was a rascal when it came to idolatry and worship on the high places and so on.

What was it specifically that characterizes Manasseh and makes him as bad as any? He child-

sacrificed his son. Ahab never did that. Last time we saw anybody do that, it was a king down around the corner of the Dead Sea when we were talking about the Edomites and the Ammonites and that excursion that we studied several months back.

This is a pagan practice. This is a practice that partakes of the Amorites who were in the land. And Amorite is the grab-bag term for all of the Gergesites and the Hivites and all of the other ites that were in the land.

Seven peoples greater and mightier than you that God drove out before them and they have matched the pagan, godless Canaanites. Not just somebody out in the Hoi Poloi. This is the king, the example-setter, the representative of God on the throne.

In the same way that the Lord Jesus on the throne of his father David represents theocratic rule, there is a link there. When it's the nation of Israel and you are its king, you have a responsibility like no other king in history, no other king of any other people is delegated the responsibility for God's people like the king of Israel and in particular the king who has his throne in Jerusalem. And this is a deal-breaker.

There are things that we can do and this is a principle to remember. God is gracious, God is merciful, God forgives the repentant sinner. However, there are point-of-no-return, unrecoverable errors we can commit.

I was impressed with this and I think I've mentioned this a time or two before, but when you're young and you're just death and old age and a lot of the maladies that beset are so far away. And I had a classmate who was driving under the influence, ran his car off the seawall. He survived, but his passenger, another midshipman, was killed.

And this is before we graduate. I don't care how repentant, how spiritual, how godly, how far you go in ministry and service or whatever else, you can never un-kill someone whose death you have caused or are directly or indirectly responsible for. You can't un-ring that bell.

And that has always stood out in my mind. It made a very profound impression on me. I knew the guy.

I knew him pretty well. And nice guy, solid, one of the example. They would have easily put his picture on the cover of Shipmate as one of those midshipmen.

He just had everything going for him. But a pattern of bad decisions, and this was part of that pattern, eventuated in a horrible tragedy. And it's not something that can be undone.

You and I, even as believers, can make bad decisions, and especially if we start a pattern and we don't break it early. The longer a pattern goes, the more difficult it is to break. And this is what Manasseh does.

So it's sort of an emblematic record for us because this is in Judah where you just wouldn't

expect it to be. It's one thing to be up there and the calves and Dan and Bethel and the prophets of Baal and Jezebel and Athaliah and all of that going on up there. But in Judah, in Jerusalem, and this is one of those bridge too far, line crossed, and it doesn't matter.

You know, reading ahead, Manasseh is going to repent. Well, that's all well and good. But he has done a thing and become a thing and as a leader set an example that can't be unset and can't be undone.

And things will never be the same in Judah, ever. It's not reversible. It's not recoverable.

And we're going to see that, and we're going to see why because God's word tells us. God told these people about this long before it happened. But you remember all of this in terms of the details of Manasseh.

Turn with me to Deuteronomy 5. It could be that Manasseh just didn't really have sufficient information to know better. It may be that God didn't make His will and His standards and the consequences of violating His standards as clear as it could have been. Maybe there was a lack of sufficient information.

Let's see if that's the case. I'm picking up here in Deuteronomy 5, verse 23. If you haven't got your reading glasses on, you might as well put them on because we're going to be looking at this for a little bit.

This is Moses. Remember, this is Deuteronomy. This is a review and a rehearsal of what God has done in the land.

And Moses is talking here. So it was, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders, and you said, Surely the Lord our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We're just talking about this Sunday in connection with the sacrifices and the first words in the book of Leviticus.

God spoke to Moses from the tabernacle of meeting. Remember that? And we went back and reviewed where is it that God speaks from. And we went back and read the visits of Moses up and down the mountain, the elders going up and seeing the throne in the midst of the glassy sea, eating a meal, Joshua.

Remember that? Just this past Sunday. Well, this is that on the lips of Moses. He's reminding the people what they saw.

We have seen this day that God speaks with man and the man still lives. It's amazing. We thought anybody that saw God, spoke with God, heard God would die.

And we've seen that God has found a way to bridge that gap to where we can have contact with God and not die. Now, therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we

hear the voice of the Lord our God anymore, then we shall die.

Heard it once and didn't die, but if we hear it again, we'll surely die. For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire as we have and lived? Is there an answer to that question? Is there anybody in the present company here that has heard the voice of God coming from a fire and lived? Hmm. It's just, how can you ignore what you know is our first reaction, but then we could turn that analysis on ourselves, couldn't we? How can you ignore what you know? Do they know Moses' history? Have they heard the story of the burning bush, perhaps? What man has heard God speaking from a fire and lived? We heard it and we don't ever want to hear it again.

Well, here's the guy that has heard God repeatedly speak out of the fire and he's still alive. But this is their argument. This is their rationale.

We talk about how smart the people were. They weren't ignorant goat herds. But it doesn't mean, in some ways, smarts can work against you.

You can overthink. You can over rationalize. You can be too smart for your own, you know, knowledge puffs up and so on.

Anyway, this is their argument. Who has ever heard God speak from the fire and lived? So we don't want that to happen to us anymore. You go near.

You hear all that the Lord our God may say. And then you come tell us all that the Lord our God says to you and we will hear and do it. Then the Lord heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me.

And the Lord said to me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear me and always keep all my commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever.

You know what God's saying here? What they have said is true. They can't hear me and live because they don't have the right heart. If they had the heart to keep and do my commandments, I could speak to them like I speak to you, Moses.

But they're right. They shouldn't draw near. This is my classic response when people ask me about stuff like, you know, child discipline, you know, should people spank their kids? And I say in most cases, no, because most people aren't qualified to spank their kids.

And I would never encourage them to do so because they don't have the heart to do it right. They don't have the wisdom and the insight and the spiritual guidance from God to do it and do it right. And those people shouldn't try to discipline their kids because it will be worse than if they hadn't.

It is the right thing done rightly. It's the proper thing when it's done properly. But if you do it improperly, it is abuse.

You do it in emotion. You do it inconsistently. You do it on the basis of squirrely and varying standards.

No, most people today, it's a good thing that corporal punishment for children has gone out because there are very few people who are qualified to do it. And does that mean that children are going to grow up in unpredictable ways? Yes. And they are and they have.

And look around. I was regaling one or two of you earlier this week because they had a report. They're trying to make some change to the ordinances in the city of Dallas having to do with nondiscrimination against people who are otherly disposed in terms of the whole man-woman question and hetero this and so on.

And so one of the scariest looking men I have ever seen in a wig and a dress was talking and was being interviewed and had just completed his gender confirmation surgery. This is what it's now called. It's not a sex change operation.

Don't be caught saying that. It's not a sex change operation. It is gender confirmation surgery.

This is the world we now live in. Why? Because of what God says right here. Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear me and always keep all my commandments that it might be well with them and with their children forever.

The children that have grown up and become the operative generation now had a failure on the part of the parents. This has been going on in our nation and our culture for some time. Go and say to them, return to your tent.

Just go home. God brought them all the way to Mount Sinai to hear, learn, and agree to and abide by his covenant. But he says, you know what, I'll give it to Moses.

Moses will give it to you. Go to your tents. Go home.

You're not qualified to stand here and even look at the thunder and smoke and lightning. Go home. Go to your tent.

Go to your room. But as for you, Moses, stand here by me and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them that they may observe them in the land which I am giving them to possess. Therefore, you shall be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you.

You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You, this is plural you now, shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you that you may live and that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess. Did they miss an opportunity at Sinai? Yes.

Is there still an opportunity to learn and to heed and to be blessed? Yes. But wouldn't you feel bad if somebody told you 2,000 years ago, well, there's a fellow called Jesus and he's going around and he's going to be just outside of town. I hear he's coming this way.

And you said, well, I'm not going to go out there and hear that guy. Then later on you become a believer and you say, ah, I wish I had the chance to hear Jesus preach the Sermon on the Plain or the Sermon on the Mount and I missed it. I'm still a believer, I still have wonderful blessings from God, but I missed an opportunity there.

Wouldn't it be great to have that in my living memory? Well, it's kind of what's happening with these folks here. You can miss things and that door doesn't open again. Look at Deuteronomy 6. Now this is the commandment.

Moses is now going to do what God told him to do. He's going to rehearse to them again, teach them again the content of what was given at Mount Sinai when they didn't want to stand and hear the voice of the Lord and they were sent to their tents. This is the commandment.

These are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the Lord your God to keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson. Notice who is responsible to keep the family in line. It's the father, the son, and the grandson.

These male leadership in the family is responsible. It's an assignment. That's the officer core, making decisions, setting policy, being accountable for everybody else.

That your days may be prolonged. Therefore, verse 3, hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you, a land flowing with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Now, did he mean that literally doing this was enough? What was the purpose of it being a sign and being on the doorposts? Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, thinking about the statutes, the ordinances, the commandments.

We are God's people. Verse 10, So it shall be when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which he swore your fathers to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses, who built Jerusalem? Jebusites. Israelites did not build

Jerusalem.

They expanded it and enlarged it. But the site was settled by the Jebusites. Cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things which you did not fill, hewn out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, when you have eaten and are full.

You can't help but think of the Lord's parable of the servant that kept the talent instead of investing. He said, I knew you were a hard man, reaping where you haven't sown, and so on. Beware lest you forget, verse 12, the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage.

When you get into this land and you are given these blessings, grace blessings that you did not earn, deserve, or work for, be careful. Are we people that have received grace blessings from God that we don't earn or deserve? Have we been prospered in wonderful ways? Yes, we have. And what is the injunction? What are we enjoined to do? Be careful.

Be careful. You shall fear the Lord your God and serve him, and shall take oaths in his name. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the people who are all around you.

It's the first thing out of the gate, isn't it? Don't serve other gods, gods of the people who are all around you, for the Lord your God is a jealous God among you. Lest the anger of the Lord your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth. What about all those promises? Abraham, your descendants will be as numerous.

It will be a blessing to the light of the Gentiles. What does God say here? If you are disobedient, I will destroy you from the face of the earth. You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted him in Massah.

What's another word for Massah? Meribah. This is Exodus 17. Water from the rock.

Striking the rock the first time. Remember the people were grumbling and complaining, and they were about to lynch Moses, and God says, go strike the rock. Moses strikes it, water comes out, and he called the name of that place Massah and Meribah.

You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted him at Massah. You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, his testimonies, his statutes, which he has commanded you. You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has spoken.

Verse 20, When your son asks you in time to come, saying, What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes? Notice what is the meaning of *is* in italics. You know what this says in Hebrews? In Hebrew rather. When your son asks you in time to come, saying, What testimonies, statutes, and judgments, which the Lord our God has commanded you? What statutes? What judgments? What commandments? I wasn't there.

Then you shall say to your son, We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and the Lord showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household. Then he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in, to give us the land of which he swore to our fathers.

When children ask their parents, when someone asks us, Well, you seem all bent on serving the Lord in your life, and there are things that you won't do, and there are things that you don't approve, and that you won't countenance. What statutes? What ordinance? What commandments? What should our response be? I serve the God who delivered me out of the bondage of sin. He saved me.

He delivered me. He set me on a path to blessing, and opportunity, and reward, and eternal life, and inheritance. It is the spiritual equivalent and concomitant to this.

What is the answer? Do you rationalize it? Well, you know, people that follow these principles are historically better, and their cultures last longer. Well, you know, you'll be able to schmooze around in Christian circles if you keep these Christian precepts and so on. What is the answer when our children or anybody else asks us, What commandments? What is this standard you live by? Why are you constrained? Why are you compelled? Why are you drawn? Why do you live the way you do? This is the answer to give.

This is your testimony. You don't have to rationalize. You don't have to explain.

You don't have to justify. Look, God delivered me. I was hopeless, helpless, and useless, sold under sin.

He delivered me. He is my God. These are His statutes.

These are His judgments. That's why. That's all you have to say.

That's the testimony. That's the witness. It's from the lips of God right here.

And it's just as pertinent for us as it was to them. He brought us out from there, verse 23, that He might bring us in. He brought us out that He might bring us in.

He brought us out of bondage to bring us into service, representative existence and prosperity. He brought us out from there that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to observe these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always, that He might preserve us alive as it is this day.

Then it will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the Lord our God as He has commanded us. That's the answer. It's a matter of righteousness.

It's a matter of what God has done. That's why His statutes are important. Chapter 7, When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you go to possess and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the

Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, when the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them.

You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. If we are delivered out of bondage and slavery to sin, and God is taking us to a land of blessing and prosperity, who are the previous inhabitants? What is the spiritual equivalent of the Hivites and the Jebusites and the Girgashites and the Hittites and the Amorites? What's the equivalent? There is a kind of prosperity that looks like the peace and productivity and fruitfulness that God gives us isn't there. We drive that out and replace it with the real thing.

Even good that is done, charity, altruistic endeavors, you know they've got a little consortium of billionaires, Bill Gates and that guy they're always asking for financial advice, have gotten together and they're doing a charity, they're finding worthy causes and giving them hundreds of millions of dollars. Girgashites, Hivites, Hittites, a form of godliness, a form of righteousness, but there is no God in it, there is no glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in it. And it is perishable, it's transient, it is fraught with abuse, mistake, malfeasance, temporariness, it doesn't accomplish any permanent good.

You say, oh but they're given to little children, they're putting shoes on the orphans, and they're supporting food for the indigent, and they find these causes, go dig a well in some far off African land or whatever. It sounds great to the human ear, but God sees the end from the beginning. And when God is not in it, it always denigrates, it always degenerates, it always corrupts and ultimately destroys.

There is a way that seems right, but it's the ways of death. And human charity always ends up in corruption. If you want a pet for your child to give them on their birthday, do you go to the shelter and get a living pet, or do you go to the shelter's morgue and get a dead pet? The dead pet may be freshly dead, it may look just like a living pet that's just asleep.

It's fuzzy, it may still be warm, it may look nice, it may be a wonderful little poodle or something, exactly the type that your child wants, looks just almost the same, but there's no actual life in it. And if you give that dead dog to your child, what's going to happen over the next few days? It's never going to wake up, it is only going to go from bad to worse. I give you this as my personal mental example of human charity when God is not in it.

It looks an awful lot like the real thing, but it never lasts, it never does any actual long-term good, and it always corrupts, corrodes, and goes downward. Always, always, always. Look sometime at the charitable giving of Al Capone, one of the biggest charitable givers of the 20th century.

Al Capone. Where did the money come from? How much of it actually made it to the charities? That's a story in itself. Suffice it to say, I'm trying to bring these words forward.

This is all metaphorical and analogous for us, isn't it? We leave Egypt, we go to the land of

Canaan. We have left Egypt, we're saved, right? We're on the road, we're headed for our inheritance. Some of which we enjoy now.

We have a foretaste of glory divine. We have eternal life now and not yet. We have our inheritance now and not yet.

But in a spiritual sense, who are the inhabitants of the land? It's those who have a pseudo-prosperity, a false prosperity, a false existence, who do what they do, and it doesn't glorify God. Did they raise their children and love them? When they weren't sacrificing them to Molech, did they laugh and smile and party and marry and give in marriage and do a lot of things that you would say, well, they seem like nice enough folks? God said, what? Destroy them, destroy them all. Why? They are cancer cells.

They're not healthy and they will only corrupt you. You shall not make marriages with them, verse 3. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. Well, but the Capulets and Romeo and Juliet, can't love cross the barrier? No.

I don't care if she's the nicest, most wonderful girl that ever lived in the land of Canaan. Don't give your son to her for a husband. Don't take and give in marriage with these people.

Do not enter into covenant with them. Don't care how nice they are. You're bringing home the dead dog.

They will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods. So the anger of the Lord will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. Thus you shall deal with them.

You shall destroy their altars, break down their sacred pillars, cut down their wooden images, burn their carved images with fire. For you are a holy people to the Lord your God. And the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

If you think Israel was special, how special do you think you and I are as body of Christ, unique in the history of creation, angelic or human? Nobody but us. If you think Israel was special and had a responsibility to be a holy people to the Lord, exponentially so you and I. The Lord did not set his love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples, but because the Lord loves you and because he would keep the oath which he swore to your fathers. What oath is God keeping when he loves us and blesses us and takes us to himself? Israel had favor because of a promise God made to Abraham.

We have favor because of a promise God made to the Lord Jesus Christ. On what level do you think we have more responsibility or less responsibility before God in heaven? On the basis of a better covenant founded on new and better promises, perhaps? Verse 8, He is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers. The Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of bondage from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Pharaoh king of Egypt was just a physical king with a physical land. What bondage have we been delivered from? Infinitely worse, infinitely more powerful, infinitely more devastating. Therefore know that the Lord your God, he is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love him and keep his commandments.

And he repays those who hate him to their face to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates him. He will repay him to his face.

And you know the biblical definition of hate. This isn't a spiteful, abusive sort of hate like we think of hate. This is a policy of dismissive and treating as unimportant.

Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which I command you today to observe them. Then it shall come to pass, verse 12, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which he swore to your fathers. And he will love you and bless you and multiply you.

He will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock in the land which he swore to your fathers to give you. Notice that every single one of those things is involved in our Levitical sacrifices. It's not a sacrifice when the Lord is blessing you abundantly with it, is it? You shall be blessed above all peoples.

There shall not be a male or a female barren among you or among your livestock. And the Lord will take away from you all sickness and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known, but will lay them all on those who hate you. Also you shall destroy all the peoples whom the Lord your God delivers over to you.

Your eyes shall have no pity on them, nor shall you serve their gods, for that will be a trap for you. If you should say in your heart, these nations are greater than I, how can I dispossess them? You shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the Lord your God brought you out. Now we haven't seen those things, have we? Or have we? We have all of those and thousands more in this book, do we not? Are they any less real because we read about them instead of observing them at first hand? We could have been a living Israelite and seen the plagues hit Egypt and that information enter our eyes and be recorded by our brains into our memory or we can read them off the pages of Scripture and have the exact same knowledge with the exact same memory in the exact same kind of human brain, right? Does it really matter if your eyes are sending you visual information or if you're getting it through written communication? It's just as true.

It's just as pertinent and it is just as responsibility creating. We have seen all of these things and we've seen that these people just saw that. They had the limited experience of their lifetimes and that which Moses communicated to them about their past.

We've got 66 books of the Bible filled with no end of examples. Would that make us more or less responsible than these people to be faithful and obedient? You saw the great trials, the signs and the wonders, the outstretched arm of the Lord when He brought you out. So shall the Lord your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.

Difficult to eradicate our spiritual opposition? Yes. In our own strength, it's impossible. Moreover, the Lord your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left will hide themselves from you, are destroyed.

You shall not be terrified of them for the Lord your God, the great and awesome God is among you. What did Jesus promise for those who have His words and keep them? I and my Father will come to you, make our home with you, be with you, send you the Spirit, abide with you, guide you into all truth. The Lord your God will drive out those nations before you little by little.

You will be unable to destroy them at once lest the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. Isn't that interesting? God could have just sent a plague and all the Canaanites died in one day. But He says, I'm going to give you a gradual driving out.

You're going to do them, I'm not going to do them all in parallel, stack them all up where you can see them, they all fall at once. It's going to be like dominoes, one after the other after the other, seriatim, gradually. Why? It's like what Jesus said about the demons.

You know, you drive out a demon and the house is clean and swept and the demon comes back with seven of his friends and moves in and the latter end is worse than the beginning. Those occupants of the land are placeholders. And as you learn and consolidate your gains and consolidate your victories, you're in an increasing position of strength to take the next group and the next one and the next.

If they all fall before you, there's going to be a giant vacuum into which other and worse things are going to be sucked because you're not ready. You're not numerous enough, you're not strong enough, you're not consolidated enough to bite the whole thing off and swallow it in one go. You're going to chew.

You're going to bite and chew, bite and chew, bite and chew until you get the whole steak done. And it is equally true for us. Don't be discouraged when we have failures in some of the areas of our life.

We're knocking these things out seriatim. Concentrate on the ones that you can get now. Ask for God's grace and God's strength.

Tackle them one at a time. Consolidate, grow, become stronger. And as we become stronger, some of the ones that were the most formidable were now in a position to lick them, to drive them out.

Verse 25, You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire. You shall not covet the silver

or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be trapped by it, snared by it, diverted, distracted. It is an abomination to the Lord your God.

Well, what's wrong with gold? What's wrong with silver? When it has been employed, I heard a real interesting story. I think I told you this some years ago. There were missionaries that had been in some of the deepest jungle parts of the mission field.

And I've heard this in both South American missions and African missions. Getting deep into the jungle and being some of the first, this has been some decades ago now, to go in and open up those places to the gospel. And they would find these tribes steeped in idolatry and demonic practices and chewing weird chemicals that got them high in one thing or another.

And one of these missionaries brought back as souvenirs some of these tribal totems, these tribal icons, and had them sitting on a table. And in the house, you know, I've been to Africa. Here's my knick-knacks, conversation pieces.

Well, weird things, I won't tell you what they all were, but were happening in this house. Poltergeist kinds of things. Dishes smashing against the wall.

People getting unaccountably sick. Just weird, weird things happening. And a fellow missionary came by and visited.

And this is the missionary that was talking to our church. And he saw that stuff and he said, Why do you have this? Do you know what this is? He said, Yeah. You know, we were in the village and we had a deal there.

And they came to Christ and we brought this stuff back as souvenirs. The guy said, Get that stuff out of your house. Once they got rid of it, all supernatural weirdness quit.

And that's in the United States of America in the 1960s. And I believe every word of it. The missionary that was telling the story was not a wild-haired, hand-waving type pilot with the jungle jars, jungle aviation and something service.

This was a jars pilot, a no-nonsense kind of guy. But he said, I have seen it with my own eyes. He told several stories of stuff that he had seen during his travels dealing with demonic things.

This is what was going on in the land. They had degenerated so far that there was active fallen angel presence in the land. And it had to be driven out and destroyed.

I don't care how nice the people are, how much they plead, how young their children are. God said, Go in and destroy them all because they are all infected with this demonic presence. Look, God will take care of the children.

Trust God to be fair and be loving. You think God loves the little children? They are angels. Behold His face in heaven.

Of course He loves children. If He told the Israelites to destroy them, it is for their good. And come to find out, when you read Isaiah, they are coming back in a greatly improved world where their parents aren't demon-worshipping, Molech child-sacrificing people.

It's a mercy to those children to dispatch them so that God can bring them back in a far better world. But you've got to trust God when you put children to the sword, right? Kind of like Abraham up on the top of the mountain preparing to plunge a knife into his son of promise. You've got to trust that God knows what He's doing a lot better than you do.

Oh no, Lord, I could never kill a child. Okay, so you leave them in the infected demon-possessed land to continue to be victimized and grow up in that culture. Thanks a lot.

Why didn't you trust the Lord God? Do you think He might know what He's talking about when He says, you've got to wipe them out? Burn the carved images of their God with fire. Don't covet the silver or gold that is on them. Don't take it for yourselves.

Even the metals can somehow leverage and broker the presence of these demons. That's what these totems and things are known to do. Don't covet it.

Don't take it to yourself lest you be snared by it. It is an abomination to the Lord your God. Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house lest you be doomed to destruction like it.

You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it for it is an accursed thing. God's not kidding about this stuff. These are inanimate objects.

Well if I melt it down doesn't it become something different? No it doesn't. It has been in the possession of and used by demons and it's got something going on with it and God says it's cursed. Stay away from it.

It's like radioactive material. And that's just what God says. And you can't go wrong heeding the Lord.

Chapter 8. Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers. You shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness to humble you and test you to know what was in your heart. Why are we sojourning between salvation and glory? So that the Lord can test us and know what is in our heart.

Whether you will keep his commandments or not. So he humbled you, allowed you to hunger, fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know that he might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone. But man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.

Your garments did not wear out on you nor did your foot swell these forty years. You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son so the Lord your God chastens you. That's in

love and for benefit with knowledge that this will do good even though it seems harsh at the time.

Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God to walk in his ways and to fear him. Do you notice sort of a recurring theme in these words? It would be a good idea for you to know and keep the commandments of God, the covenant that you've agreed to. Verse 7, For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs that flow out of valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper.

When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which he has given you. Beware, verse 11, that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments, his judgments and his statutes which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, when your heart is lifted up and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage, who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, fiery serpents and scorpions, and thirsty land where there was no water, who brought water for you out of the flinty rock, what's the name of that? Massah, Meribah, who fed you in the wilderness with manna which your fathers did not know that he might humble you and that he might test you to do you good in the end. Then you say in your heart, my power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth, and you shall remember the Lord your God for it is he who gives you power to get wealth that he may establish his covenant which he swore to your fathers as it is this day.

Then it shall be if you by any means forget the Lord your God and follow other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroys before you, so you shall perish because you would not be obedient to the voice of the Lord your God." If we had time, we could read chapter 9. We could see the second giving of the law in chapter 10. We could go to chapter 11.

Therefore you shall love the Lord your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his judgments, and his commandments always. No, today I do not speak with your children who have not known, who have not seen the chasing of the Lord your God, great and mighty hand, his outstretched arm, signs and acts which he did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh king of Egypt to all his land. What he did for you, verse 5, in the wilderness until you came to this place.

What he did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the sons of Reuben, how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession in the midst of all Israel. Your eyes have seen every great act of the Lord which he did. Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today.

The rest of the chapter reads similarly. Turn over as our final passage now to 2 Kings chapter 21. As we concluded last time, 21.13 of 2 Kings.

I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab. I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. So I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance.

That's all God's got left is a remnant already and He's going to forsake that. Into the hand of their enemies and they shall become victims of plunder to all their enemies. Why? Because they have done evil in my sight and have provoked me to anger since the day their fathers came out of Egypt even to this day.

If you turn over to 2 Chronicles chapter 33 and 34 just very quickly. Chapter 33 verse 10. The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people but they would not listen.

This is 33.11 now of 2 Chronicles. 2 Chronicles 33.11 The Lord brought upon them the captains of the army of the kings of Assyria which took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze and carried him off to Babylon. When he was in affliction he implored the Lord his God and he humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, prayed to him and he received his entreaty, heard his supplication and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom.

Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God. After this what did he do? Did he clear out the idols and restore the temple and so on? Well the first thing he does is build a wall outside the city of David on the west side of Gihon in the valley as far as the entrance of the fish gate to enclose Ophel and he raised it to a very great height. Then he put military captains in all the fortified cities of Judah.

What is my security? They captured me and carried me off to Babylon. I'm going to build a better security system. He took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the Lord and all the altars he had built in the mount of the house of the Lord and in Jerusalem and he cast them out of the city.

Good job as far as it goes. He repaired the altar of the Lord, sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel. Nevertheless, the people still sacrificed on the high places only to the Lord their God.

So this is what you call a wonderful superficial revival. It's part way. It is motivated by catastrophic discipline.

You smack him hard enough and he'll pay attention for a while. The rest of the Acts of Manasseh, the prayer to his God, the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the Lord God of Israel is written in the book of the kings. His prayer and how God received his entreaty and all his sin and trespass and the sites where he built high places and set up wooden images and carved images before he was humbled.

Indeed, they are written among the sayings of Hosei, Isaiah. It could be Hosea. But a lot of this has not survived.

Why? Remember when God said he would blot the remembrance of Amalek out from under heaven? It's some of that. Well, it's a warning to us. We live in a day similar.

We have some superficial recognition of God and worship of God. But simply taking the visible signs of idol worship out of the temple courtyard isn't the same as a change of heart. God put them in the wilderness 40 years to test them and to know their hearts.

Anybody, if you smack them hard enough, will try to do something different at least for a while. Is it a change of heart or just a change of practice? Well, we'll see that as we move into the reign of King Josiah in the next chapter. But was there any lack of warning? Any lack of prediction? Is God being faithful to every part of the covenant when he takes Judah into captivity as a result of their apathy? It's so repetitious that it becomes like a church bell ringing time after time after time.

How could you not remember? How could you not find appealing the blessing of God in a fruitful and abundant land? Well, we can ask ourselves that same question because we're in exactly the same decision point. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the passages of Scripture we've seen tonight and the wonderful light that it sheds on our own path and our own opportunities and our responsibilities as representing your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, here on this earth.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will aid us in our contemplation and our reflection as we think about the pertinence and applicability of these portions of your word to our own lives, our decisions, our priorities, the goals that we are pursuing, the priorities that we are setting, not only for ourselves, but the example that we reflect before others, so that the Lord Jesus will truly be represented and glorified in and through us in the time that remains to us in this life and on this earth. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.