

Kings and Prophets 16-03-10

This is Thursday, the 10th of March, 2016. We resume after something of a vacation, our study of kings and prophets, with an emphasis on prophets. We'll be starting sort of a fresh page this evening, but we'll take a moment as we begin to recognize the importance of the presence and ministry of God's Holy Spirit and ask God's blessing on our fellowship as we begin.

Shall we pray? Father, we're grateful for this day and another opportunity to spend time together in mutual encouragement and fellowship and appreciation for the Lord Jesus, our Savior, the one who has given us hope and provided meaning and purpose for our lives. We thank you for the struggles that we face and the challenges that test our faith. We thank you for your blessings and your provisions and those things that bring joy and gladness to our days, even as we are challenged.

We thank you for your word and the opportunity to study together, and we pray that you will bless it to the heart of each one who participates in our study tonight, that each of us will be motivated and strengthened in our faith and prepared for service and function in the time and the ages to come. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen. We began this study a while back, a couple of years of while back with Solomon and then into the divided kingdom of the Northern and Southern dynasties, as if you want to loosely call the Northern Kingdom, it's more of a series of dynasties, a series of short bursts of flame ending in judgment.

And we have seen the continuation of God's promise to David that he would not lack a son to sit on his throne in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. This has brought us all the way down through the 700s down to 721 and the Assyrian incursion that takes out the Northern Kingdom. And Judah is spared in the days of Hezekiah.

And then from Hezekiah, traveling down through Manasseh and with a little bit of a brief hiatus, then Ammon, and we have now come to the time of Josiah. And this is about 70 or so years after the days of Hezekiah and Isaiah, about one full biblical generation, 70 years, a 70-year generation. We have 40-year generations, but this is about 70 years later.

So we come down to approximately 641 or so with the time of Josiah. And if you turn to 2 Kings, we'll kind of refresh our minds on where we are in the chronological history before we resume our look at the prophets. So when you get to 2 Kings chapter 22, if you look just previous to that at the end of chapter 21, that's the spectacularly uninteresting reign of Ammon.

22 years old when he became king, he reigned two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Meshulameth, the daughter of Haruz of Jutbah. He did evil in the sight of the Lord as his father Manasseh had done.

He walked in all the ways that his father had walked. He served the idols that his father had served. By the way, all of this is important to our study tonight, what the pattern is in the land.

So evil in the sight of the Lord, walking in the ways of his father Manasseh, serving the idols that his father had served and worshiping them. Those are three strikes against him. The servants of Ammon conspired against him and killed the king in his own house.

The people of the land executed those that executed Ammon. Then the people of the land made his son Josiah king in his place. The rest of the acts of Ammon which he did, are they not written in the book of Oblivion? Because nobody knows what Ammon did.

He was so wonderfully obtuse and idolatrous that his acts have been consigned to the rubbish bin of history. So you know about all there is to know about Ammon and I read it in less than a minute. He was buried in the tomb in the garden of Uzzah.

Now this should ring a bell because we have spent the past month talking about gardens and gardening. We some weeks ago established the Grace and Truth Bible Church Garden Club, Garden Society and proceeded to plumb the depths of the garden of Uzzah and then move on to compare it to the garden of Eden. So we had a couple of weeks on garden of Uzzah, a couple of weeks on the garden of Eden.

Then we had a couple of blasts from the past and now here we are ready to resume. It's winter time, nothing's growing in the garden so we're ready to go back to history of the Southern Kingdom. But think about that just by way of the contrast.

What city is the garden of Uzzah located in in which Ammon's corpse was buried? Jerusalem. Where is it most likely that the garden of Eden was located? Same place, Jerusalem. If you had to pull out a sheet of paper and for a pop quiz list five things about the garden of Eden, just one or two word descriptions, what would you say about the garden of Eden? It had trees, fruit trees specifically.

It is a place of protection. It is a place of blessing. It is a place of life.

What is the most important tree in the whole garden? The tree of life is there. Who comes and walks in the garden in the breeze of the day? The Lord God himself. So you have the presence of God.

You have the blessing of God. You have the protection and provision of God. You have the food of God.

And you have life unending or so it would seem. With the introduction into that garden of sin and the knowledge of good and evil through disobedience and transgression of God's command, there is only, isn't it amazing? It reminds me, I knew a young lad once. I won't name him since he's not here.

If he was here, I would name him. But I knew a little boy once and it was amazing because in a dry summer, if there was one place where a hydrant had leaked or a hose had been left to run a little bit and there was mud, small as he was, he would navigate to it, find it and soon become

covered with it. And he became somewhat famous for this.

And it was just, there was a sort of a nickname of mud magnet for this young lad because he just gravitated to it. He couldn't help but find it somehow. Well, we as human beings seem to find the sin.

We find the place to fail, however small it may be. There were so many different things that could be done in the garden. There were a thousand good things to do and only one bad thing.

But mankind in our genius, we found the one bad thing and we did it. And that was to eat of the one forbidden tree. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of trees in this garden but we managed to eat of the one and Adam all died.

But this was the Garden of Eden. Now think about the Garden of Uzzah and what we know about it from our study. If you think back now, this was established by Uziah Azariah.

Remember Hezekiah's father? And what did he do to become a ne'er do well? Or what did he try to do? Oh, how soon we forget. Something to do with trying to enter a holy place, something happening to his forehead, the priests expostulating and protesting and giving him the bums rush back out. And from then to the day of his death, he was what? Leprous.

What is the biblical significance of leprosy? You are dead while you are alive. What was Adam for every day after he ate the fruit? Dead while he was alive. In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

It's just a slow death, deterioration. Shrinking, sagging, wrinkling, bulging, coming apart, things not working anymore. Second law of entropy, actively disassembling what seemed to once fit together so well, right? It is a march toward the dust from which man was made.

Dust thou art unto dust, thou shalt return. God didn't say that until after Adam ate of the fruit. So Garden of Uzzah created by the man marked by the disease of living death.

He's buried there because he's not allowed to be buried with his fathers, with the Davidic line that rests in the tombs of the kings. And afterward, others join him there who are defiled if not in body, even more so in soul. The most recent addition to that unholy collection is Ammon.

So where in the Garden of Eden you have the presence of God, you have the tree of life, you have protection, you have blessing, you have all of those wonderful inheritances in the light. In the Garden of Uzzah, you have darkness, people stay there overnight, you have depravity, you have sinfulness and wickedness. This is the absence of the presence of God.

It is the anti-worship, it is the anti-tabernacle, anti-temple, anti-holy place. It is the opposite. The Garden of Uzzah is man's best shot at recreating the Garden of Eden.

We will make this our private little paradise of darkness. It's a paradise of darkness instead of a paradise of light. Well, why do men love darkness rather than light? According to John, God is

light and in him is no darkness at all, but men love darkness rather than light, why? Because their deeds are evil, good and evil.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil grew out of the soil of both the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Uzzah, so significant. This is the choice. It could not be more clear, black and white, light and dark, good and evil present in Jerusalem on Mount Zion.

Well, this brings us to chapter 22. After the assassination of Ammon and the capture and execution of his assassins, they took Josiah, his son, and made him king in his place. 2 Kings 23, verse one, Josiah was eight years old when he became king.

Now, I don't know if you saw that, forget what the name of it was, Kingdom of the Son or something like that. It was a thing about China, about the boy emperor and he's a little tiny guy, but it's kind of a tricky thing making someone very, very young the absolute monarch of everything. There needs to be adult supervision and guidance and somebody to buffer between childish behavior and the power that is inherent in the office that that child has been dropped into.

You don't bring him his favorite dessert and people are dying right and left, that kind of thing. So when Josiah is eight years old, what do you think happened in the practical function of government? There will be adult regents and a cabinet, overseers who will carry on the function of government. He is the nominal head.

He is the future actual reigning monarch, but as a child, he is going to need to be grown and to mature before he can actively begin to pull on the reins of government as it were. So I just wanna point out that there will be princes and there will be regents and there will be other individuals who are responsible and accountable for the function of government. That's an important detail to which we will refer tonight in the not too distant future.

So he is eight when he becomes king. He reigns 31 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adiah of Bozkath.

We'll do some things with names at a later time, but for tonight, he did what was right in the sight of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father, David. He did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Not his father, Ammon, not even his father in the Hebrew sense, Hezekiah, all the way back to David.

This is gonna be something of a symmetry of one of those biblical, you began this way and you end this way sort of things. Were there kings in Israel prior to David? Any king at all prior to David? Had king Saul. Will there be a king after Josiah? Yes, there will.

But the big signpost at the beginning and at the end is David and Josiah. Now we're going to pause here in our review of the kings after only two verses, because it is time for us to cover a prophet who prophesied at this time. You remember the last prophet that we covered, I hope.

He's got three K's in his name, Habakkuk. How many chapters in Habakkuk? How many K's in Habakkuk? How many chapters in Habakkuk? Good, good job. Well, well-remembered.

But you remember the message in Habakkuk, what an admirable individual he was. He's the man who goes to the tower. He has a question for God and God answers it.

And that leads him to a second query. And God answers that. But he's the man in the tower.

He is the man who's going to watch and wait for the deliverance of the Lord for the remnant while God executes judgment on those that need it. That was delivered very near this time. Turn with me now to the book of Zephaniah.

I would wager that the pages have not been parted on Zephaniah in your Bible very often. Zephaniah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. You can work back from Malachi, work forward.

And Zephaniah, the verb from which his name is taken, you recognize the suffix. The Lord is my, or the Lord is. But this means the Lord embraces, the Lord holds near, the Lord treasures.

It even comes to mean to have a secret. How do you reconcile treasure and secret? Well, what did the man do who found the treasure buried in the field? Somebody had that treasure and buried it. He held it close.

He didn't want it being taken away. It means to treat something as having great value. Sometimes there is knowledge you have that is of great value and you don't just trumpet it to the world, you hold it close, you keep it near.

So depending on who you consult for names, this will mean something like the Lord has treasured, the Lord has held as dear, the Lord's secret, the Lord's closely held thing, might be a middle of the road translation. Zephaniah, the word of the Lord came to Zephaniah, this is chapter one, verse one, the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah, the son of Ammon, king of Judah. Of your minor prophets, there is no more well-identified prophet than Zephaniah.

We know who his father was, his grandfather, his great-grandfather, and his great-great-grandfather. He is a direct descendant of Hezekiah. Obviously he is not in line for the throne.

That line has extended down through Manasseh and Ammon to Josiah. But he is a cousin of the king. Now, let me ask you a question.

If you have an eight-year-old boy king and you are looking for individuals to surround him with, to protect him, and to operate in the functioning of government until he reaches age, where are you most likely to turn? Relatives, family, particularly godly family. You know, there are those that have killed their relatives to accede to a throne or to gain power or treasure. But if you have godly family, you are going to bring these individuals near.

Josiah is a good king. He has a heart like David. And you get the idea that his second or third cousin here, Zephaniah, is similar.

So it is a very good guess that he's gonna be up in Jerusalem nearby. Let's just read the first chapter here and get an idea. What is this Zephaniah thing gonna be about? It's wonderful to go to outlines and syntheses and summaries and all of that, but all of the people that read this before the modern day, they didn't get the benefit of any of that.

Somebody would open up the Zephaniah scroll and let her rip. And so that's what we're gonna do. We know who Zephaniah is, and he has established for anybody with a lick of sense that he's descended from Hezekiah the king.

So this also lends his message some additional weight. People perk up their ears when they say, wow, here's another descendant of King Hezekiah. What does he say? I will utterly consume everything from the face of the land, says the Lord.

I don't think this was the birthday speech for Josiah, having just come to the throne. And well, let's bring in someone with a wonderful, joyous message of blessing and prosperity. First shot out of the gun, quotes God.

I will utterly consume everything from the face of the land, says the Lord. I will consume man and beast. I will consume the birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, and the stumbling blocks along with the wicked.

I will cut off man from the face of the land, says the Lord. Well, hardly bodes well. One of the things we do know about this message by analyzing it is that it was delivered near, very near the beginning of Josiah's reign, not after Josiah had been there for any length of time.

That's why we have stopped the history of Josiah to cover Zephaniah because no sooner does little Josiah become king, then Zephaniah delivers this message. People may have had all kinds of hopeful thoughts. Well, look, this king can't possibly do a bunch of wicked things.

He seems like a good hearted little lad. Perhaps we're on the upswing. Happy days are here again.

And when people have all of this hopefulness and this false optimism, Zephaniah stands up with some credentials and says, all of your happy, glad talk, here's what the Lord says. I will consume everything off the face of the land. I will consume man and beast, birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea.

What does this make you think of? Man and beast, birds and fish. When did these come onto the land? Go all the way back to Genesis. In fact, they're gonna be wiped out in reverse order that they were created.

Exactly reverse order. What was God's final creation on the sixth day? Man, what did he created

just before that? The beast, what did he created just before that? The birds, what did he created just before that? The fish. So it's like combat loading, last on first off.

He is going to return the land to a primordial state of uninhabitedness. And that's the only time this week you'll hear that word. Notice in verse three, he says, and the stumbling blocks along with the wicked.

And you have a text note in your New King James that says, well, it's figurative language for idols. And I wouldn't disagree with that. However, look at the context of this statement.

Remember now we read about Ammon. And what I read about Ammon, what was the nature of his wickedness specifically? Mentioned it twice. I idolatry, idolatry.

He was a big time idolater. He resurrected Baal worship that had been suppressed, going all the way back. How did Baal worship really get started in Israel? Well, Jezebel, daughter of the king of the Sidonians, imported that stuff.

And she and Ahab made it the going thing up in the Northern kingdom. And it eventually infected and corrupted the Southern kingdom as well. And there were a couple of efforts to stamp it out, but it never really died.

So this is idolatry, but there are multiple forms of this idolatry. And what I would point out to you here is when God says, I'm going to cut off these living things, there are six examples of living things, man and beast, right? Then you've got the birds and the fish. Then you have stumbling blocks along with the wicked or the wicked living or dead, they're alive.

So everything else in this list is alive except the stumbling blocks. So I would suggest that these stumbling blocks are part of idolatrous worship. But if they are stumbling blocks, meaning they are that which the wicked use to trip up and subvert others.

And everything else that God is going to wipe out here is a living thing. These partake of that. These are either emblems of them or actual people and animals of these descriptions.

They're going to be beasts, they're going to be birds, they're going to be fish, all involved in this worship. Do you remember what happened in the Garden of Uzzah? What did they do at night while they were hanging around in the dark, sleeping with the corpses? What else did they do up there? What did they eat? Mice and swine, right? Do you think those were stumbling blocks? This is the kind of thing he's talking about. All of this is going to be wiped out.

Now this is important. You think, well, okay, minor detail. It's important.

God is speaking here in the first person. And if you think scripture doesn't waste a word and prophets don't waste a word and apostles don't waste a word, I promise you when God speaks, there's not a wasted word. I will consume man and beast.

I will consume. What did God initially do? He created them, brought them into being. To

consume is to take out of being, to make nonexistent.

Stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land, says the Lord. What I'm getting at here is the stumbling blocks, if they are living things, and if we are going in reverse order, man is last, then beasts, then birds, then fish.

What existed as a living thing before then? Demons. Demons and the wicked who consort with them, right? This is idolatry that involves demonic activity. What was the manifestation of evil in the garden of Eden? A serpent personifying Satan, right? What is the evil in the garden of Uzzah? Living things personifying demons.

Same place, same idea. When God says, I will consume them, he is going to destroy them and eliminate them. And so this tells you the severity of the idolatry.

This is not just bowing down in front of a rock. This is consort with denizens of the underworld, evil minions of Satan. That's the implication here.

That's why God is not speaking in a trivial fashion. I will cut off man from the face of the land, says the Lord. And notice he returns to man.

He began with man. He goes all the way down the chain. Then he says, I will cut man off from the land, says the Lord.

I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will cut off every trace of Baal from this place. In Hebrew, this says, I will cut off the remnant of Baal, the remainder, whatever is left.

You know, the Baal cult has come and gone, so to speak, a few times. It's waxed and it has waned, but it has never disappeared. God says, I'm going to disappear it.

I'm going to eliminate it and eradicate it. The names of the idolatrous priests with the pagan priests. And idolatrous priests here in Hebrew, this is the word Kemarim, C-H-E-M-A-R-I-M.

And this in a nutshell means the black robe wearers, the robed in black ones. How are the Levitical priests to be dressed? What do they wear? Linen, clean and white. What do these priests wear? Black.

They're goth priests. Their fingernails are painted black. Their robes are black.

They probably darken their eyebrows. They probably wear Ray-Bans. I don't know what all they do, but they're characterized with darkness and blackness.

Kemarim, C-H-E-M-A-R-I-M, Kemarim. They are the dark robed ones. Garden of Uzzah, Garden of Eden.

Sons of light, sons of darkness. Angels of light, angels of darkness. Priests of God, priests of

satanic infiltration.

God says, I will cut off the names. Remember when the man possessed with the legion fell down at Jesus' feet? What did Jesus ask him? What is your name? And what was the reply? My name is Legion, for we are many. God says, I'm not just gonna cut them off.

I will cut their names off. And even the names of those demons that inhabited that poor guy are not known to us. Legion means it's a long list, but the list is not given because their names are wiped out.

God says, I will wipe out the names of these dark priests along with the priests. Redundant, I'll wipe out the dark robed priests along with the priests. These dark robed priests are the demonic presences that are in touch with the human priests.

Both ends of that conversation, this would be like taking out the demon and the necromancer that calls him up, spiritists and so on. The people who consort with them, both ends of that conversation, God's gonna grab the telephone line and the ones at each end are going to be consumed, gonna be taken away. But you get a hint here of the seriousness of the situation.

This is on God's holy mountain that this is taking place. This is in Judah. It is in Jerusalem.

It is on the Mount. It is next door to, as we saw in Habakkuk, it is next door to, and as we saw in our Garden of Uzzah study, it's next door to God's temple. They can look up and see the temple.

It is in the shadow of God's presence. Those who worship the host of heaven on the housetops, those who worship and swear oaths by the Lord, but who also swear by Milcom. Milcom is Molech, as in child sacrifice, idolatrous practice, worshipping Molech.

Host of heaven. This is idolatry, of course, but it is a fresh category. Now, when God says, I will wipe out the stumbling blocks, if you have people who have, as in Romans chapter one, known God, but they do not glorify God, neither are they thankful, but they become empty in their imagination, vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart is darkened.

And they exchange the glory of God for what? Glory of created things, four-footed beasts, et cetera. This is a consistent theme all through scripture. Read the last half of Romans one.

Those who willfully disregard the knowledge of God that he has given them and willfully choose something else will turn to nature. They will worship nature and decide that, well, God is in every living thing, so every living thing is sacred. Therefore, I don't want to squash a bug.

I don't want to eat a cow. I don't wanna harm anything. And it is in the heavens.

Nature brought me forth. I evolved from the lower animals. The sky brought me forth.

I am made of stardust. You can listen to Stephen Stills sing it all day long. He didn't write it, but I think somebody else wrote that.

Joni Mitchell or Judy Collins or somebody wrote that. We are stardust. We are golden.

And Petunia's in the end of the rifles and gotta get back to the garden. And yeah, they're gonna get back to the garden of Uzzah because God is not in it. And if you're old enough, you know the song I'm talking about.

Otherwise, I'm speaking in cryptic turns here. But Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, and the name of that song is Woodstock. Look up the lyrics, Google it.

It pertains because men who love darkness rather than light don't wanna believe God is the creator, so they worship the creation and believe that it is their creator. They worship the heavens and believe that it is their creator. It was just a happy break of the pool cue and the cue ball and the balls on the table just all fell into the pockets on a single break at the Big Bang.

It's all a big happy accident. This is old, old. People think it's modern, it's scientific.

We've just come up with all this wonderful knowledge. This is ancient. Thousands of years ago, people believed this same alternate story.

What does God particularly hate? Those who worship the host of heaven on the housetops, those who worship and swear by the Lord, who claim the name of the Lord. Look around at your modern day church that has incorporated Eastern mysticism, that has incorporated meditation and visualization and the ways of the world for marketing and for money raising and for recruiting and for all of the functions that they think will make for a big happy group. It is all so much of it secularized and derived from the world.

And God reserves particular anger for those who amalgamate, who mix this in with his name. Claim his name, but you're up on the housetop. Theistic evolution might be a candidate for this.

Some of the varieties of that. Have not sought the Lord nor inquired of him. This is the key.

You can have a lot of mistaken ideas you can grow up with or be taught or start out with some misconceptions. But if you are inquiring and seeking the Lord, you will learn, you will grow, you will drop these things that scripture does not support, that the Holy Spirit does not affirm in your soul and in your conscience. If you ask and if you seek and if you knock, God has promised that he will answer and he will open the door and he will grant the knowledge of himself.

Seek it as silver, search for it as for hid treasures. You will understand the fear of the Lord and you will find the knowledge of God. God will give it, out of his mouth will come that knowledge and understanding that you seek.

These people are not seeking the Lord. They are not inquiring of the Lord. They're not seeking and they're not asking.

So they never get around to knocking. If you don't ask and you don't seek, there's nothing to knock on. Verse seven, be silent in the presence of the Lord God for the day of the Lord is at

hand.

Now, if he says be silent, what does this mean? There's a lot of yakking going on. There's a lot of rationalization. There's a lot of proselytization.

There's a lot of propagandization. There's the making of many books. There is the amalgamation of new age and all of these other things into Christianity.

And it's published in books and seminars and self-help and mentoring and discipling and all the rest of it is shot through with this. And there is a great cacophony in the household that claims God's name. And he says, shut up, stop the noise, be silent.

For the day of the Lord is at hand. The Lord has prepared a sacrifice and he has invited his guests. You remember when they advertised a big feast to bail out everybody to assemble, they invited all the guests then they shut the doors and slaughtered them all.

This sacrifice is not going to be a standard Levitical sacrifice. This sacrifice is going to be everything that he has described from verse two through verse six. It shall be verse eight in that day, the day of the Lord's sacrifice.

I will punish the princes and the King's children and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel. Remember I said, we would remember the circumstances of King Josiah coming to the throne. Who have they assembled? Who have they gathered in the household? Figuring he's safe from them, descendants of the King, the cousins, the second cousins.

And they think, well, we've got this all handled. There are regents, there are princes, there are adult functionaries that are going to take over the government. What does Zephaniah stand up and say? He's the white sheep of the family in this sense.

God says, I will punish the princes and the King's children, not talking about King Josiah, talking about the other King's children. We know from the presence of Zephaniah that there are other cousins or other descendants of Hezekiah and perhaps Azariah and some of the previous Davidic Kings who are waiting in the wings, who think, well, it's an eight-year-old, I can take over. I have a popular mandate because nobody wants to see idolatry go away.

It's the big thing. It's popular, it's normal. Everyone is used to it, everyone likes it.

I can ride a wave of support and take myself to the throne of David. I have the descendancy, I'm the King's son, one of the previous Kings, so I'll do an Adonijah. I will do a usurpation, this eight-year-old can't last.

Zephaniah stands up and says, God says in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, I will punish the princes. I will punish the King's children. I will punish all such as are clothed with foreign apparel.

What does this mean? Where have we seen apparel in this context? Remember the Kemarim?

What are they notable for? What does their name signify? Foreign apparel, black-robed priests. And these people, although they may walk around acting like they are royal family and the King's children, they are robed in foreign apparel in the sense that they have bought into Canaanite ideology. They have bought into idolatrous mythology.

They've bought it lock, stock and barrel. They wear it like a garment. And God says, your day has come.

In the same day, I will punish all those who leap over the threshold, who fill their master's houses with violence and deceit. It says leap over the threshold, but this is actually leap on the threshold. People have thought, well, maybe this is talking about Dagon.

Remember when the Ark of the Covenant went to the Philistines and they put it in the Temple of Dagon and the Statue of Dagon kept falling over and it fell on the threshold and broke off his hands and his head. And so after that, they got superstitious and none of the priests of Dagon would ever step on the threshold again. They thought, well, maybe this is a reference to that.

The only problem with it is there is no hint of Dagon worship this late in Israel. And this is not a Philistine context. It's a Canaanitic idolatry, Molech, Baal.

So that isn't it. So what does it mean to leap on the threshold and fill your master's house with violence and deceit or by means of violence and deceit? What this means is, what are these people really after? Foreign apparel. This is your, you know, think Gucci and Versace.

And, you know, the latest thing from Paris, the latest thing from, you know, Babylon or some far off place, it's pricey, right? They're not content with humility. They're not content with domesticity. They're not content with being Israelites and being faithful to God and having their covenant relationship with him as their heritage.

They want to dress fancy. They want to look like the nations. And this leaping on the threshold is leaping by servants.

How do I know that? Read the verse. Those who are leaping on the threshold are filling their master's houses. So what does that make them? Servants.

So what are they doing? They are acquiring goods by violence and deceit and they're bringing them into their master's house. And as they approach the master's house with all this loot, they can't even wait to get inside and put it away. They're dancing up and down on the threshold saying, master, look at this fresh load of booty that I have brought to you.

This is a dance of joy. They are so proud of themselves by violence and deceit in looting the poor and bringing it to the rich that they can't even get inside the house to tell their news. This is like, you know, your girls go shopping and they come back with all these boxes from the mall and they can't even get inside the door.

They want to take it all out and show it to you right in the doorway because they're so excited. This is the pinnacle of, I'm not now talking about the women, I'm talking about these servants. This is the pinnacle of their joy.

This is the apex and the acme of their achievement. Oh master, look what I have done and right there in the doorway. It is celebration.

Where did David say that he would be happy? At the gate? I would be happy just being a gatekeeper at the house of the Lord, at the door. Where did Joshua station himself in the days of Moses? At the doorway? The joy at the doorway would be master, capital M, that house, that gate, that doorway, celebrating and rejoicing. I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of the Lord.

These people are happy when they go to the household of their master with their arms full of ill gotten gains and they leap up and down in the doorway and say, we did it again. Feast them again, took them again, made a big score. This is the situation in God's earthly capital city.

Do you think God is angry? Yes. Do you think the appearance of the eight year old boy king is in any way going to stave off the day of judgment? Well, a lot of people thought that it would. It won't.

That's the message of Zephaniah. Don't think because we've got a wonderfully good hearted little boy as king and he's going to grow up to be a wonderful echo of his father, David, that this is in any way going to forestall what God has already stated he would do. Remember for the sins of Manasseh, God said, I will not forgive.

I'm going to bring back all of the sins going back to the day I brought this people out of Egypt. It is that idea of the unjust servant. You remember the servant that was forgiven a great debt, but he would not forgive his underservant a small debt.

What did the master do? He unforgave that servant, his big debt. It was forgiven and he unforgave it. This by the way, is one of the least preached principles of the Bible.

Nobody likes to talk about God unforgiving sin. We like to say he has separated as far as the East is from the West, washed in the blood of the lamb and made white and redeemed forevermore, spotless and without spot or wrinkle or any such thing holding without blemish. Nobody wants to remind us of that parable, the Lord told of the servant who was forgiven an enormous debt and set free by his master, but because he would not forgive when his master heard of it, he brought that servant back in, threw him in debtor's prison until he should pay every penny, every night.

It is possible to remove ourselves from the place of God's covenanted and promised blessings. That is what Judah and particularly the rulership and leadership in Judah has done. And God says, the day is set.

The judgment is coming and nothing is going to turn it aside. Josiah, as we know, will lead a sort of a brief revival. There will be a renewal.

They're gonna find the law and the rubble of the temple, the rubble of the temple, God's house, but it will not be enough. God knows that this is a mere flash in the pan, sort of a last revving of the engine before it runs completely out of gas. And he says, no, it is insufficient.

It's not enough. Judgment is coming. Now, this is a very sober inaugural message for the boy king.

And it is a sobering message for us because our nation is in a very similar situation. We have had the word of God. We've had a heritage of Christian influence in our culture and in our laws, in our government, in our society, all the way up until recent times.

But it has not only been thrown over and been abandoned, but it is now being repudiated. It isn't just that people are no longer wearing white. Now they want to wear black.

It is no longer that they aren't following the dietary laws that God placed in his covenant, but they are actively choosing to eat the mice and the swine, figuratively speaking. We're not just abandoning biblical principles. We are actively flouting and high-handedly going against them as a culture, as a people, as a nation.

Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord. What is the obverse? Cursed is that nation whose God was the Lord. And that's us.

Zephaniah, like Habakkuk, recognizes that the day of judgment is swiftly approaching. Does Zephaniah have a message of hope for those who are faithful, who are a part of the remnant? And the answer is yes. Look at Zephaniah chapter three, just so we don't leave on a completely dismal note here.

Turn over to chapter three, verse 17. In that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem, do not fear, Zion, let not your hands be weak. The Lord, your God in your midst, the mighty one will save.

He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will quiet you with his love. He will rejoice over you with singing.

Now, this is the same Jerusalem that God just got through saying he's gonna wipe out every living thing and utterly destroy it, top to bottom, left to right, east, west, north, and south. It's gonna look like the aftermath of the flood. It's gonna look like the Tohu Wabohu of Genesis 1-2.

Yet in 3-17, it will be said to Jerusalem, do not fear. He will quiet you with his love. He will rejoice over you with singing.

Now, how can both things be true? It is because the two proclamations pertain to different people in that same location. You may remember a little episode in Ezekiel where there's an inkhorn angel. Remember the inkhorn angel, the marking angel? What did he do right before

the destruction of the city? He went through looking for those who were sighing and crying over all of the evil being perpetrated in the city, and he placed on them a mark.

And then God told the destroying angels, don't harm the ones that have the mark. It's like the antithesis of the mark of the beast. This is the mark of the Lord.

Inkhorn angel goes through preceding judgment. And those who are marked for preservation will be safe. Like Noah, the eight souls preserved through the flood, there is that faithful remnant.

So it's a very simple choice for us. Do we wanna be light or darkness? We wanna have the Garden of Eden or the Garden of Uzzah. Do we want the inkhorn angel to look closely at us and then pull out the pen and make a nice big mark right on us? Can he, when he looks at us, does he find sufficient evidence that we are those who by faith and patience are inheriting the promises? That is the question.

All of the political falterall, all of the noise and the talking heads and the static and the downward sloshing sound in our nation cannot drown out the voice of the Lord God with his promise. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. The Lord your God in your midst, the mighty one will save.

It's just a matter of knowing who we are, remembering why we're here, pursuing by faith and patience our calling. Well, Zephaniah is a fascinating book. We'll get into the meat of 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 providing to us these wonderful prophetic messages in their historic context, a historical situation so like the one that we ourselves see around us. We pray that we will receive like encouragement and motivation as we look at your word to your people in such circumstances that God the Holy Spirit, the precious gift that we have from your son, the Lord Jesus, will strengthen us, keep us, recall to our minds your word and make it a fruitful source of application and the foundation for laying hold of righteousness so that we will be pleasing in your sight and be preserved for that bright future that is ours through our savior.

We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.