Kings and Prophets 16-04-14

This is the 14th day of April 2016, my younger brother's anniversary of birth. I remember it well. We continue our study in Kings and Prophets, and having surveyed the message that God sent to the southern kingdom of Judah through several of these prophets, we're going to get back into the narrative in 2 Kings chapter 22.

2 Kings chapter 22, the reign of King Josiah. There's a parallel, of course, in 2 Chronicles chapter 34. We'll be largely in 2 Kings this evening.

We'll take a moment as we begin our study to pause and take a moment to spiritually take a breath and focus our concentration, remember who we are and why we are here, and the opportunity that we have through the ministry of God's Spirit to be built up and encouraged through the truth that we will look at tonight in this passage. Shall we pray? Thank you, Father, for this time of fellowship and encouragement through the study of your Word. We're grateful to have the freedom and the privilege of gathering in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ without fear.

We don't have to be furtive. We don't have to be reticent or meet in secret or go to the catacombs. We are given the grace to pursue our faith and the application of it without harassment or persecution, and we know that that is not the case in so many places in the world.

We know that it's no accident and it is not an idle thing that you have given us this opportunity, and we pray that we can take maximum advantage of it tonight, that both within our own souls, within our own fellowship, and within our community, our state, and our nation, our presence will accomplish your purpose, that we will be lights that shine and reflect your glory as a result of having reviewed and reflected upon the truths that we see in this portion of your Word tonight. We pray that in our fellowship and in all things in our lives, the Lord Jesus will be glorified. We pray it in his name.

Amen. We know the time in the history of Israel. We know what happened to the northern kingdom.

We know that it has been gone now for 100 years, and we are in the low end of the 600s B.C., coming very quickly to the end of the existence of the southern kingdom of Judah. And having seen the kings, if you just think about the kings of Judah, see if this rings a bell at all, Israel, the United Kingdom, had its first king, who was Saul. Caught you there, didn't I? First king of Israel was King Saul.

Who was his heir and crown prince? Jonathan. But there was a losing effort on the slopes of Mount Gilboa, and both Saul and his son Jonathan were slain. He had a remaining son that had some pretensions to the throne.

Do you remember his name? Ish-ba-al, remembered in Scripture as Ish-bosheth, because Baal leaves kind of a bad taste in some mouths, and so they would change Baal, which meant Lord, both upper and lower case l, to foolishness, bosheth. So if you want a nice, socially acceptable expression of contempt for a thing, you can just, and say it clearly so people don't misunderstand you, just say, bosheth, bosheth. That's just bosheth.

Perfectly good Hebrew word means foolishness. Ish-bosheth. He was the remaining heir to Saul, who would have been king.

However, God had sent the prophet Samuel to anoint the oldest son of Jesse, right? Are you paying attention? See, I'm pulling you back now, pulling you back into, where did David rank among the sons of Jesse? How many sons did Jesse have? He had eight sons, and David came in last. Seven sons passed before Samuel. This is not the man, not the man, not the man.

Is this it? Well, we've got one guy out in the field, David. Okay, who is David's heir to the throne? Is it his oldest son? You had Absalom, you had Amnon, you had many sons with many wives. But who ends up claiming the throne upon David's death? Be careful.

Who claims the throne upon David's death? Adonai Yah. The Lord is the Lord. Adonai Yah.

Adonai, the Lord. Yahweh, the Lord. Personal name and title.

So, Adonai Yah claims the throne, blows the trumpet, echoes down the valley, and David's not even dead yet. So, what happens? Shlomo. Shlomo.

By the way, here's an excellent trivia question for you, as long as we're reviewing. What was Solomon's birth name, his given name at birth? He wasn't named Solomon out of the cradle in the same way that Jesus wasn't named Jesus out of the cradle. What was Jesus' birth name? Emmanuel, God with us.

But his name that was used was Yeshua, Joshua, Jesus. So, Shlomo, Solomon. What was his birth name? Wasn't Solomon.

You remember? It comes up in our study tonight. Here's a little clue. Let's read a couple of verses in 2 Kings chapter 22.

Josiah was eight years old when he became king and he reigned 31 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidiah. Does that give you any help on Solomon? Solomon's birth name, delivered by the prophet Nathan.

Go back to 2 Samuel. Jedidiah. Let me tell you a story about a man named Jedidiah.

Had no trouble keeping his family fed. Jedidiah, that's Solomon's birth name. And the root is the same as Josiah's mother, Jedidiah.

By the way, when you look at the double D there, Jedidiah, the D followed by another D is the

root of David's name, Dawid. Instead of DWD, this is DYD, but the root is the same. Do you remember what David's name means, Dawid? Coming in English as David.

Beloved. Dud, D-U-D, is the verb in Hebrew for love. Ahav is another one, but DWD is the word for love, so beloved.

David is beloved. And Jedidiah is not quite a junior name, but it harks to David's name in its construction for Solomon. So there's a sense in which, name-wise, he is sort of David Jr. And so Jedidiah, and here Jedidah, these names are all derivative from that root.

All right, so quickly now, I don't want to waste all of my time, but we're going down through those kings. You have David, then Solomon, and after Solomon, the kingdom splits. Northern kingdom, southern kingdom.

Let's just think about the kings in Judah now. So the first king of Judah alone is Solomon's son, Rehoboam. Rehoboam, number one.

Rehoboam, in order to help solidify his claim to the throne, which was a little bit shaky as the kingdom had just recently split, there's lots of trauma, he takes to wife his cousin. His brother, or actually his uncle Absalom's daughter. Daughter of Absalom is Rehoboam's wife.

I'm not sure we know her name, but they have a son who is the second king of the southern kingdom, which is Abijah. And so Abijah is number two, number three is Asa. You remember Asa? And then number four is jumping Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat. And if you remember, Jehoshaphat had a widespread teaching emphasis, sent teachers throughout, many people from the northern kingdom. In the days of the wicked kings up there, Baasha and the Amrite dynasty, Ahab famously, people came down to the south.

And Jehoshaphat spread the word of God throughout the kingdom of Judah. Jehoshaphat had a son named Jehoram. And that really goes bad quickly because Jehoram hooks up with Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.

Remember that? And then there is a time when there is no king officially in Judah and Athaliah is holding sway. And it depends on who you talk to when you number the kings of Judah because a lot of people count Athaliah as a king in the list, a ruler in the list. But Ahaziah is the offspring of Jehoram and Athaliah.

And Jehoash. Then you have Amaziah. Then Uzziah or Uzziah, the garden of Uzziah.

Remember whose father he was. Twelfth king of Judah. Now this might help you a little bit just in terms of keeping the biggies in memory.

Rehoboam is the first. Jehoshaphat is the fourth. Hezekiah, son of Uzziah, is the twelfth.

Hezekiah is the twelfth king of the southern kingdom. Number four, pretty significant. Number

twelve, pretty significant.

And, of course, Hezekiah, given 15 more years, you have Manasseh who follows him, takes up with his grandfather's ways, pretty much reinstitutes everything that Uzziah, the garden of Uzziah, all those bad practices. And God says in Manasseh's day, this kingdom is finished. Nothing is going to help this kingdom.

It is going out. And you remember that. And he goes all the way back to the sins of Exodus, practically.

He says, I'm going to bring all the sins on these people. They're wayward and froward and recalcitrant. Then Manasseh had a son named Ammon who doesn't last long.

He's more of a placekeeper. I think he's just there to up the number count. And then we have our current king, Josiah.

That's where we pick up now in chapter 22, Josiah. So a little quick review of what's been going on in Judah. Josiah was eight years old when he became king.

When's the last time you can think of a boy king coming to the throne? Baby who? Not sweet baby Ray. Baby Joash, right? Baby Joash. Or sweet baby James.

That's another one. See, I'm ready for barbecue sauce more so than James Taylor. But yeah, baby Joash.

Now, let's just think about that for a minute. Joash, this is back in the days of Athaliah. Remember, she'd wiped out the whole royal household.

But Joash is carried out and hidden for how long? Seven years. And you have the priest, Jehoiada. Remember Jehoiada the priest? Trots him out.

Keep your finger here in 2 Kings 22 and just flip back to 2 Kings 12. It's an easy jump, ten chapters back. We've been doing a lot of prophets and prophecy here.

We don't want to lose our narrative thread. 2 Kings 12, in the seventh year of Jehu, Joash became king. Jehoash, Joash, same guy, spelled both ways.

He reigned 40 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebiah of Beersheba. Zebiah is a heart or a roe.

It's a deer-type animal. Zebiah of Beersheba. You know what Beersheba means, right? Sheba is seven and beer is well or wells.

Beersheba is seven wells. There was a real estate company here in Dallas called Beer Wells. I always thought it was kind of redundant.

Beer means it's like well wells, if you are bent in the Hebrew direction. Anyway, Zebiah of

Beersheba. So his mother's name is given here for Joash.

He did what was right in the sight of the Lord. Now, if you look back in Chapter 11, I just reviewed briefly the whole thing. In the seventh year, Jehoiada sent, in verse 4 of Chapter 11, captains of the bodyguards.

You remember that? He puts on this whole big production and then he brings out the boy, seven years of age, and he becomes king. So he's seven here in the first verse of Chapter 12. This is Joash.

Joash basically means Yahweh's gift or given by the Lord, idea. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him. Remember that little caveat? As long as he had the oversight and the guidance, he did okay.

As long as Jehoiada was there to kind of keep him pointed in the right direction. This, of course, is the fear of every parent. My child is going to do great so long as I'm here to be right behind him and not let them veer to the right hand or to the left.

I'm going to smack them this way and smack them this way. And as long as I'm here, they do fine. But as soon as I'm out of the picture, they're a bottle rocket without a stem.

I just have no idea what's going to happen. So long as Jehoiada was there to instruct him. But the high places were not taken away.

The people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. Then Joash says to the priests, all the money of the dedicated gifts that are brought unto the house of the Lord, each man census money, each man... Now remember, we've gone ten chapters back, right? And we're talking about gathering money to refurbish and rehabilitate the temple that has fallen on hard times during the days of Athaliah, right? Now this is important. You need this background.

That's why we're looking at it for our chapter tonight. But we're several generations back now, ten chapters back, and we're looking at the first reign after Athaliah's death, the boy king, Joash. And with Jehoiada's help, assistance, guidance, and direction, they set up this funding mechanism to get the temple back on track.

That's what we're looking at. So each man's assessment money goes in. The priests are going to take it.

So in verse 6, By the twenty-third year of King Joash, the priests had not repaired the damages of the temple. They've been gathering the money, but no work has been done. And he was seven or eight when they started, right? So this has been fifteen years or so and no progress.

So what does that tell you? Was there any kind of public outcry? What's taking so long? Did the people come before the king and say, Oh, king, what's up with the temple? This was a formal reform, but it doesn't seem like there was a real groundswell of support for it. People are going

ahead and paying their money and it's being collected, but nothing's really happening. So in the twenty-third year, the king calls the priest and says, Why have you not repaired the damage? Do not take more money from the constituency.

Give it to repair the damages of the temple. So verse 8, the priest agreed. They wouldn't get any more money from the people and they'd get the repair effort underway.

So Jehoiada the priest took a chest, bored a hole in it, set it beside the altar on the right side. As you come into the house of the Lord, the priest who kept the door, put all the money brought into the house of the Lord there. Whenever they saw there was a lot of money in the chest, the king's scribe and the high priest came and put it in bags, counted the money, etc.

Gave it. It was apportioned. And you go on to verse 12 and following, and they got the masons and stonecutters and the guys that work with silver and trimmers and sprinkling bowls and trumpets and all the rest of it.

They gave, verse 14, that to the workmen and they repaired the house of the Lord with it. And it didn't require account from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to be paid workmen for they dealt faithfully. Money from the trespass offerings, the money from the sin offerings was not brought into the house of the Lord.

It belonged to the priests. That's the days of baby Joash all the way up until 23, 15 years go by. Right? Money coming in, being collected.

We're going to fix up the place with it. But, if you remember, there was not a big push for that. And what happens right after Joash? Who's the next king? Just look, Joash dies at the end of chapter 12 and in chapter 13, 23rd year, Jehoiah has the son of Jehu became king over Israel and then in 14, in the second year of Joash, the son of Jehoiah is king of Israel, Amaziah, the son of Joash became king.

He was 25, his mother's name was Jehoaddon. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord but not like his father David. He did like Joash had done.

High places were not taken down, people still sacrificed. So, superficial reform. Now, who comes on the scene after Amaziah? Uzziah, as in Garden of Uzziah, as in struck with leprosy Uzziah for having the hubris to walk in and think he could reorganize worship in the holy place.

Remember that? So, you can tell that this was a surge under Joash but it was superficial and didn't really last. Now, back to our passage. Josiah, chapter 22, 2nd Kings.

Eight years old when he became king. Joash was seven. Josiah is eight.

Same kind of a deal. He's going to reign 31 years in Jerusalem. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord.

Walked in all the ways of his father David. Did not turn his side to the right hand or to the left.

Notice he doesn't need a Jehoiada to keep him on track.

Came to pass in the 18th year of king Josiah that the king sent Shaphan the scribe. Shaphan is how I should say it but I'm just going to say it the way they say it in Texas. Shaphan, Shaphan the scribe, the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshulam, to the house of the Lord saying... Now, by the way, this is a great tribute to Shaphan that his lineage is given.

These guys are mentioned because they're good guys. And their names are in God's eternal word because they did it right. And there has been this tradition of people patiently waiting through the days of Manasseh, waiting through the days of Ammon, waiting for a chance for the faithful to get a word in edgewise to counter the stuff that was going on right next door to the temple in the garden of Uzzah.

And all of this overt, in your face, idolatry and eating of swine's flesh and mice and sleeping in the graves and all the rest of that that we saw. These guys are part of the faithful remnant. And that's why Meshulam and his son and then Shaphan are listed, Azaliah there.

And so the king sends Shaphan the scribe and says, Go up to Hilkiah the high priest that he may count the money which has been brought into the house of the Lord which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people. Notice that equipment that Joash put in place is still there. Now, I'm sure it fell into disuse in the days of Uzziah.

I'm sure it was unused and probably collected dust in the days of Manasseh and Ammon. But it's been dusted back off. It is still there.

They're still collecting this money. Who knows where the money has gone? But it has been used for its proper purpose. So you have Josiah here saying, Let's get this straightened out.

Get this money. And verse 5, Let them deliver it into the hand of those doing the work who are overseers in the house of the Lord. Let them give it to those who are in the house of the Lord doing the work to repair the damages of the house.

Carpenters and builders and masons buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. There needs to be no accounting made with them of the money delivered into their hand because they deal faithfully. This is the workmen.

Echoes of we are forced to hark back to what we just read in chapter 12, aren't we? It's the same idea. It's the same kind of heart and same kind of effort. But when you say it's the same, think.

How deep was that reform? How heartfelt was popular support for it in chapter 12 in the days of Joash? And you have by this repetition and this connection back to right after the days of Athaliah, well now we're right after the days of Manasseh and Ammon. So a very parallel situation. We are invited to think back and you hear a little bit of warning music playing in the background because how long did that reform persist from the days of Joash? He had one good

son and then you had Uzziah that started all of the bad stuff that we have here.

So it is a... You know what it reminds me of? Did you ever have a kite that you got going on a nice breezy day but then the wind dies? And so you pull the string and the kite rises but there's not enough wind to hold it and it sinks. And you pull the string and it comes up not quite as high and then it sinks. And then you pull the string and it comes up but not quite as high.

And you start reeling in the string to try to get the kite to fly but sooner or later it's going to be in your lap because there just isn't enough wind to sustain it. The idea here in Judah is there isn't enough spiritual vitality in the people to keep that spiritual level. And God gives them Joash and the kite rises a little bit but then it starts sinking again through Uzziah.

You have Hezekiah. It comes up but it sinks even lower. You have Manasseh and Ammon and now you've got Josiah and there's another tug on the string and Josiah in many ways is a stronger king than Joash or Hezekiah.

He's compared to his father David. And one of the points here to absorb I think for us is the quality of the government isn't going to save the nation or the quality of the people occupying office in government. People think if we could just get this good guy elected the country would soar.

No. It's the quality of the people. And the best king in the world the Lord Jesus presented Himself to Israel in the first advent, right? Hosanna, palm branches, throwing the clothes lowly and riding on the foal of a donkey and so on.

How did that work out? It isn't the quality of the king that ultimately determines the fate of the nation. It's the quality of the people. It's you and me and others like us.

To what extent are there going to be ten righteous left in Sodom? If you want to make a difference in the nation don't worry so much about how you vote as how you think. That's what God is looking at. Is there enough in the nation? So watch closely now for the clues about the heart of the people versus the heart of the king.

This king is all good intentions. And he says, look, we need to go back and use this money for its original intention from several generations ago and let's get this house fixed up. It's fallen into disrepair.

And we're going to trust. We've got these faithful workmen. It seems like the workmen are always good guys.

The blue collar in the trenches. You remember Bezalel and Aholiab when they first put the tabernacle together? It doesn't even say that Aaron the priest and his sons were filled with the Holy Spirit. Who gets the Holy Spirit in the days of erecting the first formal worship in Israel under the shadow of the tabernacle? Who gets the Holy Spirit? The workmen.

Bezalel and Aholiab. They are the guys you can trust. The Spirit is with them and they do all of this hard work that provides the furnishings and the wherewithal to give people the opportunity to come and worship.

And I think of that in the spiritual gifts that God puts in a church. Each of you has a spiritual gift. Each of you, and I mean each of you, every single one of you, listening to the sound of my voice as a part of this fellowship, you have a contribution that you can make.

Because you have the Spirit, you are a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. And if you do what you do, rightly dividing the word of truth, and you do it as unto the Lord and not unto men, and you're ready to wash the feet of the saints, you are ready to make a thing or melt a thing or build a thing or hammer a thing or take up and tear down a thing or carry a thing, just like those faithful Levites, God honors that. You are laying hold of righteousness by faith.

It may not be seen. It may not be appreciated. You may never get a thank you.

People may just take for granted. You know, that just seems to magically appear and always be there. It reminds me of laundry that shows up in my drawer and in my closet.

And unless I stop and think, it just always seems to be there. And I think, you know, there are people in my household that aren't me that make that happen, who plan ahead and make sure it gets washed and dried and folded and carried up and distributed and sorted and taken to the cleaners and brought back. And it's such a wonderful service and such a thing done in love, and it counts.

It counts in eternity. Every folded piece of clothing, every faithful carrying of that burden on behalf of others, done in love, done as unto the Lord and not unto men, you can't believe what that purchases and what that buys in eternity. God knows.

God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and your labor of love. You look at the Bible's view of workmen. Paul's highest accolade is that we be a workman that does not need to be ashamed.

Laying a straight course of bricks. Bricklayer? Really? Why can't I be, you know, the guy carried on the palanquin with the bearers and fans and, you know, ostrich feathers and all the rest of it? A workman that does not need to be ashamed. It's the highest accolade in Scripture.

Look at these workmen. Even down in Josiah's day. One thing about those workmen, we can just hand them the money and we don't have to worry about whether they're going to skim or whether they're going to embezzle or whether they're going to take it and spend it on themselves.

The workmen are trustworthy. The workmen in Joash's day were trustworthy. They didn't have to keep track of them.

The workmen in Moses' day, God put His own spirit in them to get that work done. So you have here, there need be no accounting, verse 7, made with them of the money delivered into their hand because they deal faithfully. Wouldn't that be a wonderful reputation to have? You know what? Fill in your name here.

I never have to worry about them. If they say they'll do a thing, it's done. If I entrust them with a thing, I have every confidence that they will do everything within their power to fulfill that obligation or that responsibility faithfully.

You're known for your reliability. You're known for your timeliness. You're known for your ability to just always seem to be there getting it done.

There is no greater testimony. There are many great testimonies but none greater than being the person that is as reliable as the Lord Himself. Do you want the Lord to be sloppy about keeping the list of who's saved? Well, I know we're supposed to resurrect some of these church-age people but a couple of pages blew off the end of the list here.

It's like the Gospel of Mark. The last page went missing. I don't know who that last crowd was.

God is so faithful. Out of the millions of people that have ever lived, He knows your name and my name. Faithfulness.

Being someone others count on. It is a reflection of integrity. It's a reflection of dedication to God.

So Hilkiah, verse 8, the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan and he read it. So Shaphan the scribe went to the king bringing the king word saying, Your servants have gathered the money that was found in the house and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work who oversee the house of the Lord.

Now, notice something here. Josiah wasn't walking on the roof of the palace in the cool of the day and kicked a palm leaf aside and here's the book of the Lord. He picks it up, reads it or has it read and says, wow, the law of the Lord says I need to honor the house of the Lord and get this thing squared away and get things restored and refurbished.

What is the order here? Josiah's attitude of respect for, concern for and effort toward the things of God is first. Because he has that attitude, here comes the information. Here comes the book of the law.

Shaphan doesn't come and smack Josiah in the side of the head with the book of the law and say, Why haven't you refurbished the temple? Look at what your great granddaddy and your grandfather and your father have done to this. Whack, whack, whack with the book of Deuteronomy. Get busy.

He is already proactive. He is already concerned. He is already taking steps and pushing on this.

And because he is that kind of guy, God's word comes to him and gives him illumination and guidance and further motivation and more things that he can do. And this is ever the way. There is a common theological understanding out there that says, God will move your heart and then you will get interested in the things of God.

And it's just the opposite. Those who are interested, those who are seeking, are the ones who are going to find. But it starts with your seeking.

Why is that? Because faith is not a work. It's not meritorious. You don't get credit for it.

It is a simple choice. You choose things all day long. You choose what you're going to do with your time.

You choose what kind of clothes you're going to wear. You choose how you're going to spend your money. You choose what food you're going to eat.

You choose who you're going to spend time with. We make choices all the time. Why do we choose one thing over another? Why some people over others? Why some foods over others? Why some clothes over others? Why some entertainment over others? Why do we make those choices? They are a reflection of the priorities and, in many cases, the goals and values that we have established for ourselves in our own soul.

Right? And those choices are an expression. Choosing God, choosing the things of God, choosing the people of God, choosing the Word of God, as you have done tonight by being here, is a reflection of something in your soul. Why did you choose to be here? Well, I don't want to be ill thought of if I don't show up.

That's a thought or intent of the heart. I am ready to learn something new. I know that God will enlighten my heart and put words in the mouth of the Holy Spirit so that my life will count and I can redeem the time and I can lay hold of righteousness by faith.

I can prepare myself for this life and the life to come. Whatever your motivation is for doing what you do, that determines its worth and its value. They are all choices.

Nothing magical about choosing God. To me, it's, you know, what have you got better to choose than God and the things of God? Something that partakes of beyond this life and beyond this moment, things that ultimately count and that are far beyond our subjective experience. Well, that is what Josiah did.

He began looking as a boy and seeing the dilapidated state of God's house and saying, why am I living here in a sumptuous palace and the house of God is falling down? Where is that money that's supposed to be used for that upkeep and maintenance? Get that money and spend it and give it to faithful workmen that we don't have to watch over every minute and let's get this

thing fixed. Because he did that and as a direct result of that effort, as they're doing the cleanup, here's the book of the law that nobody has heard or read. You can see the feast observance has fallen on hard times.

The regular reading of God's word and the books of Moses have fallen away and so they find it. So Shaphan brings it to him. Shaphan in verse 10 shows the king saying, Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.

Shaphan read it before the king. Now it happened when the king heard the words of the book of the law that he tore his clothes. Now, is tearing your clothes a sign of great joy and happiness in Israel? You would think he would be like David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant, coming into Jerusalem.

We have found the book of the law. I'm so refreshed and encouraged. Why does Josiah tear his royal robes when he hears the book of the law? Because looking over and seeing the dilapidated state of the house and getting the money redirected and the effort redirected to fix up the house is just the tip of the iceberg.

He realizes when he hears the word of the Lord how deep and how entrenched the apostasy and the falling away is in his kingdom, the kingdom that he is responsible for. And the divine standard compared to the current condition distresses him, but it also motivates him. Look at the next verse.

Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahicham the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Isaiah a servant of the king saying, Go inquire of the Lord for me, for the people and for all Judah concerning the words of the book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the Lord that has aroused against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book to do according to all that is written concerning us. Let's find out what we need to do.

Let's fix this. That's Josiah's attitude. So Hilkiah the priest, Ahicham, Achbor, Shaphan, and Isaiah went to Huldah the prophetess.

Notice how bad it is in Judah. And I say this knowing that, you know, I could get an axe in the head from a militant feminist. But it is a rebuke to the nation of Judah that there aren't men sufficient to serve as prophets and God raises up worthy women who can do a much better job than the men like He did in the days of Deborah.

Remember that? It was a rebuke. Where are the men who are supposed to be doing this? What happened to the big school of the prophets idea? What happened to all of those guys that used to go around and teach in the days of Jehoshaphat? Where are they? And so God says, look, I'll use anybody that is willing and has the attitude. Huldah is such a person.

And God says, fine, I don't care if you're a woman. You're my prophet. And it tells you that it is God's word and God's work and God's will in using anyone who is disposed in that way.

She has got a better attitude than any of the men in her generation. So guess what? She's the prophet. All of the precedents notwithstanding, all of the patriarchal society norms and expectations notwithstanding, He says, look, this gal's got more going on than the rest of you guys put together.

She's my prophet. And that ought to tell you something, men. Where are you? Why aren't you stepping up? So Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shalom, the son of Tikva, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe.

She dwelt in Jerusalem in the second quarter. And they spoke with her. Who does this remind you of? Some centuries later.

Who's the faithful woman in Jerusalem that gets a chance to see the Messiah as an infant and who knows all of the other faithful people in the area and goes and talks to them? God is gender blind. He is attitude sensitive. He is motivation sensitive.

And there may come a day in this country where the only good teacher of the Word of God you can find may end up being a woman. And I'd go listen. The formal nature, the formal structure of things is secondary to the functionality.

God is all about function. Form communicates. Form is expressive.

Form is the Word of God in pattern, in type, in symbolism. But you remember when they couldn't celebrate the Passover? There's provision in the law. If you can't get ready in time or if you're defiled for whatever reason, you can celebrate the thing a month late.

Is 14 Nisan an important day? Of course it is. But God will let people celebrate that feast a month late if they need to. Because it is the heart that says, I want to commemorate this.

I want to appreciate God and His deliverance. God says, I'll sacrifice the form. If your heart is in it, here's an alternate way.

And anytime you see a prophetess, anytime you see a mighty woman of God like Priscilla, Timothy's mother and grandmother, Eunice and that bunch there, those ladies that were washing the feet of the saints, those deaconesses, Chloe and Dorcas and the others, just remember they are valued by God not because they do or don't have a particular gender or assignment in circumstance, but because of their heart for Him. They're seeking, hungering and thirsting. And God will honor that and He will blow the doors off of convention.

So we get quite a bit of information about Huldah and by the way, this is another minor key warning note that don't expect a big groundswell of genuine spiritual appreciation and a bunch of people following Josiah in this desire for reform because the level of prophetic communication, the level of priestly communication is provided concomitant with proportionate to the heart of the people. If nobody's interested, why should God raise up prophets except as a rebuke? If nobody wants to worship, why should God put a bunch of

faithful priests out there that have nothing to do except as a rebuke? Remember when Jesus said, the Queen of Sheba is going to rise up in condemnation of this generation. She's a queen and she's a pagan and she's all the way down in Ethiopia and she's got more going on than you people who are native Israelites and ought to know better.

And Jesus says there's a lot of people that are going to rise up and when He says rise up, that's rise up in the resurrection because they're believers and they're going to be in the kingdom and the sons of the kingdom are going to be sitting outside wringing their hands and gnashing their teeth. So Huldah is a wonderful, we just get a little cameo appearance here but it tells us a lot. When it says the wife of Shalem, the son of Tikva, that tells you that Shalem was a good guy.

When it says that he's the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe, he's a good guy. These people are mentioned for a reason. There is this faithful remnant.

They're scattered. Some of them are on the royal staff. Some of them are out on the economy.

A few of them are in the scribal functions or in the priestly functions. And these people have been laboring for years through the days of Manasseh and through the days of Ammon and looking up to heaven and praying, Oh Lord, when are we going to get some relief? Things are just spiraling downward, downward, downward and here it comes. It is now emerging and these people are suddenly reflecting the light of the glory of God because of their patience and because of their faithfulness and because of their readiness.

Many of us may not get the chance to really demonstrate that readiness and that preparation until after the Lord comes back. Fine. Would you rather reflect for a few years in this life or for an infinitude of years in the next life? Just be patient.

Do what you're supposed to do. Be ready. Persist.

Be patient. Endure. You need a patience.

After you suffered a while, you're inheriting. You're overcoming. You're walking with the Lord in white.

You are ruling with Him on His throne. You have the white stone. You have the new name.

You have the hidden manna. You have these opportunities that we can't even dream of because you didn't get discouraged. You didn't throw it over.

You didn't decide, well, eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die and what's the point? That's what faith is. It is the substance of things hoped for. These people listed in this account are people who were patient and waited.

And this last surge of opportunity will either call people out of the population to join those faithful few or it is going to condemn the population because they don't join. This is God's call. This is God's separating rod here.

So they go to Huldah dwelling in Jerusalem in the second quarter and they spoke with her. She said to them, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man who sent you to me... Notice, go to the wonderful king, ruler of the upper and lower creek of the Kidron. He doesn't give a lot of big royal accolades here.

She says, Tell the man who sent you to me, Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants. All the words of the book which the king of Judah has read, because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore my wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.

Flip back a page or two. Remember what he said in the days of Manasseh? Very same thing. He says, Don't think your flapping of hands and waving around of the book of the law is going to change that.

However, As for the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of the Lord, in this manner you shall speak to him. Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Concerning the words which you have heard, Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the Lord. Surely therefore I will gather you to your fathers.

You shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place. That's your doctrine of the rapture of the church. Because your heart is faithful, because you are united with Christ.

Who was it? We've talked about this many times in the last few weeks. Who was it the inkhorn angel put his mark on? What did he specifically look for? Those who were sighing and crying over all the evil and violence being committed in Jerusalem. God knows what goes on in your heart.

Knows it intimately. And he honors those who honor him. It goes all the way back to the days of Samuel.

First great prophet in Israel after Moses. What does he say? I will honor those who honor me. Those who disregard me I will lightly esteem.

Do not want to be lightly esteemed by the Lord. Esteemed as light. As insubstantial, inconsequential.

Not fitted for use. Not a vessel of honor. Things that are valuable we take care.

We watch over them. We secure them. We keep track of them.

There's a big difference in genuine gold and precious stone jewelry and a plastic thing you got

for a nickel out of a machine, right? You lightly esteem the plastic simulation and you greatly value that which is of intrinsic worth. God keeps track of us. Read this again.

This is our closing thought tonight. Thus says the Lord, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods. They are looking in other places for their answers, for their guidance, for their sense of value, for their camaraderie, for their guidance in life, their priorities and goals and values.

I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants. Not just the people, but where the people are. This is the bursting radius of judgment.

Judgment falls on a person and on the periphery of that person. There is blessing by association. This is your example of cursing by association.

The place didn't do anything. The people did something, but the place is going to be destroyed because of the people who dwell there. There is an effect.

There is a radiating effect. But as for the king of Judah who sent you to inquire, you tell him, because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the Lord, when you heard what I spoke, hearing of the Word of God didn't provoke disregard or apathy or rejection. Instead, the response is humility.

The response is recognition of its truth, treating it as true, understanding to the point of tearing his clothes what it means. Is there any doubt in Josiah's mind what God's necessary judgment is going to be because of all of these practices? He tears his clothes like you do when somebody has died. Because of that attitude, you tore your clothes and wept before me.

I have heard, therefore I will gather you to your fathers and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace. Your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place. You and I are not going to see the calamity that God is going to bring on this place.

We are not those who are of the night or of the darkness. And the surest way to be certain that we are not going to be partakers of judgment is to have the heart that Josiah had, to have the heart that Joash had, to have the heart that David had, a man after God's own heart, sensitive to God's Word, seeking God's will and God's righteousness. That is the only reasonable and the only fruitful path in this life.

And it manifests itself in small ways. God is not waiting for us to go conquer a nation or evangelize a population or slay a giant in full view. What is He expecting us to do? Day by day, hour by hour, recognition of the importance of the Word of God, its truth, creating in us humility and a desire to be guided by it and to honor God through it, to lay hold of righteousness by faith, to prepare ourselves for service now and in the age to come, to be someone of whom the Lord can say, well done, thou good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful in small things. I am going to give you authority over big things. That's

our mission.

That's why we're breathing air. That's why we are alive in this age, at this time, in this place, with this Word of the Lord before us. What does it produce in us? Do we have a heart like Josiah? Does it cause us effectively to tear our clothes when we realize that we're failing in some area, we're falling short, we have pursued other gods? Are we ready to turn? Are we ready to take steps? Are we ready to get things done in the light of the Word of God as it shines on our path? That is the question.

It's not a light thing. Well, this brings us to chapter 23. So what is the king going to do once he receives this Word? That's what we'll look at next time.

Keep in mind those prophets. You know, here's Huldah. My question is, where is Nahum? Where is Habakkuk? Where are these prophets that their prophecies are in writing? They're not in view here, are they? You don't have any of those guys showing up.

In Hezekiah's day, Isaiah who wrote a book also shows up and speaks. In earlier days, Jeroboam's day, you had Jonah prophesying. In Jonah, there's a book about him.

But these writing prophets that we have recently reviewed, where are they? The Word of the Lord is delivered to the king of Judah through Huldah. And it's not an accident. That message has been delivered and those guys, for whatever reason, are off the scene.

They're not near the palace. They're not influential in the popular mind. Their message has been delivered.

It's like the written Word of God. The Word of God becomes alive and powerful when it is in our hearts, swinging like a sword, exposing the thoughts and intents, instructing, correcting, rebuking our individual thinking patterns. So we'll pick up in chapter 23 next time.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for how powerfully and how diversely You communicate to us, whether it is in narrative, whether it is in didactic or prophetic form, whether it is in poetic form, whether it is symbolic or typological, or most wonderfully in the words and the actions of the Lord Jesus Himself. We're so grateful for the privilege we have of having such unlimited access, such unlimited explanation and insight.

And we know that all of this creates both opportunity and responsibility for us. We pray that we'll be ever mindful and sensitive to that, that we'll exploit this wonderful potential that You have given to us, that we can be those who have a walk worthy of the Lord Jesus, taking up our cross and following Him so that we can arrive where He is, which is in Your presence, ready for future service and to reflect Your glory now and in the ages to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.