

Kings and Prophets 16-04-21

This is Thursday the 21st of April 2016. We continue in the book of 2nd Kings chapter 23 and it's parallel tonight in 2nd Chronicles chapter 34. We'll be picking up some details in chapter 34 of 2nd Chronicles that supplement, complement, and modify our understanding of what we saw here in 2nd Kings chapter 23 last time having to do with the reforms of Josiah.

The reign of Josiah, of course, his prominent claim to fame is not only being a boy king, we had several others of those, not only instituting reforms, we had others of those in the past history of Judah, but the spectacular lack of success that those reforms had in preventing the captivity and loss of the throne, loss of the land and everything else. If this was a king without precedent and without successor as it tells us in Kings, none like him before, none like him after, and if he did these wonderful things, as they say in the vernacular, why did the nation go out less than 20 years later? So it's an interesting subject for us because we find ourselves in similar historical, cultural, and most of all spiritual circumstances. So we'll resume our study and analysis of this particular portion of God's Word tonight after we go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we are constantly made aware of how transient this life is, how fragile our existence, how ephemeral our presence in the world is apart from those substantiating and stabilizing and eternalizing expressions of your grace that have taken us out of what is mundane and temporary and turned us into something that is lasting and eternal. We thank you for the Lord Jesus who made that possible by coming to this earth and becoming one of us, living in our flesh, facing our trials and tests, demonstrating the sufficiency of your word and your spirit to redeem the time and accomplish your purpose as a human being. We thank you for his willingness to go to the cross on our behalf, his resurrection, his triumphant ascension, his current session at your right hand, and his ministry of intercession on our behalf.

We thank you for these things and the wonderful assets and privileges and things that have been bestowed on us in him and through him. We pray tonight as we look at this portion of your word that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher, will encourage and strengthen each one, renew our sense of purpose, our sense of destiny, our focus on what the opportunities are day by day, and the means that you have placed at our disposal to accomplish them. We pray that in all things our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified here in our lives and in the ages to come.

We pray it in his name. Amen. We saw last time in 2 Kings chapter 23 that the reign of King Josiah was characterized by reform fundamentally.

Beginning in chapter 22 we saw that he was 8 years old and then within 2 verses by the time you get to 2 Kings 22 verse 3 there is a summary in verse 2 that he did what was right in the sight of the Lord and walked in the ways of his father David. This by the way is something that we will be seeing very soon in our Genesis study on Sunday mornings, it's currently in Genesis, looking at the genealogies. What does scripture mean when it says that someone begat someone or someone was the father of someone? In Hebrew these are very flexible terms in

the ancient Near Eastern world.

Any paternal ancestor separated by any distance, you remember the Pharisees telling Jesus we have Abraham as our father and we just sort of take it for granted. But what it tells us is that it was commonplace and we're going to see that the significance is not without consequences when you get to the begats in Genesis. But here it says that his father David, of course many generations distant in his past, I can't count the number of greats between Josiah and David but there's several.

But then in verse 3, it came to pass in the 18th year of King Josiah that the king sent Shaphan the scribe and we saw him calling to Hilkiah the priest to start funding or look into the funding for the reconstruction of the temple, the maintenance of it and so on, the house of the Lord, give the money to those who are in the house of the Lord. Verse 5, doing the work to repair the damages of the house, carpenters and builders and masons, buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. Now one of the reasons I belabored a bit our parallel study on Sundays in Genesis is we have a very similar analogous perhaps situation here in terms of what the Bible says, how it says it, what it doesn't say, none of which we would know except that it says it in another place.

So I wanted to review what we saw last time in chapter 22. It says came to the throne at age 8 in the 18th year of his reign. He's now how old? 26.

So he's been on the throne for 18 years and you get the idea from reading this account that he suddenly is struck by a bit of inspiration and says let's crank up a program to fix up the temple. Shaphan or Shaphan and Hilkiah, let's get busy, start funneling money toward the workmen, let's get this show on the road, right? And Kings is silent on the intervening 18 years. He's 8, one verse later he's 26, right? So turn over to 2 Chronicles chapter 34.

By the way I am not going to bother to entertain much less expose the fallacies of those who claim that because there are differences in an account there is some sort of contradiction and that this is human instrumentality with its failings showing. These accounts are both inspired, they are both completely true and fully accurate, but they have different purposes. Here's a here's a little bonus question going back to the past, a little pop quiz question.

If you remember when we were studying Hezekiah and we noted that there were three different versions of the story, Isaiah, the whole incident with Hezekiah, chapters 37, 38, 39, 40, long in there in Isaiah along with the Kings, along with Chronicles, and we said at that time, what I have just mentioned again, that the accounts have different purposes. Do you remember which one had what type of emphasis? I'll give you the one that is least helpful first, that's how they do on multiple-choice tests, you have an obvious throwaway that doesn't count. We saw that the prophetic account, Isaiah's account, pretty much gave God's perspective, the way things are viewed and are playing, if you will, before the throne of God in heaven.

That was 38 through 40 in Isaiah's account. This is the prophetic point of view, the prophet

speaking more or less on God's behalf. That leaves you Kings and Chronicles and I said, here's more help, one of them is more like the newspaper that gets reported to the people, while the other is more what is known inside the palace and there's more insider information, because these are the records that are kept in the palace, as opposed to the account that is more or less for publication.

Do you remember which one of Kings and Chronicles was the insider palace version and which was the for general consumption press release book? Kings and Chronicles, which is which? Chronicles, these are the chronicles of the king. The scribes in the palace are writing down the chronicles, these go into the vault, these are kept in the royal library, if you will. And the book of the kings, this is not exclusively and without exception true, this is the general perception you get from reading these accounts.

The kinds of information that you find there tends in these directions. It's an emphasis, but obviously it's like your your classic Venn diagram, you have Isaiah, you have Kings and you have Chronicles and there's there's a great deal of overlap. This is in terms of emphasis.

Don't allow yourself to be burnt at the stake for this. It's just helpful in terms of memory. So we just looked at the account of the early years of King Josiah's reign in Kings.

So if our theory holds, this is how it was viewed by the public. The public says, well the boy king came, isn't that wonderful? And really the next thing they see that is of any substance and seems to make much of a difference happens in his 18th year. He's now in his mid-20s and they say, hey there's there's a stir up on Capitol Hill, if you will, up on on Zion in the palace and around the temple.

Something's happening up there that I am now aware of. I haven't really been paying that close attention. They didn't have the kind of 24-7 media coverage on small things that inundates us and buries us under great rafts of useless information.

They waited for the big stuff. These people were scattered throughout Judea. They've got businesses, there's caravans coming through, they've got visitors and they've got births and deaths.

And you know, a lot of them didn't track politics. It's not like they had an election every four years. So the next thing that really strikes the public consciousness, the book of Kings, chapter 22, is well, things have been relatively quiet and stable.

He's a good king. Everybody thinks he's like his father David. You know, the impression is he's a really good king.

And they don't just go back to Hezekiah. They don't just go back to Jehoshaphat. They don't go even go back to Joash.

They go all the way back to David. We haven't seen his like since since the original mythical

George Washington of our nation, right? That's the book of Kings. Now we're going to Chronicles.

So just if our hypothesis is sound, what would you expect when we get to 2nd Chronicles chapter 34? Maybe a little bit more granularity, a little bit more of what was going on in the intervening 18 years, because these are the palace records. And Josiah is not going to say, well, you scribes, you know, go train your successors and I'll see you in two decades. They're keeping records.

Things are things are moving along, but it's it's more of an internal type of thing. So chapter 34, 2nd Chronicles, Josiah was eight years old. And and by the way, in the future, if you can keep that sort of rough rule of thumb in your mind, when you come back to the Old Testament narratives of Kings and Chronicles, and it's a helpful little bit of insight or of perspective of what to look for, because it goes to the purpose of the account.

God doesn't put things in his word as filler. It's there for a reason, and it is there for a purpose. And a great key for interpretation and therefore for application is what is its purpose? Why would God include this in his word? And so understand this, this is essential when you study the Gospels, the three synoptic Gospels and John.

And does everybody remember what synoptic is? You know what, what the prefix on synoptic, s-y-n comes from the Greek, s-u-n, sun means means with, or, you know, a synonym, a synchronization. It's the same. It goes along with, right? Well, what are optics? It's a view.

So the three synoptics, they have the same view. They view, you know, they say, well, Luke borrowed from Mark and Matthew and Matthew borrowed from Mark. You know, they, they have such the same view that they try to figure out who borrowed from whom because they're, they have a similar view, but then there's John and John seems to have a completely independent account.

So you have the three synoptics and John, but God did that for a reason. There's these three views and a fourth, and it's just so typical of God to complete it with this, this, it's like the three spatial dimensions and time. And John is so unique with his divine perspective.

Well, that's true. Anytime you have multiple accounts in scripture, look for why there's a multiple. What is the purpose? And so, uh, with that in mind, again, I'll start here in 34 of 2nd Chronicles, Josiah, eight years old and became king, reigned 31 years in Jerusalem.

He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, walked in the ways of his father, David. He did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. So far, so good.

Almost identical to the first two verses we saw before. And this is like the great earthquake in revelation. This is a, this is a stake through that pins these accounts together and gives you a great starting point.

So we're starting with the, with, with his reign beginning at eight years old. But now notice in verse three, for in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father, David. Now this is all new material.

This was nowhere in Kings. How old is he? 16. He's, he's been a king as long as he wasn't a king, right? It's he's, he's doubled his time in the eighth year of his reign while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father, David.

And this is so often the case that we really begin to own our own spiritual life at the earliest in our teens. When I was child, I thought as a child, I spoke as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things.

And as we mature, and it's different in different cultures and different situations, but you can tell that this is the point at which Josiah, it really comes out from under perhaps the tutelage of Hilkiah and the sort of the, the trappings of royalty that he's grown up in. And he, he makes his own mind up and he begins on his own with his own initiative and for his own purposes to seek the God of his father, David. And in the 12th year, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images.

Now this is still six years prior to verse three in second Kings chapter 22, right? So what we see here is now, does that make second Kings wrong? Think about Genesis, latter part of the sixth day, let us make man in our image and after our own likeness. God created man in his own image, male and female, created he them. It's just a summary statement of the biggest thing that happened.

Chapter two, kind of like Chronicles, you go back and you get a more granular account. God forms man out of the dust of the ground, breathes into his nostrils the breath of life, and you, and Eve comes along by an entirely different mechanism. Maybe not entirely different, but somewhat different mechanism.

And it isn't said that she was formed from dust and it isn't said that God breathed into her nostrils this breath. I don't see how she could have come alive without it, but it doesn't say. But you have two different accounts with two different purposes and therefore two different emphases.

They are complementary, they are harmonious, they do not contradict, they do not conflict in any way. Same thing here. So what we're finding out is that there was some preparation, there was prelude, there was foundation laid underneath what Josiah did in the 18th year of his reign, right? And here is some of that foundation.

The reason he was motivated to do that in the 18th year of his reign, the 26th year of his life, is that ten years earlier he had developed a heart for the Lord and had chosen to seek out the God of his father David. And notice both accounts call David his father. It's kind of like you can be a son of David or you can be a son of Belial.

It doesn't mean Belial gave birth to you so much as you are in the image and after the likeness of. This is why God is our Heavenly Father. As believers, through the Lord Jesus Christ, we begin to enter back into that image and likeness.

So his father David in his 12th year began to purge. Notice, began to purge. And you get the idea that this may have been something of a quiet revolution.

People woke up some Sunday morning after the Sabbath and by the time they got to looking around, the old, tired, worn-out idol on the corner was missing. The next time they looked around, somebody was tearing down an altar. The next time they looked at a hilltop, the Asherah pole was gone.

And he began to clear these things out. And you get the idea that this was sort of a quiet, unassuming campaign of under the guise of renovation or of upgrade or, well, we're moving a street through here, this thing's got to go. He didn't call the people to a great day of mourning and fasting and repentance.

He didn't offer a great sacrifice and say, Lord, today we are purging out the old leaven. They just began to disappear in ones and twos throughout the city and in the surrounding countryside. This is the idea here.

In the 12th year, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem. Notice, Judah of its high places. How many people are going to notice if two-and-a-half miles south of Jerusalem, some place of worship suddenly isn't there anymore? And in its place, maybe there's a group of shepherds having a convention or there's some camel caravan resting at a spot.

And one old guy comes up and says, well, where's the altar that used to be? It just isn't there. Not a lot of explanation required. The wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images, they broke down the altars of the bales in his presence.

And the incense altars, which were above them, he cut down. And the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images, he broke in pieces and made dust of them and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. Now, there's two ways to take this.

Did he execute the people that sacrificed to them or had this practice grown old over the previous generation? And as these people died out, the young people weren't really buying it. You know, stay overnight in the graves and eat mice? I don't think so. I've got a tattoo appointment down the road here.

I can't be bothered with that. But you get the idea that he represents a younger generation. He's in his late teens.

He's in his early twenties. And you get the idea that maybe some of the young people are kind of with him. And they don't really buy into what has now become sort of an older person's

practice.

So as these people are dying out, he breaks down there. In many cases, remember, this is not public land that these are on. These are on private land.

You remember Gideon's father and the altar and the stuff that was set up? So on this private land, when the old guy dies, his stuff is broken down and turned to powder and sprinkled on his grave. You know, this is what you believed in in life. You can have it in your death.

And it and you have both turned to dust. And that's all you're going to have to show for your life. But there is also the possibility or the suggestion that Josiah may have actually executed some of the worst offenders.

It's just, it would be an implication that he scattered the ashes on the graves of those who sacrificed to them. He burned the bones of the priests on their altars and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. This, once again, has a little bit more of an Elijah overtone to it, that this may have gotten more active as time went on.

And there's a lot that is unspoken here. He could have begun quietly, removed one here and two there. And as these people passed away, and then as this movement gained momentum, it may have become more visible and more forceful and more direct.

And as a consequence, may have engendered direct opposition and rebellion that called for action. You either submit to the will of the king and to this reform, or you're going to have to go into armed opposition. And when you do, you're going to lose.

And they did. And these priests that hold out and say, I'll never leave my wonderful cult of Baal. Well, fine.

You're, you know, you're going to be sacrificed on his altar. But this, and this is implication I am reading in a bit here. It seems to have started quietly.

I'm also factoring in the account in second Kings that it doesn't really seem to have struck the public consciousness in a big way until his 18th year. So it becomes more and more of a trend and more and more of a pattern. It builds slow.

And in many cases, this is what you have to do. Look at some of the cultural revolutions that have taken place in this country. It starts slow.

There's a, an outlier here and a weird thing there. It raises an eyebrow. It, it, you know, people are smashing Elvis records, uh, you know, down at the radio station.

The first half a dozen times they hear hound dog, but pretty soon that's old, you know, two years later, are you still going to smash hound dog? The first time somebody plays it the same thing with, you know, a, uh, a lot of things that have cropped up in our entertainment that, that we find, uh, objectionable to put it mildly. They do it once. There's a great outcry and a boycott.

And who are the sponsors? Write them a letter where nobody's going to shop at your store. But the fifth, the ninth, the 12th, the 25th, the 50th time that they do this very same thing on television. Where's the outcry? Well, it's what's the point it and people know this and we've talked about it before.

This is part of inuring people to a change is you just keep doing it and doing it and doing it until they get tired of opposing it. And you'll have your hardcore holdouts and you often have to do them some violence. Uh, but you can use this, this type of procedure for good things.

But just remember the enemy will use those very same tactics for bad things and on human history goes. So he did in the cities, verse six of Manasseh, Ephraim and Simeon, as far as Naphtali and all around with axes. Now this is very interesting and we did not get this out of Kings, but keep in mind what we reviewed as we went through the prophets and the vacuum that is created as Assyria has to turn around and face the growing power of Babylon.

Remember Assyria was a big noise. Remember Nahum and his prophecy on Nineveh, uh, that they're going to be destroyed. Well, the cracks in the foundation have already appeared and, and Assyria is no longer the power that destroyed the Northern kingdom in seven 21 and they are having to, to turn around and face the nascent threat, the growing, uh, rise to power in Babylon.

Well, that's in a whole different direction and it leaves a vacuum. The, the water flows out right before the tsunami of Babylon and Assyria is being sucked into that great wave and this creates opportunity. So do you see what I'm, what I'm saying and what I'm reading here in this verse? Let's read that again.

He did so in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, Naphtali. Where is that? That's the Northern kingdom. Ephraim is a synonym for the Northern kingdom.

Naphtali, that's, that's way up North. What this tells us is that the borders of Judah in the days of Josiah expanded to the North. He's got monarchic kingly authority to send guys with axes up there and chop stuff down.

When's the last time there was a king of the North? 721 BC, right? This is circa 622 or so and he is in charge of these regions. He sends royal destruction parties up there, the royal demolition team, the fusiliers or whoever they are and they go up there and tear this stuff down. When he had broken down the altars and the wooden images, had beaten the carved images into powder and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

So he went, he made sure this happened. He left town and honchoed this operation from the beginning. This is a wonderful thing.

He is an energetic, dedicated, faithful heart king like David. None before him like this and none after it tells us in Kings. So you would think, well, happy days are here again.

Break out the hats and canes and the pennants and the party horns and the, you know, frosted cakes. This guy is really going to make it happen. Then in verse eight, notice we've had six verses now.

We've had five verses now of intermediate material that was not in the parallel account. Now we pick up in the 18th year of his reign when he had purged the land and the temple. He sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah, Messiah, the governor of the city and Joah, the son of Jehoias, the recorder to repair the house of the Lord, his God.

He purged it. Now he's going to repair it. There is a sequence and there is an order.

We cannot think about the application spiritually as goes the nation in the Old Testament. So goes the believer in the New Testament. If we want to build our souls into a dwelling place for God, a spiritual habitation, what has to happen first? If we have let it get run down and corrupted, what has to happen before you can repair it and build it back up? You've got to purge out the things that took the place of legitimate heartfelt worship of God.

You've got to eliminate those, the things that take the time, that take the energy, that take the attention, that define the personal relationships. If you form friendships based on interests that compete and conflict, and in some cases are outside what is acceptable for a child of God who is living his life to please the Lord, then that stuff has to go first. You will never have a healthy presence of God in your life so long as that purge has not taken place first.

You purge first. And notice it took him four years to do this purge. And then it took him four more years.

Right? He began the purge. He began to seek the Lord in his eighth year. And then in his twelfth year, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem.

That was verse three. Began the purge in the twelfth year. Well, now we're in the 18th year.

So being an English major, two plus four is eight. It's six years from his twelfth year to his 18th year. All of that time was spent in the purge, right? Six years.

And wouldn't it make sense that you work on a thing for six years, and then in the seventh, it comes to fruition. In the seventh, you reach the time of rest. There's a bit of biblical symmetry here in the number.

So they come to Hilkiah and deliver the money. We've seen all of that. Notice the Levites who kept the doors had gathered from the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, from the remnant of Israel, Judah and Benjamin, which they brought back to Jerusalem.

So this levy has extended through the remnant that's up in the northern kingdom as well. Now, keep in mind that land has been sewn over with Assyrians. It's turning into Samaria up there.

It's been 100 years since they were conquered. We're about 620. That happened in circa 720,

right? So there's been 100 years of over-sewing and of displacement and replacement up in the north, but there were still remnants in Ephraim.

And you get the idea that these communities perhaps coalesced and kind of stuck together as outposts or islands within the larger context of Assyrian dominance. And that's why it mentions these specific tribal groups of Ephraim and Naphtali and so on. At any rate, and by the way, there's another point of application there, which is when things get very bleak and paganized and the defining and formal presence of God in your culture and in your society is overthrown, then find others of like mind and stick together.

And I will tell you that in my personal estimation, and this is just me, not the Lord, as Paul says, but there is something to be said for communities such as the Amish, such as the Mennonites who have chosen to gather with other believers of like mind. I'm not endorsing their theology or necessarily their culture per se, but the principle that you find others of like mind and group and provide mutual support and practice to one another commands, it's biblical and it's valid. And you will notice that where many other groups have disappeared, the Quakers and the Amish and the Mennonites and some Luddites and who knows who else, by banding together and working with their hands and not seeking to give offense, but just separating and trying to, you know, to the extent that it is up to them, live peaceably with all men, that's all biblical.

And that's what these people evidently did in the north. And it is a model and it is a suggestion to the extent that we see things deteriorating around us, it is important to identify with, fellowship with, gather with, stick with believers of like mind. It's biblical.

And when the time comes, when God brings a King Josiah or a Jehoshaphat or a Joash or a David, whoever it may be, you have been preserved. If you don't think that when the tribulation comes, we've gone to glory and Jesus told them, don't go into the house to grab your coat, but flee to the hills. Do you not think they're going to meet others who were smart enough to flee to the hills and escape the wrath of man that begins? They're going to do the very same thing in the tribulation period.

And those that had not bowed the knee to Baal in the days of Elijah did the same thing. So there is a method in God's exhortations and encouragements to us to maintain our fellowship and forsake not the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is. Some just throw up their hands and say, well, it's a rollercoaster.

I'm just going to ride it for all it's worth up and down, up and down instead of observing and seeking to fulfill these spiritual priorities. So it says in verse 10, they put the money in the hand of the foreman who had the oversight of the house of the Lord. They gave it to workmen who worked in the house of the Lord to repair and restore the house after the purge.

And after the land surrounding has been purged, he didn't just pitch it over the wall of the temple precincts. The whole area is clear. You know how they do in the Passover, the traditional observance in Jewish households, observant Jewish households, where they don't just make

sure there's no leaven at the meal, they make sure there's no leaven in the house.

Create an environment. The temple precincts were to be holy, even though God's presence was actually in the holy of holies. But the holy place should be sanctified.

The outer, the inner court and the outer court were also to be kept sanctified and holy. So purges, certainly the temple, but also the city and also the region of Judea and even up into the old northern kingdom. Then they set the craftsmen to work to shore up and refurbish with hewn stone and timbers for beams and verse 11, to floor the house in which the kings of Judah had destroyed.

Notice multiple kings in Judah had destroyed these things. And by destroy, this is probably cannibalize. Where do you think the Garden of Uzzah came from? Where do you think extensions and additions to the kingly palace came from? Well, look right next door, we've got stone and we've got beams and, you know, that's stuff that was constructed by Solomon was of the finest timber from Hiram, the king of Tyre and so on.

The cedars of Lebanon had come down there. And this is even hundreds of years later, still choice stone, choice carving work, choice carpentry. And so if these things are missing, guess where they went? They weren't burnt for firewood.

They were cannibalized and used for human purposes. And there's a lesson in that. Do we take the things that should be dedicated to God, whether it is time, whether it is resources, whether it is opportunities and repurpose them for our own uses in our own gratification? That's what the kings plural of Judah had done in the intervening years.

And notice it can't be uncannibalized. It can't be returned. So Josiah takes the money that's been gathered and buys fresh, replaces it with new, new stone, new timbers, new beams.

He has the floor replaced that the kings of Judah had destroyed in verse 11. Verse 12, the men did the work faithfully. Now, how do you know if workmen are working faithfully? There's roofers all over Plano now.

You can't look out your door, much less drive down a street without seeing a couple of roofing crews. They're all over the place. Well, how do you know if those guys are working faithfully? How do you know if anybody's working faithfully? Do you take a snapshot of them with a shovel in hand or a shingling hammer or carrying fresh supplies up a ladder? How do you know if work is being done faithfully? Is it a snapshot? It is observation over time, isn't it? How do they know these workmen can be trusted? How do they know this work is being done faithfully? Observation over time.

If you and I are going to refurbish the spiritual house, if we're going to ensure that the purge stays purged and the old stuff doesn't mysteriously come creeping back and overnight here's another Asherah pole and overnight here's another altar to Baal, what does it take? Observation over time, oversight, consistency over time. Faithfulness is consistency over time,

not a flash in the pan. You know, it's easily illustrated with exercise.

You don't do a intensive workout twice a month and say, my, am I in good shape? It's regular, consistent exercise over time. It makes an enormous difference. You may have to start small, maybe just walk and just walk a little further.

Whatever it is, faithfulness is the key. The men did the work faithfully, verse 12, and notice their overseers are given credit because how does faithful work get done by people who have a tendency to not be faithful? Oversight, authority. So Jahath and Obadiah of the Levites and the sons of Merari and Zachariah and Meshulam of the sons of the Kohathites to supervise.

Others of the Levites, all who were skillful with instruments of music were over the burden bearers, overseers of all who did the work in any kind of service. And some of the Levites were scribes, officers, and gatekeepers. Diversity, multiple skills, another benefit of a group.

The lone wolf boy scout is only for a Brook Cherith situation. See there, I mixed two metaphors at once. We're not built as believers in the Lord Jesus certainly to be lone scouts, to be by ourselves.

We are built to connect. We are built to have fellowship and God can use the diversities of gifts. And we have our assignments and the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together. And yourselves isn't just any old assembly. Most of us know what it's like to try to assemble with believers that have a different understanding and a different priority and a different goal in their fellowship.

It's not fellowship for fellowship's sake. And if you are in a situation where there just isn't anyone, then bide your time, wait on the Lord, be of good cheer. He will strengthen your heart.

But there will come a time if you hunger and thirst for that righteousness that is manufactured in a group, send it to the Lord in prayer. Lord, I could use a friend. I could use some fellowship, believers of like mind.

Bring it my way. You have promised that you will not leave the seed of the righteous begging bread. Well, it's been a long dry stretch and I would love to both be encouraged and be an encouragement.

Do you think God won't answer that prayer in his time, in his way, for his purposes? He weaves things together for his good. But these people are now brought together. And you can imagine the joy with which this work is done by people who have been grieving over the fallen down state of God's house, grieving over the depredations and the cannibalizations and the defilement and the corruption of the things of God, looking at it like the old Indian chief looking at the litter on the road.

You know, remember Iron Eyes Cody? Well, some of us are old enough to remember Iron Eyes

with his little tear, little glycerin tear coming down his face. But there was a genuine heartfelt grief at the fallen down state. And here is a king who loves the Lord like David did, who is energetically traipsing through the country, breaking down and purging and coming back to Jerusalem and investing in the rebuilding and putting good men in charge to see that it's done right.

You can't help but think this is the dawn of a new day. I want to close, I've gone a little bit long, I want to close with two thoughts and we'll flesh these out next time. Two things.

First of all, you will notice that where I told you we're circa 620 BC here, 18th year of Josiah is like 622 BC. When is the first incursion by Nebuchadnezzar? Do you remember? There are three of them. 605, 597, 586.

605, how far in the future is that from right here? What's 622 minus 5? What's 22 minus 5? 17 years. The teenagers, people born at this time won't be out of their teens before they're going into captivity. So you look at what a great start this is, how material and substantive it is.

Substantive, substantial. This isn't just a shallow reform on the king's part. But I have said for the past couple of weeks, it is a shallow reform.

Where is the lack of depth? It's one thing to have a great leader. It's something else for people to be following that great leader. I give you an example that might come to your mind.

Who is the greatest leader of all time as a member of the human race? Bar none. And how long did his public appeal as a leader last? Three years and they nailed him to a cross. It isn't a matter of the quality of the leadership.

It is the quality of the followership. You and I are the body of Christ. Who is the head? That same Jesus.

If there's a failure on the part of us as the body to get it done, it isn't the head's fault. It is we, it is us. Weenie weenie weekie, we have met the enemy and he is us.

So that's what you have here. There is no failure in God's provision of a wonderful king with a good heart and faithful people to get this work done, ample funding to get it done, a sufficient clearing out and purging, and a great example that is set. So what excuse do these people have to not be fully repentant and fully dedicated and follow with their hearts in the footsteps of this king? Well, they have no excuse.

That's the first point. The second point that I will leave you to ponder and we'll see documentation of this from what you might consider right now to be an unlikely source, which is Jeremiah and Lamentations. But when Nebuchadnezzar comes, when the city falls, the survivors and the remnant figure out why it happened.

They know exactly why it happened. And you know what they say? It's Josiah's fault. He broke

down the Asherahs and he eliminated the gods that my daddy worshiped.

He ground those images to powder and sprinkled it on my grandpa's grave. He, this great reform is the cause of our destruction. That's what the people hanging around with Jeremiah in the immediate days after the conquest by Nebuchadnezzar are going to say.

That's how they parse it. Interesting, no? With all of this clarity, with how obvious it is to us, to them, it's equally obvious to the perverse heart, everything makes sense. Well, you know, we were doing fine.

Our kingdom lasted 400 years until Josiah came along and broke down the last of the images. He swept all through the land and got rid of all of the gods of the land. We took those gods off and now look, we're destroyed and we're carried off captive.

It's in Jeremiah's time. It's in Jeremiah's writings. We'll see it next time.

So don't think there will come a day when we'll poke our finger in the eye of these people who have it wrong and they'll be forced to admit that we were right all along. They'll never see it. People will go into the lake of fire, shaking the last knuckle of the last fist in God's face.

They will never see it. They will never accept accountability for it. Even when the angels bow every knee in the presence of the Lord Jesus, the hearts aren't bowed.

Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess, but every heart is not going to change. You cannot throw any amount of truth at people who are unwilling to accept it. There's a great quote.

I can't quite remember the name of the guy who said it, but he said, you cannot win an argument with an ignorant man. You can Google that. Some guy said it.

It is impossible to win an argument with an ignorant man. And in spiritual ignorance, exponentially so. These people witnessing the reform, the transformation, all of this good that is going on will attribute the downfall of the city and the destruction of the nation to this reform.

It's Josiah's fault. So be warned. You may accomplish a purge and a restoration in your own soul.

Don't expect that everybody is going to be impressed or that everyone is going to glorify your father who is in heaven when they see your good works. The recalcitrant, the rebellious, the intransigence of those whose pride will not let them repent is adamant. It is flint and they will go to their graves unseeing, seeing they see and do not perceive, hearing they hear and do not understand because their hearts are completely calloused over.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the insight that it gives us into our own lives, into our own responsibilities and opportunities

and into the environment in which we live as we prepare ourselves both for your blessing in our own lives and your judgment on the evil that surrounds us.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit will encourage each one, motivate us, help us maintain a clear focus and a direct sense of purpose as we live in these circumstances in the time that you have assigned us so that we may reflect your glory. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.