

Kings and Prophets 16-04-28

This is Thursday, the 28th of April, 2016. We continue our study of kings and prophets. We will be in 2 Chronicles chapter 35, looking at the reign of King Josiah, really the last major phase of monarchic rule in the southern kingdom of Judah prior to the Babylonian incursion, and conquest, and captivity.

We'll take a moment, as usual, to go before the Lord individually and collectively and ask His blessing on the proceedings, on our understanding, and on our study. Father, we're so grateful for who we have become in Christ by Your grace, through Your faithfulness and Your provision for us. We thank You for the gift of the presence of Your Holy Spirit to guide us, to encourage us, to imbue us with a sense of Your presence and Your purpose, to place the stamp of ownership upon us that guarantees our security in this life and our entrance into the next.

We thank You for the passage that we study this evening and the truth that it holds for us, and we pray that as we look at it together that each one of us will be helped, that we'll be encouraged, that we'll find illumination for our path and guidance and steadiness for our thoughts as we look at the world around us and our place in it and try to make our decisions and live our lives in a way that pleases You. We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified and that our love for one another will find its full expression. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. We left off last time recognizing the more detailed account of Josiah's reign as found in Chronicles compared with the chapters we looked at earlier in 2 Kings, chapter 23 in particular, dealing with the restoration of the temple and recovery of how Jerusalem ought to look. Here is a good Bible trivia fact to carry in your head.

Of all of the kings in Israel, United, Northern, Southern, how many kings have nothing bad said about them anywhere? And of that one, what's his name? Josiah. Josiah is the only king, North or South, or United monarchy about whom there is not a bad word spoken, no criticism, no shortcoming explicitly recorded. And yet, he dies under troubled circumstances.

That's what we're going to look at tonight. So as we pick up and we're going to dive right in here, if you look at Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, flip back to chapter 34, and you remember that in verse 22, the middle of the chapter there, we ran across the prophetess Huldah. For some reason this doesn't occur much in the baby name book.

You don't go to the hospital and find just inordinate numbers of little girls named Huldah in the cradle. But she's a prophetess, the wife of Shalom, the son of Tokath, the son of Hasra, keeper of the wardrobe. And of course, this isn't so much the actual keeper.

This is like being a knight of the bath or a knight of the garter or something like that. These were very high and esteemed positions of nobility, if we understand it right. So anyway, she's dwelling in Jerusalem in the second quarter.

And so they spoke to her and communicated the king's request that was back up there in verse 21. Go inquire of the Lord for me and for those who are left in Israel and Judah concerning the words of the book that is found. For great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out on us because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord to do according to all that is written in this book.

And without going into gory detail, it seems pretty clear that this was the book of Deuteronomy. This has led modern scholarship, as I mentioned, to allege that the book was actually fabricated pretty much in its entirety at this point. And somebody stuck it under a shelf and then walked back in and said, look, I've discovered the book of the law.

And it was a big put up job. Of course, this is nonsense. But you can't convince people when they want to be convinced otherwise.

So when you read about this and a late date for Deuteronomy that it was composed in the days of Josiah, you can treat this with all the contempt that it deserves as far as I'm concerned. But they find the book and he reads it and he says, we're way out of line here. So what should we do? Now, let me ask you something.

With your extensive, vast, and long held knowledge of the way things work in Israel in terms of God communicating with his people, if you have a question for God, what's the set up? Going all the way back to the days of Moses and Aaron, let's say. Isn't there a little thing called the Urim and the Thummim and the breastplate of the... If you're going to inquire of the Lord, where do people normally go? Cast the lots. Urim and Thummim go to... In my theory, which is mine and I'm sticking to it, I think that these were sort of two-faced die, two dice, if you will.

The Baptist will lynch me for saying that God invented dice. But I think these were two-sided deals with the old original Semitic alphabet Aleph on one side and a Tav on the other. That's A to Z. That's the Alpha and Omega, if you will, of the Hebrew Alphabet, first and last letters.

And so you go and inquire of the Lord and they cast the lots. These things that are kept in the breastplate of the High Priest aren't just any old divining tablets here. These are sanctified.

They're hallowed. They are the ones that God has ordained and that He has chosen to use. And my belief is that they would cast these things and guided by the Lord, they would fall for a yes with two A's essentially.

And if it's a no, then you get two Z's. And if God thinks you're asking the wrong question or He doesn't want to commit to an answer for whatever reason, I can get no answer from the Lord. Why is that? Well, because you're not qualified to receive the blessing of communication with Him because you are out of line.

And so they would just continuously fall 50-50, an A and a T and an A and a T and an A and a T over and over. And we can get no word from the Lord. So my question here is, we seem to have a pretty good priest on board here, right? And Hilkiah is the High Priest and he seems to be a

good guy.

And so the king calls Hilkiah and he says, Hilkiah, pull out the Urim and the Thummim and let's find out what the Lord wants. He says to Hilkiah, let's inquire of the Lord. And Hilkiah goes and finds Huldah the prophetess.

So why is that? Aside from just getting her name into Scripture, which to me is worth the trip all by itself. But why would that be? Well, this stuff has fallen horribly into disuse, right? You've got kings walking into the holy place and getting struck with leprosy. They remember that it's a nice job and full of wonderful privileges and so on.

But one possibility is that that has fallen into such disuse that nobody knows how to do it. There is no mention of the breastplate or the Urim and Thummim at this point. Maybe the stuff has perished with one of the earlier, let's get all the valuables and send them off to our enemies to try to keep them from killing us or whatnot.

That's one possibility. Another one is that the question that the king is asking is going to take a long time to answer with yeses and nos. You know how this works if you've ever worked with somebody who can't speak, they've got a trach tube or they're incapacitated and okay, blink once for yes and twice for no.

Well, now you've got 20 questions would be short. Well, is it this? No. Is it this? No.

Should I do this? No. Now this yes and no back and forth could take forever. So what he needs is substantial word from the Lord.

And in this day as part of the unfolding progress and provision of God's plan for Israel, you have an established understanding of prophets and who a prophet is and what they do. And when you need some detail and you need some flesh on the bones of God's will, the prophet will expound things that God communicates to and through him or her. So Josiah is looking for some detail here and he doesn't want to spend a day and a half doing yes and no.

So even if the Urim and Thummim still exist, which I doubt, and if they knew how to use it, which I doubt, but even if it did exist, this material is better suited to a prophet. Now think about, we think, well, everything is sort of fixed in the dispensation. Moses goes to Sinai, down comes the table to the law, they break, he goes up, he gets some more, he comes down and now here's the law, here's the Pentateuch and everything is fixed for the rest of the Old Testament age.

But that's really not so, is it? As the nation forms and as it goes into its land and as you have the beginning of this new form of government, which is human monarchy, and new form of communication, which is human prophecy, without that we wouldn't have more than five books in the Old Testament, right? All of this was scribal and prophetic activity that fleshed all of this out. And it is the same, I would suggest, in our age. It didn't freeze and become fixed and immovable at the close of the apostolic age either.

Now hear me carefully. I'm not saying I believe that the temporary gifts didn't perish. All I'm saying is, if you look at every previous age in human history, there has been movement, there has been an unfolding and an increase of revelation.

What's the last part of Daniel say? Many will run to and fro and knowledge will increase. So I say that to say this. If somebody says your dispensational understanding of Scripture is late and your exegetical understanding is an innovation that wasn't shared or practiced in earlier days of the Church, you can just say, okay, and? How is that different than the way God has worked in every other dispensation recorded in Scripture? There has always been an increase of form and content and detail throughout every preceding dispensation.

Why would it be any different now? When the Apostle John finally went to glory from the Isle of Patmos, that didn't necessarily fix in stone anything that could be learned in the Church age. I think there continues to be illumination on the part of the Holy Spirit. I think when God chooses to, He can do any particular miracle or invoke any spiritual gift that He wants.

And I'm going to be the last one to stand up and say, wait a minute, Lord, you can't give somebody a gift of prophecy or of faith or of revelation or of tongues or of healing or whatever in this age. Don't you know that you were supposed to stop when the Apostle John died on Patmos? If somebody else wants to make that case, go be warm and be fed. God can do whatever He wants.

But the pattern has been, as you see here, when the king needs information, they go and inquire of the nearest available prophet. Now, this also suggests to me that although some people have tried to argue for an incredibly long life for Isaiah, he doesn't seem to be around at this point as he was in the days of Hezekiah. Some people have tried to say Isaiah wrote everything that's in the book of Isaiah and he lived for like 180 years.

Well, where is he when Josiah needs him? The only available prophet appears to be Huldah, which again is a sign of things being in the last stages of decrepitude when God is signaling the dire necessities by raising up women, wonderful women, godly women. God blessed the ministry of Huldah and God used her and spoke through her, not a thing in the world wrong with a woman being a prophet except that it breaks the pattern that God had established. And when God breaks a pattern, it's an attention getter.

It's a reminder. It's not supposed to raise all kinds of feminism questions or who's better than whom. It's just a break in the pattern.

And when the pattern is broken, that should focus our attention. And that's what's happening here. There should have been warning music playing under this.

If I was going to film it, I would have minor key, foreboding, you know, where's the guy with the axe behind the door because this should not be happening in a godly nation. Where is Isaiah? Where is Jeremiah? He's alive. He's around.

What's going on here? Why is it Huldah the prophet? There's a reason. And the reason is it is a signal for those who are sighing and crying over Jerusalem, for those who are watching and listening and paying attention, they say, God is really telling us something here because a woman prophet is not the pattern. Nothing more than that.

So, Huldah, so she answers them, thus says the Lord God of Israel, tell the man who sent you to me. Very curious response as we saw last time. Thus says the Lord.

Now pay attention closely here because there is a seeming discrepancy or contradiction here that we want to figure out. Huldah says, behold, thus says the Lord, I will bring calamity on this place and its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah, 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 will be poured out on this place and not be quenched.

But 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 God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before me, and you tore your clothes, and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the Lord. Chapter 34 verse 28, Surely I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace.

If you are a person who marks the pages of their Bible, make a mark next to I will gather you to your grave in peace. Because you heard, because you obeyed, because your heart was grieved, because you cared about the things of God, God makes Him a promise. I will gather you to your fathers, and 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 and on its inhabitants.

So they brought this word back to the king. Now, we already know from the king's passage that Josiah restored true worship as you see here in verses 29 and following. The king gathers the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

Notice the king uses the proper authority structure. The king talks to the elders, the elders will go back and talk to the tribes, the tribal leaders will talk to the clans, clan leaders will talk to the families. There is order, there is structure, there is a way to do things.

So he calls the elders. The king went up to the house of the Lord with the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the Levites, the people great and small. He read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which had been found in the house of the Lord.

Notice the king read it. The king is literate. He can read and I assume he could write.

This was not a common place. The scribes had this function, but he is able to do it. He read the book himself in the hearing of the people.

The king stood in his place, made a covenant before the Lord to follow the Lord to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. He made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take a stand. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel, made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the Lord their God. All his days they did not depart from following the Lord God of their fathers. But you will notice he made them.

This is an external impetus for obedience. And as long as he is around, they don't depart. Why? Because he made all who were present in Israel diligently serve.

And there is this oversight, this leadership. He kept a Passover in chapter 35. We are going to skip that.

Move down to verse 35-18. There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet. None of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, Judah and Israel who were present, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

In the 18th year of the reign of Josiah, the Passover was kept. He is 26 years old. Now look at verse 20 and following.

After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates, and Josiah went out against him. Now notice, Necho isn't attacking Judah. He is not attacking Israel.

He is at Carchemish. This is a fight between two other parties. But because Necho has come up, Josiah more or less opportunistically decides that he is going to attack him.

No mention of consulting the Lord. No mention of, you know, see what Huldah has to say. Hilkiah, what do you think? Cast the lots.

Is it a yay or a nay, or God's not going to answer? Josiah just simply says, here comes Necho. I'm going to attack him. He's up here, and if you look at the geography, we don't have time to look at it in detail, but this is kind of an opportunity to come from the side.

It's sort of a strategic opportunity in the sense of sort of a flanking attack. Necho is worried about the forces at Carchemish. Josiah can come in, and he thinks he can score a real coup here, so to speak.

So as he marches out, of course, Necho has got good surveillance and good intelligence, and he sees the armies of Judah marching out against him. So he sends messengers to Josiah saying, what have I to do with you, king of Judah? I've got no beef with you. I didn't come up here to

endanger, attack, or otherwise molest you.

I have not come against you this day, but against the house with which I have war, for God commanded me to make haste. Refrain from meddling with God who is with me, lest He destroy you. Now, it's hard to know if Necho is actually talking about the God of Israel Elohim is a plural, sometimes a plural of majesty, and sometimes a genuine plural like teraphim.

Is this God or the gods? But in any case, Necho says, look, I'm on a mission that is ordained, and it doesn't concern or involve you, so why are you meddling with affairs that are not your own? Nevertheless, Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, so that he might fight with him, and did not heed the words of Necho from the mouth of God. So whether or not Necho, and keep in mind, Necho probably doesn't speak Hebrew at this point, so how does this message reach Josiah? It is going to be sent, it is going to be interpreted, and someone close to the king is going to be brokering and conveying this message, right? So, in the course of that, you get the idea, perhaps, that this additional information related to God, it may have been native to Necho's message, or it may have been included by those who transmitted, translated, and conveyed the message. Somebody like Hilkiyah, or some of the scribes, or whoever.

But one way or another, God ensured that Josiah was aware that it was not God's will that he fight this battle. These words, that you leave this alone and don't meddle, are from the mouth of God, verse 22. But Josiah comes anyway to fight where? In the Valley of Megiddo.

What's another popular name for this area? Armageddon. Armageddon. This same location.

The Valley of Megiddo. Let me ask you this. If the Lord is on your side, and you're fighting a divinely ordained and commissioned battle, why would you hide? Every king we've ever seen that disguised himself, it ended badly.

Remember when David went to Gath and disguised himself as a madman and let the saliva drip down his beard, and he was trying to make out like he didn't have his right mind. We've had other kings that have disguised themselves, but somebody drew a bow at a venturer and it hit him and he died anyway. Right? There is a thought here that if you feel like you have to disguise yourself, if you feel like you have to wear camouflage and try to use some form of human deceit to accomplish your objective, it's a good time to stop and ask yourself if this is really God's will.

Would Huldah go to Josiah and say, O king, go forth against Necho, but be sure you wear a disguise. Does God need you to be disguised to protect you? One of you will put to flight a thousand as long as you're disguised. Is that what God said? There's a clue here.

There are a series of clues that this is a very misbegotten idea and a bad one. He goes without any mention of divine consultation, even though he has freely consulted about domestic affairs, about getting the temple in order and recovering worship and keeping the Passover. Almost immediately after this, in a different context, this is his foreign policy.

This is his military strategy. He utterly fails. Two quick thoughts here.

Number one, just because you are doing exceedingly well in one area of your life doesn't mean you are doing exceedingly well or even close to well in some other area of your life. I can tell you from personal observation that there have been pastors who were knocking the ball out of the ballpark every Sunday in their teaching ministry and in their private lives were committing high crimes and misdemeanors and everything in between. And the two, one initially did not seem to reflect on the other.

How could this be a bad guy? Look how well he teaches. Look at the wonderful blessing that God is raining down on his ministry or his church or the people who listen. He has got to be squared away because look at his grasp and his understanding and his eloquence and his fluency.

Look, Josiah hit the Passover out of the park like no king had ever done. Scripture says so. It is the best Passover that was ever observed at any time in Jerusalem.

And he turns right around and commits an egregious act against the will of God immediately after. Don't, we all have the human tendency to accentuate the positive and ignore the negative. Integrity means something is the same all the way through.

If an I beam, a steel I beam in a building has structural integrity, it's not just strong on the ends or it's not just strong in the middle. It's strong all the way across. If a chain or a rope that is suspending a great weight such as your body has integrity, it doesn't mean that 99 out of every 100 links are really strong and only 1 in 100 is weak.

It means 100% every link is equally strong. How many bad links does it take for a chain to drop you to your death? The chain can have 10,000 links. If one of them is bad, you're going to die.

Integrity, God's holiness and his call to us, be ye holy for I am holy, requires integrity and it is not enough to go check 50 or 60 links of the chain and say, you know, I'm going to stick in my thumb and pull out a plum and what a good boy am I? We have to root out and find those areas where we're not doing well. We need to go to the Lord in prayer. We need to consider and reflect and meditate upon the word of God and try to get those things fixed.

It is not enough to be good most of the time or in most ways or in most parts of our life. It all has to be holy. Why? What does leaven do to a lump? A little leaven does what? Leavens the whole lump.

Your good is not going to stay good if there's leaven somewhere in that lump. It will get corrupted. We've had examples in the news just recently.

Guys that have had long and stellar careers in public service and now something comes out, something even that happened long ago and their life's work is in the dumper. We had somebody in the political realm, I heard somebody say, well, we've got a new program where people, it's like a sort of a sitcom, but what people do is in this sitcom, I haven't seen it, I don't know the name of it, I just heard the last half of the description. What caught my ear was they

said, well, what they do in this show is this is like a family and some extended friends and things.

What they do is sit around and talk about subjects such as knowing what we know about the accusations against this particular well-known comedian and TV actor, do we still watch the show that he had on for years about his family, a family life, talking about Bill Cosby. Knowing what you know now, the accusations that have been brought against him, is it still legitimate to go watch his TV? Nobody wants to watch those. There were movies with O.J. Simpson.

Who wants to go see an O.J. Simpson movie now? And yet the man was a terrific athlete. Guys have done wonderful, wonderful things in many different areas of life and one failure, one area of failure poisons all of it. Josiah does wonderful things in restoring worship, having a heart for God like nobody since David, celebrating a Passover like no king has ever done according to the Bible.

And he turns right around and he is going to cancel, he is going to cancel a promise of God. What did I have you mark earlier? What did Hulda say? She said back in chapter 34 verse 28, I will gather you to your fathers and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace. Was Josiah gathered to his grave in peace? Keep reading here in chapter 35.

The archers shot King Josiah, verse 23, and the king said to his servants, take me away for I am severely wounded. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot and put him in the second chariot that he had, and they brought him to Jerusalem. He died and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers.

All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. Now do you call that being gathered to your fathers in peace? What happened? Did the word of God fail? Just because God makes a promise doesn't mean that you can't opt out of that promise. And Josiah opts out.

God says, you will not see the calamity I am going to bring on this city, and that is sure enough true. But he never got the chance to be gathered to his fathers in peace, unless you really want to stretch the definition. They did wheel him back there and he died.

He wasn't in the battle getting chopped to flinders as he died, but I wouldn't call being slain by an enemy archer dying in peace. What happened? One of two things happened. Either the word of God failed, and the promise of God was bogus, and you'll read commentators who say, oh, there's evidence of editing here.

The original had the story of the tragic death of Josiah, but then they wanted to make it all of this falderal and rigmarole I don't even want to bore you with. That's not the case. This isn't the result of faulty editing.

It's a result of faulty obedience, faulty dedication and diligence. So is Josiah the only king about whom nothing negative is said? I would argue, even here, we have a case where the Bible clearly indicates that he lost the fulfillment of a promise. God told Israel, I'm going to give you

the land and you'll have it forever.

Did they have the land forever? No. Did the promise of God fail? People opted out. By loss of focus, loss of diligence, loss of patience, loss of faith, loss of obedience, you can lose a firm promise of God.

You will die in peace. You'll go to be gathered to your fathers. You'll never see any of this calamity.

Well, he goes out and enters into calamity. He essentially walks out into the middle of the highway. Did he think because of this promise that he could not be killed in battle? Is that what happened? Well, I've got the word of the Lord that says I'm going to die in peace, so I can take on the biggest bear on the block and not be harmed.

I don't know, but it wouldn't be inconsistent with the facts as they are recorded here. Well, I'll take a precaution. I'll be in disguise.

But the Lord has said I'll die in peace, so I'm nine feet tall and bulletproof. Or arrow proof. Not so.

Very quickly now, because I promised it last time, he does die. And you know within a few years the nation is going to go out. 605, 598, 586, the three waves of incursion by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar.

And they're going to be taken into captivity. Jeremiah prophesied it. Jeremiah wept over it.

Jeremiah lamented over it. Jeremiah pleaded and warned the people. Tried to get them to turn.

But they had the same sort of attitude as Josiah. I really think I've got this figured out. And so it happens.

And I told you last time that the people, then there was a faction of them that concluded, well, you know why Jerusalem was destroyed. You know why we were taken into captivity. Why we were driven out of our own land.

It's because Josiah did all of that reform. Celebrated that big Passover. It limited us just down to one raggedy, tired, dusty old god from the past.

And we could no longer worship all the idols and Asherah and the rest of it that we were doing. He squelched all of that, and look what happened. Now Jerusalem is destroyed.

The kingdom is gone. And we're all dispossessed and homeless. It's Josiah's fault.

Turn with me to Jeremiah chapter 44. Jeremiah chapter 44. This is not specific to the captives such as those that Daniel had oversight of or that Ezekiel prophesied to.

But the idea is clearly here. This is the word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews who

dwell in the land of Egypt, who dwell at Migdal, at Tapanes, at Noph, and in the country of Pathros. Now these are ones who saw the Babylonians coming and fled in advance of being taken captive and hauled off or subjugated within their own land.

They left. It's kind of like when Naomi and her husband and sons left because there was a famine coming, so they went to the land of Moab. These people saw a historical disaster coming, and so they went to Egypt.

So they're down south. Thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, You have seen the calamity that I have brought on Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah. And behold, this day they are a desolation, and no one dwells in them.

The Babylonian conquest has taken place. Because of their wickedness, which they have committed to provoke me to anger, and that they went to burn incense and serve other gods whom they did not know, neither they know you nor your fathers. However, I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Do not do this abominable thing that I hate.

But they did not listen or incline their ear to turn from their wickedness to burn no incense to other gods. So my fury and my anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and they are wasted and desolate as it is this day. Now therefore, thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, Why do you commit this great evil against yourselves to cut off from you man and woman, child and infant, out of Judah, leaving none to remain, in that you provoke me to wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense to other gods in the land of Egypt? God brings discipline.

They escape it by wisely ducking the judgment of God from the Babylonians, but they go down to Egypt and continue these same practices. It's like, did you learn nothing from the destruction of the southern kingdom, the captivity of your brothers and fathers and sisters and so on? Verse 9, Have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, the wickedness of the kings of Judah, the wickedness of their wives, your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and I might add in the garden of Uzzah? They have not been humbled to this day, nor have they feared. They have not walked in my law or in my statutes that I set before you and your fathers.

Now, this is going on in the days of this wonderful reform under King Josiah. What's the difference in the book of Kings and the book of Chronicles? You know, the first and second are one book in the Hebrew Bible. What's the difference in Kings and Chronicles? What's the perspective of Kings? Who is it sort of presented to and aimed at? This is the newspaper.

This is for public consumption. This is talking to the people at large. What are the Chronicles? That's the inside view.

So from Josiah's perspective in the palace, his reforms were a raging success. I have ensured

that everybody obeys. And from the view inside the palace windows, this thing was an unqualified smashing success.

And everybody around the king, including those who are setting down this record for us, say the guy's heart was in it. He did it right. It was the best thing that ever happened.

What does the Chronicles account not include? What you see here. This is what was really going on beneath the facade and beneath the exterior. Nothing against Josiah.

He did as much as any king could do. And the Bible gives him full credit up to and through the celebration of that Passover. This is the heart of the people.

God doesn't say, you know, you're shallow thinking befuddled king Josiah. He says, it's you and your fathers. Verse 11, Jeremiah 44.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will set my face against you for catastrophe and for cutting off all Judah. I will take the remnant of Judah who have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to dwell there. They shall be consumed and fall in the land of Egypt.

You think you've escaped, but you haven't. Because the basis of judgment is your hearts. Your hearts haven't changed.

The judgment is going to find you. You cannot escape it. You can't disguise yourself and avoid it.

You can't move yourself and avoid it. Man looks on the outward appearance. The Lord looks on the heart.

They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine. They shall die from the least to the greatest by the sword and by famine. They shall be an oath, an astonishment, a curse, and a reproach.

For I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt as I punished Jerusalem by the sword, by famine, or by pestilence, so that none of the remnant of Judah who have gone into the land of Egypt to dwell there shall escape or survive, lest they return to the land of Judah to which they desire to return and dwell. For none shall return except those who escape. And that's those few among this remnant that really do have their heart right before the Lord.

Look at verse 15. Then all the men who knew that their wives had burned incense to other gods, with all the women who stood by a great multitude, and all the people who dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathos, answered Jeremiah, saying, As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not listen to you. We will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the

streets of Jerusalem.

For then we had plenty of food. We were well off, and we saw no trouble. But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven, and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything, and have been consumed by sword and by famine.

Can you get more thick-headed and dense, recalcitrant? Can you commit a bigger sin of the high hand? Can you shake your fist any more fervently in the face of God than this? The women said, When we burned incense to the... I would imitate their voice, but I'm not going to. When we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings to her, did we make cakes for her to worship her, and pour out drink offerings to her without her husband's permission? Of course, this is another sign of cracks in the foundation, when the women are violating the pattern that God set up. Jeremiah spoke to all the people, the men, the women, all the people who had given him that answer, saying, The incense that you burned in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and your princes, people of the land, did not the Lord remember them? And did it not come to His mind? You think God didn't see? You think God doesn't remember? The Lord could no longer bear it because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which you committed.

Therefore your land is a desolation, an astonishment, a curse, and without an inhabitant as it is this day. Because you burned incense, because you have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, and walked in His law, in His statutes, or in His testimonies, therefore this calamity has happened to you as this day. Moreover, Jeremiah said to the people, all the women, Hear the word of the Lord, all Judah who are in the land of Egypt.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, You and your wives have spoken with your mouths and fulfilled with your hands, saying, We will surely keep our vows that we have made to burn incense to the queen of heaven, pour out drink offerings to her. You will surely keep your vows and perform your vows. Therefore hear the word of the Lord, all Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt.

Behold, I have sworn by my great name, says the Lord, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God lives. I will watch over them for adversity and not for good. All the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by famine until there is an end to them.

And so on. So you can see very clearly here as a complementary account. You remember when we studied Hezekiah, we had kings, we had chronicles, and we had Isaiah.

Here we have kings, we have chronicles, and as a look back from some decades in the future, the testimony of Jeremiah from these that escaped. And here's a replay, here's a backward glance at what was going on in Judah in the days of Josiah ever since the days of Manasseh. God saw it coming.

God said, Manasseh has committed this great sin. He tried to repent at the end. There is this reform that is heartfelt on the part of King Josiah, but is superficial on the part of everybody else.

And beneath the surface and in the nooks and crannies, to the public eye, everything is golden. But here's what was really going on. And God says, That's why I took you out.

And those of you that escaped, and you're still perpetuating that thinking and those actions, I'm going to take you out. There is no relief. There is no escape.

There is no disguise. There is no hiding from Him who sees all and knows all. And we have the opportunity to judge ourselves lest we be judged.

Examine ourselves. See if we are in the faith. It is not enough to think back on that great Passover.

It's not enough to think about that great day when they cut the ribbon on the refurbished temple. It's not enough to say, Look, the landscape is clear of idols, and I don't see any smoke ascending from the Asherah poles and the high places. Isn't it great? Judah is restored to its former glory.

It is rotten to the bone. And this is nothing but a really nice paint job. Nation in the Old Testament, individual believer in the new.

Mark Knopfler, you know, Dire Straits, most talented guitar player walking the planet in his type of music, did a song with Emmylou Harris, and the title of the song is This Is Us. And that refrain goes all the way through the song, This Is Us. Well, this is us.

We are on the threshold making a decision about whether to enter into the house of the Lord and genuinely worship, genuinely dedicate ourselves to faith and obedience, or turn on our heels and go out and join the world. We make that decision for ourselves. Can't blame anybody else.

Can't blame the leadership. God has provided the most unprecedented level of access to His Word. Good teaching, good interpretation, good illumination of His Word.

There has never in the history of the planet been as much that can be known from the Word of God as there is right this minute. And ten minutes from now, it will be even greater. And it is a rebuke and a basis for condemnation for those of us who have that access and don't do anything with it.

And even if we escape an initial overt judgment, we're not going to ultimately escape. We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and we will give an account. Things that were done in secret will be spoken from the housetops.

Every thought captive for Christ. Not most of them captive, not all of them except King Agag

standing there in his finery. Every thought captive for Christ.

That's our goal. You can see illustrated graphically here the fate of those who don't do that. And who eventually end up 180 degrees out.

So it is a warning. It is a correction. It is a rebuke.

It is an instruction in righteousness for us. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the wonderfully clear way that Your Word like a fire and like a hammer breaks rocks in pieces, exposes us in the fierce light of Your righteousness and Your justice and at the same time offers us mercy and grace and compassion, provision and ultimately forgiveness and restoration and blessing, fruitfulness and abundance.

We thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ through whom all of these things are possible, in whom all of them reside. He is our righteousness, our peace and our sanctification. We pray that the Holy Spirit will keep ever before us the importance of appreciating that fact and that opportunity, that we will avail ourselves of it and live in a way that is pleasing in Your sight and that glorifies Him.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.