

Kings and Prophets 13-07-05b

We pick up our study now in the careers of the kings and prophets of Israel. We are in chapter 16 of first Kings. The reign of Baasha is predicted to come to a close.

The house of Baasha is predicted to suffer violent death. This of course is what is communicated by verse four, the dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Baasha and dies in the city. The birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field.

This indicates a time of great upheaval and most likely violence at the point of death, because if you die in your bed surrounded by royal servants and attendants, you wouldn't expect dogs to come in and mop you up off of your kingly bed, and if you die outside the city, there ought to be somebody to collect your remains and haul you back in for a proper funeral, but instead, your corpse is going to lay there untended while the birds do their bone cleaning activities on you. So this does not bode well. Now, let me ask you something.

Let's say you are Baasha and the prophet Jehu comes to you with a message from God and says, because you have walked in a sinful, evil way, I am going to take away your posterity. I'm going to make your house just like the guy that you wiped out to get where you are. This is a decision point, isn't it? Can he not fall on his face, throw himself on the mercy of God, commit to a change of mind and a change of heart and do things differently? He didn't do that, so what can we deduce about his response to this message? This is a word from God that he brushes aside, does not assign it importance.

You think about the modern day, you can communicate, some of us have dialogue with unbelievers or with people of vastly different persuasions than our own, and we can quote what the word of God says, we can represent the truth of God as it is found in nature and in God's word, and people are dismissive, they assign it no weight and no importance. Ah, that was written by goat herds back before even 1% of modern knowledge was known and this sort of thing. Knowing what we know, which has more weight, the word of God or the word of someone who dismisses the word of God? It creates warning music in our minds, doesn't it? When the prophet of God is sent, this doesn't happen every day, prophets aren't just running around delivering messages from God every day of the week.

Years go by, decades go by, even centuries go by with no prophetic word from God delivered, but here is a prophet of God sent by God with a message from God to the king, ostensibly, allegedly, of God's people with this information. And on this occasion, what does the king do? Nothing. How did he accomplish this nothing? Did he rationalize it? Did he decide, ah, these prophets are always yammering on about something, they're always quoting scripture at me, I've gotten this far, I've reigned for 20 odd years and nothing's happened yet.

It doesn't say how he handled this message. The one thing we know for sure is he didn't change his mind, he didn't change his heart, and he didn't change his policy. Now, what about

us? When the word of God comes to us, what happens? Do we find a way to deflect it? Do we find a way to diminish it? Do we find a way to ignore it? Do we think, well, yes, but I've been hearing that kind of thing.

All my life and nothing bad has happened yet. I think there is a very compelling example here of what not to do when the word of God comes, because this disaster is of a permanent nature. Baasha is not coming back at the resurrection, at the beginning of the millennium and recovering.

He's not going to be king again. He's not going to live in a palace again. He's not going to have a wonderful heritage and set of blessings from God.

He's going to be, if he comes back at all, on the far side of the earth, I suspect that he's going to have a one half acre plot on the edge of Antarctica, shooing the penguins away from his igloo in the millennial kingdom, miserably so. And so unnecessarily. Because he has this, this is the red phone to God's heavenly throne room.

He's got a prophet of God with direct access to the creator, God of the universe, and look at how cavalier and indifferent he is when he receives this warning message. And by the way, these warnings, these predictions are always opportunities. It's a last chance before the arc door for deliverance closes.

The reason it is given is to give the person one last chance to appeal, to make a change, to do something different. Why couldn't God send Jehu the prophet to the rest of the people in the land and say, let me tell you what's going to happen to the king. He sent to the king.

Why? It's a decision point for the king. This can change. The old Testament is replete with examples of God telling somebody this is what I'm about to do and that somebody falling on their face and God quote unquote changes his mind.

Moses being one of the classic examples. There is a warning here for us. Do not take lightly the word of God that comes with instruction, with warning, with encouragement, with a pronouncement of potential judgment.

We want to be smarter than this guy. God sends the prophet Jehu with a very detailed and specific message and in verse five, the rest of the Acts of Baasha, there is no wonderful story of repentance, of reversal, of cutting his losses and beginning to do the will of God. He might have reigned another couple of decades.

He might have had a son who followed and carried on with constructive policies. But there is a symbiosis, especially in the northern kingdom, with the hearts of the population at large and the king that they get. They get the king they deserve.

And this king is emblematic. He represents and expresses the general trend and the general heart of the people in the north. And the reason there's not insurrection, the reason there's not

a mass exodus to the south is people are kind of sympathetic with this guy.

He represents them. And the same is true in the modern day. We get the leadership that fits the populace and changing the leadership isn't going to help if the hearts of the people they lead don't change.

As we've talked about before, the rest of the Acts of Baasha, what he did, it's all in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel, a book we do not have. We have the chronicles of the kings of Judah. But what these guys did, God doesn't consider worth preserving, so we don't have that book.

The word of the Lord came by Jehu and it is reviewed for us again in verse seven. Anytime the Bible repeats a thing, we should repeat it to ourselves. We should ask ourselves, why is God making such a point of this? God sent Jehu with a word, Baasha ignored it.

I do not want a paragraph in the large version of the word of God that goes into the eternal future that says the word of the Lord came to Sam and Sam ignored it. God sent a message to Sam and Sam made no change, gave it no consideration, assigned it no weight, brushed it aside and continued on his path of emptiness, uselessness. Wood, hay and stubble generation.

God particularly and specifically sent a word, meant nothing to him. That is one indictment that you and I do not want next to our name in God's books that will be opened at the judgment. If we hear the word of the Lord, if God teaches us and shows us things in Bible class, as we think about what we learned in Bible class, as we memorize scripture, as we meditate on any part of God's word, as God the Holy Spirit comes and convicts us of sin and righteousness and judgment, that does not just happen at salvation, it happens all the time.

And if we find ways to ignore it, find ways to push it into the background, this will be our indictment and it affects more than just us. You become a curse to those near you. You become a curse to your family.

You become a curse to your descendants. You become a curse to your parents. You become a curse to anyone in your vicinity because we are not self-contained.

We are not an island. We are not in isolation. We are interconnected.

The body of Christ is inextricably joined in Christ by God the Holy Spirit. And what you do affects others. What others do affects us.

I'm really looking forward to a book I just found on the discount shelf, one of my famous books on CD, but there was a young man at the battle on Iwo Jima in World War II who, with three other Marines, was trying to attack the airstrip. This is where John Bassalone died at this very airstrip. These three Marines were in a shell crater and the Japanese lobbed two grenades in there and this guy jumped on them, drove them into the volcanic ash in the side of the crater with his body, and they both went off.

Thus, he became the youngest soldier in American history and the, let's see, how does that go? Well, he's the youngest soldier and the youngest Marine certainly to receive the Medal of Honor. The thing is, he lived and this book is his recollection of all of his experiences up to, through, and after that episode. I've got that book.

I wish I could remember the title I'm casting about for it, but the fish don't bite when I throw bait in my memory like they used to. Anyway, I'll let you know at some future date. I haven't started that one yet.

I'm still finishing up 1491 and then I've got to go to 1493, then I'll get to that one. But here's the thing, this notion of recognizing that you are part of something bigger than yourself and love and concern for others being sacrificial towards self and beneficial toward others used to be so much more a part of our national consciousness and our culture than it is today. We have so much more of an everyman for himself and I'm going to get mine even if it's at your expense.

And stories like that remind us of what we used to be. And when you think about the 4th of July, more and more for many of us, it is more of a retrospective appreciation of what our country once was than some of what we see of what it is. But it is important for us to remember, you remember the nature of this curse.

The word of the Lord, verse 7, came by the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, against Baasha and his house. And his house. Now, if someone in his house had been an exception, had loved the Lord, had broken the mold, had separated himself and gone after God, he would, of course, have been excluded from this curse.

But his house is like him. Because of the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord and provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, all of these little devices that they have for us work with our hands, don't they? Thumb operated, mouse operated, stylus operated, button operated. We have the work of our hands today.

It's just running on batteries. Now, the word of the Lord, verse 8, comes by the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, against Baasha and his house. himself and gone after God, he would, of course, have been excluded from this curse.

But his house is like him. Because of the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord and provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, all of these little devices that they have for us work with our Starting way back in verse 25 of the last chapter, Nadab became king in the second year of Asa. Baasha becomes king in the third year of Asa, verse 33 of the last chapter.

Now, in the 26th year of Asa, king of Judah, Elah, the son of Baasha, became king over Israel, reigned two years in Tirzah. His servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arzah, steward of his house in Tirzah. Zimri went in and struck him and killed him in the twenty-seventh year of Asa, king of Judah, and reigned in his place.

Then it came to pass, when he began to reign, as soon as he was seated on his throne, he killed all the household of Baasha. He did not leave him one male, neither of his relatives nor of his friends. Thus Zimri destroyed all the household of Baasha according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, for all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, by which they had sinned, and by which they had made Israel sin, in provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their idols.

The rest of the acts of Elah and all that he did are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? In the twenty-seventh year of Asa, king of Judah, Zimri had reigned in Tirzah seven days. I'm guessing that his section in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel was quite small, probably measured in square inches rather than pages, because he only reigned seven days. The people were encamped against Gibethon, which belongs to the Philistines.

Hmm, where have we heard of that? Now the people who were encamped heard it said, Zimri has conspired and has killed the king. So all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp. Then Omri and all Israel with him went up from Gibethon, and they besieged Tirzah.

And it happened when Zimri saw the city was taken, that he went into the citadel of the king's house, and burned the king's house down upon himself with fire, and died. Now, the people who were encamped heard it, and they were told, Omri has died. Because of the sins which he had committed, how many times have we had this refrain, why is it? Is it because he is from the wrong tribe? Is it because he came to the throne illegitimately? Why is it? It is because of the sins which he had committed in doing evil in the sight of the Lord, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he had committed to make Israel sin.

The rest of the acts of Zimri and the treason he committed are not written in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel." Now before we continue with the reign of Omri, notice that each of these kings represents something slightly different, a different kind of human failing, if you will, or human degenerate tendency. All of them walk in the ways of Jeroboam. All of them cause Israel to sin.

But when you look at the specifics, go back to Nadab, we've already reviewed the sin of Jeroboam in the first session. He set up the golden calves, he made an alternate feast, he tried to set up a whole alternate system of worship so that nobody ever need leave the kingdom because he was afraid they would be politically subverted to support the south. Nadab did evil in the sight of the Lord, walked in the way of his father, and Baasha of the house of Ishtar conspired against him and killed him at Gibethon while Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibethon.

Now, Baasha has a 24-year reign, 25 years later they are still besieging Gibethon, or they got it and lost it, but there's a remarkable lack of success in their, why are they besieging the city? Were they trying to expand their territory? Were the Gibethonites raiding across the border as

in the days of old? The Philistines used to be famous for grabbing crops and taking stuff that didn't belong to them, harassment, oppression of various kinds in nature. Why are they besieging? Whatever it is, they are utterly unsuccessful and all they do is meet with unexpected disasters at Gibethon. In the first case, Nadab is assassinated there while he's trying to prosecute this effort.

Now, all these years later, 25 years later, they're still encamped against Gibethon. Have you ever had the feeling in your life that you're working and working and working, you're putting in a lot of effort and a lot of time and you're just getting no movement on a problem? You're getting no headway in whatever it may be. I like to think of my garage in this context.

I carry boxes out. I throw things away. I clean out.

I thin. I remove old stuff I don't need. But the garage, in terms of available cubic space, just never seems to change.

It's some weird, freakish law of nature that there's no progress made in the garage. Elves come in at night and stalk it with other people's stuff. I don't know what happens.

But I can pour hours and sweat and blood into that thing and it just never stays or becomes what I want it to become and stay. Well, that's sort of a facetious example, but there are times when we do not prosper in our way and it is a sign. It is a symptom.

It should cause us to stop and reflect. If this is something that I am doing, why is it not succeeding? Have I dedicated this effort to God? Am I doing it in His name? Am I, it isn't so much the thing itself, but me as I am doing it. Am I doing it as unto the Lord and not unto men? Is this a legitimate form of testing or is this a wake-up call from God that all is not well? He is not blessing my efforts.

He's not prospering my way. It's a healthy thing to give this possibility some consideration. It is not always true.

Jesus said, for example, the poor you have with you always. Well, you could put a lot of work into ministering to the poor, trying to meet the needs of the poor, clothing them, sheltering them, sharing the gospel with them, doing whatever, and you're still going to have poor at the end of all that effort because Jesus said you will always have them with you. There are some things in our lives that God is not using that particular thing to wake us up, but we always have to check that possibility and satisfy ourselves that, no, that's not what's going on because I really am operating with my whole heart.

I have prayed in this. I can answer all of the test questions properly in this regard. I do it in Jesus' name.

I am thankful for it, and I think my conduct and my thoughts in it and around it are reflecting the glory of the Lord Jesus. There's nothing immoral or illicit or selfish or untoward or unbiblical

in it. It's just a thing that doesn't have an end.

Paul's thorn in the flesh apparently didn't have an end, and it was from God, and it had a benefit. But we always need to check. If there's something of long duration, we need to check.

The siege of Gibbethon should have awakened some questions in the minds of people in the Northern Kingdom. Why are we not prospering? These people are clearly enemies. God promised us victory over these enemies and peace on all sides on what condition? If they were faithful, if they were obedient.

Here is a war they can't win and a siege they can't seem to get away from. What should that tell them? It's another clue. They can get warnings from prophets.

They also get warnings in circumstances. Now if they had been down there in the name of the Lord, if they had gone out there like David faced Goliath, you are fighting the armies of the Lord God of Israel. You're defying him.

You're an affront and an offense to him, and we fight you in his name and for his sake, and we're relying on him for victory, Gibbethon would have been reduced in a week or less. Here it is 25 years later, and they're no further along than they were two kings ago. Just something to ponder.

But notice that these kings in the north are not safe and are not secure and are not successful whether they are facing enemies on the outside or on the inside. It is members of their own retinue, members of their own cabinet, members of their own household that are rising up, conspiring to slay them and then to murder their families and everyone they know. If you ever had the king over for a dinner, you're dead when this guy comes in.

Killed his family and all his friends. So all of the people that have been cronying and glad-handing and back-slapping and getting in good with the king, all of that effort, all of that expense, all of that sort of social bribery that went on, now comes back to bite them because of that association and that link and their toadying and their friendship, now they die for it. Keep in mind, these things happen because the wall of blessing, the benefit of God's protection and God's provision is withdrawn from these men.

They are suffering the slings and arrows that any pagan king would suffer. You and I, when we abandon our spiritual identity, when we ignore our provision and the resources that God has so graciously and at such great cost given us, His Word, His Spirit, the presence of His Son in our hearts, His presence in our hearts, when we treat that lightly, God will treat us lightly. I will honor those who honor me.

Those who dishonor me, I will lightly esteem. If you are lightly esteemed by God, this is the kind of stuff that happens. God turns you over to what you have chosen.

You've chosen to please people. You're now in the hands of people. They love you today.

They murder you tomorrow. They like you today. They want what you have tomorrow.

And they will not just murder you, but everybody related to you and everybody you know. There is a bursting radius. You have an effect on more than just yourself.

So after this murder of Zimri by Omri, look at verse 21 in chapter 16, the people of Israel were divided into two parts. The kingdom has already been divided, has it not? Northern and southern. Why? Because of their apathy and indifference to the things of God, because their lack of attention to the Word of God.

Now the northern kingdom is divided again, divided into two parts. Half of the people followed Tibni, the son of Gennath. Who is this guy? Tibni, the son of Gennath.

This is a name you might make up if you're writing a video game, right? Here's Gennath and his son, Tibni. Who is this guy? He's out of nowhere, doesn't even give his tribe. We're not even he doesn't even get the dignity of a of a ancestral reference.

It's just him and his dad to make him king and half followed Omri, but the people who followed Omri prevailed over the people who followed Tibni, the son of Gennath. So Tibni died and Omri reigned. How pathetic is that? What do you think happened to the people that supported Tibni? Well, half the kingdom is now on the outs.

They're they're going to be treated with disdain. They're going to be blackballed. They're going to be cold shoulder.

Their businesses are going to be boycotted. You know, you supported the wrong guy now in the 31st year of Asa, king of Judah. You see this sort of almost tongue in cheek reference to the stability in the South.

King after king after king is referenced against this long, straight, solid totem pole of Asa in the South. Asa's got his problems, but nothing like these guys. 31st year of Asa, king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel and reigned 12 years, six years.

He reigned in Tirza and he bought the hill of Samaria from Shamer for two talents of silver. This is where it gets its name, Shameria or Samaria. It's named for the guy that owned it.

Called the name of the city, which he built Samaria after the name of Shamer, owner of the hill, Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord. What kind of slow learners are these guys? Do they not look at immediately preceding history? It's not like you need an angel descending with a flaming sword to say, behold, bad things will happen if you don't get right with God and honor your responsibility as you rule his people. Whether they are apathetic, whether they are indifferent, doesn't matter.

They are still God's covenant people and God still holds their kings accountable. But he did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did worse than all who were before him. Now, this is quite a feat.

How can you be worse than Jeroboam, Nadab, Zimri, et cetera, Elah, in his, you know, 15 minutes of fame, did evil more so than all those who were before him. He walked in all the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat and in his sin by which he made Israel sin, that common refrain. Why is this repeated so many times? When you have influence over others and your sin gives them occasion and excuse to sin, you are held accountable.

If you remember what Jesus said about those who cause one of these little ones to stumble, it would be better for him if a big rock were fastened about his head, a millstone, and he were cast into the sea. The sin which he made Israel sin, provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their idols, with that which takes the place of and substitutes for God and the things of God. Now, think about us.

Think about now. Is God in heaven at this very moment the same God that was dealing with these kings? He is. You and I love and serve this very same God.

He is the same yesterday, today and forever, as is the Lord Jesus, as is God, the Holy Spirit. He's the very same God. Do you think his standards have slipped or changed? Is he a kinder, gentler God? Is he not quite as righteous, not quite as interested in how we spend our time and whether or not we observe his priorities, try to live in the light of his word and according to his plan and purpose? Do you think he's older now and he's kind of watered down a little bit? He is the very same God.

He is no different now. You and I are, in fact, his people, and we do sit on the throne of a kingdom for which we are responsible. And it is the kingdom of our own soul.

And we are in preparation for greater service, greater authority. Do you think God looks at you and looks at me to see if we are provoking him to anger with idols? What do idols do? They take the place of God. Their worship pushes aside the worship of God.

Time spent paying attention to these idols is time that should have been spent paying attention to God. Do you get the point? You and I can be idolatrous when we covet entertainment, when we covet information, when we covet interaction or stimulation. In any area of life.

In a way that excludes God. To whom we are first and foremost accountable. Pick any activity and ask yourself, how much time do I invest in that every week? And how does that compare to the time I invest in my relationship with God, my prayer, my contemplation of his word and the things that have come up in Bible class, scripture memorization.

That is the truth teller, that's where our priorities really are. And to the extent that those things have pushed aside and taken the place of God's rightful place in our lives, that's idolatry. What does God think of idolatry? What does God think of the sin of pursuing other things when we should be pursuing him? Provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their idols doesn't mean that we can't do things.

But if it becomes a substitute, if it pushes aside and takes the place of God's first and foremost

primacy in our lives, don't kid yourself, it's idolatry. You don't need a little statue. You don't need a gilded object.

All you need is something that replaces the time that ought to be invested and devoted to the things of God. And you are an idolater. You're just as bad as any Baal worshiper.

You're just as bad as anybody who went to the high places looking for ash tart. It's just as bad because it has displaced God. What is the very first commandment in the Ten Commandments? Say it out loud.

Thou shalt have what? No other gods before me. These things were written for our instruction. It's interesting history.

It's sometimes even funny to look at the things, you know, at this distance that happened in these accounts. But we ought to take it seriously when it comes to the point of application. The very same God is looking at you that looked at Omri, that looked at Nadab, that looked at Baasha, that looked at Jeroboam.

And he's got the very same standards. And the very same judgment will fall on you and me that fell on them. If we don't pay attention to our responsibilities as the captains of our ship and the masters of our fate, God has granted us authority over ourselves first, looking to grant us authority over many things later on.

But if we can't even handle this little limited domain of ourselves, not only will we not be promoted and not be able to serve and reflect God's glory in the future, we are going to be judged and judged severely from those to whom much is given, much is required. And we need to take this seriously. It's such a wonderful opportunity.

It is so easy. It is fraught with blessing. It gives us peace.

It gives us guidance. It illuminates our way. We have happy, productive, fruitful, beneficial, glory reflecting lives.

If we simply submit ourselves under the mighty hand of God so that He can bless us, so that He can elevate us, so that He can promote us at the right time, He will exalt us in due time. Well, we're going to see more when Ahab comes to the throne next time. This is going to open a whole new panorama of activity and insight for us into ourselves.

Everybody has an Ahab somewhere in their psyche, just like Captain Ahab. If you know your Melville, you'll know that there's a lot of biblical allusion. There is a lot of deeper truth going on in that book.

It's not just a story about a whale. In the same way, the account of Ahab is a lot more than just the history of Jezebel's husband. And we'll begin to look at that next time.

But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you

for how elegantly, how compellingly you communicate to us what you require, that we do justice and love mercy and walk humbly before you.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will take these things and use them to motivate us, enable us to see our secret faults, our hidden flaws, purge us with hyssop and make us clean, wash us and enable us to be those who can come into your presence with hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, our bodies washed so that we can come boldly before your throne and live lives that bear fruit and do credit to our wonderful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name. Amen.