

(Through the Bible) 2 Chronicles 28-36

by Chuck Smith

Hezekiah's reformation and restoration of the worship of Jehovah in Judah serves as a model for the importance of consecrating one's life to serve God and turning back to Him in times of spiritual decline.

Duration: 1:24:50

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 15:2, 2 Chronicles 26:5, 2 Chronicles 30:27, 2 Chronicles 34:21, 2 Chronicles 36:17, 2 Chronicles 36:20, Lamentations 4:20

Topics: "Faithfulness To God", "Spiritual Dependence"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker tells the story of Balaam and his donkey from the Bible. Balaam is tempted by the king's offer of wealth and power, but his donkey keeps veering off the path. Balaam beats the donkey multiple times until the donkey finally speaks up, questioning the fairness of the beatings. The speaker uses this story to highlight the importance of staying faithful to God and warns that forsaking God will lead to trouble and defeat. The sermon emphasizes the need for individuals and nations to rely on God's help and not become independent from Him.

Transcript

So we turn now to 2nd Chronicles chapter 28. We are now moving into the final stages of the deterioration of this nation prior to its destruction. Ahaz is now the king.

He is 20 years old when he began to reign. And he is an extremely wicked person. And it is really during his reign that the kingdom sinks to a lower level spiritually than it ever has.

And this begins the final downward trend. There are few respites. Hezekiah, his son, was a very good king.

Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, was a wicked king. And then the son of Manasseh, Josiah, was again a very good king. But each time you get to the wicked kings, it seems like their wickedness is just a little deeper or greater than the previous ones.

Now among the things that Ahaz did was to walk in the ways of the kings of Israel in the north. Establishing the worship of Baal, and in establishing the worship of Baal, caused his children to pass through the fire. Now some people wonder why God ordered the extermination of the Canaanites when the children of Israel came into the land.

And it seems a very cruel thing for God to order them to wipe out all of the inhabitants of that land as they moved in. And it has created great problems for some people. How could a God of love order the extermination of a whole race of people? But if you will get into the practices of their worship, and you begin to study their whole cultural system, you will see why God ordered their extermination.

Because they had come to a place of such depravity, even in their concepts and worship of God, that they would in time destroy themselves. One of the practices in the worship of Baal was to cause your children to pass through the fire. They would heat the little iron or stone images of Baal.

Until they were glowing hot. And then the little images of Baal have always arms that are straight out from the body with the fingers turned up. And that was so that they could hold the infants.

And these little images, when they would turn molten red, they would place then their little babies in the molten red arms of the image of Baal, and sacrifice their babies unto Baal. And so this king Ahaz was actually guilty of causing his own children to pass through the fire. And he got into all of the pagan practices in their religious system, forsaking the worship of the true and the living God, and following after the worship that was common in the nations that God ordered exterminated.

God ordered to get rid of them completely because of their disobedience to God and their failure to utterly exterminate these nations. Gradually, the practices of these nations became sort of inculcated into the life of the people of God. And they polluted the people of God and ultimately caused the fall of God's people.

So God was only seeking to protect them from this poison, this venom, in order that they might continue in the land and continue to serve the Lord. And it was their failure of obeying God that led to their ultimate downfall as they began to pick up the practices of the people round about. Now, as we are in this particular period of history, as we are dealing now with Ahaz and then subsequently Hezekiah, this is about the time Hezekiah's reign.

Ahaz only reigned for 16 years. Hezekiah was the time when Isaiah was the prophet of God. And you can go into the book of Isaiah and you can read how he speaks against those who had followed after the astrology and the stargazers and the monthly prognosticators and so forth.

And he speaks of the things that they became involved with in false worship. As we move on after Hezekiah in the period of Manasseh, it was Manasseh actually who ordered Isaiah the prophet sawed in two. He didn't want to hear any more of God's word.

But God raised up another prophet during the time of Josiah, the prophet Jeremiah. And Jeremiah is the prophet who, talking to the people at this period of history, he said, has there ever been such a thing before that a people will turn from their God, which are no gods. In other words, those people that worship false gods won't turn away from their God.

They'll continue to worship false gods generation after generation after generation. Of course, the reason is, is that in the worship of false gods, there is an appeal to the flesh. Thus, there is no spiritual struggle.

To worship the true and the living God does create a conflict within. The moment I accept Jesus Christ as my Savior, begin to serve the Lord, there is a conflict, an internal conflict that is set up within me. The flesh warring against the Spirit, the Spirit against the flesh.

These two are contrary. This battle begins. But in worshiping the false gods, they are extremely appealing to the flesh.

And thus, there is no conflict set up. And thus, people who worship false gods will continue in the worship of false gods from generation to generation. And so, Jeremiah points out, is that, is there, have you ever seen such a thing, people will turn from their God, which really aren't gods.

They're not even true gods, but people won't turn. They're very loyal to them. And yet, God said, you have turned away from me.

You have left me the fountain of living waters. Living waters is a running stream. You have left me the fountain of living waters and you have hewn out for yourself, carved out for yourself cisterns, which are great caves that they carve out in the limestone over there in Israel in order that they might be water reservoirs.

But they collect the water in the winter rains and then hold them through the summer season. But you know what water does that's collected in a cistern like that. It soon begins to get stagnant.

The little wiggle tails and all in it. So, cisterns can only really hold stagnant water at the best. But here you have forsaken me, God said, the fountain of living water and you cut out for yourself cisterns.

You've followed now religious systems that really... But he said concerning their cisterns, they can't hold water. Every once in a while, they carve out a cistern and there would be a fracture in the rock. So, you set the whole thing up and you pray for the rain and then you've got the thing all designed.

You got all your little dikes built and you direct all of the rain to the hole that you've put in the top of the cistern. And you watch the water running in down your dikes and in and you hear it splashing and all right, you know, this is great. And so, you go out the next morning to draw a bucket of water out and there's no water in it.

Suddenly, you discovered after three years of picking away at this rock and carving out your cistern, there's a fracture in it somewhere and it won't hold water. And so, you use it for a tomb. And interestingly enough, there is a tomb on the Mount of Olives just below the Intercontinental Hotel that was originally a cistern, cut out for a cistern, didn't hold water, so they used it for a tomb.

So, God's complaint against the people, you've turned from me. Ahaz, turn from God, follow the practices. Now, you see, in following these practices, in getting into these horrible, abominable practices, it was for these things that God brought His judgment upon these nations.

And now His own people are following these same things. The reason why God ordered them exterminated is so that they would not infect His people with these practices. But their disobedience led to their infection, which led ultimately to their destruction.

And so, Ahaz, an extremely wicked king, and because of his wickedness, there was a rapid deterioration of the strength of the kingdom. Verse 5, So the Lord delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria, and they smote him and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and he was brought with them to Damascus. And he was delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

That is the northern kingdom. And 120,000 of his men were killed in one day of battle. They were all very valiant men because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers.

And then the children of Israel carried away 200,000 of their brothers and their children and women as captives. But when they brought these captives unto Israel, some of the old men of Israel said, Hey, that you can't do. They are actually our brothers still and you can't bring those of Judah as slaves.

They were going to make slaves out of them. And some of the older men in the northern kingdom of Israel spoke out against this. And so, they brought the people back again from that particular captivity.

Now, in verse 16, the king sent to the... Ahaz took money and sent to the king of Assyria to come and help him because the Philistines moved against him and took several of the cities. The Edomites moved against him and took several of the cities of the southern portion. The Philistines were taking the cities of the western portion.

The Israelites were taking the cities from the northern portion. He was getting wiped out on every side. And so, he sent for the king of Assyria to come and help him.

And rather than helping him, he also just took his money and did nothing to help him in his distress. Verse 19, For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz, the king of Israel, for he made Judah naked and transgressed sore against the Lord. Until Gath-Pileser, the king of Assyria, came unto him and distressed him and would not help him.

And in the time of his distress, did he trespass yet more against the Lord. This is that king Ahaz, for he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus which smote him and said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, therefore I'll sacrifice unto them that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him and all Israel.

And so, the reason for, of course, his problems, his forsaking of God, clearly declared. And in his distress, rather than turning to God, he just went deeper into the abominations, beginning to worship the gods of the Syrians, saying, Well, because the Syrians wiped us out, their gods must be stronger than our God, and began to worship them. And he and his practices became the ruin of the people, these false, the worship of these false gods.

Now, Ahaz died and his son Hezekiah began to reign in his stead. Hezekiah was 25 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for 29 years. Now, it is interesting to me that as wicked as was Ahaz, Hezekiah was a very good spiritual king.

Perhaps he saw the folly of his father. Perhaps he saw what his father's reign had done for the nation. But it is interesting how that such an ungodly man as Ahaz could have a son as Hezekiah, who was so spiritual.

And Hezekiah began to reign, but Hezekiah was strongly influenced by Isaiah the prophet. And no doubt, the relationship of Hezekiah and Isaiah is the reason why Hezekiah was such a good king. Now, Hezekiah, when he began to reign, immediately sought to undo the blasphemous work of his father in the tearing down of all of these idols and images that his father had established and set up.

He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. The first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and he repaired them. And he brought in the priests and the Levites and he gathered

them together into the East Street.

And he said, Sanctify now yourselves and sanctify the house of the Lord, God of your fathers and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed and done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord, our God, and have forsaken Him and turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord and turned their backs. And they have shut up the doors of the porch.

They've put out the lamps and they have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel. Wherefore, the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment and to the hissing as you see with your eyes. For lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this.

And it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel that His fierce wrath may turn away from us. My sons, be not now negligent talking to the priest. For the Lord hath chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, that you should minister unto Him and burn incense." So here the first thing that Hezekiah does is reestablish the worship of Jehovah.

The temple had been shut. It would have been filled with just a lot of junk, filthiness, pollution. And the doors had been shut.

They had not been offering the daily sacrifices. They had not been keeping the lights of the menorah lit. They had just forsaken the worship of Jehovah God completely during the reign of Ahaz and it is Hezekiah's purpose to reestablish.

Now calling the priest together and saying, okay, now you fellows, sanctify yourselves and let's get back. I'm determined to make a covenant to worship God. And so Hezekiah was the instrument to forestall the judgment of God in the fact that he was turning the people back to the worship of God once again.

And so they gathered their brothers. They sanctified themselves according to the commandment of Hezekiah by the words of the Lord to cleanse the house of the Lord. And the priest went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it.

And they brought out all of the uncleanness that was found there in the temple of the Lord. And they carried it down to the brook Kidron and dumped it down there in the bottom of the valley. And they began the first day of the first month to sanctify.

And on the eighth day of the month, they came to the porch of the Lord and they sanctified the house of the Lord. So they started going through sanctifying everything. Now, there was a ritual by which things had to be sanctified and the purification rites.

There was a whole ritual to it and it took several days. And they would go one area at a time sanctifying the holy of holies again, then sanctifying the holy place, sanctifying the table of showbread, sanctifying the altar of incense, sanctifying the candles. And it took eight days actually to formulate the oil that was burned in the candles, so that you'd have the sanctified oil to burn in the sanctifying lamb and the whole thing.

And so they started this process and the first day of the first month, they began this process of sanctification. And it was coming, of course, now you're in the first month, you've got the great feast of the Passover coming up. But they didn't have time to get everything all set for the feast of the Passover in the

first month.

Now, there was a provision in the law of Moses that if a person could not observe the feast of the Passover in the 14th day of the first month, that he could do it on the 14th day of the second month. And so they determined that they would have the feast of the Passover once more. It is something that was, you know, back in their history.

They hadn't done it for a long time and they determined that they were going to start the feast again, that they would observe the feast of the Passover unto the Lord. And so they sent messages throughout all the land inviting the people to come to the feast of the Passover in the second month. And it is interesting that they even sent messages on up into the northern kingdom, into the areas of Samaria in the northern kingdom, inviting the people that they should come.

And so there was this great celebration of the feast of the Passover. They restored the worship of the temple and all. And then in chapter 30, we get the Passover.

But in the restoration of the worship in the temple, verse 27, and Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offerings upon the altar. And when the burnt offerings began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets and with the instruments ordained by David, the king of Israel. David had invented a lot of musical instruments and ordered the singers and all.

And as they started to burn the sacrifice, they began to sing and worship God once more. And so the beautiful sight really of the worship of God reinstated there in the temple. All of the congregation worshiped and the singers sang and the trumpeters sounded and all of this continued until the burnt offering was finished.

Now, the burnt offering was the offering of consecration. They offered a sin offering because they had sinned against God. But then the burnt offering, you remember, he said, I have made a covenant to serve the Lord.

That's what the burnt offering was all about. The burnt offering was the offering of consecration. It is the consecration of my life to serve God.

And so the Bible says, I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you'll present your bodies as a living sacrifice, not a sin sacrifice, but a burnt offering sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. In other words, here God is my body. I sacrifice my body to you.

That is, I am consecrating my body and my life to serve you. That's what the burnt offering sacrifice was all about. The offering of consecration.

And so Hezekiah the king, the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and Asaph the seer. So they began to sing the Psalms with which you are familiar. And they sang praises with gladness and they bowed their heads and worshipped.

Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now that you have consecrated yourselves to the Lord, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the house of the Lord. And the congregation brought in the sacrifices and thanks, thank offerings, and as many as were of a free heart, burnt offerings. Now, sometimes there is a mistaken notion that we can legislate righteousness.

It's impossible. The worship of God must always arise out of a free heart. You cannot force people to worship God.

That always has to come from the free heart. It should never come out of coercion. It should never come out of pressure.

Whatever you give of yourself, that which you have, should always be done freely and willingly from your heart. And so the people, as many as were of a free heart, came and worshipped. And Hezekiah rejoiced, verse 36, in all the people that God had prepared the people for the thing was done in a hurry.

Actually, this was a hurried up deal. And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and to Judah, and he wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, this is up in the northern, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to keep the Passover unto Jehovah, God of Israel. But the king had taken counsel and his princes and all the congregation in Jerusalem to keep the Passover in the second month inasmuch as they could not keep it at this time because the priest did not sanctify themselves sufficiently and neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.

And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation. So they established the decree to make the proclamation from Israel from Beersheba, which is in the southern portion towards the desert, even unto Dan, which is up almost at the base of Mount Hermon in the northern part of the Hula Valley above the Sea of Galilee. So the messengers went out with letters from the king and his princes throughout all of Israel and Judah.

And according to the commandment of the king, they said, ye children of Israel, turn again unto Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. So notice they are now addressing themselves to the remnant that had escaped out of the hands of the king of Assyria. And they were up there in the northern tribes, Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon and all.

And be not like your fathers and like your brothers, which trespassed against Jehovah, God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as you see. Now be ye not stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Lord. Enter into his sanctuary, which he has sanctified forever.

Serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. And if you turn again to the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again to this land. For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you if you return to him." Now, Hezekiah is sending out this letter.

You see, the Assyrians had come and they had taken now the northern kingdom. They had taken the people captive and just a remnant of people were left. He writes to them and he says, come and let's turn back to God.

If we'll just turn back to God, God will work. And your families that have been carried away captive, they can be returned again. Let's really turn with all of our hearts to God.

Come on down and let's worship God. And it was an endeavor to unite again the people and draw those from the northern kingdom back to the worship of the Lord. A very beautiful attempt on the part of Hezekiah.

And then his statement to them, if you will do this, surely God will bless. For God is gracious and merciful. There is a false concept that the Bible actually portrays two gods.

The God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. The God of the Old Testament being a God of wrath and vengeance and the God of the New Testament being a God of love. Not so.

In the Old Testament, God is revealed as a God of compassion. And as Hezekiah said, for God is gracious and merciful. And He is presented in the Old Testament as a gracious, merciful, compassionate God.

However, for those that reject His grace and mercy, their own lives bring upon themselves destruction. God is compassionate. God is merciful.

But God will not shield you forever. And ultimately, the fruit of your own wickedness is going to catch up with you. And then people want to blame God for the judgment.

The judgment that is constantly around them. And the only thing that keeps you from that judgment is God's protecting hand. Now, in the New Testament, God is portrayed as a God of love.

Yes, God so loved the world. But also a God of judgment. If you want to read Revelation chapters 6 through 18, you'll find all about the God of justice and the God of judgment.

As He allows to come upon the earth, the fruit of their own rebellion. And as He pours out His wrath against the ungodly. So, those people who say, well, there are two gods revealed in the Bible, the God of wrath in the Old Testament, the God of love in the New, just really don't know the Bible.

They've never really done a serious study of the Bible. It's ridiculous to say that there are two gods revealed. One God.

He is a God of love, a God of mercy, a God of compassion. Revealed both in the Old and the New Testament. But He is also a God of righteousness and of justice.

And so, Hezekiah's encouragement turned to the Lord. Nevertheless, the people in the Northern Kingdom just sort of laughed at the messengers who came. Sort of put them down, put down their message.

However, many of them, many of them came on down to celebrate the Passover. And a great multitude gathered in Jerusalem. This was going to be a momentous event.

Here the worship of God had been forsaken for so long. And now the great holy day, the day of Passover. And they were going to gather together and the multitudes gathered together in Jerusalem for this Passover.

And even to gather for the Passover, it was necessary to go through a purification rite. They had, what you'd have to do is actually shave your head. And then you'd have to come into the temple every day and go through certain bathings and so forth to be sanctified, to cleanse yourself really from the defilement of the Gentile world.

And this was especially true of those who had been living in Gentile nations and would come back to Jerusalem for the holy days. It was necessary to sort of cleanse yourself from all of the pollution of the Gentiles. So they had this whole purification rite.

You remember when Paul returned to Jerusalem and the feast day was coming and Paul wanted to participate in the feast day in Jerusalem as long as he was there. And so he started into the purification rites. And he started sponsoring a couple of young men in the purification rites because you couldn't work during this time.

So you really needed someone to sort of sponsor you if you didn't have the bucks yourself. And so James said, now Paul, they hear that, you know, you've been stirring up, you know, the Jews and the Gentile cities and you're not really being a good Jewish boy and you've been following the practice of Gentiles and all now. A lot of, you know, the church is quite upset.

You know, they hear that you're sort of radical and out, you know, out there among the Gentiles. So why don't you just sort of settle them all down and take the part of a good Jew boy and just go ahead and go through the rites and sponsor these two boys and show everybody that, you know, you're still a Jew. So Paul, to keep peace, went into the temple, went through the purification rites, but it was there that some of the Jews from Asia who were also being purified saw Paul.

And they said, this is the fellow who's created all the problems through Asia and all. And the big tumult where Paul was saved, actually, from a lynching mob by the Roman guard and taken into the fortress of Antonio, where as he was going in, he said to the guard, let me talk to these people a minute. And the guard said, OK.

And so Paul began to preach this. He waved his hand, quiet, folks, you know, and they were all out there yelling and screaming, you know, kill him, get rid of him. And so, let me talk to you, fellas, quiet a minute.

And they all hushed and Paul began to tell them, hey, look, I know how you feel. I know where you're at. I was just like you are.

Look, the Pharisees, they'll testify that I was one of them. In fact, I was persecuting the church. I thought I was doing God a service, just like you do today.

I know where it's at. I know exactly how you feel. In fact, it was when I was on my way to Damascus that I was apprehended by Jesus Christ.

And he said, why are you persecuting me? And I said, who are you, Lord, that I might serve you? And he said, I am Jesus whom you're persecuting. And Paul said, and so he spoke to me and said that he was going to send me to the Gentiles. Now, when he said the word Gentiles, things just broke loose.

People began to rip off their clothes, throw dirt in the air, start screaming and all. And he was talking to the people in Hebrew so that the Roman captain couldn't understand. He was, of course, knew Latin.

But he didn't know what Paul had said. And the crowd started rushing. And he said, grab him inside quick.

And they took Paul inside the fortress there. And he said, find out what he said to those people. Scourge him, make him tell.

Now, the scourging was actually the Roman third degree. They would take and whip you with this leather whip with little bits of lead embedded in it and broken glass. And they would lay it across your back, ripping open your back until you'd scream out your crime or whatever.

And so he said, examine him by scourging. Find out what he said. Created such a tumult out there.

And so, Paul was going through this same purification thing. Now, the people would come. And they would come.

But here they were straggling in. And the time for this ceremony had arrived. And they just came.

They didn't have time to go through the whole ritual of sanctifying themselves. So, Hezekiah said, Lord, have mercy on these poor people. They've come so far.

And here they are to worship you. Let them get by without the rites. You know, let's bypass the whole ritual and just receive them, Lord.

And the Lord spoke and said that He would receive them without the rituals for them to go ahead and observe the Passover. And so, it was a turning point again for the people in turning them back to God. And Hezekiah prayed for them saying, the good Lord pardon everyone.

I like that. That prepares his heart to seek God. And Jehovah, God of the fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.

And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah. He healed the people. And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great gladness.

Such a great celebration they decided to go on for another seven days. And so, they went on for seven more days worshiping the Lord. And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the Lord.

And they did eat throughout the feast for seven days offering peace offerings, making confession to the Lord God of their father and then determined to go on for seven more days. So, there was great joy in Jerusalem. For since the time of Solomon there had never been an occasion like this in Jerusalem for many, many years.

Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people and their voice was heard and their prayer came up to the holy dwelling place even unto heaven. Now, when all of this was finished all of Israel and those that were present went out of the cities of Judah and they broke the images in pieces. They cut down the groves.

They threw down the high places, the elders from Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim, and Manasseh until they had utterly destroyed them all. And all the children of Israel returned every man to his possession into their own cities. So, it was a spiritual revival, spiritual movement as these guys went back up to the north.

They broke down all of the images, the idols of Baal, and places of worship for the pagan gods that had been established in the northern kingdom. And they just went through sort of cleansing the land from all of the remnants of their idolatry that they had fallen into. And Hezekiah appointed the courses for the priests and the Levites that each man might serve the Lord according to his own course.

And he appointed the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, for the morning and evening sacrifices. He commanded the people who dwelled in Jerusalem to give the portion to the priests and Levites and that they might bring in the tithe of all things. And the people brought in abundantly.

And so, there was plenty for the house of the Lord. And thus did Hezekiah throughout all of Judah. He brought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God.

And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God and in the law and the commandments to seek God, he did it with all of his heart and he prospered. Now, in chapter 32, we find that Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, was coming against them. He entered into Judah and he encamped against the fence cities he thought to win them for himself.

And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, he took counsel with the princes and with his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city. And they did help him. Now, he said, why should they come and find all of this water here? Let's stop up all of these springs so that they won't know where the water supplies are that are outside of the city of Jerusalem.

So, they went about and they stopped up all of the springs. On the outside of the city of Jerusalem. And they set the captains of war over the people.

They gathered them together in the street of the gate of the city and spake to them saying, Be strong and courageous. Be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all of the multitude that is with him. For there are more with us than with him.

For with him is the arm of flesh. But with us is Jehovah our God to help us and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, the king of Judah.

So, Hezekiah gathered the people together in the streets of Jerusalem. And he said, Now, don't be afraid. Don't be dismayed.

There are more with us than are with them. Now, with the Syrian army, there were at least a hundred and eighty-five thousand fighting troops. And here's the king saying, Don't be afraid.

Don't worry. There's more that are with us than are with them. Can you imagine what a hundred and eighty-five thousand men would look like coming over the hill? That's a lot of people.

Don't worry. Don't be afraid. More with us than with them.

For with them is the arm of flesh. But with us is Jehovah God. Oh, how we need to realize that if God be for us, who can be against us? There is always more for us and with us than is with the enemy.

Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. As a child of God, you should never be fearful or terrified of the enemy. Never.

We need to have that awareness and consciousness of God's presence with us. With them, the arm of flesh. With us, Jehovah our God.

We've got a mountain numbered. We've got Jehovah on our side. And so the people, it said, rested in the words of Hezekiah, which is beautiful.

Now, Sennacherib sent these guys to Jerusalem. He was busy in battle at Lachish. And he sent these messengers to Hezekiah with these threatening letters, telling them to surrender or get wiped out.

And he said, don't trust in the words of Hezekiah, your king, saying that your God is going to deliver you. Where are the gods of the Syrians? Where are the gods of the other kingdoms that we've destroyed? No god of any of the kingdoms have been able to deliver their people out of our hand. And these letters were

actually blasphemous letters against the Lord, who Hezekiah was encouraging the people to trust in.

And these messengers were there and they were speaking in the Hebrew language to the people standing on the wall, taunting them, saying, don't trust in the words of Hezekiah. You know, surrender, give up. Because if we come with our armies, we're just going to rip you up.

And they were giving them all these threats. Don't let Hezekiah deceive you, saying trust in Job. Now the word of the Lord came to Hezekiah through Isaiah to just rest in God, trust in the Lord, he would deliver.

And the angel of the Lord went through the camp of the Assyrians in one night and wiped out 185,000 troops. So that when the Israelis woke up in the morning and looked out, there were all these dead corpse on it. Those that remained of the Assyrians fled back to Assyria, including the King Sennacherib, who when he came back to Assyria, went into the temple of his God, his two sons killed him.

And so they saw the delivering power of God. Now, as we get into Isaiah, Isaiah will give us more background in this, quite a bit of more detail. Of this particular victory of God over the Assyrians, because they trusted in the Lord.

The words of Hezekiah. Now, verse 21 gives you a brief little thing. The Lord sent an angel which cut off the mighty men of valor, the leaders and the captains in the camp of the King of Assyria.

So he returned ashamed where he was assassinated back to his own land. Verse 24, In those days Hezekiah was sick to death. He prayed to the Lord and he spake unto him and he gave him a sign.

But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up. Therefore, there was wrath upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Now, Hezekiah was sick.

Isaiah came to him and said, set your house in order. You're going to die and not live. And Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and he began to pray.

He prayed all night. Isaiah tells us about his, the prayer of Hezekiah in the book of Isaiah. We'll get more into that.

And naturally, this is, this is a good time to read the prophecy of Isaiah and of Jeremiah as we deal with these last few chapters. But Isaiah tells us how that he, that he cried all night long before the Lord, turning his face to the wall. And the word of the Lord came to Isaiah saying, go back and tell the king that I'll give him another 10 years or 15 years.

And so the Lord extended the life of Hezekiah. But it was tragic. Now, there is a direct will of God for our lives.

And I believe that there is a permissive will of God for our lives. I believe that God does permit certain things that are not necessarily His direct purpose and plan for your life. But here you are insisting on something, crying out to God, insisting.

And so God permits. In the case of Balaam, when Balak the king sent to him and said, I want you to come and curse these people that are coming through the land. Balaam prayed and God said, thou shalt not go to the king.

Thou shalt not curse them. For they are blessed. They're my people.

So Balaam sent back a message to the king and said, I'm sorry, king. I can't come. I can't curse them because these people are God's people.

They're blessed of God. So Balak sent back other messengers with a lot of loot and said, look, the king wants you to just come and counsel him concerning these people. And Balaam saw all of the loot that he was being offered for just being the counselor.

And this time I'm sure he really prayed, oh God, please let me go. Oh Lord, please, please, please. You know, because he was so greedy of all this loot that was being offered.

So the Lord said, all right, go. I mean, here's the guy, please, oh God, God help. Please, Lord.

You know, and God said, go. You just be careful. You don't say any more than what I've told you, you know, than what I put in your mouth.

So Balaam gets on his donkey heading out and in his mind, all the visions of sugar plums dancing in his head. The things that he's going to be able to buy with all of the loot that the king is offering. And suddenly the little donkey turns off the path and he beats the little donkey, gets him back on the road again.

Pretty soon the little donkey sort of edges in towards the cliff, gets his ankle. He beats the donkey again. Pretty soon the little donkey just sits down.

Refuses to go. He beats it again. And at this time, the little donkey's had enough.

He turns around and said, do you think that's right to beat me three times? Haven't I been a faithful donkey to you ever since you've owned me? And Balaam was so mad, he talked back to him. He said, you bet your life I'm right in beating you, you stubborn beast. If I had a club, I'd kill you.

And then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam and he saw the angel of the Lord standing there with a drawn sword. And Balaam says, wait a minute. The angel said, you better thank that little donkey.

If it weren't for him, I'd have had your head. Balaam said, I'll go back. I'll go back.

That's all right. I'll go back. And he said, no, you've come this far.

You go. But surely God had declared his direct will. Don't go.

Stay out of it. But because of greed, he was insisting on going and God permitted him to go. Here is Hezekiah.

Now we talk about praying and prayer changing God. And in a sense, God allotted and allowed Hezekiah's life to be extended for a period of time. But it was tragic because during this period of time, this King who had been so good and had brought so much good to the people of God.

Now he began to be lifted up with pride. The last years of his life were different. He wasn't that humble servant of God any longer.

Now, because God had begun to prosper the kingdom. After Sennacherib was wiped out. Man, all of the kings began to send him presents and gifts because the Assyrians have been wiping everybody else out.

And now this horrible threat of Assyria is reduced. Having been defeated by the Lord there before Hezekiah, all of the kings are sending him a lot of gifts and he becomes a very wealthy man. And now he begins to be prideful of all of his wealth.

Got his eyes onto that. Tragic. Because it was during this period of time also that a son was born to him named Manasseh.

And this son was one of the most wicked kings in all of Israel. So it probably would have been better for him and for the nation had he died. But he was praying and insisting that God would heal him.

If indeed you can change the mind of God through your prayers, it's always going to be for your worse. If you can insist, Lord, my will be done, God. And God will in a gracious kind of a gesture allow your will to be done.

It's going to be the worst thing that ever happened to you. Much better for you that God's will be done in your life. Much better that your prayer be not my will, thy will be done.

Because you don't know what's best for you. You don't know what's best for your friends. And many times those things for which we are crying out to God, insisting, fasting and praying that God will do this particular thing, it could be the worst thing that ever happened to you.

And the worst thing that God could do for you would be to answer that particular prayer. I cannot agree with those who say that praying, thy will be done is a spiritual cop-out. Because if indeed that be so, then Jesus was guilty of a spiritual cop-out.

Because he prayed, nevertheless, not my will, thy will be done. So Hezekiah prayed all night. God said, I'll extend you 15 years.

But he was never the same. After this victory over the Assyrians, after all of the wealth that came, his heart was lifted up with pride. Now Hezekiah had exceeding much riches, honor.

He made himself treasuries for the silver and for the gold and the precious stones, the spices, the shields and the jewels. Storehouses for the corn and the wine and the oil, stalls for all of the beast. And he provided cities and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance, for God had given him the substance very much.

Now this is the same Hezekiah also who stopped the upper water course of the spring of Gihon and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all of his works. While he was awaiting this invasion by Sennacherib, they took the spring of Gihon.

And they dug this tunnel 1,700 feet through solid rock. There were fellows who started at the pool of Silom and others who started at the spring of Gihon, digging through this solid rock. Now it was quite an engineering feat for those days because, you know, they didn't have any modern surveying type of instruments or equipment.

And these guys drilling through solid rock, or not drilling, they were chipping with hammers and all, through this solid rock for this distance of 1,700 feet in order that they might bring the spring of Gihon within the walls of the city because they were expecting this siege and so they needed a freshwater supply within the city of Jerusalem. And so this tremendous engineering feat, especially for those days, this 1,700 foot

tunnel. We've been through this tunnel several times and it's quite interesting.

When you get towards the middle, there's a few zigzags because they could hear the picks of the other guys and they were trying to, you know, find them and you could see where they adjusted and finally where they came together, where the pick finally hit the pick. And oh, it must have been tough though, digging in that thing. Some places, the height of the tunnel is only four feet high or so and it must have really been tough, tough digging through that thing.

But this was one of the great feats of Hezekiah's reign. Now, when he recovered from his illness, the king of Babylon heard of the recovery of his illness, so he sent emissaries to Hezekiah to congratulate him for the recovery from his deathbed kind of thing. And he showed to them all of his treasure.

Now, this was no doubt, again, a thing of pride. He became, you know, prideful, all of the wealth that he had and so he was just showing off all of his treasure to these emissaries from Babylon. And so the prophet came to him and said, who are these guys that were here? He said, oh, they were from Babylon, wherever the other side of Euphrates.

He said, what did you show them? He said, everything I have. He said, oh, that was foolish because they're going to come back and they're going to carry it all the way captive to Babylon. So the prediction of the captivity to Babylon at the time of Hezekiah was not fulfilled until some years later, but here was Hezekiah's.

Been better had he died, but some people think they know better than God. Manasseh was 12 years old when he began to reign. He reigned for 55 years, his was the longest reign of any king.

He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. Now, here you go. Hezekiah had restored the temple, rebuilt the thing, reestablished the worship.

Things were going good. God was blessing. They became strong and prosperous again.

And here his son takes over now, 12 years old when he takes over. He does that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, like to the heathen that the Lord had cast out of the land before the children of Israel had come in. He built again the high places which Hezekiah, his father, had broken down.

He raised up the altars for Balaam. He made the groves, worshiped all the hosts of heaven, served them. He built altars in the house of the Lord, whereunto the Lord had said, in Jerusalem shall my name be forever.

He built altars for all of the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. He caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Enam. So the same thing that Ahaz, his grandfather, had done.

Also, he observed times, enchantments, used witchcraft, dealt with familiar spirits, with wizards, and he wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger. These things that he did, as far as enchantments, witchcraft, familiar spirits, wizards, these are the things that Isaiah speaks out against when their calamity came. And Isaiah was put to death, actually, by Manasseh.

And at the time of Manasseh's doing all these things, and the judgment of Babylon was predicted, Isaiah said, thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, stargazers, monthly

prognosticators stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. So these are the things that Manasseh did.

He started following after his horoscope and astrologers and all of these people. And of course, it might be good until you're really in trouble and then it's no help at all. So he set a carved image, the idol, which he had made in the house of God, which God had said to David and to Solomon, his son, in this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name forever.

Neither will I anymore remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I've appointed for your fathers so that they take heed to do all that I have commanded them. But here he is disobeying. Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err and to do worse than the heathen whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel.

And the Lord spake to Manasseh and to the people, but they would not hearken. God spoke, they would not hearken. And of course, in 36 chapter, God said, I sent the messengers and all, but they would not hearken, they mocked them.

Wherefore, and of course, Manasseh ordered Isaiah, sawed in two, just stretched him out and took a saw and cut him right in two. Wherefore, the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, bound him with fetters, carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.

And he prayed unto him, and he was entreated of him and heard his supplication and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that Jehovah was God. So Manasseh had a conversion experience.

It was a tough way. He was taken captive by the king of Assyria who drug him through the thorns, gave him a rough time, brought him as a captive to Babylon. And while he was there, he began to call out upon God.

And of course, God is so good. God was merciful. God heard his prayer and God brought him back again to Jerusalem.

And from that time on, Manasseh was a changed man, but he was not able to undo the folly of his earlier years. He did start bringing about spiritual reforms. He took away the strange gods and the idols of the house of the Lord and the altars that he had built.

And he repaired the altar of the Lord, sacrificed there on the peace offerings, thank offerings and so forth. Nevertheless, the people did sacrifice still in the high places unto the Lord. They did not sacrifice unto their God only.

So, there was a partial return unto God. At his death, his son Ammon began to reign. And Ammon was 22 years old when he began to reign.

He reigned for only two years. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, even as his father Manasseh, for he sacrificed unto all of the carved images which Manasseh's father had made and served them, which means that Manasseh didn't get rid of them all. He humbled not himself before the Lord as Manasseh's father had humbled himself, but Ammon trespassed more and more and his servants

conspired against him and killed him in his own house.

And so, his son Josiah began to reign. Josiah was only eight years old when he began to reign. He reigned in Jerusalem for 31 years.

Josiah instituted reforms. In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, which means he was 16 years old, he began to seek after the God of David, his father. And in the twelfth year, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places and the groves and the carved images and the molten images.

So, eight years old when he started to reign. By the time he was 16, he started seeking the Lord. By the time he was 20, he began to purge the land of the false images.

When he was 21 years old, the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet. And so, now you're into the period of Jeremiah. For in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, the Word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the prophet, calling Jeremiah.

So, Jeremiah was about 17 years old when the Word of the Lord came to him. So, it means that he was about four years difference between Jeremiah and Josiah, this king. And Josiah did institute spiritual reforms among the people.

And yet, Jeremiah the prophet of God at this time could see that the spiritual reforms were only surface reforms. It was only because the king was serving God that the people followed, but not with their whole hearts. And Jeremiah cried out against the superficiality of their conversion and of their worship of God, declaring that they had only turned, you know, in a surface way, but not with all of their hearts to the Lord.

So, Jeremiah, if you can remember now this period of history when you get to Jeremiah, you'll really understand the prophecy of Jeremiah so much better because Jeremiah began his prophecy right at this point of the purging of Jerusalem and the reestablishing of the temple worship and so forth by Josiah. That's when Jeremiah began his period of prophecy and he prophesied through the rest of the history of the nation prior to the Babylonian captivity. So, from 2 Chronicles here on is the period of Jeremiah's ministry.

So, he broke down the altars of Balaam, the images. He cut down the groves. He burnt the bones of the priests and their altars.

And so he did up in the cities of the north in Ephraim, Simeon, Naphtali. And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, he had beaten the graven images into powder and cut down the idols throughout all the land of Israel. He returned to Jerusalem.

And he began the repairing of the temple in the 18th year of his reign. After he had purged the land, Jeremiah had now been prophesying for five years. They sent out the message to repair the temple.

They hired the workmen to come in and to begin to restore the building that had fallen into great disrepair under his father Ammon and his grandfather Manasseh. Now, as they were cleaning out the temple, they found a book of the law of the Lord, one of the scrolls upon which the law of God was written. And the priest brought it out to Josiah, and he began to read to him out of this scroll.

And as he read to him, and of course, no doubt the portion of Deuteronomy really got to him, where God pronounced the curses that would come upon the people should they turn away from God. And Josiah cried out and he said, Oh, this is terrible. He realized that because of the iniquity and the sin of these people who have been called by God to be a special people, and because of their failure, and these are the curses God said that I will bring upon the land.

And so when they read this scroll to Josiah, it came to pass when he heard the words that he tore his clothes. And he said, Inquire of the Lord for me and for them that 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 upon us because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord to do all that is written in this book.

And so they came to Huldah the prophetess who was there in the College of Prophets in Jerusalem. And she said, Yes, the nation was going to fall, but that it would not fall during the reign of Josiah because of his righteousness and turning unto the Lord. And so he was promised that he would be brought to the grave in peace.

So then he had the law of the Lord read to the people. And he read in their ears all of the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord. And the king stood in his place and he made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all of his heart and with all of his soul and to perform the words of the covenant which are written in the book.

And Josiah took away all of the abominations out of the countries that pertain to the children of Israel. He made all that were present in Israel to serve even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.

And then he instituted a tremendous Passover that even superseded that of his great grandfather's Hezekiah. In fact, there was no Passover in all of the land as great as this one since the time of Samuel. Now in Hezekiah, he had the biggest ones from Solomon, but Josiah even superseded those of Solomon David's period.

Nothing like this since the time of Samuel. The death of Josiah is declared in the latter part of the chapter 35 and what had happened is that the king of Egypt had come into the land and was fighting up in the area of Megiddo and Josiah went up against him. And the king said, Hey, God has sent me to be an instrument here of judgment.

Now, just don't meddle around. Go on back to Jerusalem and dwell there and don't meddle around because I haven't come to fight you and I have no grudge against you, but I've been sent by God to destroy this place. And so Josiah, rather than listening to the advice of Necho, the Pharaoh from Egypt, he decided that he would get into battle and he disguised himself, got into the fight and one of the archers hit him and he changed chariots and headed back to Jerusalem, but he died of the wounds that were inflicted.

So it would seem that perhaps a premature death from meddling around in a place where he shouldn't be. And because God had sent the Pharaoh up there for this particular mission. So Jerusalem lamented for Josiah and Jeremiah also wrote a lamentation for him.

Not the lamentation that we have in the Bible, but there is a reference perhaps to Josiah in the book of Lamentations. But of course, the verse 20 of chapter 4, the breath of our nostrils, the anointing of the Lord was taken in their pits of whom we said under his shadow shall we live among the heathen. But a little vague.

Now at his death, Jehoiachin has begun to reign. He was 23 years old when he began to reign and he reigned for only three months in Jerusalem. And the king of Egypt came up, conquered him and took him back as a captive to Egypt and made Eliakim his brother, the king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim.

And Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he began to reign. He reigned 11 years. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God.

And against him came Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, bound him with fetters and carried him to Babylon. And Nebuchadnezzar sent upon the throne a vassal king Jehoiachin who was only eight years old and he reigned only for three months and ten days and did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. Now that's for an eight-year-old kid who only reigned for three months.

That's pretty good, pretty bad. And when the year was expired, King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon with the goodly vessels of the house of the Lord and he made Zedekiah his brother, the king over Judah and Jerusalem. Zedekiah was 21 years old when he began to reign.

He reigned for 11 years. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God. He humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord.

In fact, Zedekiah had Jeremiah thrown in the dungeon and he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar who had made him swear by God, but he stiffened his neck and he hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel. Moreover, all of the chief priests, the people transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen, polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place.

But they mocked the messengers of God. They despised his word and misused his prophets until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people till there was no remedy. Therefore, he brought them upon them the king of the Chaldees who slew their young men with a sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion upon the young man or maiden, old man or him who stooped for age.

He gave them all into his hand. And all of the vessels of the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king and the princes, all of these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burnt the palaces with fire, destroyed the beautiful vessels.

And all of them that had escaped from the sword were carried away captive to Babylon where they were the servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths. For as long as she lay desolate, she kept sabbath to fulfill the threescore and ten years. Israel had existed for 490 years in the land which God had given unto them.

Now, they were commanded in the law of Moses to let the land rest every seven years. They were to plant the land. They were to cycle their crops.

Six years they were to plant. The seventh year, they weren't to plant. Just that which grew up by itself, they were to eat it, but they weren't to plant anything.

Just let the land rest in the seventh year. Now, they failed to do that. They didn't obey the commandment of God, the law of God.

So, when God brought them into captivity, he said, because they have not obeyed for the 490 years the sabbath law, but have planted the land year after year, I will allow the land to lie desolate for 70 years because there are 70 sabbaths that were missed by the land. And so, God said, I'll just let the land lie for 70 years in order that the land might have its sabbaths that it missed while the people were living there because they disobeyed the law of the Lord. So, here we find the captivity, the end of the nation, and the beginning of what the scriptures call the time of the Gentiles from a biblical kind of a standpoint.

The time of the Gentile reign, beginning with Babylon and the Babylonian kingdom, which will move to the Medo-Persian kingdom, which will move to the Grecian kingdom, which will move to the Roman empire, which finally will move into a 10-nation federation in the last days. 10-nation European federation, which we see taking place today. But, it is interesting that God in declaring, first of all, his love, and because he loved them, he sent his prophets, but they wouldn't listen.

They mocked the prophets. They despised the word of God. They misused the prophets of God.

And therefore, the judgment was sealed by themselves. God withdrew his hand of protection. God withdrew his hand of blessing, and judgment came.

What lessons there are for us to learn. If you forsake the Lord, the prophets said, you will be forsaken by the Lord. They forsook God.

They were forsaken by God, and are now carried away captive. Whenever they worshiped God, whenever they served the Lord, they were strong. God made them strong.

God gave them victory over their enemies. They dwelt safely in the land. The land prospered.

Whenever they turned their backs on God, their enemies were victorious against them. They were oppressed by their enemies. And it was a time of national weakness and decline.

Lessons that we need to pay close attention to in this day in which we live, as we too have enjoyed the benefits in a nation, living in a nation, where God was placed by the founding fathers at the heart of the national line. But even as they forsook God, so have we forsaken God. And we cannot long exist without God's help.

We dare not to think of ourselves ever as independent from God. And our nation is in serious trouble tonight. Our leaders are beginning to tell us more and more about how serious that danger is.

May God help us. If it is not already too late, turn to God with all of our hearts. Now, the last two verses of this chapter are the same as the first two verses of the book of Ezra.

So there is a definite tie between 2 Chronicles and Ezra. Ezra begins when they, after the 70 years of captivity, as they come back into the land, the book of Ezra and Nehemiah covered this period of the rebuilding of the temple after the 70 years of Babylonian captivity. So next week we move into Ezra.

We jump now the 70 years of Babylonian captivity. If you would like to really do some diligent Bible study, you should read this week, along with the book of Ezra, the books of Daniel and Ezekiel. Because it is during this 70 years that they are in captivity, that the books of Daniel and Ezekiel were written.

So to get some really background and color, you should read Daniel and Ezekiel along with Ezra this week. I'd like to challenge you to do that. It may mean that you won't be able to watch soap or Dallas, but I'll tell you what, you'll be a lot better off at the end of the week if you don't pollute your mind with that stuff anyhow.

I'd like to just challenge you to do it. I hope you'll take up that challenge. I'll do it, and I challenge you to do it.

You're not going to have much time to study anyhow. Soon be over, you might as well find out what it's going to be like.

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