

(Through the Bible) 2 Kings 17-25

by Chuck Smith

The sermon warns of the dangers of turning from God and the consequences of moral decay, using the example of the northern kingdom of Israel and applying it to the United States.

Duration: 1:27:12

Scripture: 2 Kings 20:12

Topics: "Moral Decay", "Godly Greatness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses how people often pursue things that are empty and unfulfilling, leading to temporary moments of excitement and pleasure but no lasting happiness. The speaker also highlights how nations, like individuals, can attribute their greatness to external factors rather than acknowledging God as the source of their strength. The decay of moral values within a nation can lead to its downfall, just as it did in Israel. The speaker emphasizes the need to turn back to God and acknowledge His grace as the true source of strength and greatness.

Transcript

Kings chapter 17. In the 17th chapter, we come to the death of the northern kingdom, the nation of Israel. In the 12th year, when Ahaz was the king in Judah, that's the king of the southern kingdom, Hoshea began to reign in Samaria over Israel.

He reigned for nine years. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. And so unfortunately Israel did not have one single king of which it was not testified that he did evil in the sight of the Lord.

Not one king of Israel followed after the Lord from the very beginning of Jeroboam when the kingdom was divided into the northern and southern kingdom. From Jeroboam onward, all of the kings did evil in the sight of the Lord. It is interesting that as the king goes, so went the nations so often.

And the nations following after God or turning from God was largely dependent upon the influence of the king. And so the Assyrians came up against them. Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria.

And Hoshea became a servant. He began to pay tribute unto Shalmaneser. But the king of Assyria found them conspiring.

For they had sent to the king of Egypt for help. They had taken the money that they were supposed to send for tribute and they sent it to the king of Egypt to hire mercenaries to come and to fight against

Assyria. So the Assyrians came again and they circled the city and they captured it and they bound him up and placed him in prison after sieging Samaria for three years.

And in the ninth year, Hoshea, the king of Assyria, in the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria and placed them in Hala, in Habar by the river Gozan and the city of the Medes. Now God begins to enumerate his indictment against Israel and lists the reasons why Israel, a once great and powerful nation, the people who were once known as the people of God and had been a strong and powerful nation. But God lists his indictment against them, the reasons why they became weak, the reasons why they were defeated and fell to their enemies.

And so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord, their God, which had brought them out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of the Pharaoh and they feared other gods. The first indictment is their failure to be what God wanted them to be, the missing of the mark. They sinned against the Lord and they served, they began to reverence and worship and serve other gods.

This was caused partially by a misinterpreting of their history. They failed to realize that it was God that made them great. It was their relationship to God that made them strong.

It was God who brought them out of Egypt. It was God who brought them through the wilderness. It was God who brought them in the land.

It was God who caused them to possess the land and to defeat their enemies. But they began to misinterpret their history and they began to attribute their greatness and their victories to other things, to other gods. They built the Golden Calf, two of them, set one in Dan and one in Bethel and the king said, these are the gods that brought you out of Israel.

And they began to forsake the true and the living God and worship the gods that they had made with their own hands. Now, a man has to worship something. It's just innate within us.

I've got to worship something. There is a void within that I am seeking to fill. It is a spiritual void.

I've got to fill it with something. And if I don't fill it with the true and the living God, I'm going to fill it with garbage. The garbage of nonsense.

I will, as the humanistic philosophy says today, I will take my leap of faith. I must take the leap of faith. For they say the lower story of reality is only despair and man can't live in despair.

So man must take the leap of faith into the upper story of a non-reasoned religious experience. And the world today is filled with non-reasoned religious experiences. I read in this month's issue of the Reader's Digest of this Scientology and how the whole thing started.

Some guy was a writer and he was writing for a penny a word. And he said, writing for a penny a word, you'll never make any money. And so he said, the only way to make money is to develop a new religion.

And so he developed Scientology with a purpose of making himself wealthy. And he succeeded because there's a bunch of stupid people who are willing to let their minds be bent to become the robots and the merchandisers for these purveyors of ignorance. And Dianetics and all of these kind of things and his supposed stories and all.

And Reader's Digest really has quite an article on the background and all of Scientology this month's issue. You might find it, I did, very, very fascinating indeed. But it only helps point out how when man forsakes the true and the living God, he is an open sucker for anything that will come along.

He'll believe in stupidity. He'll believe in nothing. He'll worship and serve the creature more than the Creator.

He begins to worship his body needs and body appetites and the fulfillment thereof. So the children of Israel sinned against the Lord. They turned from God, but they sought to fill the void in the worship of the other gods.

They misinterpreted their history and they began to attribute the greatness to characteristics of their own nationality. We're tough people. We're hardy people.

We're smart people. We have a democratic system of government. We have a free enterprise system.

This is what makes a nation great. This is what makes the nation strong. And we begin to attribute the greatness and the strength to these other things rather than to the fact that we were a nation founded in God.

And that God was the strength because God was the heart of the nation. And thus there was strength because of the moral strength that was in the heart of the nation because the people worshiped and served God. But when the planks that hold the people and the nation together, when these moral planks begin to decay and begin to rot, then the nation surely cannot stand much longer.

And the planks have become so rotten, the moral decay has become so great in Israel that the nation could no longer stand. And so the children of Israel did secretly those things which were not right in the eyes of God. They built the high places in the cities and the towers in order to worship the strange gods.

They set up images and they burn incense in all the high places until the Lord carried them away captive. They served the idols where the Lord said you should not do this thing. The Lord testified against them.

He sent his prophets unto them to warn them, but they failed to listen to the prophets of God. They did not hearken to the servants. The prophets said turn you from your evil ways.

Keep God's commandments and statutes. But they would not hear. They hardened their necks like the necks of their fathers that did not believe in the Lord their God.

And they rejected his statutes and his covenants that he had made with their fathers and the testimonies which he had testified against them. And they followed vanity and became vain. That is always the effect of following vanity.

You become vain. The word vanity is emptiness. Following emptiness, you become empty.

Now it is interesting that people today are following after emptiness in their pursuit of happiness. It seems that the goal of man today is to be happy. And we all have in our own minds that mental concept of what it will take to make me happy.

Happiness is. You know and each of you can finish that sentence yourself because each of you have in your mind that which you think it would take to make you happy. Happiness is a million dollars in the bank.

The bank may fold tomorrow. Happiness is a yacht. Happiness is a house on Lido Island.

Happiness is, you know. Happiness is an experience that results from a right relationship with God. The rest is the pursuit of happiness.

But in our pursuit, we are oftentimes pursuing after things that in themselves are empty and unfulfilling. They may bring us moments of excitement and moments of pleasure. Moments of joy.

But no true lasting happiness. Through my mind races the college years and all of the things that we used to do for excitement. And to have an exciting evening.

And I would hate to share them because some young kids might get things in their mind they hadn't thought of before. We used to grease the streetcar tracks at an incline. And just sit on a sit on the side and just laugh and roll as the thing just was there spinning its wheels, you know.

I only say that because the kids don't have streetcars anymore. When it's parked downtown, just run up behind it and pull the thing off the wire, you know. Hear the bell ringing and the lights go out in the streetcar and all that.

And you just, you know, run up the street. They can't do anything and you just laugh. And it's a big joke, you know.

Oh, it was fun. But the next night you're looking for something else. You know, it doesn't last.

It's good for 10-15 minutes. But there's nothing lasting to it. The pursuit of the world.

Following after emptiness, they become empty. And they went after the heathen that were around about them. Concerning whom the Lord charged them, you should not do like them.

Now, here is one thing that we've got to be careful about. Because there is strong pressure today for us to do exactly this. To do like the world around us.

Today, the world around us is governed by a humanistic philosophy which declares that there is nothing really evil or wrong in and of itself. For there is no absolute good or bad. It is all relative to your culture, to your background, to the area where you live, to the mores of the society.

And the mores are always that which determines what is right and what is wrong within a society. And so, the sociologists point to the mores of the New Guinea culture. Or the mores of some South American Indian tribe.

Or the mores of the Eskimos and so forth. And they can prove that any kind of a relationship is accepted and is good in particular societies. So, it all depends upon your society.

Whether or not a relationship is right or wrong. Wrong. There are absolutes as far as morals are concerned.

God has laid down the absolutes. But the men of Israel, the people of Israel had made the mistake of following the mores of the society around them. And following the mores of that society, they became corrupted before God.

And being corrupted before God, they were destroyed. And the greatness and the strength of the nation was sapped. And they became weak morally.

Weak spiritually. And then, it only followed that they were to be destroyed as a nation. For the true strength of any nation lies in the moral planks upon which that nation stands.

God sent his servants, the prophets. They cried out against the way the people were living. But they were accused of being bigoted, narrow-minded, old-fashioned, prudent.

And the people would not hearken. And thus, the nation fell. Now, God had given them other warnings.

God had allowed them to fall really in the battle even against small nations. Not totally defeated. But they were once ruling over Moab.

And the Moabites rebelled against them. The Moabites were not a big people. They were not a strong people.

They were just a little nation. But Israel had become so weak, they could not subdue Moab and bring it back under their control. And seeing that Moab had made a successful incursion against them, then the Edomites decided to rebel from their control.

And the other small nations, one by one, seeing him being encouraged by the weakness of Israel, began to pick on Israel, began to battle against them. And they were unable to win a decisive victory over them. And even then, they didn't recognize their weakness.

Even then, they were deceived as Samson, who once his hair was cut off and his vow before God was broken, knew not that he was weak as other men. And when Delilah said, Samson, the Philistines are upon you. He said, I will shake myself as at other times and go out against them.

And he did not know that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him. And he fell before the hands of the Philistines. Because without the power of God's Spirit, he was weak just like anybody else.

And without God, our nation is weak just like anybody else. And our nation has turned from God. We have turned from actually having God at the heart and the center of our national life.

And though we still print on the coins, in God we trust, it seems almost a travesty. And though the Bible was the first textbook and the only textbook in the first public school in America, yet now because of the decisions of the Supreme Court, we cannot even have a Bible class in a public school room that the children can attend at their own discretion. Nor can there be public prayers offered within the school room.

Of course, the kids violate that every time a test comes along. The nation has become weak. And now the little nations are beginning to pick on us.

North Korea, unable to defeat them. South, in North Vietnam, they defeated us. Iran, they are mocking us.

They're taking advantage of us. They know we're too weak to react or respond. And it'll be some other nation next.

And after that, another. Because we have proven our inability to react or to respond. And it is only encouraging the enemy.

And it is only a matter of time until Russia makes her move. And believe me, if we can't defeat the little vassals of Russia, how in the world do we ever expect to defeat Russia? We can't. Again, the Reader's Digest this month's issue has another very interesting article concerning the policies of our President Carter, which has led us into this dilemma, and how impossible it is for us to get out of it, even with our greatest efforts, until at least 1985.

You'll find that another very fascinating article this month's Reader's Digest. I don't get a commission on that magazine either. And so the death of a nation.

It's always sad. It's always tragic. To see a nation that was once strong, once mighty, once glorious, to see it die, to watch it in its agony of death, to stand helplessly by and know there's nothing you can do.

We see our nation today in the agony of death. The same conditions that prevailed in Israel prevail in our nation today. We have turned our backs upon God.

We have made materialism, pleasure, intellectual pursuits, the master passions of our lives, and we've turned in the true and the living God, and we've become weak. We failed to realize that it was God that made us strong, that it was God's grace that was shed upon us that made us a mighty nation. And we've begun to attribute the greatness to other things, and to declare the praises of the free enterprise system, or of the democratic system of government and all, rather than to praise and thank God for His strength and what He has done.

And I am convinced that unless there is a great spiritual revival and a turning to God in the United States, that we will fall before 1985. And so, God gives His indictment against them. And in verse 23, He concludes, Until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by His servants the prophets, so was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

721 BC, the northern kingdom fell to Assyria. And the king of Assyria had a practice of taking the people, all of them out of the land, and taking them to other places, scattering them, and then repopulating them in strange places. It would be like if Russia should defeat us now, and they move all of the people out of the United States to various provinces in Russia, down into the area of the Caucasus, and down through the areas of Estonia, and up through Latvia, and into Siberia.

And all of a sudden, you're living in a city where maybe there are only three other Americans, and there's 100,000 Russians, you can't speak their language, and everything is strange, a strange culture, and all. You're completely alienated, you're demoralized, there's no way you can get together to rebel against this kind of power. And thus was the practice of the Assyrians.

So subduing their enemies that there is no recovering from it, as they repopulate them into other areas where they have no chance of getting together and forming a united kind of a rebellion against what has happened to them. And so, thus happened with the nation Israel by Assyria, and they became scattered, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom. Now, the Assyrians then took other nations that they had conquered, and they brought the people from those other nations, and they established them in this strange area to them, the area of Samaria.

Totally uprooted them, brought them into an area that they were totally unfamiliar with, and they set them in the area of Samaria. And so it was when these other people first began to dwell in the land of Samaria, the land of Israel there, the northern part, that they feared not the Lord. Therefore, the Lord sent lions

among them and began to destroy the people.

And so they came to the king of Assyria, and they said, Hey, we don't understand the ways of the gods of the land, and lions and wild beasts are killing our people, so send someone to teach us the ways of the gods of the land, so that we can live in that land. And so the king got one of the priests, and he sent him back unto Samaria, and the priest taught them the ways of the Lord. And then there's a very interesting scripture.

So it said, And they feared the Lord, but served their own gods. Oh, what a picture of so many people today. They respect the Lord.

They acknowledge the Lord. They give obeisance to the Lord, but they serve their own gods. They may even sing praises unto the Lord.

They may listen to records about the Lord. They acknowledge the Lord, that He exists. But when it comes down to their life and their lifestyles, they're actually serving other gods.

Now, Jesus said, No man can serve two masters. You're either going to love the one and hate the other, or hold to the one and despise the other. And you cannot serve God and Mammon, which was, of course, another god of those days, the god of power, represented by money.

How many people today reverence, fear the Lord, but yet they serve other gods. It's like Bob Dylan saying, You got to serve somebody. And it isn't the one that you really are reverencing so much as the one that you're actually serving that really counts.

Who are you serving? Are you serving the gods of your own creation, your own lust, your own desires? Or are you serving the true and the living God, obedient unto His word and to His commands? And so a real paradox here. Fear the Lord, serve their own God. In chapter 18, we now move back to the southern kingdom of Judah.

In as much as the northern kingdom has now been destroyed from the rest of the second kings on, we'll be dealing actually with now the southern kingdom of Judah, which still remains. And as we move south, we find that Hezekiah is coming to reign over Judah. He was 25 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for 29 years in Jerusalem.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to the Lord. And all that David his father did. And thus he removed the high places, he broke the images, he cut down the groves, he broke in pieces the brass serpent that Moses had made, for in those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it, and he called it Nehushtan.

So, as he took over as king, the first thing he did was to start removing the false idols and gods and worship centers that the people had created in Judah. Destroying them, getting rid of them in order that he might turn the people back to the true worship of the true and living God. And one of the interesting things, one of the things that the people had made an idol out of and were burning incense to was this brass serpent that Moses had made in the wilderness.

You remember when the children of Israel had murmured against the Lord, the Lord sent serpents in the land. And the serpents began to bite the people and they began to die from the result of the bites of these serpents. And Moses cried unto the Lord, and the Lord told him to make a brass serpent and to put it on

the pole in the midst of the camp.

And whoever was bitten by the serpent, if he would look on the brass serpent, he would be healed of the bite and live. Now, Jesus uses that as a remarkable illustration to answer the question of an earnest Jewish leader who said to him, how can I be born again when I am old? Can I return the second time to my mother's womb? And Jesus, in answering the question, how can I be born again, said, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. So, Jesus made reference to this brazen serpent in the wilderness that it was going to be sort of like Him, actually, even as Moses raised up the serpent.

Now, of course, brass is always a symbol of God's judgment, and the serpent was a symbol for sin. The people sinned against the Lord in murmuring against the Lord. So, the brass serpent there on the pole in the wilderness was a symbol that their sin had been judged.

And if they would just look at the provision that God made, the brass serpent on the pole, and believe in that provision, they would be healed of the bites of the serpents and live. Even so, Jesus Christ on the cross is a symbol of God's judgment against sin. And if we'll just but look to Jesus Christ, the crucified Lord, we will be forgiven our sins and we will live.

So, I am born again by believing on Christ, the fact that He bore my sins upon the cross. But the people had taken now this brass serpent, and they made a little shrine and an altar, and they had begun to worship it and burn incense to it. Now, whenever a man sets up an idol and begins to worship an idol, it tells us a couple of things about that man.

Number one, it tells us that he has lost the consciousness of the presence of God. Whenever I have to have an idol, a worship center, that means I have lost the consciousness of God's presence, and I need something to remind me of God's presence. That's a sign of spiritual dullness.

Paul the Apostle said, I know that you men of Athens are very religious people. I've seen all of your gods that you have through town and all of the altars that you have built. And I saw this one altar, I was interested in it because it had the inscription to the unknown God.

He said, that's the God I want to talk to you about. For He is the God who made the heaven and the earth and everything that is in them. And in Him we live, we move, we have our being.

Paul didn't need any idols. He was so conscious of God's presence that he realized that he was totally surrounded by God. I live in Him.

I move in Him. I have my being in Him. I cannot escape Him.

He surrounds me all the time. That kind of consciousness, you don't need a reminder. You don't need some little idol, some little trinket to remind you of His presence.

Man is so prone to want something to worship, something I can see, some object. And it is a sign that he has lost the consciousness, something vital in his relationship with God, the consciousness of God's presence. But the second thing that an idol tells us is that somehow that man is longing to regain that which he lost.

I want to be conscious of God's presence. And so I need this as a reminder because I'm longing for something that I have lost. The consciousness and the awareness of God.

And so the children of Israel have made an idol out of this brass serpent. They made it an object of worship. They were burning incense to it.

Again, that folly of worshiping and serving the creature more than the Creator who is blessed forevermore. Hezekiah, when he came into the throne as a king, as he began to destroy all of the false worship centers, he took this brass serpent and he broke the thing in pieces and he said, Nehushtan. Now the word Nehushtan means a thing of brass.

It's no God. It's a thing of brass. Oh, how we get attached to things.

Oh, I always like to sit in that particular portion of the church because there one night I felt the presence of God. Don't ever remove that pew, you know. And I'm only letting you know that the first of the month, the pews are to be removed.

We'll sell it to you if you want it. But it's Nehushtan. It's a thing of wood and cloth.

It's not a God. It's a thing of brass. It's no God.

Nehushtan, thing of brass. It is interesting if you go to St. Ambrose Cathedral in Milan, Italy today, you'll find in a beautiful case what they claim to be the glued together portions of that brass serpent. That's right.

And again, prayers are being offered before it. But it's Nehushtan, a thing of brass. It's important that we recognize these things for what we are, that we don't put some kind of a magical, you know, spiritual aura around the things.

Oh, you know, that's the place. That's the pulpit. That's the spot.

So Hezekiah initiated a tremendous religious reform and he trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that after him there was none among all of the kings of Judah that were like him. For he claimed to the Lord, he stuck with the Lord and departed not from following him, but he kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses, and the Lord was with him. You know, and we get into 2 Chronicles, when Asa had come back from his victory over the huge force of the Ethiopians.

The prophet met him and said, the Lord is with you while you'll be with him. And if you seek him, he will be found of you. But if you forsake him, he will forsake you.

Now, Hezekiah was committed to the Lord. He obeyed the commandments of the Lord. He claimed unto the Lord and thus the Lord was with him.

The inevitable consequence of commitment to the Lord. Not only was the Lord with him, but the Lord prospered him wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him.

Now, the king of Assyria had come down to the area of the Philistines and he had actually smitten the city of Gaza and all of the little intermediary cities around there. And it came to pass in the fourth year of King Hezekiah that Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria, came up against Samaria and besieged it. And at the end of three years, they took it, which was the sixth year of Hezekiah.

And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel, as we've already covered, into the captivity because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant. And in the 14th year of Hezekiah, this Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, came against the fenced cities of Judah and took them. And Hezekiah the king sent to the king of Assyria and saying, I have offended, return from me that which you put on me, I will bear.

In other words, he was offering to surrender unto Sennacherib. And so he laid upon Hezekiah a tribute of 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold. And Hezekiah gave him the silver that was there in the house of the Lord, the treasures of the king's house.

And at that time, he cut the gold from the doors of the temple and from the pillars, which had been overlaid, he gave it to the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria then sent a couple of fellows, emissaries, Tartan, Rabserus and Rabshakeh to the king Hezekiah. And they came with threats from the king of Assyria.

They came to the wall and Hezekiah's prime minister went out and these guys began to call up unto them. And they said to the Rabshakeh said unto them, Speak unto Hezekiah and say to him, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What is this confidence wherein you're trusting? You say, but they are vain words. I have counsel and strength for the war.

Now on whom do you trust that you're rebelling against me? Now behold, you're trusting upon the staff of the bruised reed upon Egypt, which if even a man will lean upon it in his hand, it will pierce his hand. So Pharaoh the king of Egypt and all of those who trust in him. But if you say to me, we trust in Jehovah our God, is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away and has said unto Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem.

Now that shows how, of course, little the people understood Jehovah God. He thought that all these high places and altars that were actually pagan altars that were built throughout the land were built unto Jehovah. How much people outside really misunderstand often our devotion of Jesus Christ, our worship of Him.

And this guy is saying, you know, you say you trust in Jehovah, but Hezekiah tore down all of his altars and all and said you should worship only at this altar in Jerusalem. Wrong. He did not tear down the altars of Jehovah, but only the false pagan altars that were there in the land.

Now he said, I'll tell you what we'll do. Pay us some money and we'll give you 2000 horses and see if you can find enough riders to put on them. And we'll send the weakest captain that we have and he'll wipe you out.

I mean, you know, he's really boasting and really threatening these people. And he said, tell you what, I've come up against this place to destroy it because Jehovah told me to come. And so the guy is there blaspheming God and threatening the people.

And these two guys on the wall said, hey, fellas, don't talk to us in Hebrew. We understand the Assyrian language. Talk to us in Assyrian language and we will relay the message to Hezekiah.

And oh, Rabshakeh said, no, the king didn't send me to talk to the king, but to these men who sit on the wall. And he continued to talk in Hebrew now, threatening all these guys that were sitting up there on the wall in their Hebrew tongue and saying, hey, don't listen to Hezekiah. He tells you the Lord's going to help

you.

Don't believe it. You think that God can deliver you out of our hands? Where are the gods? You know, all of these nations, we've conquered all them. Their gods were no value to them and your God will be no value to you.

And really began to threaten the people there that were on the wall. And yet the people did not answer them because Hezekiah, the king, had commanded, don't answer them anything. So Hezekiah sent a message to Isaiah, the prophet.

Now at this point in the Kings, it would be well if you want a good side assignment to read the book of Isaiah in conjunction with these few chapters, because Isaiah was an influential prophet at the time that Hezekiah was king. And thus to really put it together, you need now to really get background on this period of history by reading Isaiah. And you'll understand better the prophecies of Isaiah with this particular background, realizing that Hezekiah was a good king.

And he was reigning at the time that Isaiah was a prophet. And Isaiah had a great influence. And Isaiah was really the prophet to whom Hezekiah sought for advice.

So it came to pass when Hezekiah heard the words and the threats and the blasphemy, that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went to the house of the Lord. And Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shibna, the scribe, and the elders and the priests, they covered themselves with sackcloth. And they came to Isaiah, the prophet, the son of Amoz.

And they said unto him, thus saith Hezekiah, This is the day of trouble, of rebuke, of blasphemy. For the children are come to birth. There isn't enough strength for them to be delivered.

It may be that the Lord thy God will hear all the words that Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria, his master, is sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the Lord thy God hath heard. Wherefore, lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left. And so the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall you say to your master. Thus saith the Lord. Don't be afraid of the words which you have heard, which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

Behold, I will send a blast upon him. He'll hear a rumor. He'll return to his own land.

And I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land. And so Shalmaneser heard some rumors that the king of Ethiopia was coming out to fight. And so he sent messengers to Hezekiah saying, Don't trust in God and don't be deceived, saying Jerusalem will not be delivered into the hands of the Assyrians.

You've heard what the Assyrians have done in destroying the other lands. Where are the gods of the nations of the lands that have been destroyed? And Hezekiah received the letter and he took it into the house of the Lord and he spread it out before the Lord. He said, Now, Lord, look at this threatening letter.

Look what this guy is saying. And Lord, there's a lot of truth to this. These people are strong.

They've conquered over these other nations. And he laid the whole thing out before the Lord. You know, that's the best place to bring your problems.

You know, you may get some mean, threatening letter. Best thing to do is just lay it out before the Lord and say, Look, Lord, what they're threatening to do to me now. And he just laid the whole thing out before the Lord.

His burden poured out His heart before the Lord. And the Lord answered Hezekiah through Isaiah and He said, That which you have prayed to me against Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, I have heard. And God gives this prophecy against him saying that actually he is blasphemed against the Lord and against the God of Israel.

And thus the Lord said, I'll put my hook in the nose and my bridle in your lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which you came. And this will be the sign you shall eat this year, such as the things that grow of themselves the second year, that which springs of the same. And in the third year, you're going to sow and reap.

The people have been shut up. There was a famine. God said, I'm going to deliver you this year.

You'll just eat what grows wildly next year the same. But the following year, you'll sow and plant again. And the remnant that has escaped to the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward and bear fruit upward.

For out of Jerusalem shall go forth the remnant, and they that escape out of Mount Zion, the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this. Therefore, thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, he will not come to this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast a bank against it. For by the way that he came, by the same way he will return, he will not come to this city, saith the Lord.

For I will defend this city to save it for my own sake and for my servant David's sake." So the result of Hezekiah bringing his problems to the Lord, he found the answers. You know, so many times we run to others with our problems. First thing we do is run for a counselor, run for a friend, run, you know, and we start laying our heavy trips on everybody else.

The Bible says, cast all your cares upon Him, for He careth for you. So many times when people bring me their problems, I only feel absolutely frustrated because what can I do? Nothing, except take it to the Lord. You know, I'm powerless to help.

I can't change the situations. Only God can change the situations. Oh, that we would learn to just bring our fears, our worries, our concerns and just lay them out before the Lord.

Lord, look what they're saying. Look what they're doing. Oh God, I cast myself upon you.

I can't do anything about it. I'm helpless. Lord, help me and the Lord will help you.

The Lord helped Hezekiah. Came to pass that night that an angel of the Lord went through the camp of the Assyrians and wiped out 185,000. So that when they woke up in the morning, there were 185,000 frontline troops lying there, dead corpses.

One angel of the Lord, one night, 185,000. Now, as you're reading Isaiah, you get a very interesting footnote on this. Very fascinating.

The result of this experience to the people who were living in Jerusalem. What happened to them when this happened to the Assyrians? Very fascinating footnote. You'll find it in Isaiah.

He said, fear gripped the hearts of the sinners in Zion. Terror took hold on the hypocrites. And they said, who among us can dwell in the midst of this devouring fire? To see what the fire of God did to the Assyrians made all the sinners terrified.

They said, who among us can dwell in the midst of this devouring fire? Or that word dwell could also be translated, who among us can approach? Or another place is translated, who among us can flee from this devouring fire? Now, here's again where God is seen as a symbol of a devouring fire. Our God is a consuming fire, we read in Hebrews. And when they saw the effect of God against the Assyrians, those who were sinners became terrified because they realized that, you know, how can you dwell in the midst of this fire and not be burned? Not be destroyed, not be consumed.

They saw the effect of the fire of God. Now, well, that's another message. So, we'll get that when we get to Isaiah.

And so, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, returned back to Assyria. And while he was worshiping in the house of Nishrak, his god, his sons assassinated him. Now, in those days, Hezekiah was very sick.

Actually, he was dying. And Isaiah came to him and said, Thus saith the Lord, set your house in order, for you're going to die and not live. The word of the Lord from Isaiah to Hezekiah.

Set your house in order, you're going to die and not live. And so, Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and he prayed unto the Lord. And he said, I beseech you, O Lord, remember now how I have walked with you in truth, with a perfect heart, and I've done that which is good in your sight.

And Hezekiah just really wept before God. So, it came to pass, when Isaiah was leaving, as he was going through the middle of the court, the Lord said, Go back and tell him. Thus saith the Lord God of David, Thy father, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears.

Behold, I will heal you. On the third day, you will go up unto the house of the Lord. I've heard your prayer.

See your tears. Okay, you'll be healed. In three days, you'll be going up to the house of the Lord.

And I will add to your life 15 years. And I will deliver you in this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria. And I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake.

And Isaiah said, Now take a make a polis from figs and lay it on the boil. And he recovered. And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, What will be the sign that I'm going to be healed? And Isaiah said, Well, you want the sun to go back 10 degrees on the sundial or you want it to go ahead 10 degrees? Imagine asking for a sign for something and God working a sign with a sundial, either moving the sun backward or forward 10 degrees for you.

What would you like? He said, Well, if it goes forward 10 degrees, that wouldn't be too much. You'd think the earth is just tilting that much faster. Let it go back 10 degrees.

And so the sun went back 10 degrees on the sundial. Is it impossible? Yes, if you've got a puny little God of your own creation. But if you can believe the first verse of Genesis, why would you have any problem with that? In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

That's how big the God is that we serve. It is important that we remember that, especially when we pray over our little problems. Oh, Lord, thou art God.

Thou has created the heaven and the earth, all that in them is. That's the way the apostles began their prayer. And it's a good way to begin prayer, just sort of reminding you who you're talking to.

Now, there were emissaries that came from Babylon when they heard that Hezekiah was recovered from his sickness and they came into Hezekiah and they said, Oh, we're so glad that you're well. And Hezekiah said, Oh, let me show you around. And he took them into the treasury.

He showed them all the treasures, all of the gold and silver that was in the house. Lord, all the treasures of the land. And so Isaiah came to Hezekiah and said, Who were those fellows? Where did they come from? And he said, Oh, they came from a long way off.

They came from Babylon. What did they want? All they wanted to tell me, they were glad I was well. What did you show them? Oh, I showed them the treasures.

What? How much? Oh, I showed them everything. He said, Oh, that's foolish, because all of those treasures that you showed to them will be carried away captive to Babylon. Hezekiah said, Well, that's good.

He said, What do you mean that's good? He said, Well, you said it won't happen in my days. So the rest. So strange way to look at it, isn't it? The rest of the acts of Hezekiah are recorded in Second Chronicles and in Isaiah.

An awful lot about Hezekiah in Isaiah. How he made this tunnel from the spring of Gihon to the pool of Siloam in order that they might have a freshwater supply when they were anticipating the attack from the Assyrians. And this conduit that he built the tunnel.

And I've hiked through that tunnel on a few occasions. And you feel like you're hiking in history as you are walking through the water as the spring of Gihon flows through that and on out to the pool of Siloam. Now, Manasseh was 12 years old when he began to reign.

Manasseh was the son of Hezekiah. And here is something that I think is interesting for speculation. Would it have been better for Hezekiah had he died instead of being healed? Was the healing of Hezekiah God's perfect will and plan? God had sent the message, you're going to die.

Hezekiah began to weep. And of course, in Hezekiah, he says that he all night long, he sort of chattered like a dove and all, you know, and, and just, you know, weeping before God and all. And so God sent Isaiah back and say, I've seen his tears.

I've heard his prayer. I'll give him 15 years. Was that really God's real purpose and plan? Would it not have been much better had Hezekiah died at that time? For his son, Manasseh began to reign when he was 12 years old, which means Manasseh was conceived and born after Hezekiah had his life extended.

Had Hezekiah died at that point, Manasseh would never have been born. And I say that because we read concerning Manasseh. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord after the abominations of the heathen, who the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.

He built again the high places which Hezekiah, his father had destroyed. He raised up altars for Baal. He made a grove as did Ahab, the king of Israel and worshiped all the hosts of heaven and served them.

He built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord said in Jerusalem, I will put my name. He built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. He made his sons to pass through the fire.

He observed times, used enchantments and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards. He wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger, made the graven images. And it was because of Manasseh's leading the people into such depths of sin, they could never recover.

And thus Judah fell as a result of Manasseh's leading them to the depths of sin. Now, what would have happened to the nation had Hezekiah not insisted in prayer that God heal him? The whole story of the nation could have been much different. The whole history could have been much different.

But here's a man insisting with tears, begging, Oh, God, heal me, please. Lord, I've served you. I've loved you.

I've done so. You know, please heal me, God. This is a part of the problem that evolves when I start ordering God rather than taking orders from God.

When I think that prayer is that instrument and tool whereby I am to get my will done rather than the instrument whereby we can get God's will done. I wonder how much damage is done by these insisting prayers that we hear so much about today. The nation could have been spared the horrors of Manasseh had Hezekiah died.

It's something to contemplate and think about. I don't have any answers for it. It's just something to think about.

But Manasseh was an extremely wicked king. God testified in verse 12, I am going to bring such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah that whosoever hears about it, their ears will tingle for I'm going to stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, the plummet of the house of Ahab. I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.

And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies. And they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies because they have done that which was evil in my sight and have provoked me to anger and so forth. Now, in the New Testament, we read of the prophets of God, men of faith in Hebrews chapter 11.

Men of great faith who stopped the mouths of lions, who survived through the fires. And yet they were, it says they were stoned. They were sawed in two, according to tradition and extracurricular scriptures.

Isaiah was the man referred to who was sawed in two. And this was done by Manasseh, the wicked son of Hezekiah. This glorious prophet Isaiah, he had him sawn in two.

Evil, wicked man who never would have existed had Hezekiah not insisted on God healing him. Manasseh died, was buried in the garden of his own house. And his son Ammon reigned in his stead.

He was 22 years old when he began to reign. He reigned for two years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, walking after the ways of his father, Manasseh.

He served the idols that his father had served. He worshipped them. Actually, he grew up in it.

He was one of the children of Manasseh who Manasseh made to pass through the fire to these pagan, in the rites to these pagan gods. And the servants of Ammon conspired against him to walk fire walking and all causing your children to do the fire walk. And you know, you get into these trances and so forth and walk across coals.

But you notice it also says along with these things that they dealt with familiar spirits or with demon spirits and all. And this is all a part of demonology. He reigned for two years.

His servants conspired against him and killed him in his own house. And Josiah his son began to reign as king in his stead. And Josiah was only eight years old when he began to reign.

And he reigned for 31 years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. Now, at this point, you need to read the prophecy of Jeremiah.

Because here is where Jeremiah began his prophecies. And Josiah was a good king as far as spiritual reforms went. However, at this point, the people have been so corrupted as the result of Manasseh that with the people, the born again movement became a popular movement because the king said he was born again.

And so it became a popularized movement among the media. But it wasn't a genuine movement within their hearts. It wasn't a true experience.

And so, the temple was all of a sudden full of people again. Everybody, it was a popular, vogue thing to do, to go to the temple. And so, God said to Jeremiah, Go down to the temple, the gate of the temple.

And as the people are passing through into the temple, cry out, Trust not in lying vanity saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. It's a lie. It's emptiness.

You're not really serving God. And of course, Jeremiah got into all kinds of trouble because of the things God told him to tell these kings. He was thrown in dungeons, thrown in the prisons.

He ran into a lot of difficulty. But this is when Jeremiah began his prophecy. And now to the end of the kingdom, under the four kings, Jeremiah prophesied.

Under Josiah here, and then under Jehoiah has, and Jehoiachin, and Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah actually. But Jeremiah doesn't mention Jehoiakim because his reign was so short. So, this is the period in which Jeremiah is prophesying.

And so, when you read Jeremiah, you got to bring your mind back to this point in history so that you'll understand better. You know, as you go through the Bible more and more, as you start to put it together, it helps in understanding. You'll understand Jeremiah better if you can put it with this portion of history.

And you'll understand this portion of history better if you read the commentary on it by Jeremiah. So, that's where the Bible starts coming together. And the cumulative knowledge of the Bible begins to really develop.

And you really begin to understand the thing a lot better as you take these pieces of the puzzle, and you start fitting them together, you begin to get the whole picture. You know, as long as you're just looking at one little piece of the puzzle, you say, man, I wonder where in the world that goes. How does that fit? You know, it's a weird shape, and those are weird colors.

You know, and you study it, and you can study it for a long time and still not understand it very well. But when you start putting and linking the pieces together, and the faces and everything begins to take shape, you say, oh yeah, I see that. All right, you know, and it begins.

But you've got to start putting the pieces together. And so, you know, when you get to Jeremiah, put it back to here, or jump ahead. It wouldn't hurt you to read Isaiah and Jeremiah this week.

You know, if you take the time that you're going to spend this week reading the daily newspaper, you could probably read both books. Now, what you're going to gain from reading the daily newspaper is deep depression and discouragement and despair as you see what a mess the world is in. But if you read Jeremiah and Isaiah, you'll get all kinds of hope.

You'll see that even in the darkness, God is there. God is working. And God is promising the light that's at the end of the darkness.

So, Josiah began to reign. He began in reforms. The rebuilding of the temple.

The temple, of course, under Manasseh had been, you know, he put all these altars in the courts and in the temple itself. And they tore all these things out. They started cleaning up the temple.

They took the money that was brought into the temple and they used it to begin to repair the breaches that were in the house of the Lord. And as they were repairing the temple, they came across a copy of the law of the Lord. Now, the law had been lost for a long time.

They didn't even know the law of the Lord. And some guy came across a copy of the law of the Lord. And so, the priests began to read the law of the Lord.

And as they began to read, they realized, oh, how we have disobeyed the law of God. It came to pass when the king heard the words of the book of the law that he tore his clothes. And he said, go inquire of the Lord for me and for the people, for all of Judah concerning the words of this book that you've found.

For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us because our fathers have not hearkened to the words of this book to do according to all that is written concerning us. So, they came to Huldah the prophetess who was there with the college of prophets. And she said unto them, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me.

Thus saith the Lord, I will bring evil upon this place, upon the inhabitants, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read because they have forsaken me and they've burned incense unto other gods that might provoke me to anger and all the works of their hands. Wherefore, my wrath shall be kindled against this place and not be quenched. But the king of Judah, which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall you say to him, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, as touching the words which you have heard because your heart was tender and you have humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I speak against this place and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation, a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before me.

I also have heard these, saith the Lord. Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace. And I shall not see all the evil that I'm going to bring upon this place.

And so they brought the king, the word of the Lord. So, Josiah, he heard the law and he tore his clothes, he wept before God. Real repentance.

Oh, God, what have we done? What have our fathers done? And so inquiring of the Lord through Huldah the prophetess, he received this message that the nation was going to fall, however, not in the time of his reign. So he ordered that the people be gathered together and that they read the law of the Lord to all of the people. And the king stood by the pillar and he made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord and to keep His commandments and the testimonies and the statutes with their heart and with their soul and to perform the covenant that was written in the book.

And all the people stood to the covenant. So the king stood there and in his heart, he said, okay, God, I'm going to obey You. I'm going to follow You.

I'm going to serve You. And made his commitment unto God. Very beautiful, beautiful scene.

And the people, again, standing with that covenant with the king. And so the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order, the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord all of the vessels that were made for Baal and for the host of heaven. And he burdened them there in the valley of Kidron in the fields.

And he took the ashes on up to Bethel and buried them there. They began to tear down all of the high places, the places of worship and so forth for the pagan gods. And they came on up to Bethel and they broke down the altar that was there in the city of Bethel that Jeroboam had built to worship in the northern kingdom.

And they beat down the altar and they took the graves and they took the bones out of the graves and they burned the bones, which was a desecration of the altar. Now, this goes back several hundred years. For when Jeroboam first became the king over the northern Israel, he built this altar in Bethel and as he was worshiping at the altar, you remember the story of the young prophet that came out of Judah and cried against the altar? Oh, altar! Oh, altar! Men's bones will be burned on you.

And Jeroboam stretched forth his hand. He said, arrest that young man. And his hand withered.

Jeroboam said to him, pray for me that God will heal me. And the young prophet prayed for Jeroboam and his hand was healed. And you remember that Jeroboam said, come and eat at my house and I'll give you rewards.

And he said, you know, if you gave me the whole kingdom, I can't stay. For the Lord who sent me here to cry against the altar told me not to eat any bread, drink any water in this place, not even to go home by the way I came. And so he took off.

And a couple of boys were there whose dad was a prophet. They went home and said, Dad, there was a prophet that came out of Judah, a young kid. Man, he cried against the king.

And the king reached out his hand and told him to arrest him and his hand withered and he prayed and the hand was healed. Dad said, which way did he go? He went down the road that way. He said, get my donkey.

And he saddled his donkey and took off after the young man. And he caught up with him and he was sitting there under a tree. And he said, who are you? Are you the young prophet? He said, yes, I am.

He said, why don't you come back to my house and eat some bread and drink water? He said, no, the Lord who sent me told me not to drink any water in this place, any bread in this place, but get on home without even going back the same way. And he said, well, I also am a prophet. And the Lord spoke to me and said, come and get you and invite you to come back to my house.

So the young prophet listened to the old man, had respect for his age and so forth. He listened to him and he came back. And while he was eating bread in the old man's house, the spirit of the Lord came on the old man and he cursed him.

He said, because you have done this and all, you're not going to get home. You're going to die in the way. And so as the young prophet left, a lion attacked him and killed him.

And so news came back to the old prophet that the young man had been killed. And he said, this is the word of the Lord, you know, that he wouldn't get home safely. And so he came out and the lion was standing there, had not eaten him or torn him, but just left his body there.

And the donkey was just sort of roaming around that the kid was riding on. And he picked up the young prophet and brought him back and buried him. You remember the story? So here's the young prophet that cried out against the altar.

So as Josiah is up there now tearing down the altar to desecrate it, he burns, they see these graves, they take the bones out of them and burn them. That is a way of just really utter disrespect and desecration of an altar. Thus, the prophecy was fulfilled.

And then they saw another grave and they said, what's that tombstone say? They said, well, that's the young prophet who came up and cried up against the altar. He said, don't take his bones, just leave his bones alive. And so it ties back into the prophecy and so forth of this young prophet.

And here we come with it again. Back in 1 Kings 13, you'll find the story of that young prophet. Moreover, verse 15, the altar that was at Bethel, the high place which Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, he made Israel to sin, had made that altar the high place he broke down, he burned the high place, stamped it small to powder, burned the grove that was by it.

And as Josiah turns himself, he spied the sepulchers that were there in the mount, and he sent and took the bones out of the sepulchers, burned them on the altar, polluted it according to the Word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed who had proclaimed these words. Now Josiah commanded that they keep the Passover. Of course, they had not been keeping the holy days, the feast days, and Passover was coming.

And so they had this huge Passover. And in 2 Chronicles, we'll actually get into further details of this huge Passover feast that was instituted by Josiah. The death of Josiah is recorded for us in the beginning with verse 28 how that the king of Egypt had come up against the king of Assyria and how that Josiah went up to battle and he got into the battle at Megiddo.

And there he was killed at Megiddo and he was brought in his chariot back to Jerusalem and buried. Now, Jehoiah has. His son was 23 years old when he began to reign.

He reigned for three months. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. And Pharaoh put him in bonds and he actually took him out and put tribute upon the land.

And the Pharaoh then made a vassal king, Jehoiakim. And Jehoiakim was just a vassal king to the Pharaoh. And he paid the Pharaoh, of course, the tribute that the Pharaoh had demanded.

He was 25 years old. He reigned for 11 years. And during this time, Jeremiah is really crying out against the sins of the people.

Now, he decided to rebel. Jehoiakim rebelled against the Pharaoh and the Lord sent on the bands of the Babylonians and of the Syrians and of the Moabites. And again, now the same kind of thing that happened to Israel.

When the weakness of the nation was displayed, then all of the nations began to attack. It's dangerous for a nation to display weakness because it gives courage to all of the other nations to attack. So, Jehoiakim died and his son Jehoiachin.

And of course, this gets a little difficult. You have Jehoiahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin. And it gets a little difficult to follow.

Jehoiachin reigned in his stead. And during his reign, Nebuchadnezzar came, conquered Jerusalem and took 10,000 captives back to Babylon. And this is where you might read the book of Daniel.

For Daniel was one of the 10,000 that was taken in this first captivity back to Babylon. And Daniel was one of the princes. He was actually related to David.

He was of the family of David, the royal family of David. He was taken as a captive to Babylon and was groomed in the Babylonian schools in order that he might serve in the court of Nebuchadnezzar. He became a great statesman in the Babylonian kingdom.

He became a great statesman and leader in the subsequent Medo-Persian empire. And so, this brings us now into Daniel. So, we're beginning to work the prophets into this particular period of history.

The Babylonians made Zedekiah the king. And he was 21 years old when he began to reign. He reigned for 11 years.

And he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. And so, Nebuchadnezzar made his second invasion in which he besieged Jerusalem and he then broke down the walls of the city. He broke down and set on fire the temple of God and all of the houses within Jerusalem.

The king's palace. The king, of course, himself, just before the Babylonians had encircled Jerusalem and the king and a company of men sought to escape during the night. And they went out one of the gates and they fled towards the wilderness.

But the Babylonians pursued after them, caught them near Jericho. And there, Zedekiah's sons were killed before him. And as soon as he watched them kill his sons, then they poked out his eyes and they carried him captive to Babylon.

And Zedekiah died in Babylon. And there's an interesting prophecy in Jeremiah chapter 32 concerning Zedekiah, how that he would be led, indicating blindness, unto... He said he would see his sons die and he

would be led captive to Babylon. And so that prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled.

Now, they left only the very poorest people in the land to keep the vineyards and so forth. The rest were all taken captive or killed. They put a fellow Gedaliah in charge, sort of the governor over the land.

But some of the people after a while conspired against Gedaliah. They assassinated Gedaliah. And so then they became frightened.

They realized that when Nebuchadnezzar hears about this, he's going to send and wipe all of us out. And so the remnant of the people that were left fled on down into Egypt. And thus you have the death of Judah.

Another nation that had been a mighty nation. Another nation that had known the power of God. Another nation that was created by God.

And as long as God was at the center of the nation, they were strong and victorious. But when they failed and turned from God, they became destroyed by their enemies and the nation ceased to exist as such. Now, for 70 years, Jeremiah prophesied they would be in Babylon in captivity.

And again, you really need Jeremiah as a background to this particular period of history. Also, of course, now as you get into Babylonian captivity, you need the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel and so forth. And so these all are good background for this particular point of history.

As we start into the books of the chronicles of the kings of Judah, you remember that all the way through from 1 Samuel till now, we have been reading, and the rest of the acts, are they not recorded in the chronicles of the kings of Judah? So you're going to get further details on a lot of the kings of Judah. Not on the kings of Israel. We do not have the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

But these are more or less the official court records, the court documents that record the reigns of the kings, their accomplishments and all, as we get into chronicles. So in a sense, it is going to be going over the same period of history from Saul to Zedekiah as we deal with the kings of Judah. But yet, we will get further insight and details on many of the kings.

Much of the insight and detail is very valuable and very interesting, and I think you'll enjoy the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles as we deal now with the chronicles of the kings of Judah. And so your assignment, of course, is to go ahead and start reading 1 Chronicles along with Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Jeremiah. Might as well be smart.

No premium on being dumb. May the Lord give you an especially good week this week. Oh, may God deliver you from the power, the strong power of your own fleshly desires that would drag you down and cause you to live like other men in the world around.

But may you live a life that is pleasing unto the Lord. May you stand with Josiah before the law of the Lord and make a covenant to obey God and to follow after God and to serve him with your whole heart and soul. And may God anoint you and give you that strength that you need to fulfill the commitment that you make.

In Jesus' name.

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