

"WALK THRU THE BIBLE: II KINGS."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for Sermon: II Kings 2:9-12; 17:6-20

Introduction.

We are halfway through the 12 OT historical narratives. They are a declaration from God about God and His personal activity in human history. Each book has its own particular emphasis and perspective and special significance.

Because this is God's revelation, God's story, there is a unity to all of it. It has a meaningful beginning, a meaningful trajectory and a meaningful destination. It is thoughtful and purposeful, nothing is wasted. And Jesus Christ is the destination. Everything comes from Jesus and everything leads to Jesus.

Introduction to II Kings.

II Kings is different from the previous three. Each of them had a central character, Saul, David, Solomon. II Kings is more like a montage than a portrait, with many characters as it summarizes the careers of nearly 30 kings. Only Elisha stands out for a bit.

From Joshua and to I Kings the historical books traced the rise of the Jewish empire of Israel. At the end of I Kings we see the nation divided but still standing. In II Kings the movement shifts to a grim spiral downward and over a spiritual cliff into destruction and exile.

The northern kingdom falls first to the Assyrians. Then Assyria fell to the Babylonians and 136 years after the north fell, Judah suffers a similar fate. But Israel will remain scattered, Judah will return after 70 years of exile.

The great nation that Joshua led into the Promised Land to be set apart and to be a witness and testimony to the one true God, instead of being holy, became an imitation of the pagan nations.

We need to know 1 and II Kings because without them we won't understand the context for more than half of the Old Testament, 20 of the 39 books of the OT were written during the time of the kings.

During the three centuries covered by II Kings the prophecies of Amos and Hosea were given to the people of Israel; while Isaiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah,

and Jeremiah prophesied in Judah, both groups calling the people to repentance and warning them of God's coming judgments.

Think about that. I trust at some time all of you have read all the prophetic books in the OT. They fill a huge amount of space in the OT. The people of Israel heard all of it first hand, live and in person. And they ignored it or didn't believe it. They lost all spiritual sensitivity and moral vision. What little religious reformation took place from time to time with a few kings was superficial and short-lived.

Politics thinks it is king, thinks it rules the day. II Kings is probably the most political book in the Bible. Most of the texts are political, dealing with kings, political power and power struggles. The problem of politics is too often it seeks autonomy, to play God in rebellion against God and they rejected the prophets.

But prophecy trumps politics, and prophets trump politicians. In all the activity of man, God's Word is final.

I don't know if you have noticed but God is not politically correct, nor is He democratic. God is not a go along with the majority God. God doesn't allow us to pick our religious preferences and engage in freedom of religion. God is a jealous God, jealous for His glory and His authority, jealous for the hearts of His people whom He has created for His glory.

II Kings is not just a narrative history of the fall of a once great nation, it is a narrative history with interpretation. It is history with explanation meant to instruct us and from which we are to learn.

Yahweh is the only true God. There is only one living God, and he is the Lord (1 Kings 18:15; 2 Kings 5:15).

II Kings 5:15 [after Naaman's healing] he said, "Behold, *I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel.*"

Yahweh demands exclusive worship. As the only God there is, the Lord demands exclusive worship.

The bright spot in I Kings was Elijah on Mt. Carmel.
The bright spot in II Kings is Elisha.

II Kings 2, The Call of Elisha.

There are a lot of critics of the Bible and of Christianity. There are a lot of people who are allergic to miracles, allergic to the truth, to God being God.

Elijah and Elisha are the miracle workers of the OT.

We are privileged here to witness the succession of a prophet, the transition of spiritual authority and power.

"Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken from you?" vss. 9-10.

This is as much a test of character as when God ask Solomon what he wanted. Elisha asked for what is spiritual, he asked for the best gifts, to be equipped and anointed with a double portion of Elijah's spirit for the work God had prepared him to do.

And indeed, he did, his ministry lasted well over twice as long as Elijah's and he did twice as many miracles.

The purpose of ascensions is to make clear that one is gone so succession can take place. It also makes very clear to the observer of the reality of the invisible life, of the spiritual world.

The apostles ministered with great power and passion because they knew Christ was alive, He was very real and very near to them. Our life and courage and faith and power in prayer increase the more we are sure of faith in the invisible/unseen.

II Kings 17:6-13, 16-20

Starts in chapter 16 with King Shalmaneser, King of Assyria. Because of him, Israel will cease to exist. The judgment of God has arrived, it always does.

II Kings 17 is key because the author stops the story and offers a prophetic reflection on all that's happened so far. He blames the downfall of the northern kingdom on the idolatry and covenant unfaithfulness of Israel and its kings. Because of their sins, God allowed His people to face the consequences of their decisions.

Yahweh brought Israel up from Egypt, but they sinned against Him (vs. 7).

They were a people of incredible *blessings*, untold blessings, grace, mercy, steadfast love and kindness.

The nation of Israel, the people of God, chosen by God, saved by God from a horrible slavery, preserved and protected and provided for miraculously through a long wilderness journey, settled in a land flowing with milk and honey, the Promised Land, given

everything, now losses everything because of their lust to chase after other gods, to commit the adultery of idolatry, whoring after other gods, and doing all the things those pagan, godless, wicked nations did, the very things that destroyed those other nations, now destroyed them.

In the light of the bountiful blessings, their failure is an unprecedented failure, great was their fall.

They were supposed to be different from all the other nations. Instead of being holy, separated and set apart from the peoples of the nations, they conformed, they sinned just like all the other nations and did what they did. Notice vs. 16-17, all the clauses announcing the spiral of descent into the abyss of sin and evil. They conformed to the world's mold (Romans 12:1-2). They sinned against God's grace.

They didn't just sin, they sinned with a passion, with great intent, with vigor, over and over, worse and worse, again and again.

Remember your blessing, remember everything you have is by the grace of God and is cause for worshipping Him alone.

Yahweh warned Israel by His prophets.

God is a God who ***warns*** and warns again and again. Before God brings judgment, God brings truth. God is exceedingly patient, slow to anger, giving much time, every opportunity to repent. No one has an excuse.

The problem with God's Word and His warnings is people treat it all as idle threats.

God is faithful and keeps His Word. He always does what He says He will do. He will judge, there will be a great judgment on sin.

God is the God of nations, He sovereignly rules and reigns over Kings and armies and their movements. God is the God of politics and power. God is king and He acts and intervenes.

Yahweh was very angry with Israel and banished them from His presence.

The sins of Jeroboam come to roost. He was Israel's first king, and Israel was faithful to his sins all the way to the end.

What is the worst part of God's ***judgment***? It is stated twice. God removed Israel from His presence (18, 20). God rejects them and ejects them from His land.

Tremble at the thought and the possibility. Pray like David,

Psalm 51:10-12 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

God is a jealous God and a consuming fire. He will not be mocked, we will reap what we sow. God will bring down catastrophic repercussions on our love affair with idolatry. It is adultery in the face of God. God is holy and it is part of His nature to hold responsible, to judge.

II Kings 25.

Just as Adam and Eve were banished from the garden after the fall, so Israel and Judah were banished from the Promised Land after their fall into sin and idolatry, wickedness and disobedience.

Just as there was a ray of hope at the end of fall in Genesis 3, so there is a ray of hope at the end of II Kings, that gets explored further in the wisdom and prophetic books of the Bible. The exile is not the last word. Yes, they have experienced the judgment of God, but God reveals His grace and mercy in not abandoning or rejecting or giving up on His people.

II Kings 25:27-30 In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, *graciously* freed Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. 28 And he spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. 29 So Jehoiachin put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king's table, 30 and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, according to his daily needs, as long as he lived.

The northern kingdom of Israel was scattered into the surrounding pagan nations and lost. There was no return. But Judah's fate was not the same, for Judah God's judgment was different, it was 70 years in Babylon and then they would be regathered and returned to Jerusalem.

Yahweh is also faithful and remembers His covenant made with David and He will keep and restore a remnant of His people. God promised David a "lamp," a descendant

who will always sit on his throne. He will preserve the royal line of David, a son of David will sit on the throne forever. The Messiah would come from the line of David and out of Judah.

The line of David survives. God's people often seem to be defeated. Seem.

God always reserves to Himself the last word. Judgment must be experienced, God is faithful and true. But God in His grace and mercy keeps for Himself a remnant of His people.

Hope is the last word.

Jesus

As Elijah precedes the Lord and is seen in John the Baptist as the one who precedes the Lord, so Elisha is the figure who points to Christ, a type of Christ.

Elisha and Jesus have the same meaning, God saves, God helps.

Elisha is called greater than Elijah, receiving a double portion, doing much more.

Many of the miracles of Elisha foreshadowed those of Jesus Himself. Elisha raised the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:34-35), healed Naaman of leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-19), and multiplied loaves of bread to feed a hundred people with some left over (2 Kings 4:42-44).

Judgment falls on the sins of the people and they are exiled and forsaken.

For us Jesus experienced this same exile for us, being judged and forsaken by God. Jesus cried out "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus paid the price of our turning away from God, so we could turn back to Him.

Implications and application.

For those of you following the Bible reading plan we just finished reading about the seven churches of Revelation. It reads a bit like reading the kings, some were good, some were bad and some were mixed. Some good things are said and then there is a but. But this I have against you. Some good things followed by a nevertheless.

Is there a nevertheless in your life? Some sin, some idol, some worldly affection you are holding on to, some place in your heart you are not tearing out, repenting of, removing, dying to. Do you have anything you love more than God?

Hebrews 3:12-14 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

“God hates sin and He will not allow it to continue indefinitely. If we belong to Him, we can expect His discipline when we disobey Him. A loving Father corrects His children for their benefit and to prove that they indeed belong to Him. God may at times use unbelievers to bring correction to His people, and He gives us warning before delivering judgment. As Christians, we have His Word to guide us and warn us when we go astray from His path. Like the prophets of old, His Word is trustworthy and always speaks truth. God’s faithfulness to His people will never fail, even when we do”
(Gotquestions.org/Book-of-2-Kings).

Take to heart God’s Word, listen, learn, this is your hope.

Prayer: Father, hear and answer, give us repentance and faith, rescue and redeem us from all unrighteousness and all our idolatries, do this for your glory, that all the world may know that you are the one true and only God.