

“The Fall of the Empire” - Part 1

A Walk Through the Old Testament - Class 18

Various Scriptures

Dr. Jeff Stivason

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Jeff: All right, let's pray together. Father in heaven, we are thankful for this day and for the time. And we're thankful for the opportunity that You've given us, the ability that You've given us to redeem the time, and to get up and to be here and open Your word and start the day with You and with brothers, and with the opportunity to study that Word. And Lord, we know that Your Holy Spirit uses it and takes it up. He indeed inspired it and He applies it to life, and He applies it to us, and we're thankful for that. We're thankful for the illumination that He provides in opening our eyes, not just to the gift of salvation, but also to understand what it is that He has inspired, what it is that He has written and inscripturated. Father, we're thankful again for that, and for many things we're thankful. We're thankful for life in Christ and all of the blessings that we enjoy being in Him, the Holy Spirit being among them because He is the applier of the work of Christ to our lives. But we are thankful also for justification and sanctification and our impending glorification, and all of the benefits and delights in between. Father, we are thankful to come before You this morning and to work our way through the Scriptures.

But Lord, we also come with heavy hearts, knowing that our brothers and those we love suffer and struggle as they do. And so we pray for Bill. Lord, we pray that You'll enable him to overcome through the work of doctors or medication, or even by Your sovereign hand just immediately working in his body. There are difficulties that he's experiencing. We're thankful for the good news that he has received. And Lord, we just pray that You'll continue to give him more of that.

We pray for Gerry and we ask, Lord, for a good blessing upon the work that the doctors have done with regard to his hip replacement. We pray that it would continue to mend, that You would continue to be able to make progress. Father, we pray for Rich as he struggles with the flu, and ask that You will indeed bless him with health. We pray for his wife and ask the same on her behalf.

And we do think of our brother Don. And Lord, we do pray for the doctors as they evaluate this cyst. We ask that it would be of no consequence. We certainly pray that his health would be well, and that You would bring him back to us soon. We ask, Lord, that You'll comfort his heart in the midst of it all.

And Father, we pray for Sig and for Nancy. We're thankful for the good news that Nancy received, and Lord, we pray for more of that. And Lord, we pray for her strength to increase. We pray that she would be able to get this reversal surgery that she anticipates. And Lord, we just pray that having brought them through this time of real need and great anguish, we pray, Father, that they would emerge from this valley having the ability to say along with Job, "I once had heard You, but now my eyes have seen You." And so, Lord, let that be their experience.

Lord, we pray for Paul and especially for his mother Leah. We ask that You would bless her as she recovers. And we do pray and give You thanks that she's home now. And

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Lord, we pray also for Bruce Bickel. And Lord, we're thankful for our brother. We know that You have used his life in a mighty way, and we're thankful for that. We pray that You would continue to use His life in many and in various ways, especially in this Bible study that he teaches downtown. We just ask that You'll make that a blessing to the folks who attend.

And Father, we turn again to our time here today. We ask that You will bless the work that we're doing. And we pray, Father, that You'll bless our time of fellowship one to another. And we ask it in Christ's precious name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. So let's continue to work our way through the Old Testament. And one of the things that I want us to talk about today is *the fall of the northern kingdom*. But let me just go ahead and throw up this purpose statement on the board. So today we're going to look at the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel and the continual erosion of the South.

Now we're looking at a large period of time, a couple hundred years. And we're going to see that in the North there's just this continual slide. And in the South it's not much better. Though they have some good kings along the way, it is also a slide. They will go into exile less than 200 years later. But nonetheless they will go into exile. And so that's what we're going to be looking at in terms of timing.

Next week we're going to look at *the fall of Jerusalem* and the historical era around that. But today we're going to focus in on the slide in the North and the erosion in the South. Next week we'll finish up looking at the kings and the fall of the cities. Next week's reading will be Ezekiel and Daniel. If you have time read Daniel of course. But if you have time just kind of work your way through Ezekiel. Both of these are prophets that speak in some way of the Exile, one a little before and after the Exile, and Daniel of course after the Exile happens.

We're going to be looking today at a little bit of an introduction. We're going to be thinking about *a drifting nation, a rebellious nation, and a reformed nation and a falling nation*. Now all of these aren't the same nation. And I'll identify what nation we're looking at at the time. In one sense we're looking at one nation, Israel. But in another sense we're looking at Israel in the North and Judah in the South, and we go back and forth between the two.

So let's think about *some introductory points* first of all. And the first thing that I want to remind you of is something that's very important. As we think about this particular time, this is what God said to the people of Israel. He said, "Don't be like them." In other words,--and again, just so you have this in mind,--when we think about the history of redemption, we think about the Fall. But then we think about the initiation of the New Covenant. And that covenant is the covenant of grace.

Now this is basically a twofold structure, because we have the covenant of works in the first three chapters of Genesis. And then the rest of the Scriptures are about the covenant of grace. And the covenant of grace is one covenant, but it has unfoldings to it, exfoliations. It's like a flower that sort of blooms and blossoms, and you see all of its petals. And when it reaches the climax unfolding, it's a beautiful flower.

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So the first covenant is obviously Noah, and the second covenant is with Abraham, and the third covenant is with Moses. And there's a sort of a subset in the Mosaic covenant with David. And then there is the climactic covenant, the New Covenant with Christ, who comes and fulfills all that was before Him. So there's a continuity in the covenantal unfolding, so that when you reach the New Covenant, it's not new in the sense that okay, God says, "All right, surprise! All of this was trash!" (*Laughter*) You know, it's not that. It's a new covenant in the sense that you are a new creation in Christ. God doesn't say, "All right, we're going to crumple you up and throw you away and recreate you." God doesn't say, "Everything behind was a surprise ending." In the same way that you are new in Christ, you are the old you who is new in Christ. And the newness is Christ. And in the same way we find that the newness of the New Covenant is Christ.

So for instance we find that there's a newness to the aspect of some of the promises to Abraham. I mean, Romans 1 and Galatians 3 both tell us that the gospel was preached to Abraham. And part of the gospel was what? "I'm going to give you people a land so that you can be a blessing to the nations," right? Now that little plot of land that was given to Israel is now in the New Covenant not a little plot of land, but Jesus comes and says, "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.*" "Go and disciple the nations." And so there's a sense in which there is a newness to the New Covenant, because almost in the same way we find that the people of Israel were supposed to be a blessing to the nations. Now all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Christ. And so the disciples of Christ, the people, possess the whole earth and are to disciple the earth under Christ's Lordship. So there's a newness in that regard. But the gospel is the same gospel. The message, in one sense, is the same message that is going to be taken into all the world.

Now that's the idea. But you find that in this very narrow exfoliation of the covenant of grace, one of the things that you realize is that when the people of Israel go into the land, God says to them, "Don't be like the people in the land of Canaan, because I'm punishing the people in the land of Canaan because they've been a wicked, pagan people. And do you want to be a wicked, pagan people? Then follow in their ways. But if you want to be blessed, then follow My law."

Now we can say a lot about this. I'm not going to say much more than this because I just want to set the context for it. But I want you to notice what this says. This is from Deuteronomy. "*When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a necromancer, or one who inquires of the dead. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these things the LORD your God is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God.*"

So we find that the law is given so that they're not like the other nations. They're a redeemed people; they've been brought out of the land of Egypt. They're given the law so as to please God and remain in the land. And God says, "So long as you do these things you can remain in the land."

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Now let’s just talk about this for a minute. They were given blessings and cursings. And so if you look in Deuteronomy 11:29 it says that “when you come to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim you will pronounce these blessings and these curses.”

Now here’s the interesting thing. When they come to it in Deuteronomy 27, that’s exactly what they do. Now here’s the picture. This is Gerizim and this is Ebal. And some of the tribes were supposed to get up onto Mount Ebal and some were to get up onto Gerizim. And from Gerizim the people were to read the curses, and from Ebal they were to read the blessings. So, you know, it was this sort of back and forth kind of thing. And what a spectacular sight that must have been in one sense, God impressing upon these people that “as you go into the land, remember the blessings and the cursings”—blessings if you obey and listen, and curses if you fail.”

And part of the curse is in Deuteronomy 28. Now I didn’t put this up on the screen, but you can just go here for a minute. And I don’t really want to spend a lot of time reading this. But I do want to draw your attention to a few things found in the curses. They’re not just in Deuteronomy 28, but some are in Deuteronomy 28.

And it says this. Take a look at verse 45. *“All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you till you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes that He commanded you. They shall be a sign and a wonder against you and your offspring forever.”*

And then notice this: verse 52. *“They shall besiege you in all your towns, until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout all your land. And they shall besiege you in all your towns throughout all your land, which the Lord your God has given you. And you shall eat the fruit of your womb, and the flesh of your sons and daughters whom the LORD your God has given you in the siege, in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you.”*

Now I don’t know about you, but that’s not very encouraging. It’s sort of like Psalm 109 that we just read this morning. But God is saying, “Look! If you do not obey, I will drive you out of the land and I’ll use a nation to do it. And the nation that I will use will be a merciless nation. And while you are being sieged, I want you to know that you’ll have no food, to the extent that you’ll eat your offspring.”

That’s a horrible picture. And that’s what happens. That’s what we find described in the Old Testament when the cities are sieged. And so the curses are being brought against Israel for her unfaithfulness to the covenant.

Now I just feel like I need to stop here and just say this to you. When you think about this, you have to think to yourself, *Well, wait a minute. Did the law given to Moses, did that nullify the promise given to Abraham?* In other words, is this such a disjunctive kind of thing that it actually doesn’t fit with the whole overall scheme of the covenant of grace? In other words, some theologians have asked over the years, is this really a part of the covenant of grace at all?

And the answer to that is yes. It is part of the covenant of grace. So why the law? Well, the previous question was one that I’ve asked you repeatedly because it’s an important one. It’s the one Paul asked in Galatians and it is this. Does the law nullify the promise?

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And Paul says no. Then why the law? Because the law teaches us our need for the promise.

Now let me just remind you of this. Remember what I said to you in Romans chapter 5? In Romans chapter 5 we find this curious construction where it says—and think about this!—“*From Adam to Moses, there were those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam.*”

Now what does that mean, that there were those between Adam and Moses who didn’t sin in the likeness of Adam? Well, I’ll tell you what it means. And it’s very simple; I’ve said it to you before, but it’s worth saying again.

Remember, when God created Adam, He created the world and He created the garden of Eden. And He created Adam outside of the garden, and He placed him in the garden. And He said, “Here’s a law. And if you keep the law, you can stay in the garden. But if you don’t, then I’m going to drive you out.”

And then what happened? You find over here that God said to Israel, “I’m going to give you a land.” And where did He create Israel? Outside of the land. They were created in Egypt. And then He brought them into the land. Then He gave them a law and He said, “If you keep the law you can remain in the land. But if you don’t, I’m going to drive you out.”

Now I don’t know about you, but that picture looks like that picture. (*Laughter*) And so when he talks about those who sinned in the likeness of Adam, what he’s talking about is that Adam’s story in the garden looks like Moses’ story with Israel in the land of Egypt. And those who were in the middle did not sin in the likeness, meaning that the story wasn’t revisited until Moses, but these people are still guilty.

But then, why this picture, because that’s the question. Why then this picture? It’s to show the need for the promise given to Abraham that was here. Okay, does that make sense? Any questions about it? Yes, Jordan? Hey, Jordan.

Jordan Obaker: Hey.

Jeff: How are you doing?

Jordan: Fine. How are you?

Jeff: You know, your dad told me a while ago that the reason why it’s easier for you to come in the morning is that you now have a car that will drive you here without any assistance from you at all.

Jordan: This is correct.

Jeff: That’s incorrect. (*Laughter*) All right; I just wanted to clear that up, because that’s what he told me.

Jordan: The question I have is that two nights ago you were actually doing something when you had that thing with our girls. And it goes through the stories of the bible.

Jeff: Yes.

Jordan: And one of them was the Ten Commandments. And interestingly, as we were reading about this from this book, they can’t refer to the Ten Commandments as life commandments.

Jeff: Yes.

Jordan: I was thinking of this the last two days. And we talk about the covenant of grace, and how they deal with the commandments. Well, first of all, they tell you about

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who God is, how to love God and how to love others, not just in the sense of being negative, and teasing out sin, but it truly is a form of grace in the sense that you want to love Him and He has given you rules to follow and tell you how to act. It’s a form of grace to teach you how to love God and how to love others.

Jeff: Absolutely. And Jordan brings up a great point. So for instance, I focus upon this aspect, this question that the Fall asks. But Jordan is absolutely right. When you look at the Ten commandments, you know, they have this preface. What is the preface? *“I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”* What is He saying? *“I redeemed you.”* That’s why it fits so nicely with the covenant of grace framework. These ten laws, these ten words, are given to a redeemed people, a people who have experienced grace.

So when Jesus comes and says, “Love the LORD your God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself,” when He summarizes those commandments, what He’s saying is that you’re right; those are love commandments. And they’re love commandments because they teach us how to love the God who redeemed us and His people. That’s excellent. Yes, Kirk?

Kirk Ellerbusch: When you talked about them being redeemed there, that doesn’t necessarily mean that they were saved and fit for the kingdom of heaven. Am I correct in saying that?

Jeff: Well, some of them were. It’s like the church, right? The church is a mixed multitude. Israel was a mixed multitude. There were people who came out of Egypt as long as the day is full, right? But there were people who came out of there and who were rebels. And that’s what we find in the church of Jesus Christ, right? We find people who make professions and then apostatize and leave the church, and so forth.

Kirk: Right; I understand what you’re saying. The reason I ask that question is that I have a friend who refers to Israel being redeemed by God as if they were all saved. You have to change a lot of theology.

Jeff: Yes, right.

Kirk: I just wanted to clarify that.

Jeff: Yes, right.

Caleb Falbo: In that period between Noah and Moses, where you said—and I forget what image you used—but it was like they did not sin the same way Adam sinned.

Jeff: In the likeness of Adam.

Caleb: Is that because the law was written on their hearts? The New Testament describes the law being written on the heart.

Jeff: Well, no. I think that the law is written on the heart of the individual from the very beginning. But I think that the likeness part of it is that there is sort of a recapitulation in the story of the outworking of the people of Israel going into the land, and that sort of thing, and the law. And so that’s the recapitulation. That’s sort of the retelling that’s in the likeness of Adam. The law on the heart I think is always there. It’s always here.

Caleb: And that is what’s making them guilty. That’s why they’re guilty.

Jeff: Yes. There’s a sense in which—oh, you mean imputed.

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Caleb: Yes.

Jeff: That’s right.

Bill McCoy: Doesn’t the bible also say that the law is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ?

Jeff: Yes. The law drives us to Christ. It shows us our need for the promise. Yes, absolutely. Good stuff. Yes?

Ted Wood: This is very informative, because on the one hand the law is a schoolmaster. It drives us to God. But on the other hand, also, as the brother here said, it actually tells us who God is.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: And I think it’s interesting. I’ve been thinking about some things during the last several months. It seems like the law describes the reality of God and who we are. And I think that basically we are swimming in a sea of ignorance about God and who He is. I mean, we Christians are dealing in categories that the world is not even dealing in. They don’t even look at reality the same way we do.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Ted: I just spent four days in New York City. I can see that very clearly.

Jeff: Sure. You know, let me tell you something. I’ll get on here, but let me just tell you something. You know, I think I might be going a little over our heads here. I wanted to tell this story, but I think it’s going to produce—

Ted: I’ll bail you out. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: But I just find it interesting. So I went to see the “Mr. Rogers” movie. And you know, I watched “Mr. Rogers” growing up. You know “Mr. Rogers,” and you’ve watched him. But I had never watched him on interviews. So I watched him on a few interviews. And on this one interview, at the end of the interview, he says, “I just want everyone to know that we have a special coming up on disciplining our children.” And he said, “You know, discipline is love.” And you know, he gave the Hebrews speech. It’s not always easy; it’s not always fun. But it’s necessary, right, so that little boys can grow up to be men and little girls can grow up to be ladies.

And I thought to myself that in our day and age everybody loves Mr. Rogers. But it’s funny. It’s more of “I love you just the way you are.” That’s the message that comes out, and you never hear about “let’s do the special on discipline.” *(Laughter)* That’s what they tell you, right? They’ll pick and choose out of even a few people from the past. I’m sure they’d say that this disciplinary aspect was from some negative thing that happened in Mr. Rogers’ background. But I digress. *(Laughter)*

Ted: He was a Presbyterian. He was on the right track.

Jeff: All right. We’re going to go to *a drifting nation* right now. This drifting nation is Israel. Israel is a mess. No good kings in Israel. In fact, Zechariah is Jehu’s fourth son. And if you remember right, Jehu was told, “You’re going to have a dynasty to the fourth generation.” Well, Zechariah is Jehu’s fourth son who sits on the throne. And guess what happens to him? He gets assassinated. And so we’re going to pick up with his successor in just a minute.

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But you need to know that there are things that are happening in the world at the time. And sometimes I like to pause and just sort of help you to see the things that are happening outside of Israel because they're very important. And they're very important because we realize that it might affect Israel.

For instance, here's Israel and there's Judah in the south. Here's Israel in the North. And then here's Damascus. And then here is Assyria. And then here's Babylon. And so Assyria is here, Babylon is here. The problem is that what is happening in Assyria is that they are a world power. But world powers have their struggles, especially when you're a world power in ancient times.

For instance, we're going to find that when Israel rebels against Assyria, they say, “We're going back.” They pull the armed forces and everything. *(Laughter)* And so in six short years they came back again. *(Laughter)* Six years, right? Why? Because Babylon was being a stinker satellite at the time. *(Laughter)* Babylon was a satellite nation under their power, and the problem was that they were constantly wanting to get out from under the thumb of Assyria. And they eventually do. Assyria is eventually overthrown by Babylon and Babylon becomes the power.

So while Assyria is the dominant nation in the ancient world, and constantly giving Israel grief and Damascus grief and Judah grief, they have a thorn in their flesh called Babylon that will eventually arise and become the dominant nation. But there's a battle that's taking place.

So here's my point. My point is, in the providence of God this thorn in the flesh of Assyria provides opportunities for even years for the people of Israel in the North to repent of their sin and turn from their wicked ways. And God would save them. Isn't that fascinating!

So God is controlling all of the things that happen in the world. And we can say in this instance that one of the reasons why this is happening is for the good of Israel. And yet the stiff-necked, hard-hearted people don't repent. Yes?

Brave Man: Who is the king of Syria?

Jeff: Tiglath-Pileser is the king of Assyria. And he is having trouble with Babylon. Tiglath-Pileser comes to power. He's suppressing Babylon as a satellite nation.

Brave Man: Who is the leader of Babylon?

Jeff: Babylon doesn't have a leader right now in terms of any particular king except for a puppet king that Assyria puts in place.

Brave Man: What year was this from?

Jeff: This would be close to about 722 or 723. I haven't been keeping track of the years. It's because that's the time frame we're looking at today. That's where Israel is going to fall. But I can't give you an exact date for that.

And just one thing. One thing I picked up in an archaeological text is that the reason that Tiglath-Pileser was so mean was because of his name. *(Laughter)* If you were named Tiglath-Pileser, wouldn't you be mean? Anyway, I digress. *(Laughter)* Shallum is Hebrew for *shocking*. *(Laughter)*

Shallum is Zechariah's assassin, and he rules for two months—two whole months before somebody assassinates him. Manahaim takes over. Pekahiah is his son, and

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Pekahiah eventually takes over. They have a different view toward Assyria. Their view toward Assyria is one of diplomacy. Let’s give them what they want. And let’s be a happy, satisfied, satellite nation. And so that’s the way they handle it.

Pekah assassinates Pekahiah. And Pekah says, “We’re not going to have any more diplomacy with Syria. We’re not going to be a satellite nation for them. We’re going to kick off the goads.”

And so Israel down here says, “We’re not going to pay you tribute anymore.” That’s really what the payoff is. “We are no longer going to pay you for the supposed protection that you offer as the dominant power of the world at this time. We’re just not going to do it.”

Now that’s when Assyria says, “Okay. Well, we’re going to come for you.” Six years later that’s what happens. So Assyria in retaliation comes in due time. But it comes a lot later.

So there’s a constant slide in the North toward erosion and finally inheriting the curses of the covenant. Actually, they should have inherited the curses of the covenant a long time ago. But they don’t because God is gracious, slow to anger and abounding in mercy, right?—that sort of thing.

So *a rebellious nation*. When we think about a rebellious nation, I want us to think about Judah for a minute while Judah is in the mix. Judah meets up with Pekah and Rezin. Remember, Pekah is king in the North of Israel. And Rezin is the king in Damascus.

Now remember, Pekah and Israel have said to Assyria, “Na nan a nan a na!” (*Laughter*) “We’re not going to pay you anymore. We’re not yours. We are our own nation. But we’re not a satellite nation.”

And Assyria said, “Well, we’re coming for you.”

And so then Damascus gets a little bit puffed up because of what Israel did. And so Damascus says, “Yes, and by the way, you’re not either.” (*Laughter*) And so Damascus and Israel oddly enough get together. Now this guy, Damascus, has been affecting Israel for years. And all of a sudden, there is an alliance between Pekah and Rezin. And there’s an alliance because this guy is coming, and they know that at any time he’s going to come.

Now what do they do? These guys say, “What we need is that we need Judah to get on board.” So they, Pekah and Rezin, approach Judah. And they say to Ahaz, “Form an alliance with us, because we have to stand against Assyria.”

And this is where Isaiah 7 unfolds. Ahaz has already told Damascus and Assyria. Assyria! (*Laughter*) It’s a fruity cereal. (*Laughter*) Anyway, he has already told them “No, I’m not getting into this. Assyria is my friend!” You know, that’s kind of what he said to them, right? So he said, “I’m not going to do that.”

So God sends His prophet Isaiah. And He says, “Look! I know that these two guys are camped twenty miles away,” because that’s where they are, at a camp twenty miles away. He said, “I’m going to deliver you from these two. And all you have to do is ask Me for a sign. Ask it in the heights above or in the depths below. Ask it, and I’ll give you a sign.”

And this is where Ahaz says, Oh, no! Far be it from me to ever put God to the test.”

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And this is where Isaiah says what he says. And I’m going to tell it to you in just a minute. But you know why he says this. He says this because in 2 Kings 16:7 this is what we learn. *“So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Israel, saying, ‘I am your servant and your son. Come up and rescue me from the hand of the king of Syria’” (that’s Rezin), “and from the people who are attacking me.”*

So Ahaz says to Isaiah, “I would never put God to the test,” because really what he has already done is that he’s already written to the king of Assyria and said, “Come and help me.” Basically, what he’s saying is, “I don’t really want God’s help.” And how do we know that? Because of the way he’s addressed by the prophet. Look at the way he’s addressed. *“Hear then, O house of David.”* In other words, Isaiah says, “You are a son of David!”

Ahaz says, “I don’t want to be a son of David anymore. I want to be a son of Tiglath-Pileser.” If you have it, open up to Isaiah chapter 7, because this is just great. God says to him in Isaiah 7, “All right. You know, I’m tired of you. You guys are so unfaithful. I’m going to send My own Son to be the Son of David.”

This is what He says. *“And he said, ‘Hear then, O house of David. Is it too little to weary men, that you weary my God also? So therefore the LORD Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and He shall call His name Immanuel.’”*

Now I want you to go to Matthew 1:21-25 and look at the Immanuel prophecy.

Transcriber’s Note: Matthew 1:21-25, ESV. *“She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”*

“All this took place to fulfill what the LORD had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which means ‘God with us.’”

“When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him. He took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a Son. And he called His name Jesus.”

Jeff: In fact, I’ll put it up here. This is what’s interesting about it. What’s interesting about it is that in 1-17 we find that the Davidic line is in view. And Jesus is the Son of David. That’s what’s being said in that genealogy. And then when you get to 1:21-25 you get this inclusio. And I got this out of bill. We had to retrieve this out of Bill. *(Laughter)*

Transcriber’s Note: Referring to a joke between Bill Stolze, Don Maurer and Jeff.

Jeff: So this inclusio is in verse 21. *“You shall call his name Jesus.”* Verse 25: He (Joseph) called his name Jesus.

Who is this Jesus? Verse 23: *“they shall call Him Immanuel,”* or “God with us.” In other words, this Jesus is the promised Son from Isaiah 7. In other words, “the One who is going to sit on the throne of David is the Son that I promise to give, because I couldn’t find a faithful son in Judah.” That’s the idea. So God is promising to send His own Son.

Assyria does come. And what happens is that they level Damascus, such that Damascus is never the nation that they once were. They level Israel in the North. And in 722 it falls.

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And then this is the deal. This is where you have, for instance, Samaria in John 4. Samaria comes from this particular attack of Assyria. What happens is that their practice was to take the people of the land and export them and then bring other people in. But they didn't take everyone. They would leave some and take many. And so what they would do is that they would leave some and then bring others who were foreigners, often times Assyrians themselves to dominate the land. And so the people of the land, the Israelites, marry these foreigners. And that produces Samaritans. And so they're considered to be people who are impure. They've intermarried; they've gone against the law, and so on. And so that's where they come from in the New Testament.

Here's the basic time line that I gave you earlier. I'll just throw it up on there now so you can kind of see it. We start with Abraham in 2000. There's the Exodus conquest, and so on. David is born in 1041. And by the time the North falls, it's 722. So lots of years have gone by between David and the North falling, lots of years, about 250, 300, something like that. All right?

So *a reformed nation*. This is still Judah, Judah in the South. They must feel very alone now because Israel is a wrecked nation. Damascus is leveled. Hezekiah rules in Judah. And what he does is that he breaks with Assyria. He says, “We don't need Assyria's help.” Actually Hezekiah is a good king and godly. He loves the Lord. But I think that oftentimes his motivation to break with Assyria is motivated out of his devotion to the Lord, believing that the Lord will preserve him.

Hezekiah brings reform. That's not the right book. The right book is 2 chronicles 29. And in 2 chronicles 29 we find that he reforms and restores worship. So he cleanses the temple in verse 3 of 2 chronicles 29. And then in verse 20 he restores the worship. And if you want a description of Old Testament worship as it was carried out, 2 Chronicles 29:20 and following is a wonderful place to find that.

So he restores worship. Passover actually lasts longer than it's supposed to last because the people are rejoicing and having such a great time. Things are really going well. He destroys the high places. This is a good king.

Assyria returns, and this is a great story. Assyria returns. Just go here for a minute to 2 Kings chapter 18. And look at it. I'm just going to walk you through this.

In 2 Kings 18 Hezekiah is reigning in Judah. Sennacherib comes back. And there's a guy by the name of Rabshakeh. Rabshakeh is the spokesman for the king of Assyria. And he comes, and this is in verse 19 of chapter 18. He comes and he stands outside the wall. And he starts to speak to the people in the city. And remember, this is what they say. They say, “Don't talk in Hebrew.”

And he says, “Oh, I'm going to talk in Hebrew, because everybody in that city needs to hear what I'm going to say. We are going to lay a woman on you.” (*Laughter*)

And look at what he does. He talks politics. This is Rabshakeh. He says in verse 20, “*Do you think that mere words are the strategy and power for war?*” That's what he says to Judah and the people behind the walls of Jerusalem. And then he talks about their religion. He says in verse 22, “*But if you say to me, ‘We trust in the LORD our God,’ is it not He whose high places and altars have been removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, ‘You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?’*”

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And then he says this. He says, “Don’t think your size is enough. Come, make a wager with my master, the king of Assyria.” *“I will give you two thousand horses if you’re able on your part to set riders on them.”* “You don’t even have enough men to stand against us.”

And then he says, “And don’t think that God is on your side.” Verse 25: *“Moreover, is it without the LORD that I have come up against this place, to destroy it?”*

So here is a guy standing outside the gates. And he is just laying a hurt to them.

Now look at this. In 2 Kings chapter 19 verse 1 Isaiah reassures Hezekiah.

Transcriber’s Note: 2 Kings 19:1, ESV. *“As soon as King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.”*

Jeff: And so Hezekiah believes and trusts. And later in the story he lays out the letter before the LORD. He prays and Isaiah comes to him and says, “You need to trust the LORD.” And then Sennacherib comes after them. And what happens is this. Look at verse 35 of chapter 19. *“And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185 thousand in the camp of the Assyrians.”* And so God delivers them.

So this is a great story of defiance by the enemies of God. Hezekiah receives this letter. He takes it to the temple. He spread it out before God. He prays. He’s been told to take courage in heart by the prophet. He does. And then he trusts in the Lord. The Lord delivers them. It’s a fabulous story, it really is.

So we’re seeing a reformed nation here. Hezekiah is ill. He prays. God sends the prophet Isaiah to him and says, “Ask for a sign. You’ll be healed.” And he is healed.

The interesting thing about this is this. The sun god was worshiped by the Babylonians. The Babylonians come. And I think the reason why we find that Hezekiah is punished for his pride is because he doesn’t seem to give God God’s due when the Babylonians come.

Now think about why the Babylonians would have come. They worship the sun god. They see the sun move back in the sky. When you piece it together it doesn’t actually say that. But if you piece these things together, that’s kind of the conclusion you come to.

So Hezekiah is prideful. He’s going to have the kingdom pulled from him. 2 Chronicles 32:24 is where I mentioned that he doesn’t give God His due.

Transcriber’s Note: 2 Chronicles 32:24, NKJV. *“In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death, and he prayed to the LORD; and He spoke to him and gave him a sign.”*

Jeff: And I think that’s because when the Babylonians come, having witnessed the sign in the sky, Hezekiah doesn’t give God His due.

And then *a falling nation*. Let me just take you through this really quickly. Manasseh reigns in Judah after Hezekiah. Hezekiah does not raise a good son. Manasseh sins and is taken off to Assyria.

But here’s the interesting thing. He repents while he’s in Assyria. And he’s restored. That’s great.

And then Amnon comes to the throne. Amnon is evil. And then along comes Josiah. And Josiah is really the great king of Judah, leading up to the fall of Jerusalem, and we’ll look at that next time. We’ll stop there. Any questions or thoughts that you have in closing out? Yes, Bill?

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Bill McCoy: You started out with the words from God. “Don’t be like them.” Can you think of professing Christians today in churches who are any different?

Jeff: Well, for instance, I think that the New Testament tells us to be a distinct people. I think that syncretism is bad in the Old and it’s bad in the New. But I think that oftentimes we are much more comfortable and happy if we can talk about sort of blending or mixing with the culture in order to reach the culture. And it’s that latter part, in order to reach the culture, that sort of massages the conscience and says, “You know, I’m doing this for a good thing, so I have to hold my nose. But I’m doing it for the purposes of getting close to the culture.” And I don’t think that’s what the New Testament teaches. I actually think that the New Testament teaches that the distinction actually draws the world, and not the blending. When you blend, the world says, “How different are you?”, and so forth. So that’s my view on that. I don’t know what you’re asking.

Bill: What was that term you used?

Jeff: Syncretism.

Bill: Do you want to define that?

Jeff: Yes. *Sync* means *with*.

Ted: Syn-, with.

Jeff: Yes. It’s the idea of blending or being with or combining. Baal worship in Israel was syncretistic, since they took true worship of God and brought it together with Baal worship. And they had a blending of the two. Sometimes I think that’s similar.

Bishop Rodgers: It’s like Christians who consult horoscopes.

Jeff: Yes, that’s exactly right. It’s very much like that. Anybody else? No? Okay, well let me pray.

Father, thank You for this day and for the time You’ve given, for the love You’ve shed abroad in our hearts, and for the time we’ve had here to be in Your word. We certainly pray, Father, that You will not only teach us the history of this, but that You’ll help us to understand, Lord, that You call us to holiness just like You called ancient Israel to holiness. And we pray, Father, that having given us the resources for that holiness in Christ that we would draw down on them by the power of the Holy Spirit living in us, that we might not be syncretistic, but that we might be devoted to You and that we might be apart from the world. And so, Father, we ask that You’ll bless us in these things, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.