

## *“The Fall of the Empire” Part 2*

### **A Walk Through the Old Testament - Class 19**

Various Scriptures

Dr. Jeff Stivason

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**Jeff:** I want you to know that Roger’s wife, Michelle, and Tab have become close. And last night my wife got a text from Michelle asking, “I wonder what they’re going to do to Don tomorrow.” *(Laughter)* I mean, it’s leaked out into the women folk. *(Laughter)* So men, you’ve got to help me correct this. *(Laughter)* I’m the victim. *(Laughter)*

**Brave Man:** You’re the victim.

**Jeff:** I appreciate it. Those are kind words. But I always tell people that there are fifty or sixty guys that come out Friday morning at 6:30 for a Bible study. And they all say, “Get out of here!” *(Laughter)* “None of these guys look really serious.” *(Laughter)* So it’s great, and it’s a real honor and privilege to be able to be here with you in this capacity. So thanks very much; I appreciate it.

**Tom Hans:** The honor is ours.

**Jeff:** Why don’t you lead us?

**Don Maurer:** Yes. I’m going to do something a little different this morning. Since it’s the Friday before Christmas, I’m going to play and you’re going to sing the first verse of “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” We all know that, don’t we? Okay.

**Jeff:** All right. *(The men sing):*

Hark! The herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King!”  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild;  
God and sinners reconciled.  
Joyful all ye nations rise;  
Join the triumph of the skies!  
With th’angelic hosts proclaim,  
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”  
Hark! The herald angels sing:  
“Glory to the newborn King!”

**Jeff:** All right; let’s pray together. Our gracious heavenly Father, we thank You and praise You for the God that You are and for the way in which You’ve revealed Yourself. We’re thankful, Father, for the Lord Jesus Christ and for how He is indeed the Word, and for how He is the One who came to explain You to us, to shed light upon that darkened room of the Old Testament, to show us what was always there—one God in three Persons, and a God who is committed to saving His people. We’re thankful for that and we praise You. And we come before You now asking that You will indeed bless us as we gather so early in the morning to open Your word. We ask that You will indeed be with us, and that what we learn will not simply be an academic exercise with the adding of knowledge to knowledge. But we certainly pray that the knowledge that we have would give rise to praxis, delight, the living out of the Christian life. And so, Father, help us to

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have a consistent walk. And Lord, as we look to You, we know that You will enable us to do that.

Father, as we come we pray that You'll open our eyes to the truth of Your word, to unlock the truth of it, the beauty of it. And we pray, Father, that You will not only hear our prayers with regard to making us more like Christ, especially in the use of Your word, but also we pray for those who are dear to us. And certainly we think about Bruce Bickel and the setback that he has had. And yet, Father, we're thankful for the way in which you've constituted this man. We pray, Father, that he would continue to battle forward. We're thankful for his getting better already. We pray that would continue.

Father, we certainly pray for Sig and Nancy. And Lord, we are thankful for the way in which they've battled throughout these last many months, and ask that You would continue to give them that spirited vigor, and that You will continue to grant them good news. Father, we're so thankful that the cancer is in remission. And we pray that would continue to be the case. We're thankful for Sig's presence with us, and we just pray that You'd continue to bless him and strengthen him and Nancy as well.

Father, we certainly pray for Bill, and we are thankful that he's with us. We are thankful not only for his presence, but we ask on behalf of him for Your presence in his life as he faces future procedures. And so, Lord, we pray that You will grant him success in those. But we're thankful for the health that he now enjoys, and pray that will continue.

Father, we're thankful for Leah and for her move home. And we're also thankful for Paul and for the way in which he has provided an example of how to love a parent, and we're thankful for that. And we just pray that You will continue to bless not only him but his mom and his family as they gather around and care for her.

Father, we pray for Ryan. And Lord, we just ask that You will be with him,. Especially in light of this news about his kidney stone. We ask that You'll help him to pass that stone soon, and that You'll relieve him of the pain that he is obviously in. And Father, we pray that You'll do these things for our good, and most of all for Your glory, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. You know, I had a kidney stone myself. And I went to the doctor years ago. And they didn't have a bed, so I was out in the hall. And this nurse came by and she said, "What are you in for?"

And I said, "I have a kidney stone."

And she looked at me and she said, "I had a baby. A kidney stone is worse." (*Laughter*) So don't let those women tell you! (*Laughter*) Having a baby is nothin'. (*Laughter*) Please erase that from the tape. (*Laughter*) All right. Hey, enough of this goofing around.

All right, let's think about today. And today we're going to think about a very pivotal moment in the history of Israel. Today we're going to think about *the fall of Jerusalem*. We already looked at the fall of the North last time we were together. And so the North is gone. We're going to look at the South today.

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And I’m going to just remind you by way of a map carefully drawn. (*Laughter*) This is the scale. This is Damascus here. This is Assyria here. This is Babylon here. And this is Israel. And so we’ll just make this the North and this is the South.

All right. So we’re going to look at *the fall of the South*. The North fell the last time. It fell to Assyria. And so the South is going to fall today.

Now one of the things that I want to remind you of today and throughout this lesson is that when the South falls, it’s falling because of some of the intrigue that’s going on in some of these other nations. And that’s one of the things I want to keep our eyes on as we look today at the fall of the South.

The next week’s reading is here, and it focuses on the Exile—Nehemiah, Ezra. And Jeremiah 29 is a letter to the exiles, and we’ll talk more about that later.

I want us to think today, and I’ve got a long outline. I want to think today about just a couple of introductory points and *the international scene*. I want to think about *the prophet Daniel* just for a minute, and more about *Assyria* and *Josiah in Judah* as he rules in Judah. I want to think about *a couple of prophets*. Then I want to think about *the international scene* again. Then I want to go back to *Habakkuk*, and then *the fall of Jerusalem*. So I just want to pull some threads together for you today and give you a taste of what’s going on in the life of the Southern tribe of Israel.

So first of all let’s think about *some introductory points*. And the first thing that I want to say to you is this. We ended on a pretty good note, but we traced a couple of sons of Hezekiah, and it didn’t look really all that great as we left last time. But Hezekiah was really a good moment in the life of Israel because Hezekiah led in reforms.

Now I have up here *that superficial reform*. And the reason why I say that is simply this. It’s because if you look at Isaiah the prophet, and you notice that he’s prophesying at the same time, one of the things that you realize is that here is a man who is talking about not just something outward. But he’s talking about a heart condition that seems to be pervasive in Israel.

For instance, there is the keeping of the Sabbath day. There is the offering of sacrifices. There are those kinds of things that are going on. But he continues to hammer away at what is underneath. What is more, he points out that God looks at this place and doesn’t see anyone there that’s righteous enough to intercede on their behalf. And so He has to go Himself and intercede on their behalf. So God sees problems underneath that surface stuff just can’t care for.

So you can redo the worship and you can institute old policies and you can get everything going in the right direction, at least outwardly. But if the internal is a problem, then it’s a problem no matter what the outside looks like. So there’s an internal problem in the life of the people of God. And that’s what you find Isaiah pointing out.

So Manasseh comes to power. Manasseh is in power about 55 years. And he returns Israel to its paganism and its idolatry in the South. And he’s wicked. And we learn that he repents. But he doesn’t repent until he’s in Assyria.

But then Ammon comes to the throne. And Ammon has a very short reign. But here’s the important thing to realize. Ammon is anti-Assyria.

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Now this is one of those situations that you have to just keep in mind, because there are pro-Assyrians and there are anti-Assyrians. And, for instance, Ahaz was a pro-Assyrian.

So in the South, when the politicians would look at what was happening and going on in the world, some like Ahaz who sat on the throne at that time would say, “You know what? What we really need to do is that we really need to become friends with Assyria.”

Now there were others obviously in the land who were saying, “No!” There was an anti-Assyrian party. “No, we should not become friends with Assyria. And that doesn’t mean we ought to be anti-Assyrian because we’re pro-God.” I mean, think about it. There are Republicans out there who are Republicans not because they believe in the Christian agenda, right? There are Republicans out there for all sorts of reasons. There are conservative Republicans who are conservative socially. There are Republicans like Arnold Schwarzenegger who was a conservative fiscally but not socially, and so on. You see, just like there are all sorts of different politicians who are in different camps for different reasons, so too in the life of Israel.

So you have these two major groups—pro-Assyria and anti-Assyria. And Ammon was anti-Assyria. Now his reign is short-lived. And Josiah replaces him on the throne at eight years old. And we often say something like this. Wow! Eight years old! Well, somebody must have longed to restore the line of David with somebody that they thought might be a hopeful candidate.

No! Look, this was the anti-Assyria party that put Josiah in, with the hope that Josiah would be anti-Assyria. So there were things at work at play under the surface that were causing the decisions in Israel, and at this point in Jerusalem in that day, that I don’t think that we can take for granted that were just theological in motive.

So Josiah gets put on the throne. And he now begins to be groomed as an anti-Assyrian. And that leads us to *the international scene*. Any questions about this, or anything before we move there? No? Okay.

All right. So let’s think about this for a minute. King Sennacherib is ruler in Assyria. He’s murdered by two sons. He’s actually worshiping his god, and they kill him. The two sons flee. And they basically become irritants to Assyria for the rest of its time and for the rest of their lives.

Now there’s another son, Essar-Haddon. Essar-Haddon is in Babylon at the time. He is trying to keep order in Babylon. So he remains prince in Babylon during the time that his father is alive. But once his father dies and is murdered by Hezekiah’s two brothers, he returns to seize power. And so he does. He takes power in Assyria.

Now this is the interesting thing. What happens? Babylon sees her opportunity to make a move. Right now she’s a vassal country. And so she’s a servant country. But she is a constant thorn in the side of Assyria.

So when Essar-Haddon moves back to Assyria she says, “This is our opportunity to rebel.” And so she does. So she rebels against Assyria, seeing the opportunity.

Think about it. The king’s dead, the prince is gone. It’s a great time to rebel, right? So she does. But Essar-Haddon is able to push down the rebellion, and so he says, “I’ve got a great idea.” He’s going to do the same thing. He’s going to model his solution, because

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he’s really in an intractable situation. “How am I going to keep this particular country from continuing to rise up against me?” He says, “I’m going to do the same thing my father did.”

So just as Sennacherib was ruler here and Essar-Haddon was ruler here, he’s going to take two sons, Ashurbanipal and Shamash-Shum-Bukan. *(Laughter)* If you’re looking for a name, those are great names. *(Laughter)* I’ll tell you what? How about Noah and Shamash-Shum-Bukan? *(Laughter)* You know, you can always shorten it to Noah and Shum. *(Laughter)*

Okay, I digress. *(Laughter)* But Ashurbanipal is in Assyria and Shamash was in Babylon. And so Essar-Haddon thinks it’s all good. I’ve got it taken care of, right?

Well, while he has it all good, or so he thinks, he believes that it’s time now for Assyria to take care of Egypt. Egypt and Assyria are the two competing powers of the day. And so now Assyria having taken this problem in hand decides that he’s going to deal with Egypt. And he does. And he actually takes the battle to Egypt. And he penetrates Egypt to the very heart of Egypt. He goes to Thebes.

And so Assyria is the dominant power in the world at this point. And you have to remember that the politicians in Jerusalem are watching all this. And there are pro-Assyrians and there are anti-Assyrians. And the pro-Assyrians are always trying to get the ruler to buddy up to Assyria just like Ahaz did. And the Anti-Assyrians are always trying to maintain independence, right? So that’s what’s going on. That’s the international scene, if you will, as we look at what is leading up to the fall of Jerusalem.

So now *the prophet Nahum*. You remember that you have to go back about a hundred years before this time. And if you do, you notice that there was another prophet that went to Nineveh, an Assyrian city. And that was Jonah. And you remember that Jonah is sent there by God before Assyria is a major power to be contended with.

And yet I want you to think about this. We went through Jonah together. And I said to you at the time that we went through Jonah that the major message to Jonah is a question. Is it ever right to rebel against God? Is it ever right to disobey God? And the answer was no. It’s never right to disobey God.

But along with all of that, packed into that question was the behavior of the prophet, because God said to the prophet, “I want you to go to Nineveh and preach repentance.” And he didn’t want to go. And so the question was is it ever right to disobey God? And we answered the question. No, it is never right to disobey God.

But why? And this is the question that is answered and not answered. But part of the answer I think that we might be able to give is this. The prophet knew that Assyria was on the rise. And he knew this, because remember what the prophet says in Amos. God doesn’t do anything without first revealing it to His prophets. Jonah knew that Assyria was likely the next nation to give Israel trouble. And so he did not want to go there and preach repentance.

And then they repent! And it looks good. But it doesn’t last, because about a hundred years later you find Nahum. And Nahum is preaching its destruction because of their wickedness.

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So it’s just interesting, right? It’s really interesting that here it is. All right, compare these two guys. Do you remember Elisha? And Elisha is shown that Hazael will come against Israel and do all kinds of atrocities to it. And he’s standing there and he’s telling Hazael, “You’re going to be made king.” And then he looks at him to the point where it’s embarrassing. And Hazael says, “Why are you looking at me like that?”

And he said, “Because I know what you’re going to do to Israel.” And yet he doesn’t do anything. Jonah is called, and he seems to know what Assyria is going to do to Israel, and he’s all bent out of shape. And he’s like “I don’t wanna go!” That sort of thing, right? I just find the comparison to be interesting.

Anyway, this prophecy and this proclamation by Nahum is just before Assyria and basically their descent, their weakness. So that’s what’s happening. And I say this. I’m putting this in because I want you to know that God through His prophets is always aware. God knows what’s going on because God has planned what’s going on. So God throughout it all is bringing prophets to bear upon His people and His saints. This is why when He says, for instance, to Ahaz through Isaiah the prophet, “Look, I’m going to deliver you from this. These are smoking firebrands that are there. I’m going to deliver you from Damascus and Israel. So just trust Me. I’ll give you a sign.”

And Ahaz says, “No. I’m part of the pro-Assyrian party. I’ve already signed up with Assyria. I’m good; thanks, God.”

And this is the kind of thing that I think we need to remember. God is speaking to His people through His prophets, telling them, “I’m in control of all this.” So that’s it. I realize that we’re taking a huge chunk and going after everything quickly here. But are there any questions or thoughts that you have before I go further?

**Ted Wood:** My only thought about the pro-Assyrian and anti-Assyrian factions, those two factions, are mirrored in the Jewish experience right up through the Holocaust and everything—those who felt that it was best to find some kind of accommodation with the German state, and those who were out to resist it. It’s just interesting that it continues through history. The Jews are a small group. What do you do? Because Assyria was a monster.

**Jeff:** You know, the thing is that you know what’s happening. I mean, their taking the wrong view, because remember that in the North, when they agitated Assyria, Assyria leaves for six years, and doesn’t come back to actually take Samaria and Israel for six years. So that’s what they’re banking on. They’re banking on that in the slow process of time something will happen.

But what they don’t seem to be banking on is that God would show up, you know, and do something miraculous, or even natural. Anything else? No? Okay.

All right. Let’s go back to Assyria for just a minute. Essar-Haddon dies. He’s the king here. Now remember, he’s got Ashurbanipal as prince here, and he’s got Shamash here. And Ashurbanipal who is the prince here takes power in Assyria.

So you know what that’s going to do. These are brothers. (*Jeff laughs*) The brother in Assyria now has power in Assyria. This brother, he knows that he’s just trying to keep rebellion from happening in Babylon. So you know what’s going to happen. And it does.

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However, Egypt who is a vassal servant down here over time, and because of distance, has become more of an ally. So hold that thought.

Now what happens here is that Babylon, under the leadership of Shamash-Shum-Bukan, rebels. And they rise. And Shamash-Shum-Bukan leads the rebellion. Isn't that interesting? I mean, two brothers fight, right? Over a toy. *(Laughter)* Anyway, Shamash-Shum-Bukan is defeated. And he commits suicide because of it.

So think about this. You have Assyria now in transition of power. Babylon moves against it with brothers fighting. You have Egypt down here, who is more of an ally instead of a vassal state. And they're going to help Assyria, okay?

So the problem is that what Assyria has done is to cut off many trade routes through Babylon. And so they're re-routed through this section here through Israel and the southern tribes. So what you find is that you find that there's a closing in on the southern tribes that makes it really apparent that they're part of all the political intrigues that are going on in the world at this time. So they're relocated through Judah.

Ashurbanipal's reign lasts 13 years. The last thirteen years of his reign are very obscure. What we have in terms of the annals of Assyria are not a lot of information about him, oddly enough. I don't know why. But they're obscure.

But what happens is that—and this is a great name, isn't it?—Ashur-Edo-Eloni succeeds him. And the handwriting is on the wall. Remember, I said to you that Nahum was prophesying about their collapse. And he was prophesying about their collapse just prior to their weakness. By the time that Ashur takes power, that weakness is the handwriting on the wall. Assyria is falling. They're in the midst of being dismantled internally. And the constant chipping away by Babylon has had its effect. And so what's happening is that they're beginning to fall. They're on the cusp of collapse. So that's where we are in terms of history.

I do apologize to some of you for a lot of history in this lesson. There's a lot. But what I want you to catch is that sometimes we think to ourselves that when we think about Israel and Judah we hear these names that are mentioned and we say to ourselves, “Well, that's kind of neat.” But I don't think we realize that these are two powers in the world at this time. And they're being affected by the other powers in the world at the time. And when you see the overall picture, what I think you see is that you see the hand of God moving in the midst of it all.

And one of the things that I would say is this. And I'm going to say something that's probably not going to be controversial here, but I know it has a tendency to be controversial elsewhere. But for instance, I think that when you look at the life of nations, they're not super long, a couple hundred years. They rise and they fall. And you know, I think that to suggest to some people that America may have its time of falling as well, it's like they get really indignant and angry about that, you know? But it's funny. We've watched the U.S.S.R. dismantle, you know? So we've watched a major country collapse in our own day. And to think that we're not under the hand of God in the way that these other nations were under the hand of God is really foolish.

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But what is more, to think that we have some special blessing from God,. That we’re going to last forever as is, is ludicrous, I think. I just find that really difficult to think about. Yes, Don?

**Don Maurer:** Yes. And that’s why I’m very appreciative of what you’re doing, going through all of these things, because it’s been said that those who don’t learn from the lessons of history are doomed to repeat it. And so even though these things may seem very obscure to us in the Old Testament. It’s all written for our instruction, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians. Yes, thank you.

**Ted:** I mean, there is tremendous political foment all through Assyria. And if you were reading the *Jerusalem Times* in 620 B.C., you would say, “My gosh! Did you hear about that battle between those two brothers?” We’d be fixated, just like we’re fixated on politics now. And in the end it didn’t make any difference.

**Jeff:** Yes, that’s right.

**Ted:** All the political foment of the nations is like Isaiah said. “*The nations are as a drop in the bucket.*” They are “*as nothing.*” And for any Christians to get overly worked up about the politics of today means that they don’t understand that these things are almost as nothing.

**Jeff:** Yes, and that’s really true. And I’ll just say it. The trouble is that Christianity and Republicanism have been too closely tied together. And you can see it in the way that President Trump has sort of tried to recognize the enemies of Christianity and treat them like enemies. Remember way back when he was talking about this when some of the foment of homosexuality was going on, and some of the implications of that for our country? Remember how he described it? You know, at one point he talked about them being enemies. It’s almost like, “We don’t like them either,” that kind of thing. And you want to say, “That’s not how the church handles those kinds of social issues,” right? We don’t treat them as enemies.

**Brave Man:** I think it was this week that the U.N., under the direction of the United States, is now pushing for proper treatment of homosexuals around the world. So we are starting as a country trying to get people to respect others in spite of their differences. So he may have started out with the opinion that he didn’t like gays, but he’s not presenting that now.

**Jeff:** No. In fact, I remember this. Do you guys remember? I’m not a super-political guy. In fact, I feel that you may think less of me after you hear this. But I kind of feel like I woke up and I felt like, Hey, are we in the middle of an impeachment? (*Laughter*) I just don’t follow it, you know?

But do you remember when George W. and John Carey were running against each other? Do you remember the climate of our country at that time? I mean, it was incredible! Everybody thought that when John Carey got in that the country was going to go so left that it wasn’t even funny. And when Bush got in he was going to amend the Constitution. It was that kind of foment.

And I read an article right before the election. And the article was written from the perspective of an Irish columnist. And it was published in our local paper. And it basically said, “What are you Americans getting all upset about?” Because John Carey, if



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he gets the election, is going to move to the right, and Bush is going to move to the left. It's his second term; he's going to move to the left. And Bush got in and he moved to the left. *(Laughter)* Anyway, it was just kind of funny.

But you're right. We get all exercised about all this stuff going on. And really, this is just men trying to position themselves. I mean, some of us have better views about men and politics than I might be expressing now. But my idea is that is that God is sovereign over this. And oftentimes men who are placed in power feel the pressure of those who have put them there, and they begin to capitulate. And there are very few men out there who can withstand the pressures and be their own men.

And whether you like it or not, I think Obama was that kind of guy. I mean, he was pressing forward with his agenda. Not that I liked it, but he was pressing forward with his agenda, regardless of whether anybody liked it or not. And no matter what you said about the man, this was a man according to principle. Maybe not principles I agree with or that other people agree with, but he was working out his principles. And his principles were more socialized medicine and all that sort of thing, right? And it didn't seem to matter what the country thought about it or not. He was going to move forward. And I am sort of way off my topic. *(Laughter)* Not being a political guy, I'm really out of my depth. So I'm going to move back away from politics. Yes?

**Isaac Meck:** Yes. Just one comment. Can you explain the handwriting on the wall that happened?

**Jeff:** Yes. I'm not talking there about the Daniel handwriting on the wall. What I'm talking about is, like any nation that has existed as long as they have, there's internal corruption that's taking place. There's family infighting. You can't have two brothers that are taking two countries and warring against each other without there being internal problems. These internal problems are compounded not just by Babylon, but Damascus which is still a vassal country, and is not happy to be one. Israel is a vassal country. And Egypt has moved into a position of being this more or less. There are all these external problems compounding the internal family structures. So the handwriting in that sense is on the wall.

**Isaac:** But what does that phrase mean? What is this handwriting on the wall? Are you saying that it's just infighting?

**Jeff:** Yes. By the time the last ruler of Assyria comes to power, I think he recognizes that the handwriting on the wall is that he recognizes that he is leading a country that's on the decline. That's what I mean. Does that make sense?

**Ted:** Does the brother understand the expression “the handwriting on the wall?” Is that the question?

**Isaac:** Yes.

**Ted:** The expression “the handwriting on the wall.” Do you understand that expression?

**Isaac:** That's the question, yes.

**Ted:** He doesn't understand it. I mean, those of us from another generation take it for granted.

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**Jeff:** “Handwriting on the wall” basically means that the conclusion is obvious, although we’ve not reached the conclusion. So the conclusion to this king was obvious, that we’re on the downhill slope.

**Ted:** anybody who lives with millennials knows that we speak different languages. *(Laughter)* I have a millennial daughter. We’re in another world. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** You know, I wonder. This has been enlightening to me. I sometimes wonder if this is why my kids go—

**Transcriber’s Note:** Jeff mimics a blank facial expression. *(Laughter)*

**Isaac:** Maybe you can explain Daniel.

**Bill Stolze:** Explain the Scripture.

**Jeff:** Yes. We’re going to get to this. So Babylon is going to take over Assyria. Babylon is eventually going to fall. And just before Babylon falls a hand appears. And it writes. What is it?

**Don Maurer:** “*Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin, peres.*”

**Jeff:** “You’ve been weighed and found wanting. And so you’re done.” And at that point Babylon falls. I mean, I would imagine that “handwriting on the wall” comes from that.

**Sig Tragard:** He was in the men’s room writing on the wall. *(Laughter)*

**Paul Deffenbaugh:** Sig!

**Don Maurer:** Typical Sig.

**Jeff:** All right. So Josiah comes to power at 8. But Josiah comes to faith at 16, and so enacts reforms. In 2 Kings 13 he enacts reforms. Part of the reforms he enacts is that from ill use and misuse the temple has been neglected. So he commissions Hilkiah the priest to come and do some renovation in the temple.

While Hilkiah is doing renovations in the temple he stumbles across what?

**Paul:** The Law.

**Jeff:** The word of God. In particular he probably discovers the Law. And one of the reasons why it’s probably the Law that he discovers is that there are two types of prophecy at this time. There is *foretelling* and there is *forth-telling*. *Foretelling* means to tell the future. *Forth-telling* is to apply existing revelation to the present day. Preaching today is prophetic in the sense that it’s forth-telling—taking current existing revelation and applying it to our present day.

Now one of the reasons why we think that it’s the Law that Hilkiah discovers is because if you take the prophets that were writing in this day, a lot of Deuteronomy, for instance, appears in these prophecies. And it’s almost as if the prophets are sort of harvesting the pie and applying it to the southern tribe of Judah in this particular day.

So *this great find*. Manasseh has probably destroyed as many texts as he could find. But faithful priests have taken them and hidden them. And so it’s for Hilkiah to discover these texts.

Josiah’s response is a wonderful one. It’s a response of repentance. Remember, he tears his garments and repents and really strives for greater reform.

But we’ll leave him for just a second and go to *the prophets* for another minute. You remember Jeremiah, a very transitional figure. Jeremiah is the prophet who is both prior

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to the fall of Jerusalem and the post-fall of Jerusalem. And he is a prophet who basically says to these folks that “what you need to do”—Jeremiah 29—“is that you need to go into exile happily. What you need to do is, you need to keep faithful. You need to pray for the good of the city. Have gardens, raise your families. And you need to be there because you’re going to be there seventy years. And then you need to enjoy it while you’re there. Have a happy countenance.” (*Laughter*) “This is God’s punishment on us for the neglect of His law.”

So Jeremiah is left in Jerusalem after the siege. But he’s really a hated prophet because he’s telling the people the truth. There are false prophets in the day who are saying, “no, no, no; this isn’t going to happen. Jeremiah is a liar.” Jeremiah is thrown into a well for a time, and so on. He actually dictates a portion of prophecy. The king burns it. He has to re-dictate it. It’s just a mess. No wonder he’s called “the weeping prophet,” because what a burden it was for him to be in this particular time in the life of God’s people.

Zephaniah is the great-great-great-grandson of Hezekiah. And he is prophesying doom to the people. And I’m not going to stay there. I’m going to go back to *the international scene* for just a minute. Think about the reform of Josiah. Things are going really well. This is during the last king of Assyria.

Now Babylon attacks Assyria in these days. Now that means that Babylon is going to attack this way. Now what does that mean? Egypt who is now an ally is going to come to the rescue of Assyria.

However,. Remember what we said. We said that Josiah was placed on the throne by anti-Assyrians. There’s an anti-Assyrian party spirit in Josiah. So what does Josiah do? He goes out to try to intercept the Egyptians who are coming up to help the Assyrians. And Josiah dies in the midst of that battle. So there is lots of political intrigue happening, lots of positioning going on. Judah comes under Egypt’s power because of that.

So it’s interesting. They don’t come under Assyrian power. They come under Egyptian power again. Isn’t that interesting, especially when you think about the Exodus. So they’re under Egyptian power.

Habakkuk comes along. And Habakkuk says to the people in the South who are now under Egyptian rule, “God is going to do something in our day that you will not believe, even if I told you. And I am going to bring these folks down on you,” right?

And this is where Habakkuk says, “Wait a minute! Time out! We’re bad, but we’re not that bad,” right? (*Laughter*) And God says, “No, that’s not the right attitude,” right? And so “*the just shall live by faith.*” That’s a great statement, and we need to take it seriously. “It’s a final admonition to trust Me, and you’re going into exile.”

And what happens is that we find *the fall of Jerusalem.*” Jehoahaz rules in Josiah’s stead. He’s got a three-month reign. He’s evil. Babylon defeats Egypt. Remember, Egypt is Assyria’s ally. Babylon has defeated Assyria. Babylon now defeats Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. Jehoikim and Jehoiachin are both—guess what?—moving from being anti-Assyrian to anti-Babylonian. They’re the puppet kings who are on the throne. But they are opposed to Babylon’s rule. Guess what? Zedekiah comes in. He is anti-Babylonian in his rule. He rebels against Babylon. And Babylon says, “We’re not putting up with this.” And they come and they sack the city, lead people out with

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fishhooks through their noses, and things like that. A horrible, horrible thing. The siege is just an ugly, ugly thing. And they go into exile. And they basically inherit the fruit of the curses.

Next week I won't be here. But the following week we'll pick up with *life in exile*. Any questions or thoughts before we pray? Merry Christmas! (*Laughter*) Any thoughts before we wrap up?

All right, why don't we pray? Father in heaven, we give You thanks for this day and for the time You've given us to be together. Father, we take this time in the life of Judah and Benjamin. And we think about it and take it to heart because we realize that this is the line of David. And it is put into exile. And it's not until Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, comes and is born into the poverty of the land that You set Your King on the throne, who will not be moved. That King will not restore geographical land, but will restore life, and life in abundance. And the whole earth is His. And Father, we're thankful that the whole earth being His, that He reclaimed us, and that we've been brought out of the exile of darkness, brought out of the kingdom of darkness and set down into the kingdom of the Son of Your love. Thank You, Father, that You did this in Christ on our behalf. And thank You that You gave us the Holy Spirit, who is a deposit and guarantee of a better life even yet to come. So Father, we thank You and praise You. Help us to learn from the past. Help us to learn from Old testament history, knowing that it is for our learning. And help us, Lord, as we think about this time of year, to appropriately anticipate the remembrance of the coming of the birth of King David,. The greater Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ. So we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. (*Applause*)