

Easy Come, Easy Go

2 Kings Overview

(preached Pine Grove 3/22/15; Sunday PM)

Introduction

Parenting is often filled with empty threats.

WE will say things like...

“If you don’t come her, I am taking that pacifier.”

There’s no way that would happen because that pacifier is one of our favorite weapons.

Or we will say...

“If you don’t eat this lunch, we aren’t giving you anything else to eat.”

And we all know how that goes....

The world is also filled with empty threats...

Drivers break traffic laws regularly without any consequences.

People are warned by their doctors to change their lifestyle, but many fail to do so because they don’t see any immediate consequences.

Obviously, I am not saying empty threats are a good thing.

If you are a parent, your children need to experience the consequences of your threats.

When they break clearly established rules, they need to be punished.

Why?

Because it is confusing to a child when threats are not followed.

The same way it is confusing to you when you feel good but your doctor is clearly concerned with your health.

Warnings are given to motivate us to right action.

They are meant to motivate a change in behavior that leads to good results.

I tend to think that people's lives would be a whole lot different if every sin came with immediate consequences.

Yet, that is not the case.

God is a gracious God and often times, the consequences don't come immediately.

But it is a huge mistake to think that God is issuing empty threats.

I assure you that HE is not.

IF you remember from last week, God went to Solomon with a warning in 1 Kings 9...

⁴ As for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, ⁵ then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I ^[b]promised to your father David, saying, ^[c]You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’
⁶ “But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, ⁷ then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will ^[d]cast out of My sight.

We have learned that Solomon was the 3rd king of Israel.

He followed his father David, who followed Saul, who was Israel’s 1st king.

By the time we got to chapter 9, Solomon had built the Lord the 1st Jewish temple.

And he had dedicated it to God, but after the dedication, Solomon was warned not to disobey the LORD.

We all found out in the remaining chapters of 1 Kings that Solomon did in fact disobey the LORD and chase after other gods.

And that had some devastating consequences in Israel.

One was the division of the nation into 2 parts.

The northern part kept the name Israel, while the southern part was known as Judah.

And the rest of 1 Kings was simply a description of how Israel began to fall apart.

But there was also another consequence of Solomon's disobedience in the verses that I just read.

God simply told Solomon that disobedience would lead to them being cut off from the land.

And that was a reference to the Promised Land.

IF you remember, Israel has entered the Promised land in the book of Joshua.

As we have moved through the Bible, here is a very simple review of what has happened to Israel from Genesis to 2 Kings.

Genesis was the story Israel getting a start from God's call of Abraham.

Exodus was the story of Israel getting some people under Moses.

Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were the story of Israel getting the Law.

Joshua was the story of Israel getting a land.

Judges was the story of Israel getting in trouble.

Ruth was the story of Israel getting grace.

1 and 2 Samuel was the story of Israel getting a king.

1 Kings was the story of Israel getting split in two.

For half of the time, Israel has been in the land.

And though God was the One who cleared the way for them to enter, it was no small task.

There were military victories and defeats and it took time to settle the land.

Yet, God clearly warned Solomon and all of Israel that disobedience would carry the consequence of leaving the land.

In the 1980s, I watched the Cosby show which was the story of the Huxtable family.

And one of the shows most famous scenes was when the Dad, Cliff Huxtable (played by Bill Cosby)....

Comes to talk to his son, Theo, about his bad grades in school.

Theo says that Cs are the best he can do, and that he doesn't even care to try harder.

And Cliff responds with his famous line..

“Oh, you are going to try harder. I'm your father, and you are going to do better because I said so...”

“Boy, I brought you into this world and I'll take you out!”

Well, that is the clear warning here to Solomon and the entire nation.

Solomon and Israel, I brought you into this land and I can take you out of it.

And now that Solomon and Israel have fallen into habitual sin, it is time for them to be removed from the land.

And that is the story of 2 Kings...

The first 17 chapters end with the removal of the northern kingdom of Israel from the land...

And then the final 8 chapters end with Judah being removed from the land as well....

And that is really the simplest way to outline 2 Kings...

I. Israel Falls (1-17)

II. Judah Falls (18-25)

Now, we are obviously going to look at more than those two events..

But those are the key events that really define 2 Kings..

And before we get into the text, consider how horrible that would be.

You have set up your home.

You have lived here all your life.

All you know is living in Israel.

Then all of a sudden, an army invades and conquers the land and takes you captive.

WE sometimes lose sight of how tragic that was for Israel.

We read about it, but to fully understand it, we need to put ourselves in their shoes.

Imagine an army from Canada invading SC and taking your home and land and then taking you and your family to live up there.

We can't imagine it, but that is what happened to Israel and Judah.

Their sin led to them losing their home.

Such is the consequence of sin at times.

Yet, another reason for all of us to choose the path of obedience and blessing in our lives even today.

So, let's get started by looking at the events that lead up to Israel getting evicted from the land...

I. Israel Falls (1-17)

As 2 Kings begins, we land in a time when the kings of Israel and Judah are doing evil in the land.

Last week, we met Elijah the prophet.

God had intended to rule Israel and Judah through the kings that he set over the people...

But since most were corrupt and disobedient, God sent prophets to the people.

They were spokesman for God.

Their ministry was to call the people back to God.

Last week, Elijah challenged the false prophets of Baal, who was a god that many worshipped instead of the God of the Israel.

And we get into 2 Kings 1, we see Elijah's ministry continuing.

But in chapter 2, we witness an unusual end to Elijah's ministry.

2 Kings 2:1ff...

2 And it came about when the Lord was about to take up Elijah by a^[a] whirlwind to heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

In 2 Kings 2:1-12, Elijah is taken up to heaven without dying.

He joins Enoch in Gen 5 as the only two men in Scripture who never died...

But instead were taken to heaven by God.

Many believe that Elijah will return to earth along with Enoch in the tribulation as the 2 witnesses that call Israel back to God...

I do think Elijah will be one of these two prophets, but I think Moses will be the other...

Elijah is also the one who appeared with Moses when Jesus was transfigured before the disciples into his glorious body.

Elijah is simply representative of the prophets of God and Moses of the Law of God.

And in 2 Kings 2, he is taken up to heaven, but his last act is to pass on his ministry to Elisha.

So, Elisha becomes the next prophet that goes and tries to call the people of God to repentance.

Elisha takes part in some incredible miracles of God.

In chapter 4, he multiplies the oil of a poor widow so that she can get out of debt.

In chapter 4, God uses Elisha to bring a boy back to life who dies after being struck in the head.

In chapter 5, we see Namaan, a Gentile, who is healed from leprosy when he follows Elisha's instructions to bathe in the Jordan River.

Then in chapter 6, we read about another incredible miracle of Elisha.

Some men working near the Jordan River and then are cutting trees and the head of an axe falls into the river.

Elisha throws a stick into the river and the axe head floats to the surface.

Now, to recap chapters 4-7, Elisha...

Multiples oil out of thin air to provide for a poor widow.

He raises a young boy from the dead.

He heals a Gentile man suffering from leprosy.

He makes an axe float on water.

All of these are very similar to the ministry of Jesus when HE comes to earth.

He raises a young girl from the dead.

He multiplies fish and bread to feed a group of people.

He heals a man with leprosy.

He shows mercy to a Gentile man.

And HE walks on water.

For Jews who were experts in the OT, the miracles of Jesus were a clear indication that HE was sent from God as well.

As we move to chapter 9, we see the fate of Jezebel.

Remember her?

She was the evil wife of Ahab, who persecuted the prophets of God.

She led Ahab away to worship the false gods of Baal.

Yet, after God judged the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel...

He said that the dogs would eat the flesh of Jezebel, and in 2 Kings 9, that is what happens.

She is thrown out of a window to her death, and the dogs come and eat of all leaving only a skull, feet and hands only.

All the while in 2 Kings, most of the kings that are coming to power are evil kings, but every once in a while, we find a good king..

One of those kings is found in 2 Kings 12:1 when Joash becomes king in Judah.

And that starts a good run of kings for Judah.

The next 3 kings of Judah will all be good kings, further proof that doing the right thing in the Lord's eyes brings blessing to a people and land.

In chapter 13, we see the death of Elisha.

Following that in chapters 14 -16, we see a series of evil kings in the northern kingdom of Israel...

Which leads up to the events of chapter 17...

Read with me in 2 Kings 17:6...

⁶In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

IT was the custom of an invading army to carry off the conquered people and put them in foreign lands.

Here is a map of where Israelites would have been relocated.

Most of the areas here were all NE of Nineveh.

The towns where they settled were 500 miles or more from their homes in Israel.

It would be like someone coming to Fairview and taking us all to live in Washington DC.

This is not a neighboring land.

It would have been a difficult time to say the least.

This was a horrible consequence for disobedience.

And the God who brought them into the land has now cast them out.

And look at why this happened...

2 Kings 17:7...

⁷ Now this came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had ^[a]feared other gods ⁸ and walked in the ^[b]customs of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons

And the LORD goes onto describe other sins that the nation had committed to be banished from their land.

Look at the language of verse 14...

¹⁴ However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck ^[1]like their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God.

We all see this picture very clearly of a stiff necked people.

This picture of stubbornness and disobedience.

And guess what?

You don't have to be taught to stiffen your neck.

Ever tried to pick up a young child, who doesn't want to be picked up.

They will stiffen up their neck, their back, even their whole body.

But what a great description of people.

People who refuse to obey God.

Who stiffen up their hearts to him.

It goes back to what I always say is the favorite phrase of the world...

“Nobody tells me what to do.”

That is the stiff necked person, and that attitude is just as alive and well today...

As it was in the days of the kings of Israel.

It has been around forever because that is the fallen nature of man.

He is born with a heart of stone, and the only cure for that stiff necked attitude is the gospel.

Unfortunately, Israel was filled with unbelief and disobedience and God sent Assyria to remove His people from the land.

And that closes this first section of 2 Kings.

Israel falls to the Assyrians in 722 BC.

For around 700 years, Israel has been in the land, but now the northern kingdom is gone into exile.

Which brings us to the southern kingdom of Judah, who is not going to survive much longer than Israel.

II. Judah Falls (18-25)

The remaining chapters of 2 Kings are simply the story of the kings of the southern kingdom of Judah.

When chapter 18 opens, we meet Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz.

Ahaz was a wicked king.

Ahaz had other children.

In fact, one of his other sons was burned on an altar to a foreign god.

Yet, Hezekiah was nothing like his father.

In 2 Kings 18:3, we read...

³ He did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. ⁴ He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the ^[a]Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called ^[b]Nehushtan. ⁵ He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. ⁶ For he clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses.

Couple things to see here...

First, Hezekiah removed the high places, which simply meant, he destroyed the altars where people sacrificed to their false gods.

Maybe, he remembered seeing his own brother being sacrificed on these altars.

The Bible doesn't say that, but it was possible that these altars were a reminder of his father's sins.

Either way, the high places of false worship were destroyed.

He even destroyed the bronze snake that Moses had made in the wilderness.

Remember way back in the book of Numbers when God sent deadly snakes among the people as judgment because they were questioning God's plan?

God told Moses to make a bronze serpent as a cure to the deadly snake bites.

The people simply had to look upon the snake to prevent their death.

Well, Israel had kept that snake for all these years and even offered incense to it.

It had become an idol for them.

Now, think about that.

God sent a cure in the form of a bronze serpent, yet Israel had turned the cure into an idol.

Instead of worshipping the One who sent the cure, they worshipped the cure instead by offering incense to it.

This reminds me of an incredible passage in Romans 1...

That was so true in this situation and even seen very clearly in our day as well.

Paul is writing about the rejection of the gospel by the world...

And the widespread unbelief in the world...

This is his description of the unbelieving world...

Romans 1:18ff...

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth ^[l]in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident ^[m]within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood

through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

The Bible is simply telling us here that no man can ever say...

“Well, I never knew God was real.”

The truth is that he has written his name on every part of creation.

And every man knows this in his heart.

But they push that down; the Bible says they suppress it, and then they do what verse 21 says...

²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not ^[u]honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools,

Simply put, men try to come up with other explanations for the creation..

And in doing so, look what happens....

²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and ^[o]crawling creatures.

How does man deal with understanding the creation around him?

He finds something else to worship.

Even the atheist worships something.

He worships science.

Even the average unbeliever worships something.

Whether that be another person, a job, a house, money, power, their outward appearance.

We are made for worship of God, but when you take God out of the equation, your worship will go somewhere else...

So let's look at where that worship goes..

24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for ^[v]a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed ^[g]forever. Amen.

Simply put, people end up worshipping something in creation rather the Creator Himself.

We see this all the time.

People worship animals.

People even worship the creation by worshipping trees, streams and rivers.

And let me bring this back to 2 Kings...

God gave them a bronze serpent to save their lives.

Instead of worshipping the Giver, they worshipped the gift.

We see this even in our kids.

Every time you buy your child something, then give it to them and never get a thank you?

How does that make you feel?

Every gift is from above, coming down from the Father of light...

Everything is a gift of God, but people worship the gift and not the Giver.

That is really incredible.

But that is why the Bible is clear...

Don't hold on too tightly to this world.

The world is passing away.

WE don't hold on the creation or even the created things of it, we hold on to the Creator...

That's a long detour, but this attitude of holding on and worshipping the gift and not the Giver is the reason that Hezekiah destroyed that serpent.

And this was the principle of Hezekiah's life...

Look at 2 Kings 18:5 and 6...

He trusted and then verse 6...

He clung only to the Lord...

That is the picture of a faithful man of God...

Clinging to only to the Lord...

And the Lord honors that obedience....

2 Kings 18:7...

⁷ And the Lord was with him; wherever he went he prospered. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. ⁸ He ^[c]defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

Soon after Judah was attacked by the Assyrians, yet God protected Judah by sending an angel of the Lord to kill 185,000 Assyrian soldiers at night.

However, Judah was back to her old habits of disobedience again in chapter when Manasseh, Hezekiah's son who became king.

Then, we find another good king again try to reform Judah in he person of Josiah in chapter 22.

He succeeds by reading the book of the Law, which is something that Manasseh had not done..

Yet, it is not enough to turn Judah completely back to God, and in chapter 25....

The Babylonians invade Judah, led by King Nebuchadnezzar...

Jerusalem is destroyed and the temple is torn down, and the treasures of the temple are taken away by the Babylonian soldiers to Babylon.

We finish this chapter as the smoke rises over Jerusalem.

We marched into this land with the people of Israel back in the book of Joshua...

And now we go with them as they are led away as captives of another country.

A nation who showed so much independence by being dependent upon God...

Are now prisoners of another country.

The land flowing with milk and honey....

Is now the land wasted by fire and destruction.

And what do we say was the cause of all of this?

The people's refusal to obey God.

The people's refusal to worship only God.

The people's stiff necked hard hearted attitude
toward God.

And now they are reaping the consequences of their
sin.

But the incredible truth is that God is not finished
with them.

They may be out of the land but they are not out of
God's plan for them in the world.

The story doesn't end here....

Conclusion

Though the story of 2 Kings is a not a good story from a human perspective....

Israel falls. Judah falls.

The story behind the story is that never lets them fall beyond recovery.

He is still working through this nation to fulfill his promises to Abraham.

Though they are temporarily out of the land, they are still a nation...

And God is still going to make them a blessing to all the families of the earth...

And that is an incredible testimony to the nature and character of God.

In all honesty, I would have said...

“I’m done with Israel. I think move on to the Canaanites or Phillistines or some other nation...”

“This nation of Israel is never going to get it.”

“I’m done with them.”

But that is not the God of the Bible.

He is a God who has made a promise to this nation.

And HE is going to see it through to the end.

God is not wishy-washy...

Loving a nation today and leaving it tomorrow.

God is faithful.

He is loyal when no one else is.

How do we understand love?

We love those who love us.

But that is not the love of God.

Who even shows love and faithfulness to an ungrateful people...

Let me close with Jesus' words here...

And they are a reminder that our love for others shouldn't stop when their love for us stops...

Luke 6:32ff

³² If you love those who love you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners do the same.

³⁴ If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is *that* to you? Even sinners

lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount.³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, ^[t]expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.³⁶ ^[u]Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

If 2 Kings teaches us anything, it teaches us that we don't love as God loves.

Because the truth behind 2 Kings is that God still loves Israel even when they don't love him.

I pray that God would continue to teach me to love people as He loves them.

Let us pray.