

Dr. Elaine Phillips, OT History, Lit. and Theology, Lecture 29

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This is Dr. Elaine Phillips in her Old Testament History, Literature, and Theology course. Lecture number 29.

Questions? We need to sing. Do you know this one? It's been a while. It's a wonderful psalm. Psalm 51, David's psalm of confession, after his heinous sins were discovered. But the section that we've learned is particularly telling for each one of us. So let's see how we do with this: [Class singing]. Yeah, I know it's a bit rough up there on the top, isn't it? We'll sing it a couple more times before the semester ends.

At any rate, let's pray together. Our gracious father, as we start another week together, we are so thankful that we can pray to you as the psalmists prayed. Create in us clean hearts, renew right spirits within us. Father, we all need to pray that prayer, and so we earnestly plead with you. And we're so thankful that on our behalf Jesus has indeed created those clean hearts. We pray we wouldn't quench your Spirit. As we start this week together, we ask for your presence with us, encouraging those who are discouraged, bringing healing and restoration to those whose hearts are broken, or who are suffering from illness. Father, be our comfort, our prod, our guide and our director. And thank you that you are our Sovereign God. Help us to study today, and not that we would just be packing a bunch of facts into our heads, but Lord please transform us by the power of your word. We pray for troubled spots in our families. We pray for painful issues that our friends are dealing with. We ask for our country and for its leaders, and how we pray for wisdom for each one of them. And we do pray for those parts of the world where life is seemingly just being thrown away so easily. We pray for the persecuted church; give them strength, encourage them. And Father may they be lights to a world that simply does not understand. May they see your grace through these people. Help us to be faithful to pray. As we think of persecution in the material we've studied for today, Lord, help us not to keep it three thousand years ago, but to think of how we might be praying through these issues today. And in all these things we offer you our thanks in Christ's name.

Amen.

Well, we do have a lot of work to do today in terms of history. This is our last major emphasis on history, and some of you I'm sure are just as we throw the bits, but don't lose sight of where we've been for the last two sessions, and also where we're going to go today, because it will provide the framework for our whole next unit, which has to do with the writing prophets. I'll say why prophets have to be dealt with in terms of history. We're talking about the history of God's people to the fall of Jerusalem, and that means the fall of the southern kingdom. You may remember that last time I said that we would go back and pick up some material from the southern kingdom, because last time we did indeed get to the point where the northern kingdom was taken away by Assyria. But we left some threads that were sort of unraveled, in terms of the south last time, and we need to pick those up today.

First of all, with our handy dandy chart in mind, this is the most complex one you're going to see so far, let me remind you where we've been. Last time we worked all the way from Jehu, actually Ahab, right down to the fall of the north. And our second key date, now remember I'm not forcing you to memorize a whole ton of dates, but there are three that you absolutely need to know; one is the division of the kingdom, 931 B.C. the second is 722 with the fall of the north, and the third, of course, will be when the southern kingdom falls to Babylon, about which we'll say a whole lot more, in 587/586. So those are the dates you need to know. For our purposes today, the northern kingdom is gone, basically. We'll have some things to say about Hezekiah's appeal to the north. But for all intents and purposes, we're not talking about the politics up north very much today. Instead, we're going to go back and pick up with immediately after Jehoshaphat, run through these kings fairly quickly, I'll have some things to say about Athaliah and Joash, a few more things to say about Uzziah. We're going to focus on Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh, and Josiah, and then of course move to the fall of Jerusalem. So it's a lot of material here. Do the best you can, make those flash cards, and keep using them in terms of learning our key persons that are going to be involved.

Yes, Mackenzie. (Student). It should be. If it's not, I will check. It really should be

on blackboard. You shouldn't have to write all this down, is what I'm trying to say. That would be really a travesty. Appreciate those of you who are more in tune than I am to what's on the lecture outline.

We need to talk a little bit about some international political issues, and, of course, I'm not going to sketch them at length, but three major persons whose names are eminently important that you absolutely need to know in terms of international politics. The first one is going to be Sennacherib; he will be a key ruler of Assyria in the time that we're talking about today, so have his name front and center for yourselves. As far as we're concerned, the main thing that he's doing that's important for us is going to be his attack on Jerusalem during the time of Hezekiah. To do that he has himself stationed at a Shephelah outpost. You remember what the Shephelah is, it's that low lands area between the hill country and the coastal plain, Shephelah outpost called Lachish, and we'll say a little bit more about that as well. It shows up in the biblical text, it also will show up in some extra biblical materials, you've read about them in *Old Testament Parallels*. So Sennacherib is a major name, and I'll have much more to say about how Hezekiah deals with this threat from Sennacherib.

It's not too long after Sennacherib's time, maybe a little less than one hundred years, that Assyria will suddenly nose dives, and in 612 B.C. Babylon is going to take over Assyria. Very quickly, the fall of Nineveh, we're going to talk about that later when we talk about the prophet Jonah. But for now, we just want to focus on a major name for Babylon. And that is going to be, of course, Nebuchadnezzar, sometimes called Nebuchadrezzar. He will be the Babylonian king who will be responsible for the capture of the Jews in Judah and for the destruction of the temple. There are two passages that I'm going to quote for you in just a moment. Actually up here, you don't need to write them down because you kind find them a) in *Old Testament Parallels*, and b) in your Bible, of all things.

This is a translation of a text that was found at that place called Lachish that I mentioned to you a moment ago. Some of you probably pronounce that Lachish, but Lachish. At any rate, in the gateway of Lachish were found some letters on potsherds,

those are called ostraca, and this particular one is rather interesting for what it says. Let me read it to you: "This letter certifies to the commanding officer that I remain on duty to carry out your orders." Read between the lines: there's not too many people left who are remaining on duty. Things are getting grim. Let's keep going. "Judah's signal fire, Lachish still burns." They all had signal fires, they didn't have cell phones back then, they didn't even have other things that were operative 100 years ago, like telegraphs. They had signal fires. We know this from a lot of the material we read. Judah's signal fire, Lachish still burns. "Even after the only other remaining signal fire, Azekah, has gone out." In other words, these two major cities, again in Shephelah, were on the front line against the attacks of the enemy, and, of course, Babylon has begun to slowly encroach and will eventually wipe these, not only these cities out but Jerusalem as well.

Here you actually have a passage from Jeremiah that corroborates what we read in that letter, or vice versa. "The army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and the other cities of Judah that were still holding out." But notice there aren't many: Lachish and Azekah. These were the only fortified cities left in Judah. Now you may remember back to when you read, shortly after the split in the kingdom, Rehoboam, our son of Solomon, fortified at least 15 or 16 cities, they were a major ring of defense. Those obviously have been chipped away and nibbled away and remain. Now you can ask yourself "how does Neco have a message from God?" That's fairly interesting. We don't really know. But at any rate, Josiah disregards that and, of course, tragically he will lose his life in 609 B.C. and it's not going to be long before then, and the dissolution of the southern kingdom. Alright, that's our international politics, how about simply a map to remind ourselves of where we are. The last time we looked at this basic map, we looked at the various growth patterns within the Assyrian empire, and notice that the fullest extent of that Assyrian empire went all the way down into Egypt. Here we have the Babylonians pretty much taking over that whole thing as well. The red arrows are simply indicative of the fact that that was the path that the people of God took, the captured Judahites took, as they were led into captivity from Jerusalem all the way down to Babylon and other points. So again, this is a major, major political empire at this point

in time.

As I said a moment ago, we've got to catch up down south. So here we go, a quick run through the significant names and issues from down south. We left off with our southern kings, with Ahaziah being assassinated by Jehu. So let's just get these things in line: Ahaziah has gone north to commiserate with his relative Jehoram up north. They are both assassinated by Jehu. And as that happens, you may remember that there had been an intermarriage between the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. And the peace of capital was, I hate to say it so crassly, but it's the way it worked back then, was Athaliah. She was a granddaughter of Omri, she seems to have been a very powerful woman, and her intent, once her son Ahaziah is done for, her intent seems to have been to bring this whole of the southern kingdom under Baal worship up north.

Because what does she do? Well as you read the text, and, of course, if you read my little notes up here, she wipes out all of the potential descendants of the Davidic dynasty. Once Ahaziah's gone, she just does a major purge. She gets rid of all of them, except one. She misses one. She misses a little guy named Jehoash. And, of course, you may remember that his nurse hides him, he happens to be raised in secret for the first seven years, and then at the age of 7 the high priest Jehoiada makes him king. It's a remarkable ceremony, and we read these things and it's on paper and it's in the text, but think of a little 7 year old king. With a crown on his head. With all the people who have probably had their fill, and more of Athaliah's murderous techniques, and suddenly Jehoiada and his priests and his Levites have the courage to stand up to Athaliah to make sure that she's done in, and to set up a new king Joash. He's a fairly good king, as long as Jehoiada's alive. And you read some important things that he does, like clean up the temple and get it all refurbished and ready to go again. But unfortunately his mentor dies, by the way, for the good of the southern kingdom, Jehoiada lives a long time, if I remember correctly it's about 130 years, which is extraordinary. But Jehoiada dies and Joash turns away. And, as we see, he was assassinated. His son Ahaziah's also assassinated, this is a time that is really fractious, and, of course, that's nothing new for us, we've seen a lot of it.

Our next major figure that we want to deal with is a man who actually has two separate names, depending on where you're reading about him. When you read Ahaziah, and then you read Uzziah, same person. And just kind of keep that in mind: I will refer to him as "A." And we have a fuller description of what he does, and the fact that he's a really good king in Second Chronicles. We find out that he manages to expand the boundaries of this southern kingdom, pushes west, pushes out the Shephelah, deals with Philistines, which means he's politically quite successful. He reigns fifty two years, so he lasts a good long time and has time to do some important things. It also says that Uzziah learns how to make military warfare equipment. Kind of good, he uses that when he needs to, but he's also a man of the soil which tells you something. He's connected to the earth if you will. I don't mean that in a weird, new-agey sort of way, but he knows that this country's prosperity comes from God's blessing the land with the grain, the new wine, the oil, and those kinds of things. So Uzziah's a good king.

Unfortunately, as I note for you here, there comes a point when he transgresses the boundaries that were set for kings. And as you read this narrative, we find out that Uzziah decides, presumptuously, to enter into the temple and burn the incense, and, of course, that was reserved for the priest. It was the priest who was to do that, he instead takes that upon himself, and as he does the Lord smites him with leprosy. This isn't the first time that we've had leprosy being used as a punishment when somebody has transgressed some boundaries that God has set up. The one that comes to my mind right away is Miriam. At any rate, he's afflicted with leprosy, this means that he has to step back in some of his kingly activities, and therefore his son Jotham will be co-regent with him.

We don't read much about Jotham as we read through the biblical text. Sometimes we tend to skip him, but he also is a good king. You'll find this out, he's not nearly as demonstrative in some of these things, but he's a good king. Therefore God will bless during his reign. Unfortunately.

Sorry Sarah, go ahead (Student) Ah, that's the Azariah issue (Student) Ok? Let me just make sure I'm right on that, but when you have these two separate names, this is where you run into some issues. If that helps a little bit. Let me just make sure I'm not

telling you the wrong thing, not a problem....and I'm going to have to find it as well. Somewhere in here. Yeah, it's the Azariah issue. Yeah.

So, at any rate, once we get onto Ahaz, we have someone who is vicious. Ahaz, and one of his descendants, Manasseh, are going to be the two kings who are said to pass their children through the fire, along with all the other idolatries they do. So, Ahaz is unbelievably wicked. So, good king followed by a truly wicked king. Couple things I want to mention about Ahaz, and in one of these cases I would like us to hold this on the back-burner for our study of Isaiah the prophet. But let's at least sketch out what's going on. Ahaz is reigning just towards the end of the northern kingdom's time of existence. Alright? But one of the northern kings is going to band together with a king of Syria, use your map in your mind; you've got northern kingdom, bigger than Judah, you've got Syria, buffer zone just to the northeast. That's threatening. And so when those two are allied together against Ahaz, he gets scared. And he does the same kind of thing, interestingly enough, that we saw a king do several generations before that. The king's name was Asa. That king appealed for international help when he was threatened from the north. So does Ahaz. And this time Ahaz is gonna go to Assyria. He's appealing to the superpower against these two that are allied against him. Well, this works to a degree, because the pressure's taken off for a while and the northern kingdom's going to fall fairly soon. It's going to fall to Assyria.

But, we're going to have a message that Isaiah the prophet is going to utter into that context. Isaiah chapter seven will address this very issue. And, in a nutshell, Isaiah says, "look, you're so scared of these two kings? You're scared of the northern king? You're scared of the Syrian king? By the time a son, who's going to be born to a '*almah*, virgin or young woman, by the time that son knows to tell between good and right. Those two kings are going to be off the scene." So Isaiah prophecies into this particular context, trying to address Ahaz's fear, his political terror. And I'm going to leave it at that for now, but we're going to pick that up when we study Isaiah very shortly.

What Ahaz also does is continue the pattern that his predecessors had done, in terms of all sorts of idolatry, to the point where he sets up Baal altars, Baal temples, and

shuts the doors of the temple of the Lord. That's in Chronicles by the way, it doesn't show up in Kings. Chronicles tells us that Ahaz actually gets things so bad that he "shut the doors of the Lord's temple." In case you haven't quite got a feeling for that, it's like taking your major church, to which you have a very strong allegiance, and somebody coming along and just barring its doors, and saying, "No more, can't go in. Sorry." That's what's going on in this context.

Alright, let's go on. After Ahaz, in God's mercy, we have his son Hezekiah. And this is where things get good for a while. He is like Uzziah and Jotham. Then a downturn, now we have an uptake with Hezekiah. And notice the amount of space that's spent on him. He will affect some very significant religious reforms. I want first of all to look at 2 Kings 18, because we're going to see something reappear that we haven't seen for a while. Hezekiah was 25 years old, this is 18:2, when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem 29 years. Verse 3, "he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done." Verse 4, "he removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles," a standard practice for those who are engaged in religious reform. You get rid of all the junk. And in case you hadn't noticed it, notice how quickly the junk comes back into everybody's lives when there is not somebody in a position to basically guide and direct them in the right way. It's not but a moment, in terms of the history, that these people are back worshipping their Baal's, their Asherah. Probably because they wanted to have all the perks that seemed to go along with worshipping a fertility god and goddess.

At any rate, still in verse 4, "he broke into pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made." Remember that? Remember Numbers 21, when they were in the wilderness, and the people were being bitten by serpents because they were complaining? Moses prays on their behalf, and God says, "put this serpent up on a pole, and anybody who looks at it will indeed be healed." And obviously they kept that bronze serpent, but, as with all things, it so easily became an idol. "For up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it." And so Hezekiah wisely destroys this thing, which they had turned their attention to and made an idol out of. How easily we take things that are tangible,

that are visible, that are here and present, and make idols out of them, because we can't deal with the intangible, but eminently more powerful, reality of God. It's a human problem. At any rate, he's going to affect that kind of religious reform. He also cleans up the temple and because the doors have been shut for so long, it takes them a long time to clean up the temple. They start working on it on the first day of the first month. By the way, what religious festival shows up in the first month? Think of our three major pilgrim festivals. It starts with a P. Passover. When was Passover to be celebrated? On the fourteenth day of the first month. But guess what? The temple is so filthy and so polluted, they don't even get it cleansed and dedicated again until the 16th day of the first month. That's a bit of a problem, isn't it? In addition, Hezekiah has very courageously sent letters not just around to the people of Judah, as in "Come celebrate a Passover with us," but he's also sent them up to the Northern Kingdom remnants. There's still folks up there. And he said, "to all those tribes," it says, "as far as Beersheva down south and Dan up north." He sends these letters inviting them. Turns out there were a number of people who mocked him and laughed, but there were others who came. So he's got a huge crowd of people.

It's past the specific time for celebrating Passover, the 14th day of the first month, so what do they do? They celebrate it in the second month. And we have then in the history of Israel, an incident when that stuff in Numbers chapter 9 actually comes to have some effectiveness, because in Numbers chapter 9, God gave provisions for people to celebrate the Passover if, for some reason or other, they were not able to do it when they were supposed to do it. On business, traveling, unclean, whatever, they can celebrate it second month. In Hezekiah's time, they do that. Even so there are still some people that are there that aren't quite ritually prepared. Yet Hezekiah prays on their behalf, and there's a remarkable celebration. It's a reformation of reformations. It's a revival of revivals. It's a good time.

Politically, things are alike, slightly different story. What's *hutzpa*? Boldness. Audacity. It's a great word. There's hardly....there isn't one English word that does it for us. So *hutzpa* a good word. You guttural "h," right? But it is bold audacity. And what

he's doing is to rebel against the king of Assyria. I.e. not paying tribute. 2 Kings 18 is going to tell us about this. Of course, this is going to bring down the wrath of Sennacherib fairly quickly, so he will indeed invade. That's going to be the backdrop against which we have some of our next developments in the text, which are corroborated in our archaeology.

Now let me go through some of those things fairly quickly. First of all, we're getting a sense of the map. Let me find my pointer here. Isn't it nice I've got batteries for my pointer? Again, it really works you can see something. Here's Lachish. So, just to remind ourselves of how important geography is. I can't emphasize enough how important geography is. I've said that way too many times for most of you. Here's the coastal plain, easy travel, all enemies are going to come that way first, and then they're going to make their way up through these gateways, to the Shephelah. There are a number of gateways to the Shephelah. Lachish, is a major city. I'll say more about that in a moment. Little bit of work to get up into the hill country, there's Jerusalem, but obviously Sennacherib knows that Jerusalem is the heartbeat for Hezekiah's kingdom. And so there will be a point where he will, from his encampment in Lachish, send his commanders and his armies and lay siege to Jerusalem as well. So keep that map in mind as we then look at a few more issues that are a part of this. When Sennacherib's palace was uncovered, when the archaeologists did this actually way back in the 1800's, they found, I said this to some of you I'm sure, they found an entire room in that palace devoted to Sennacherib's conquest of Lachish. Here's just one tiny panel from it. Notice you've got defenders of Lachish portrayed up on these city walls. You've got Assyrians, you can see their iconic, their little heads right here, they're chipping away trying to dig through the city walls. There's all sorts of destruction that goes on in this multi-paneled room. By the way, if you want some sense of this you can go to the British Museum. Those of you who go to study in Oxford, I hope you'll spend some time in the British Museum in London, and the room that is devoted to Sennacherib's conquest of Lachish is about one quarter the size of this auditorium. Alright? And, the whole wall all the way around shows panel after panel depicting this kind of thing, culminating with Hezekiah

having to pay tribute Sennacherib. Obviously, he's the king. So they have to pay tribute to Sennacherib himself. At any rate, very interesting kind of things that are going on here. Lachish was not a small city. In fact, as you look at the archaeological remains of it, it has one of the largest city gates in all of Israel. So there is a major conquest that takes place. I've read about this, this is the Sennacherib prism, which talks about having Hezekiah trapped like a bird in a cage, that's what he says about his siege in Jerusalem, although of course he never takes Jerusalem and we'll talk about that in a moment. This is an artist's depiction of what it might have looked like to actually storm those city gates and city walls of Lachish. Alright. And there's finally folks paying tribute to Sennacherib on his throne right here.

Let's look at it from the text's standpoint. When Sennacherib is encamped at Lachish, and he sends his envoys to Jerusalem, you have the people on the city walls, and they're pretty terrified. Because all these Assyrian envoys are speaking to them and they're saying "don't trust Hezekiah and don't trust Hezekiah's god. Haven't you seen what I've done to all the other gods of all the other nations that I've conquered." Of course, these people have no sense that Israel's God is a universal God, and sovereign over the whole world. They think in terms of every little god, located in a little piece of land. We talked about that last time when we talked about 2 Kings 17. Well one of the things Hezekiah does is eminently important, and that is he prays. He will go up to the temple and lay this whole situation out in front of the Lord. But notice he doesn't stop there. He also sends people to the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah was very much a part of the whole court scene at this point, we're going to see this more when we read parts of the book of Isaiah. In fact, parts of Isaiah will talk about this very situation from Isaiah's perspective. But Isaiah will foretell deliverance, and what's really interesting, and you need to go back and review this, I won't take time to read it now, but part of Isaiah's message is coming from the daughter of Zion, which is another term for Jerusalem. Alright? It's a term referring to Jerusalem. The daughter of Zion speaking to the mighty Sennacherib. And, of course, it's a wonderful piece of irony, because in this prophetic poem that Isaiah utters, the mighty King Sennacherib is going to be utterly devastated by,

figuratively, a woman--the daughter of Zion. There's some very nice little attacks that are taking place here. It's an irony that's being presented. Hezekiah not only does those things that are eminently important, prayer to God, consulting the person who is God's spokesperson to him, Isaiah, but he also gets down to business. And I'm going to read several of these passages, because we see some interesting things that Hezekiah does. He will construct walls, he's also going to make certain that his water source is secure for his people.

Now one thing I also need to say that I neglected to say, is that when Hezekiah invited those folks up north to come down for Passover, that was just a beginning of a movement of refugees from up north, because in the meantime the Northern Kingdom had fallen. And there were some people up north who came south. They're political refugees basically—political/religious refugees, that category of persons. They come south, and a number of them are going to land in Jerusalem. When that happens, obviously you have an expansion of the population of Jerusalem. What are they going to do for those people? For one, they're going to build a wall around them to protect them so when there's enemies attacking them, they actually are secure. And part of what Hezekiah does is not only build some walls around his water system, he's going to build some walls around a much expanded Jerusalem, to keep these folks safe that have come as refugees from the North. The city is expanded. So then let's read a couple of passages from Scripture, and then talk about this a little bit.

If you want first to turn to 2 Kings 20. "As for all the other events of Hezekiah's reign, all his achievements, and how he made the pool and the tunnel, by which he brought water into the city, are they not written in the books of the kings" and so forth. Now, if you've read your *Old Testament Parallels* for today, you know that we have an inscription found in the tunnel that's called Hezekiah's tunnel, that talks about the making of that tunnel. I'll say more about that in a moment, but let's get a couple more passages of Scripture down first. Let's look at the parallel in 2 Chronicles. It adds a little bit more for us. Starting with chapter 32 verse 2, "when Hezekiah saw Sennacherib was coming, he consulted with his officials and his military staff about blocking out the water

from the springs outside the city.” In other words, you make sure that anybody coming from the outside has no idea where the springs are. You camouflage them. You block them. And you make sure that that water that’s coming from your spring, goes into your water source inside the city walls. “A large force of men assembled. They blocked all the springs in the stream that flowed through the land.” Why should the kings of Assyria have this sort of thing? And then at the end of verse 5, “he built another wall outside that one and reinforced the supporting terraces.” He’s getting ready.

Now we have to look at the Isaiah passage, which is equally interesting. So, if you’re following in your text, check Isaiah 22. I’ll get there as well. We’re going to have the following. “You saw that the city of David had many breaches in its defenses.” That means holes in the wall. “You stored up water in the lower pool.” Now I’m in verse 10. “You counted the buildings in Jerusalem and tore down houses in order to strengthen the wall. You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the Old Pool.” Does this sound like the kinds of things I’ve been talking about that Hezekiah did? Is that a “yes,” or a “no”? Yes! Good. It does, doesn’t it? Walls for defense, dealing with the water to make sure people would have access to water. Then why, for those of you who have your Bible open in front of you, do we have the next two lines? “But you did not look to the one who made it. Or have regard for the one who planned it long ago.” In other words, it sounds like whoever’s done this is being rebuked by God. Did you get that impression? That’s what it sounds like to me. Interestingly enough, the Hebrew for all three of these verses is plural. It’s not just Hezekiah. But he’s referring, the prophet here is speaking to the whole of the Judahites, the people of Judah, who are trying, I would suspect, to depend on their own resources to do this. It’s an interesting combination. It’s a fascinating combination. Hezekiah was dependent on the LORD. He also went and did these other things. It sounds as if you read this like the prophet is condemning most of the people, because they don’t have Hezekiah’s intent to seek God and do what God would have them do first. They’re just busy digging holes through walls and rocks and so forth. That’s my take on it, it’s the best I can do with it. But, the fact that it’s plural I think gives us that indication.

Now, let's go back and look at some of the pretty incredible things that are going on here. Oh, I forgot to say this, as you continue to read the text, God does indeed do precisely what he said through Isaiah he was going to. The Assyrians will never take Jerusalem. Even though they threaten it, they never take it. Because it says first of all, a rumor of war causes the Assyrian ruler to pull back. But even more powerfully it says, "an angel of the Lord destroyed 186,000 of those Assyrian troops." As you read on there's another little line a little bit later on that talks about Sennacherib being assassinated. So he meets his end the way lots of other folks meet their end in this very ugly world. Here's a bit of map work. Again, if you look at this fairly carefully, for those of you up front you can see it pretty easily, here we have city of David, right here. Ok, if you can't see from the back, this is city of David, this whole thing. We've looked at pictures of this before. It's about 11 acres, and size not real big. The source of water for the city of David is the Gihon spring--that's right here. We've talked about that before as well. We've talked about how people would access that spring by climbing down a shaft, and walking out and drawing water from a pool there. But now with the water sources under siege, potentially, and, here's where you get to wake up a little bit, now Hezekiah's city is not just the city of David, Hezekiah's city has expanded to include all of this as well, because of the refugee issue. And so people who live up here, you know rather than going down in this valley, and back up over there, and back down here to get water, it would make matters a whole lot easier for them if there were water accessible somewhere down here. And that's precisely what Hezekiah does.

As you read *Old Testament Parallels*, review the Soloam inscription. Because it's a phenomenal thing. What they do, and we know this from that inscription, is one group of engineers, workers, starts at one end, another group starts at the other end. They're chipping through bedrock folks, they're not digging through sand. They are going through hard limestone—solid bedrock. As I note for you here, it's under 150 feet of bedrock. They meet up with each other! Yeah, there are some twists and turns, this is Hezekiah's tunnel right here, alright? Kind of a weird S shape. But they manage to meet up with each other, and then of course they just chip the floor down so the water can flow

from the Gihon spring, down to the pool. The pool's inside the city walls, and the folks have water safely accessible for themselves. It's an engineering marvel. People still wonder exactly how it was done. Probably, at least this is the theory that makes the most sense to me, this is limestone, and so there are always going to be fissures and shafts in that limestone. There may have been some sort of a trickle of water through some kind of fissures, and they followed that. We don't really know.

At any rate, here are two of the illustrations of Hezekiah's defense. On the left is one of the walls that he built up in that big western city, that is, to accommodate those folks that had been added to the population of Jerusalem. You get a feeling for the size of this wall, at least I hope you do, by looking at the size of those people right there. And from surveying the rubble, they determined the wall originally stood about that high. So this is a good defensive wall. Here is a little bit of Hezekiah's tunnel. Again, solid bedrock. You can wade through it now. It's great fun. There are fabulous stories about the initial explorers of this tunnel. It was lost for about 1800 years or more. It was only rediscovered in the 1880's, and of course the people that did it back then didn't have flashlights. They had little candle-like things, and the water was so high sometimes that they were going from one breathing hole to another, because the ceiling is not always this tall, sometimes it's up to about here on me. And if the water's that tall, you know, where are you going to breathe? Fascinating stories. You can Google 'Charles Warren' and you can read all about his first attempt to go through Hezekiah's tunnel. It's a great story. Of course, you can experience it to, if you go to Jerusalem.

Alright, we need to move on from Hezekiah to, well tragically, his most wicked successor. And what's interesting about this, by the way, I didn't talk about this with regard to Hezekiah, but you may remember from reading the story that at one point Hezekiah was ill. Ill to the point of death, and he prays to the Lord, and he has 15 years of life added to him. When you do the mathematics, we find out that the evil king Manasseh was born in those last 15 years, which is kind of a horrifying thought. At any rate, Manasseh's absolutely the worst. Let's go back to 2 Chronicles. No, we'll do Kings first, then we'll do Chronicles. So, 2 Kings, we want chapter 21. "He built altars in the

temple of the Lord.” Verse 4, and they obviously are not Yahweh altars, they’re Baal and Asherah. Verse 6. “He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced sorcery and divination, consulted mediums and spiritists, took the carved Asherah pole.” You may remember that Baal and Asherah are these two fertility pair—a god and goddess. He puts that right in the temple. He’s done more evil than Amorites. And verse 16 of chapter 21. “Moreover, Manasseh also shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end.” Did you get that? Let me read it again. “Manasseh also shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end.”

Jewish tradition, by the way, says that Isaiah was martyred under Manasseh. Manasseh was intent on getting rid of anybody that had anything to do with worshipping the Lord. It’s a horrifying tradition. Actually, when you read the book of Hebrews, it talks about prophets, and the kinds of horrors that some of the prophets endured as prophets such as being tossed to the lions or being sawn asunder. That one is probably referring to Isaiah, because the extra-biblical Jewish tradition, called the prayer of Manasseh, talks about Isaiah’s being sawn asunder as part of the torment and torture that Manasseh wreaked upon all these followers of the Lord. He’s a horrible man. You can equate him right up there with all the nasty despots and all the dictators that we’ve seen in the generation prior to us and our own generation.

What happened to Manasseh? Well he’s taken further yes, that’s quite true. Now turning from Kings to Chronicles. Where we have the most remarkable thing, and, by the way, you know I say this every year and I’m going to say it again this year as well, if you’ve been sleeping today, now is the time to wake up. I really mean it, now is the time to wake up, this is probably one of the most important things you’re going to hear all week. And it’s not from me it’s from Scripture. 2 Chronicles chapter 33 verse 11, “So the Lord brought against them, the army commanders of Assyria who took Manasseh prisoner and put a hook in Manasseh’s nose, bound him with bronze shackles, and took him to Babylon.” “In his distress,” I’m in verse 12, you may want to go back to this. “In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God.” Did you catch that? “And he humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And when he prayed to him, the

Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea, and brought him back to Jerusalem.” Don’t ever say to yourself “my sin is so bad that God could never forgive it.” I hear that all the time. “You don’t know what I’ve done. My sin is so horrible. God can’t, I know he can’t forgive me.” He can. If he can forgive Manasseh with the kinds of things that Manasseh did in terms of the horrifying slaughter of innocent people, then he can forgive you and me. Hold on to that message. Maybe for a week from now. Maybe for 10 years from now. Maybe for someone you love dearly who’s saying that kind of thing to you. Hold on to this message. God forgave Manasseh and brought him back, and restored him.

Now, what’s interesting is that God does not withhold the punishment from the people, because Manasseh had led them into sin. And we see, I think I’ve got this up here in my next little bit of material. 2 Kings 24:4, “The consequences for the sins of the people under Manasseh were still going to be affected and the land would suffer.” And we learn from that chapter that they would indeed go into exile and suffer those consequences. Manasseh, in God’s absolute mercy, was restored to the Lord. But there were still consequences for the sin. Ok? Those two things are extremely important to hold in mind.

Well that’s Manasseh. There’s lots of other things we could probably say about him, but that’s the lesson I want you to get. We’re going to go from Manasseh on into another good king, Josiah. So the good ones from today are really good, Hezekiah, Josiah, the bad ones are really bad, Ahaz and Manasseh. You have kind of this tragic counterpoint. 2 Chronicles 34:1, Josiah’s 8 years old when he becomes king. When he’s 16, he begins to experience the kind of things that maybe you experienced when you were a sophomore in high school. He didn’t have Young Life, perhaps that was the mechanism God used for you, but about that time he became spiritually awake. And he’ll begin a process that will finally arise in the cleansing of the temple and another major reform. It starts when he’s 16. We have mentions of it again when he’s 20, that he’s still continuing to do this kind of work. But notice as he’s cleaning up the temple, he finds the book of the Torah. Let’s read about it a little bit. He’s collected all sorts of money from

people to do this, and it says in verse 14 of chapter 34, “Hilkiah, the priest, found the book of the Torah of the Lord that had been given through Moses.” Manasseh, by the way, did I say this? Manasseh reigned 55 years. That was enough time to not only lose the Torah but to let it get buried amidst all this other garbage that had accumulated, but lose any sense of what Torah said. People just didn’t know. Obviously there were no Levites that were doing what they should have been doing every 7 years and teaching Torah around the countryside. So the Book of Torah’s been lost.

You do need to know, by the way for those of you that do Biblical Studies or listen in this area very much, there are some Old Testament scholars who say, “oh, they didn’t find the Book of Torah, this is when they wrote Deuteronomy for the first time.” You might hear that at some point, there are lots of really good arguments for putting that one to rest. But if you hear it, I think you can just say, “No, they found it.” And it’s perfect circumstances in terms of understanding why it was lost given the kind of thing that Manasseh had been doing prior to that.

At any rate, they find this, Hilkiah’s the priest, hold on to that name ‘Hilkiah’. It’s in yellow for a reason. We’re going to encounter it again when we read the prophet Jeremiah. At any rate, they take this book to the king. And the king is absolutely horrified, it says he “tore his robes,” which is a sign of utter distress. And then they say “you know, we’ve got to find out what this is all about. Go inquire of the Lord for me, what’s going on with this book? Great is the Lord’s anger that’s poured out upon us because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord.”

So where do they go? Well they don’t go to Jeremiah interestingly enough. Jeremiah is alive and well and old enough to work at this point in time. And he lives just a little bit northeast of Jerusalem. And he’s from a priestly family, in fact his dad seems to be Hilkiah. But they don’t go to Jeremiah, they go to a prophetess who’s name is Huldah. That’s in verse 22. Let’s get her up here too....interpretation. It says she’s “the wife of Shallum, son of Tokhath, son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem in the second district.” That’s a fairly major section, apparently, of Jerusalem. So she’s right there, proximate to the temple, and she is the one to whom they take this.

And notice that she has no compulsion whatsoever about instructing them in terms of what they've been doing wrong. She says, "tell the man who sent you," nobody, by the way, among those messengers has said, "oh, by the way it was King Josiah who sent us." She knows. She's a prophet. "Tell the man who sent you to me. This is what the Lord says: I am going to bring disaster on this place. All the curses," remember Deuteronomy 27 and 28? Remember Leviticus 26? If they were obedient, they were going to be blessed. If they disobeyed God, there were all sorts of punishments designed to bring them back. "Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods, and provoked me to anger, my anger will be poured out on this place. Tell the King of Judah this is what the Lord the God of Israel says. Because your heart is responsive, and because you've humbled yourself," that is, he tore his robes, when he heard what she spoke against this place, "I will gather you to your father's in peace. Your eyes will not see all this disaster." So Josiah will be spared, watching the horror that was part of that set of covenant curses coming up on his people. But it won't be but a generation after his death that they are gone. The whole bunch of them is gone. But he's spared seeing it. Perhaps because of that fateful encounter with Pharaoh Neco that we talked about a little bit earlier on.

Now Josiah does some other things as well that we also need to look at. He will restore the covenant, or renew the covenant I should say, and we see that as we read on. It says he read in there, "hearing all the words of the book of the covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord." But that's not all. Josiah will take off and not just purify the temple, but work hard at cleaning up what's left of that small little parcel of land known as Judah. And he also will go a little farther north. Do you remember any kind of a prophecy about a guy named Josiah that we read, oh, maybe a week ago? It's now going to come to pass. When we had the split in the kingdom, there was an unnamed man of God from Judah. Remember this? He goes across to Bethel, and he pronounces a curse against the altar of Bethel. "Oh, altar, altar. On you will be burned the bones of the prophets." And who's going to do it? A man named Josiah. That unnamed man of God from Judah actually names Josiah some 300 years earlier, and now along comes Josiah

and he'll do exactly that. Let's see if we can read it. Turn back to 2 Kings, where we have this reference. "Even the altar of Bethel," I'm in chapter 23, verse 15, "Even the altar of Bethel, the high place made by Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin--even that altar and high place he demolished." So Josiah's pushed rather into what used to be the Northern Kingdom. He burned the high place, burned the Asherah pole, then he looked around and he saw the tombs that were there on the hillside. He had the bones removed from them and burned them on the altar to defile it, in accordance with the word of the Lord proclaimed by the man of God from 1 Kings 13, who had foretold these things. So, some very interesting conclusions are drawn here to this whole narrative. That prophecy is fulfilled.

Josiah, just like Hezekiah his predecessor, will celebrate Passover. But why, why, I think we've talked about this before, but I'll ask the question anyway, why Passover? Why is it that when Hezekiah effects a reform when there's a revival under Josiah, why do they celebrate Passover? Why not Yom Kippur? Why not Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Tabernacles? Why Passover? What did Passover celebrate? It celebrates redemption, freedom, deliverance from the bondage of Pharaoh, which of course specifically symbolizes the bondage of sin. And so when these people are freeing themselves--they're not freeing themselves--when they are being freed from the bondage of the sin of worshipping idolatrous objects like fallen Asherah, now they are going to indeed celebrate their redemption, their deliverance from that kind of bondage. Not only that, what follows the Passover deliverance--the exodus deliverance? It's the giving of the covenant at Sinai. And, of course, the covenant is also central to this. So bind those two together, you can see why they would be intent on celebrating Passover.

Well, the upshot is Josiah's a good man. As you read this narrative you find out that that's eminently true, the text will indeed talk about it as well. He is a good king. He's followed, unfortunately, by a bunch of misfits, and here we have our last kings of Judah. Jehoahaz, taken to Egypt, Eliakim, whose name is changed to Jehoiakim, is set on the throne by Egypt. These are both sons of Josiah. Babylon is not just going to come in one fell swoop, they're going to come in waves, slowly, slowly. Picking off the cream of

the crop bit by bit, there's actually been one prior incursion to this, but we won't worry about it right now. But in 597, they will take off some fairly key people. You know, you want to get the best? You take the nobles, you take the people who are priests, you take the educated sorts. Hang onto that, we'll see some of those. Jehoiakim, as I mentioned here also was taken to Babylon.

Then we're going to have the reign of a guy for about 11 years, his name is Zedekiah, he's an uncle to Jehoiakim, and to all intents and purposes he's simply here as a representative of Babylon--Nebuchadnezzar's puppet. And when he tries to flex his muscles, he's going to catch it. There will be a final invasion.

I don't have time to read you Psalm 74, but jot it down and take some time just to read it and see the horror at seeing the temple destroyed in this awful way. The people are taken to exile at Babylon, and then the text says something very interesting right at the end of 2 Chronicles. It turns out that, even though we don't have an ongoing commentary about this, it turns out that that whole business that we read about in the Torah, remember that business about giving the land a chance to rest every seven years? One year in seven the land was supposed to rest. It turns out they apparently hadn't been doing that, because in 2 Chronicles 36, verse 20, "he carried into exile the remnant, the land." Verse 21: "The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests, all the time of its desolation it rested." Until the seventy years were completed in the year of Jeremiah, which we're going to look at a little bit later on. So the land has not been given its chance to rest, now it will by virtue of the exile.

One more thing we need to say, and that is all these others had been descendants of the king, but now we have a governor appointed, who was not related to the king. His name is Gedaliah. There's a plot against him to assassinate him, he doesn't seem to really believe that it's going to happen, but it does. And everything is going to fall apart completely. When we do Jeremiah we're going to pick this up, because Jeremiah is working in this whole context. At any rate, have a good afternoon.

This is Dr. Elaine Philips in her Old Testament Literature, History, and Theology Course, lecture 29.