

# Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 26, Part 1

## 2 Kings 17, Part 1

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This is, as has already been alluded to, a dark chapter. It really is the conclusion of a long, long downward slide. We've been seeing it all the way along, and now it comes to its conclusion.

By this point, about all that is left of the nation of Israel is the city of Samaria, which is in the central highlands of Israel. Most of the rest of the nation had been eaten away by the various Assyrian attacks, and so it's Samaria, the walled city, that stands alone. In the south, Ahaz, who has basically sold out to the Assyrians, is on the throne, and his son, Hezekiah, is co-regent with him, probably forced on him by the pro-Assyrian clique in the government.

Hezekiah is probably only early teens at this point. A little difficult to tell, because as we saw last week, there's an issue with the dates of Hezekiah, but at any rate, that's the situation, and Hoshea is the king in the north. Yahweh saves.

That's the meaning of his name. And yet, disaster is ahead. Now, notice the very interesting verse 2. He did evil, this is Hoshea, he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, but not like the kings of Israel that preceded him.

He is the only king of the north of whom it is not said he followed in the way of Jeroboam. We don't know exactly what that meant. Did it mean that he abandoned those golden calves that Jeroboam I had built now some 200 years earlier? We just don't know, and it is so interesting.

Is he, in fact, terrified of what's facing them, what's staring them in the face, the mighty Assyrian army? We don't know, but at any rate, it's too late. And I think this is one of the lessons here. You can sin, and sin, and sin, and finally decide, well, I think I'll back off of that a little bit, and it's too late.

Not that God will not forgive, not that God cannot forgive, but simply that we get ourselves into a position where we really cannot repent. We can do a little better. We can cut off a few sins, but outright, flat-out repentance? No, no, it's too hard.

We've talked about this a bit before that the world is so made that it will help us on the road that we have decided to take until we come to the point where we really are unable to make any other decision. That's what the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is all about. It's not that God says to a nice, kindly man, no, you're not going to let them go.

No, he's a man who'd been God all his life, and the thought that somebody claiming some other God would tell him what to do was not possible. So, that second verse is very tantalizing as we wonder just what happened there, what happened. So, Hosea revolted.

Now, why would he do that? It says he no longer paid tribute to the king of Assyria as he had done year by year. Now, as I say, his kingdom is basically a walled city and not much more. And here's the mightiest army in the world, and yet he revolts.

Why would he do that? Yes, yes, it's human nature to reject submission, even when the alternative is destruction. Why is that? We say it's human nature. Why is it human nature? It's lower human nature, yes, yes.

Yes, yes, we get it from our parents, our first parents. Absolutely, absolutely. If I were to give my life completely to God and take my hands off my land, there's no telling what he'd do with me.

He might send me to Kentucky or Africa or some other place. I mean, no, I only trust me, and I will have my way, and nobody else's. At the very bottom line of humanity, there it stands.

I belong to me. And I will have my way and nobody is going to tell me what to do because we're afraid of God. We will not trust him.

So, rather than making a deal, rather than trying to find some way out, it's revolt. Now, the question that then emerges is, what about this? Our country was born in a revolution. John Wesley wrote a very, very strong pamphlet condemning the American Revolution.

What about this? Is all revolution wrong? If not, when isn't it? When is mine? Okay. Okay, okay. If there is a religious reason if there's religious justification.

Okay, okay, okay. And that certainly can be argued that indeed they did try to find some middle road and parliament and George's cabinet refused a middle road. So, okay, perhaps for religious reasons, perhaps as a last resort.

I don't think there's an easy answer to this question. You don't see Jesus leading a revolt. In fact, because he wouldn't lead a revolt, he got killed.

So, I simply throw this out for us to think about because it is a continual issue of how we as Christians relate to the state and what our obligations as Christians call us to. Okay, when people are powerless, they have no other option but to riot and revolt. Again, I kind of wonder about Jesus in that regard, who was powerless and allowed himself to be killed.

All right, he had a different mission. And there it is again, the whole question of how you relate the civil state to the Christian experience. Do you mean for Jesus? Yes, the second coming will be a little different from the first coming.

Yes, yes. Then he'll be the king. So, I don't propose to have an answer here, but I think the whole issue is... We'll see it again in a few weeks when Zedekiah, the king of Judah, does the same thing against Jeremiah's strong, strong insistence that he ought not to do this.

So, I think really where I want to leave you and where I want to leave myself is simply to think about how easily we can justify what is finally unchristian behavior on the basis of civil necessities. And I don't think we can simply push that aside. We have to face the issue.

So, for many in the Second World War, the decision was, am I going not to fight, or is the evil being propagated around the world so strongly that I must in the name of good? There are no easy answers there. No easy answers. But the question finally for you and for me is, am I, in the depths of my soul, a submissive person? Or is it a veneer? The old, old story of the little boy whose father said sit down.

No. Sit down. No.

Either you sit down or I'm going to make it for you hard to sit down. The little boy sat down. I'm sitting down on my outside but on my inside I'm standing up.

Yeah. What is my attitude toward authority figures? What is my attitude toward... And again, I'm suggesting we ought not to make a neat division. Oh, I'm submissive to Christ.

It's just those people in Washington I'm not submissive to. Because they're evil. You will ask questions and maybe say things and there may come a time when you have to say no.

But even Moses said no to God when they were arguing about him going in and speaking. He didn't want to. And God said okay, okay, I'll give you Aaron.

I mean showing that in that relationship there was some give and take there. And I'm not saying we need to sit there I mean if God says something I'm not going to do it. At least I hope I'm not.

But do you know what I'm saying? I mean, it's really not... Yeah, I hear you. I mean, submission can be mealy-mouthed. Well, I'm no good, and I don't have to do anything, and I can't help it.

And I'm not talking about that. But I'm talking about a fundamentally rebellious nature that says I'm going to do what I think is right, what I want to do.

And I'm simply saying to us I need, and I dare to think you might need to constantly ask ourselves, am I truly, and I think it comes back, am I truly trusting God? Or do I have my fingers crossed all the time? Mark? Romans 12 or Romans... Isn't there a distinction between injustice done to me personally and injustice I see done to others? Absolutely. I should be rising up in defense, whereas in my own life, I'm to be... I'm not to take my own revenge. Absolutely.

Absolutely. This is where we see Jesus in the temple being very angry because of what had been done to people who wanted to worship, and other people were making a lot of money out of it. Well, I don't want to push that too far, but I simply... If we talk about Hosea foolishly revolting, we need to turn our fingers back on ourselves as well.

Now, I want you to look at Isaiah 28. I hope you can read that which is written at basically this time and what is Isaiah's reading of the leadership in the north at this time. Ah the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim the fading glory of its glorious beauty which is on the head of the rich valley of those overcome with wine.

He has a beautiful mixed metaphor here. Samaria was on a very lovely round hilltop and the city was built on the hilltop with the crenellated walls. The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim and he sees again a beautifully mixed metaphor he sees a drunken party where some people have wreaths on their head like the Olympic winners not lampshades but same idea.

Behold the Lord has one who's mighty and strong like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest like a storm of mighty overflowing waters he cast down to the earth with his hand. Wait a minute, the Assyrians? The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden underfoot. The fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is on the head of a rich valley, will be like the first ripe fig before the summer. When someone sees it, he swallows it as soon as it's in his hand.

In that day, the Lord of hosts will be a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of his people and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate. These also reel with wine and stagger with strong drink. The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink. They're swallowed by wine. They stagger with strong drink. They reel in the vision. They stumble in, giving judgment, for all the tables are full of filthy vomit with no space left. So, the proud crown is made up of the princes, priests, and prophets. How does Isaiah lump them all together? What are they? What's the repeated word there?

Drunk! Drunk! Their tables are full of vomit, and they've got their broken, dried-out wreaths on their heads.

So, what's he describing? Now very probably, it was like Berlin in the winter of 1945 when there were huge, huge orgies when they figured, well, we better clean out this wine cellar before the Russians get here. So, there may have been literal drunkenness, but what's Isaiah saying about them? What's their condition? A lack of judgment. Yes.

Yes. They're out of it. Self-indulgence.

They have no vision. They are proud. This is what Isaiah sees from his perspective in the South about what's going on up there in Ephraim.

Ephraim is the major tribe in the northern kingdom. So, in this kind of situation where leadership is desperately needed on all three levels, there is instead drunkenness. Now, my question is, what is the relationship between physical drunkenness and spiritual drunkenness? We've already touched on several of these characteristics, haven't we? Number one is the inability to make correct judgments.

It is secondly a focus entirely on one's own enjoyment. It is third a loss of balance. It is fourth blindness to reality.

Reality. Yes. Dulls the senses.

Oh exactly. Exactly. For years, they had blinded themselves to the truth of God, and the result was that they stagger.

And so the line goes on: what am I going to do with them? I'm going to have to start over with them in the first grade. The Hebrew is kav v'kav and it looks like it's rote memory. Precept upon precept, line upon line for by people of strange lips and foreign tongue.

That's the Assyrians. God says you haven't heard me. Maybe you'll hear the Assyrians, and they will drive you back. Start at the beginning. We are in captivity. We are oppressed as we were in Egypt. Who will deliver us? Yeah, yeah.

No, there's that aspect as well. It's over. So, the question is for you and me: awake oh him who sleepest.

Awake to see what is reality and to see the condition of our own souls. And be able then to walk the straight line, which the drunk can never do.