

Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 26, Part 2

2 Kings 17, Part 2

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So, Samaria has fallen. What are the reasons? They worshipped other gods, and in that connection, they made idols. And I ask the question, what's repeated most often? And that's the thing that's repeated most often. They worshipped idols.

They worshipped things they'd made with their own hands. I want to come back to that. No, I don't.

I want to stop right there now. How easily we worship gives ultimate value to our own creations, what I have made of my life, my reputation, my business, the worship of that which I have made. They followed the practices of the Canaanites.

Did you notice that? About three times in this passage, they were doing the very things that the people that God drove out were doing. And here's that language from Isaiah. They've returned to their vomit.

They've built pagan worship centers and high places. They've set up sacred stones. These would not be so much idols that they have made as these stones that they have set up and said, oh, it's kind of weird looking.

It must be sacred. It must be holy. They've set up Asherah poles.

And I'm not entirely comfortable with all of the reasoning here, but it looks fairly, fairly serious that these poles were symbols of the erect penis worshipping their reproductive capacities again. They've rejected God's decrees. They've sacrificed their sons and daughters.

That's very interesting. God says your firstborn belongs to me. But you have to redeem the child.

The pagan says, give me that kid. The first sexuality in Ephesus, a girl spent her wedding night first with the priest, worshipping the forces of life and the forces of fertility. They practiced divination and sought omens.

The whole idea of, well, what's the position of the star? Let's find out whether tomorrow will be a good day or not. How many birds flew in that direction? How many flew in that direction? What does the liver of the sacrificed sheep look like? Give us magical signs. They sold themselves.

Isn't that a moving phrase? Did they sell themselves for what purpose? To do what is wrong in the creator's eyes. They enslaved themselves. My goodness, you would think that was written in the 21st century.

What does a drug addict do except sell himself or herself? Or an alcoholic? They sell themselves to become slaves to this. Notice then that the last paragraph, 21 through 23, is a rehearsal of what Jeroboam did in the beginning. That Jeroboam made these two golden calves of Yahweh.

There's never a question that these were golden calves of Baal. They were golden calves of Yahweh. And that's what you see throughout the whole northern kingdom.

Is this this crazy mix of biblical faith and paganism? In the middle section, this story of Elisha and Elijah is about whether they're going to get rid of Yahweh and bring Baal in. But the tragedy of Jehu is, yeah, he got rid of the Baal worship. All right.

But he did not get rid of the golden calves. So, my question is, why do you think this summary, 21 through 23, comes at the end of this horrible list? Matthew? Yeah. Yeah.

Why not begin the list with this? Again, a principle of Bible study is to ask questions. And I don't have the answer. I have an answer, but I wouldn't suggest you have the answer.

All right. All right. I think that's right.

I think it's, they did this, and this, and this, and this, and this, and this, and this, and you know where it started? Right there. Right there. One little step.

Well, I don't want my people three times a year to be crossing the border to go to Jerusalem and worship. So I've got to have something that is really exciting. And visually powerful, like that temple down there.

Oh, okay. Let's make a gold bull. The Chinese proverb is that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

So, I think that's what's going on, and you want to know where this all started right there. And you want to know why this tragic list continues because nobody was ever courageous enough to say we're going to quit that. Now, as I've suggested to you before, what's the alternative? If you get rid of those bulls, are they going to go back to Jerusalem and sell out to the Judeans? Or that wouldn't be an easy question for a northern king to answer.

But the question is, are you going to obey God and let him provide the solution? So, there it is. Now, through this list, we have some things that it is said that God did for them. What are they? In verse seven, he brought them up out of Egypt.

He redeemed them from slavery. Verse eight. What did he do for them? Same thing in verse 11.

What did God do for them? He drove out the other nations, as shown in verses 8 and 11. There's another one in 15 that relates to my next question.

What did he do for them then in, well, the answer is he sent them prophets. It is 13. Yes.

Yes. So, he redeemed them. He gave them a land by driving out the nations.

When they broke his law, he sent them prophets. Why do you think the author is making those points? God is not out to get them. He's not giving up on them.

God did for them what they could not do for themselves. And what does that then say about this list? They've slapped him in the face. It's not as though they are an enslaved people.

God says you're going to be my people, like it or not. And I'm going to stick you in this land, and I'm going to keep you there, and you better do what I say. No, no.

He's their Savior. He's their provider. He's their Warner.

This makes all of this even more heinous. What had happened? I think the answer is in two words, which are opposites of each other. Says Deuteronomy, when you sin, you have forgotten the Lord.

Now, you see, we can say, oh, I remember him. And Moses says, no, you don't. If you really did remember who he is and what he's done, you wouldn't act like that.

The Hebrew mindset, the biblical mindset, is you cannot separate your mentality from your behavior. So over and over again, when our scriptures will say, the text actually says, hear my voice. They heard his voice.

They obeyed. We can say, yeah, I heard you, but I'm not doing it. And the Bible says, then you didn't hear me, did you? So again, the question for me is, does my behavior show that I'm remembering who the Lord is and what he's done? That's the significance of the Lord's Supper.

Do this in remembrance of me. Do this because you remember me. And in a real sense, he can say of all of the scripture, do these things because you remember me.

If you do these things, you've forgotten me. You can have your Yahweh temples. You can have your Yahweh feasts on the wrong days.

You can have all these things, but in fact, you've forgotten me, as is evident from this sort of stuff. So again, the question for me, for you, is, am I remembering the Lord? I've often thought with regard to Isaiah 6; God is not saying to him, Isaiah, I've been telling you to do this for years, and you wouldn't do it. But now I'm telling you, this is it.

This is your last chance. Get out there and speak for me. No.

God says, whom shall I send? Who will go for us? And here's Isaiah down here, jumping up and down. God, God, could you use me? Why? Because he remembered what God had just done for him. He was a blot on the pavement.

And God has cleansed his lips. God has given him a new life. He thought he was dissolved.

He's alive, and he's clean. Oh God, isn't there something I can do for you? I think God's difficulty with so many of us, one for you, three for me, is we don't remember what an amazing thing he's done for us in saving us. We've forgotten.

We think God's sort of fortunate to have us on his team. They followed the nations around them. God had said from the beginning you're to be different.

Because you have a different perception of reality, Karen and I have been talking recently about Andy Stanley and his suggestion that Christians don't need the Old Testament. I get rather hot under the collar, so I need to restrain myself.

And I say, dear God, what in the world? Those other nations say this world is God. That's what the secular world says today. This world is it.

They're, excuse the bad grammar, ain't no more. This is it. And God says you can't do what they do.

You can't act the way they act or live the way they live because this world is not ultimate. Now, folks, that's an Old Testament idea.

The New Testament borrows it because those New Testament writers are smart. But this changes everything. If this world is not ultimate, then there's someone who is not this world that I can't manipulate through this world.

And that's where so much of that stuff comes from. I want my wife to be fertile. I want her to have a lot of kids.

Sons will help me work in the fields, and daughters will marry off to the neighbors so we inherit their land. Come on, woman, get with it. Well, how do I do that? Well, I've got to manipulate the powers of fertility.

And God says you can't do that. That doesn't work because this world is not ultimate. So, forgive me.

I get a little bit exercised on that point. You can't do what the nations do. Why not? Not because God says, well, I just said you can't.

No, it's because they've got a different perspective on reality. You can't go there. All right.