

## **Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 30, Part 3**

### **2 Kings 24-25, Part 3**

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To the destruction of the city, despair, and hope, starting at verse eight on the seventh day of the fifth month in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar Adon, commander of the Imperial Guard and official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. So, it's been about a month since the city was actually captured. He set fire to the temple of the Lord, the royal palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem.

Every important building he burned down. The whole Babylonian army, under the commander of the Imperial Guard, broke down the walls all around Jerusalem. I sort of hear these guys saying, I signed on to fight.

I didn't sign on to break down walls. Well, you've signed on, so you're going to do it. I've talked to you before about the three-step plan that the Assyrians followed and that the Babylonians picked up on.

Number one, they show up in the neighborhood and offer you an alliance. And if you're smart, you accept the alliance, and there's a big tribute attached to it. Well, inevitably, you and your people get tired of paying that tribute, so you revolt, and the Assyrians come back.

They besiege your city. If you're smart, you surrender, and you maybe will live. And the tribute is raised.

They put their own choice of native king on the throne. Inevitably, he revolts, and they come back. And this time, there is no surrender.

This time, the city is burned to the ground, and the walls are destroyed. This place is never going to be a center of rebellion again. So, this is the third strike.

Once again, in verse 12, the commander left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and the fields. Now, I want you to look at these next verses, 25, 13, and following. So, we've just had a very quick summary.

He burned down the temple, burned down the palace, burned down all the houses and tore down the walls. Now, we're going to have six verses. The Babylonians broke up the bronze pillars, the movable stands, and the bronze sea that was at the temple of the Lord and carried the bronze to Babylon.

They took away the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, dishes, and all the bronze articles used in the temple service. The commander of the imperial guard took away the censers, sprinkling bowls, all that were made of pure gold or silver. The bronze from the two pillars, the sea and the movable stands, which Solomon had made for the temple of the Lord, was more than could be weighed.

Each pillar was 18 cubits high. The bronze capital on top of one pillar was three cubits high and was decorated with a network and pomegranates of bronze all around. The other pillar with its network was similar.

All right, turn back, please, to chapter 8, no, excuse me, 7, verse 15, he cast two bronze pillars, each 18 cubits high and 12 cubits in circumference. He also made two capitals of cast bronze to set on top of the pillars. Each capital was five cubits high.

A network of interwoven chains adorned the capitals on the top of the pillars, seven for each capital. He made pomegranates in two rows, circling each network, and so forth. In verse 23, he made the sea of cast metal circular in shape, measuring 10 cubits, 15 feet from rim to rim, and five cubits high.

I'm in 1 Kings 7. Verse 25, he made 12, the sea stood on 12 bulls, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, three facing east. In verse 27, he made 10 movable stands of bronze. Each was four cubits long, four wide, and three high.

Verse 38, he made 10 bronze basins, each holding 40 baths and measuring four cubits across six feet. One basin to go on each of the 10 stands, and so forth. Do you see the similarity in the language? Why do you think that is? Why didn't he just say he destroyed the temple and took all its stuff? Why this much of a detailed description? Is it recorded? Yes, yes.

The tragedy of it all, this stuff that was dedicated to the Lord, made for his service. All right, now look at chapter 9 of 1 Kings, verse 3. I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me. This is God talking to Solomon.

I have consecrated this temple, which you have built by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there. As for you, if you walk before me with a perfect heart and uprightly as David your father did, do all I command and observe my decrees and laws; I'll establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father when I said you will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.

But if you or your descendants turn away from me, do not observe the commands and decrees I've given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I've given them and will reject this temple I have

consecrated for my name. Israel then will become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. This temple will become a heap of rubble.

All who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, why has the Lord done such a thing to his land and to this temple? People will answer because they have forsaken the Lord, their God, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods worshiping and serving them. That is why the Lord brought all this disaster on them. So here it is.

We've really got bookends. Here's the glory of the temple, and here's the tragedy of the temple. Now I asked the question there: can you construct a theology of the temple from this? With, of course, chapter 9 there.

We talked a long time ago. Why so much detail about this temple? And in a sense, reflected here. Why so much detail? Why did God cause that? He loves it.

It was a house, the house where his name would be. He loved it. And what's the tragedy? He left it.

Why did he leave it? What did he say in chapter 9? Yes, if you turn away from me, I don't care about a building. What I care about is you. You are the temple of my heart.

This is all symbolism. How beautiful are our hearts to him? That beautiful. And what is the tragedy? When our hearts are no longer his.

They're a horror. They're ugly. They're a disaster.

So, in many, many ways, I think the books of Kings are about the temple. All of this, I believe, is symbolic, and it's symbolic symbolism designed to tell us where God is headed.

It's not accidental that I want to talk to you about Ephesians in the fall. In a real sense, this is where it's all headed. I've been interested in and fascinated by the prevalence of the temple in the Old Testament recently.

The last book in the Hebrew Old Testament is Chronicles. Here's the last verse of Chronicles. This is what Cyrus, king of Persia, says: Yahweh, the God of heaven, has commanded me, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has appointed me to build him a temple at Jerusalem in Judah.

That's the last verse in the Old Testament in the Hebrew order. And in our order, it's Malachi. And Malachi is about the corruption of the temple by people who are trying to use it for themselves.

So, what is this all about? It's about God wanting to come home. It's no accident that the last 16 chapters of Exodus, which is really the biblical theology of salvation, are about God coming home. And so it is here.

The echo that we find here of these words. All right. Now, back to Kings.

How does the book end? Honestly, a little mysteriously. In the 30s, this is chapter 25, verse 27. In the 37th year of the exile of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Jehoiakim has been in prison for 37 years.

In the year that Awel Marduk, Nebuchadnezzar, finally died after 56 years, in the year Awel Marduk became king of Babylon, his first year, Nebuchadnezzar headed in for Jehoiakim, obviously. But I think Awel Marduk is his son. I'm not sure about that.

But his successor, in his first year, released Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from prison. He did this on the 27th day of the 12th month. He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honor higher than those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon.

Huh? Judah is a nothing. Judah is not as big as Jessamine County. A seat of honor higher than those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon.

So Jehoiakim put aside his prison clothes and, for the rest of his life, ate regularly at the king's table. Day by day, the king gave Jehoiakim a regular allowance as long as he lived. Now, what in the world is that about? Well, the scholars love to fight each other on this one.

I think, as I started out, the end of Judah, maybe. David's line is not going to be put out. Judah, as an independent nation-state, has its own human king, so yeah, that's over.

It's done. The book is finished. But is the story over? No, no.

Pardon? Yeah. I'm going to be cruel here. Yes, he's sitting on the throne in heaven.

Yes, yes. So, I think this is absolutely intentional. Gloom, doom, tragedy, disaster for what we thought was the kingdom of God.

An independent nation-state with a human king on the throne and an army guaranteeing its independence. We thought that was the kingdom of God. It's over.

It's finished. But God's not done. And so, I'm confident.

Now, many scholars say, well, this is just a postscript of some sort. But I'm confident that it's not just a postscript. It's really saying the story is going to go on.

But it's going to go on in a different way than you can imagine. Because the kingdom of God is not the nation of Judah. And the son of David is not merely a human king.

There's something more going on here. So, the book ends, as I said, darkly. And yet, it's as though as the darkness shuts down around us, suddenly there's a candle flame.

And they say that. I have not been there and cannot guarantee it. They say that in space, a match lighted can be seen 500 miles away.

In the absolute darkness, that single little glimmer of light, oh, I think that's the story here. It's darkness. Joachim? Who knows? Who knows? He lifted up his head.

And on the other side of David's psalm, chapter 3, where he said, God is my head. Of my head. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Don't know if you all heard that.

When Jeremiah tells the story, he has one difference. He lifted his head, which reminds us of Psalm 3: God is the lifter of my head.

Yes. Yes. Well, one more thought, just wrapping up.

I said at the outset months ago that liberals and conservatives alike are agreed that Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are all written in the light of Deuteronomy. Now, the liberals think that Deuteronomy wasn't written until 621 when it was found in the temple. I don't believe that for a moment.

I think it was written in 1400 by Moses. But we all agree Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are written in the light of Deuteronomy. They're looking at Israel's history with that backdrop.

So, what is Deuteronomy's philosophy of history? Pretty simple. Keep the covenant and experience blessing. Break the covenant and experience the curse.

So, who is a good king? Keeps the covenant. Who's a bad king? Breaks the covenant. Did he rule for a long, long time? Did he have a lot of material wealth? Did he have a lot of power? But he broke the covenant.

Forget it. He was not significant. So, what does it mean to keep the covenant? In a nutshell, four things.

Number one, absolute exclusive devotion to Yahweh. Absolute exclusive devotion to Yahweh. Goes right back to Exodus chapter 20, verse 2. You shall have no other gods before me.

The second, the second commandment is no idolatry. You cannot capture a deity in the shape of anything created. And I cannot overemphasize the importance of that.

It makes all the difference. I've said it to you several times. There are only two world views, the biblical one and the other one.

The biblical one says a deity, whatever it is, is a part of the cosmos. And the Bible says absolutely not. Deity is not part of the cosmos.

And therefore, you cannot represent the divine with anything created. So, Jeroboam could say, hey, I'm worshipping Yahweh. Yeah, but you're worshipping Him in the shape of a gold bull.

Oops. You've made Him part of this world in a form that you can manipulate and control. Do not put your trust in anything other than Yahweh, especially Assyria.

I said this before. I'll say it again. You won't have to hear me anymore until September if you come back.

Whatever you trust in place of God will one day turn on you and destroy you. A job, a house, a lover, whatever you trust in place of God will one day turn on you and destroy you. There's a sense in which those first three are the first four commandments.

This last one is the last six put together. Treat others, especially those who cannot repay you with kindness. That's the word hesed.

With generosity, that's the word ahav. Both those words, hesed and ahav, are translated love. Ahav is more affection.

Hesed is choosing to do right for another person. And respect, mishpat, often translated justice. But as I've tried to say to you several times, it's bigger than mere legal equity.

It's God's design for life. And everybody matters in that design. That's Deuteronomy.

And that's the grid that Kings has used from end to end to say what worked and what didn't work. All right, any last words you want to say before I let you go? Amen,

that's a pretty good word. When's the book coming out? Well, if I can get somebody to transcribe these tapes, I might be able to do it.

Oh, I've done a commentary on Kings. I've got 1,100 typewritten pages sitting on my desk that have gone to the editor for commentary. I think my sister's talking about a more popular book like My Exodus, The Way Out or so.

All right, let me pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for the truth. Thank you for its vitality. Thank you for its power. Thank you for its beauty.

Thank you for all the ways in which you use it to reveal yourself to us. We don't worship the Bible. It's a book, but we worship you.

We give you eternal thanks for your book because in it we see your face. Help us, oh Lord, to live as men and women of God. Help us to live our lives day by day, reflecting you, choosing you, loving you, and living for you.

May we be truly blessed because we walk with you. In your name, amen.