

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 2 KINGS 23

2 KINGS 23:1-3 - COVENANT RENEWAL

JOSIAH HAS ALREADY CLEANSSED THE LAND OF MUCH OF THE IDOLATRY AND BEGUN TO CLEANSSE THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM. NOW HE GATHERS THE PEOPLE TOGETHER TO RENEW THEIR COVENANT WITH THE LORD. JOSIAH READS ALL OF THE WORDS OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW TO THE NATION AND HE HIMSELF VOWS TO WALK AFTER AND KEEP THE COMMANDS OF THE LORD. AND THE ASSEMBLED NATIONS AGREES.

2 KINGS 23:4-14 - JOSIAH'S REFORMS CONTINUE

JOSIAH CONTINUES TO CLEANSSE THE TEMPLE, JERUSALEM AND ALL OF THE LAND OF JUDAH. NOTICE THAT HE DOESN'T JUST DECIDE TO WORSHIP THE LORD AS HIS PERSONAL OR NATIONAL GOD...HE ALSO GETS RID OF THE IDOLS AND RIVALS TO THAT RELATIONSHIP. THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF A COVENANT (MORE ON THIS LATER).

AND JOSIAH'S ZEAL IN THIS OBEDIENCE IS EVIDENT! BREAKING, GRINDING, BURNING, REMOVING. HE DEALS WITH THE PHYSICAL POSSIBILITIES OF IDOLATRY (ALTARS, STATUES, VESSEL OF WORSHIP) AND ALSO REMOVES THE EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL POSSIBILITIES BY "DOING AWAY" WITH THE IDOLATROUS PRIESTS (V. 5). THOSE TWO STEPS ARE IMPORTANT.

2 KINGS 23:15-20 - JOSIAH'S ZEAL REACHES ISRAEL

JOSIAH'S REFORM AND CLEANSING CAMPAIGN REACHES BEYOND HIS KINGDOM. HE ENTERS THE LAND OF ISRAEL (HOWEVER, NOW DESOLATE OF HER CITIZENS) AND DEMOLISHES THE ALTARS THAT JEROBOAM HAD SET UP OF THE MOLTEN CALFS GENERATIONS AGO. IF YOU REMEMBER THIS WAS THE INITIAL SIN OF ISRAEL WHICH LED TO THEIR DOWNFALL AND CONTINUAL REBELLION FROM THE LORD. JEROBOAM, THE FIRST KING OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL SET UP TWO GOLDEN CALVES IN HIS KINGDOM TO DISCOURAGE HIS CITIZENS TO TRAVEL TO JERUSALEM. HIS SIN WAS A BIG DEAL AND A PROPHET NAMED AHIJAH DENOUNCED HIS ACT AND PROPHESED OF HIS DOWNFALL.

WAY BACK IN 1 KINGS 14 I INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING NOTE:

"JEROBOAM WAS THE KING OF ISRAEL. JEROBOAM WAS THE ONE WHO BROUGHT IDOLATRY INTO THE LAND. THIS LEADS TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL TO WORSHIP IDOLS TOO AND IDOLATRY FILLS THE LAND. AS A RESULT THE ENTIRE NATION WILL BE EXILED - BUT THE LORD WANTS THE KING AND THE NATION TO KNOW THAT THIS IS BECAUSE OF JEROBOAM.

"...IN CASE YOU WERE A BIT DULL WHEN YOU READ 1 KINGS 14, THE WRITER MAKES SURE YOU DON'T FORGET AHIJAH'S PROPHECY, FOR HE TAKES (ITS FINAL POINTS), MAKES IT HIS REFRAIN, AND - LIKE A JINGLE ON A RADIO COMMERCIAL - DRUMS IT INTO YOUR HEAD AGAIN AND AGAIN. THERE IS NO ESCAPE; OVER AND OVER YOU HEAR 'THE SINS OF JEROBOAM, WHICH HE SINNED, AND WHICH HE CAUSED ISRAEL TO SIN' (14:16 + 1 KINGS 15:26, 30, 34; 16:19, 26; 22:52; 2 KINGS 10:31; 13:6, 11; 14:24; 15:18, 24, 28; 17:21-23). THE FIRST KING OF THE 10 TRIBES FINISHED THEM. THE BEGINNING WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE END. JEROBOAM WENT BULLISH AND DAMNED A WHOLE PEOPLE. THE CURSE OF AHIJAH'S WORD HANGS OVER THE NEXT 180 YEARS" (DALE RALPH DAVIS, "FOCUS ON THE BIBLE: 1 KINGS", PAGE 163-164)

THOSE OF US READING ALONG THE WAY SINCE THEN HAVE HEARD THAT REFRAIN OVER AND OVER AGAIN...AND NOW HUNDREDS OF YEARS LATER JOSIAH DESTROYS THESE IDOLS AND ALTARS. HE DUG UP THE BONES OF THE FALSE PRIESTS AND DEFILED AND DISHONORED THEM. THOUGH NEITHER JEROBOAM OR HIS EVIL PRIESTS ARE THERE TO WITNESS, JUSTICE IS SERVED.

V 17-18 - "THE MAN OF GOD" - ONE FINAL POINT OF THIS JEROBOAM STORY IS THAT THE MAN WHO CONFRONTED JEROBOAM'S SIN ENDS UP BEING HONORED. (HE WAS THE MAN OF GOD WHO WAS TOLD TO RETURN BACK TO JUDAH AND NOT STOP FOR ANYTHING, 1 KINGS 13). HE IS NOT THERE TO WITNESS IT EITHER, BUT JUSTICE (FOR HIM AND HIS MESSAGE) IS SERVED. AND I WANT TO TAKE THIS TIME TO FLASH BACK TO HIS MESSAGE:

1 KINGS 13:1-5 - NOW BEHOLD, THERE CAME A MAN OF GOD FROM JUDAH TO BETHEL BY THE WORD OF THE LORD, WHILE JEROBOAM WAS STANDING BY THE ALTAR TO BURN INCENSE. 2 HE CRIED AGAINST THE ALTAR BY THE WORD OF THE LORD, AND SAID, "O ALTAR, ALTAR, THUS SAYS THE LORD, 'BEHOLD, A SON SHALL BE BORN TO THE HOUSE OF DAVID, JOSIAH BY NAME; AND ON YOU HE SHALL SACRIFICE THE PRIESTS OF THE HIGH PLACES WHO BURN INCENSE ON YOU, AND HUMAN BONES SHALL BE BURNED ON YOU.'" 3 THEN HE GAVE A SIGN THE SAME DAY, SAYING, "THIS IS THE SIGN WHICH THE LORD HAS SPOKEN, 'BEHOLD, THE ALTAR SHALL BE SPLIT APART AND THE ASHES WHICH ARE ON IT SHALL BE POURED OUT.'" 4 NOW WHEN THE KING HEARD THE SAYING OF THE MAN OF GOD, WHICH HE CRIED AGAINST THE ALTAR IN BETHEL, JEROBOAM STRETCHED OUT HIS HAND FROM THE ALTAR, SAYING, "SEIZE HIM." BUT HIS HAND WHICH HE STRETCHED OUT AGAINST HIM DRIED UP, SO THAT HE COULD NOT DRAW IT BACK TO HIMSELF. 5 THE ALTAR ALSO WAS SPLIT APART AND THE ASHES WERE POURED OUT FROM THE ALTAR, ACCORDING TO THE SIGN WHICH THE MAN OF GOD HAD GIVEN BY THE WORD OF THE LORD.

WOW! THE MAN OF GOD FORETOLD THIS VERY EVENT (AND JOSIAH BY NAME!). THOUGH SURELY THE NATION HAD FORGOTTEN THIS PROPHECY, THE LORD HAD NOT. AND JUST AT THE RIGHT TIME, JOSIAH APPEARS TO FULLY FULFILL THE WORD OF THE LORD. AND WHEN JOSIAH, IN HIS "DIG UP THE BONES OF THE BAD GUYS AND DEFILE THEM" CAMPAIGN REACHES THIS MAN'S GRAVE, JOSIAH LEAVES IT ALONE, HONORING THE MAN AND HIS MINISTRY.

2 KINGS 23:21-23 - PASSOVER CELEBRATED

THE PASSOVER IS THE GREAT NATIONAL CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM AND THE DELIVERANCE OF GOD. FIRST CELEBRATED AS ISRAEL LEFT EGYPT, IT WAS A YEARLY REMINDER OF THE COVENANT-KEEPING GOD WHO HAD SAVED AND SPARED THEM BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB AND BROUGHT THEM INTO THE PROMISED LAND. APPARENTLY THIS YEAR WAS UNLIKE ANY OTHER COMMEMORATION. (V. 22)

2 KINGS 23:24-27 - THE GREATEST KING

JOSIAH IS DESCRIBED AS ONE OF, IF NOT THE, GREATEST KINGS TO SIT ON DAVID'S THRONE. WOW, WHAT A DESCRIPTION. YET WITH ALL OF HIS DEVOTION, LOVE AND PASSION FOR THE LORD AND HIS WAYS, HE WASN'T GREATER THAN THE WORD OF THE LORD WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN DETERMINED AGAINST JUDAH. JOSIAH'S REIGN REPRESENTS A REPRIEVE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE AND A CHANCE FOR THAT GENERATION TO REPENT AND BE SAVED...BUT GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON JUDAH AND HER SIN WILL (AND MUST) COME.

2 KINGS 23:28-30 - JOSIAH'S DEATH

JOSIAH IS MURDERED BY THE KING OF EGYPT. A TRAGIC END TO OUR GREAT KING. JOSIAH'S SON JEHOAHAZ ASCENDS TO THE THRONE IN HIS PLACE. WE PAUSE OUR STORY FOR NOW, GRATEFUL FOR THE LIFE AND EXAMPLE OF JOSIAH, BUT STILL MINDFUL OF THE COMING JUDGEMENT.

TWO LESSONS FOR US

A COVENANT IS AN IMPORTANT THING IN SCRIPTURE AND IN LIFE. WE OFTEN HEAR IT IN THE CONTEXT OF A "MARRIAGE COVENANT". BUT DO WE KNOW THE FULL PICTURE OF A COVENANT? A MARRIAGE COVENANT IS THE INTENTIONAL COMMITMENT TO ONE PERSON, BUT IT IS ALSO A COMMITMENT TO NOT BE UNITED WITH ANYONE ELSE. HERE IS THE VOW THAT WE OFTEN HEAR AT WEDDINGS:

"GROOM", DO YOU TAKE "BRIDE" TO BE YOUR WEDDED WIFE, TO LIVE TOGETHER IN MARRIAGE? WILL YOU LOVE HER, COMFORT HER, HONOR AND KEEP HER FOR BETTER OR WORSE, FOR RICHER OR POORER, IN SICKNESS AND HEALTH, AND FORSAKING ALL OTHERS, BE FAITHFUL ONLY TO HER, FOR AS LONG AS YOU BOTH SHALL LIVE?

WE LIVE IN A SOCIETY THAT IS FLOODED WITH CONSUMERISM, AND NOT JUST IN THE WORLD OF ECONOMICS. THERE ARE SOME ELEMENTS OF CONSUMERISM THAT ARE WISE AND GOOD - FOR EXAMPLE, IF DAVE'S MARKET HAS A BETTER PRICE FOR ROAST BEEF THAN STOP AND SHOP DOES, HAVING LOYALTY TO STOP IN SHOP BECAUSE YOU LIKE THEIR LOGO DOESN'T MAKE MUCH SENSE. GO WHERE THE DEALS ARE. AND IF STOP AND SHOP LOWERS THEIR PRICE FOR MEAT, OR OTHER ITEMS, WE'LL GO BACK THERE. SOME OF US EVEN STOP AT MULTIPLE STORES TO GET SHOPPING DONE. PRICE RITE FOR DRY GOODS, TRADER JOES FOR SNACKS, DAVE'S FOR MEAT AND WHOLE FOODS FOR PRODUCE. WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR BANK ACCOUNT AND FOOD PREFERENCES, THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH "SHOPPING AROUND". A CONSUMER IS JUST THAT, ONE WHO CONSUMES, AND A CONSUMER WILL GO WHERE THEY FIND THE THINGS THEY WANT TO CONSUME BASED ON QUALITY AND PRICE.

HOWEVER, THIS CONSUMER MINDSET HAS CREPT INTO OUR LIVES BEYOND WHERE WE GET OUR BREAD AND MILK. IT COLORS OUR SOCIETY'S RELATIONSHIPS AND OUR WORLD'S CONCEPT OF COMMITMENT AND COVENANT. IF YOUR WIFE ISN'T MAKING YOU HAPPY ANY MORE, GET RID OF HER AND GET A BETTER MODEL. IF YOUR HUSBAND IS PAYING THE BILLS BUT NOT MAKING YOU FEEL LIKE A PRINCESS, KEEP HIM AROUND BUT ALSO GET A BOYFRIEND ON THE SIDE. AS BELIEVERS, WE READ THIS AND THINK "THAT'S CRAZY". IT IS. HOWEVER, THIS CONSUMER MINDSET IS A THREAT TO COVENANT WITH GOD AS WELL.

HERE'S WHAT I MEAN. JOSIAH MADE THE COMMITMENT TO FOLLOW THE WAYS OF YAHWEH. AND THAT MEANT OBEYING THE COMMANDMENTS AND WORSHIPPING THE LORD - BUT IT ALSO MEANT NOT WORSHIPPING OTHER GODS. YOU SEE THAT IS WHAT THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD HAD BEEN DOING. WORSHIP BAAL IF YOU WANT GOOD CROPS. WORSHIP ASHERAH IF YOU WANT RAIN. WORSHIP MOLECH IF YOU WANT X, WORSHIP A GOLDEN COW IF YOU WANT Y, AND SO ON. YAHWEH, HOWEVER, WAS THE ONE GOD THAT HAD POWER OVER EVERY AND ANYTHING IN LIFE. AND HIS STIPULATION ON BEING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH HUMANITY WAS THAT YOU WOULD LIVE FOR HIM, AND NO ONE ELSE WAS ALLOWED IN THE CONVERSATION.

THIS SEEMS EASY TO SEE WHEN IT COMES TO IDOLS OF WOOD AND STONE. BUT WE MUST REMEMBER THAT WE CANNOT WORSHIP THE LORD AND FOLLOW HIS SON JESUS AND ALSO BE IN CHARGE. THAT'S IDOLATRY. WE CAN'T LIVE FOR GOD AND PRAISE HIM AND ALSO LOOK TO THE GOVERNMENT, OUR JOBS, OTHER PEOPLE, ETC TO BE OUR SUFFICIENCY. SURE, GOD WILL USE THOSE THINGS TO DO HIS WORK AND PROVIDE FOR US, BUT HE IS OUR GOD. AND IF THAT IS TRUE, WE CAN'T KEEP THE OTHER "GODS" AROUND IN CASE WE GET IN TROUBLE. WE HAVE TO DESTROY AND DEMOLISH ANY REMAINING FOODHOLD THEY MAY HAVE IN OUR HEARTS. WE NEED TO DAILY, RENEW OUR COVENANT TO BE FAITHFUL ONLY TO HIM.

AND THE BEAUTIFUL THING THAT WE MUST REMEMBER IN THIS DISCUSSION IS THAT THE LORD COVENANTS WITH US TOO. AND HIS PART OF THE COVENANT IS TO BE FAITHFUL TO US AS WELL. TO PROVIDE AND CARE AND TEACH AND SHAPE US WITH LOVE AND GRACE. TO GIVE US PEACE NOW AND LIFE FOREVER IN PARADISE. AND SO WE CALL TO MIND HIS GREAT LOVE AGAIN TODAY AND DETERMINE TO BE FAITHFUL TO HIM AND HIM ALONE.

THE SECOND LESSON RELATES TO THE FULFILLED PROPHECY OF JOSIAH. THE PROPHECY WAS THAT A SON OF DAVID, NAMED JOSIAH WOULD COME AND DESTROY THE IDOLS AND VINDICATE THE LORD'S NAME. 1 KINGS 13 IS THE FIRST MENTION OF "JOSIAH" BY THE MAN OF GOD WHO WAS SENT TO DENOUNCE THE IDOLS OF ISRAEL. THIS LIKELY HAPPENED AROUND THE YEAR 931 BC.

THE MAN OF GOD LATER DIES, JEROBOAM DOES TOO AND MUCH TIME AND HISTORY PASSES. EVEN THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL CEASES TO EXIST. BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD, ENDURES FOREVER. THIS IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF THAT TRUTH. JOSIAH, THE PROMISED SON OF DAVID WHO DEFEATS THE RIVAL GODS AND RIDS THE NATION OF EVIL APPEARS. A CHILD KING, TAKING HIS THRONE AT 8 AND COMING TO LOVE THE LORD AS A YOUNG MAN. HE IS USED BY GOD IN THE YEAR 622 BC TO FULFILL THE PROMISED WORD.

WE MAY NOT SEE THE WORD OF THE LORD COME TO PAST IN OUR LIFE TIME, BUT IT SURELY WILL. WE CLING TO THE PROMISES OF GOD, KNOWING THEY ARE ABSOLUTELY GOING TO COME TO BE FULFILLED! EVERY WORD OF THEM! NOTHING WILL THWART GOD'S PURPOSES AND PLANS. NO KING, NO PRIEST, NO NATION, NO HUMAN, NO ANGEL, NO DEMON. WE TRUST THAT HIS WORD IS TRUE AND SEE IT IN ACTION IN THAT SPAN OF 300 YEARS. THERE WERE MANY TIMES AND MOMENTS WHERE GOD'S PEOPLE COULD HAVE BEEN TEMPTED TO DOUBT BECAUSE IT WAS "TAKING TOO LONG" OR THEY WEREN'T SEEING THINGS COMING TOGETHER THE WAY THEY THOUGHT. BUT IN THE END, HIS WORD WAS TRUE.

AND SO WE LEARN FROM THIS TO CLING TIGHTER TO EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD. FOR REMEMBER, WE TOO ARE PROMISED THAT A SON OF DAVID WILL COME TO TAKE THE THRONE AND BRING JUSTICE TO THE EARTH. HE HAS ALREADY APPEARED AS A CHILD AND GREW TO BE A MAN. SO MUCH OF THE WORD OF GOD HAS ALREADY BEEN FULFILLED IN HIM - AND WE NOW WAIT, WITH CONFIDENCE FOR THE REMAINING PROMISES TO TURN INTO REALITY. FOR OUR PROMISED KING, DAVID'S HEIR NAMED JESUS, WILL COME, JUST AS HE SAID.