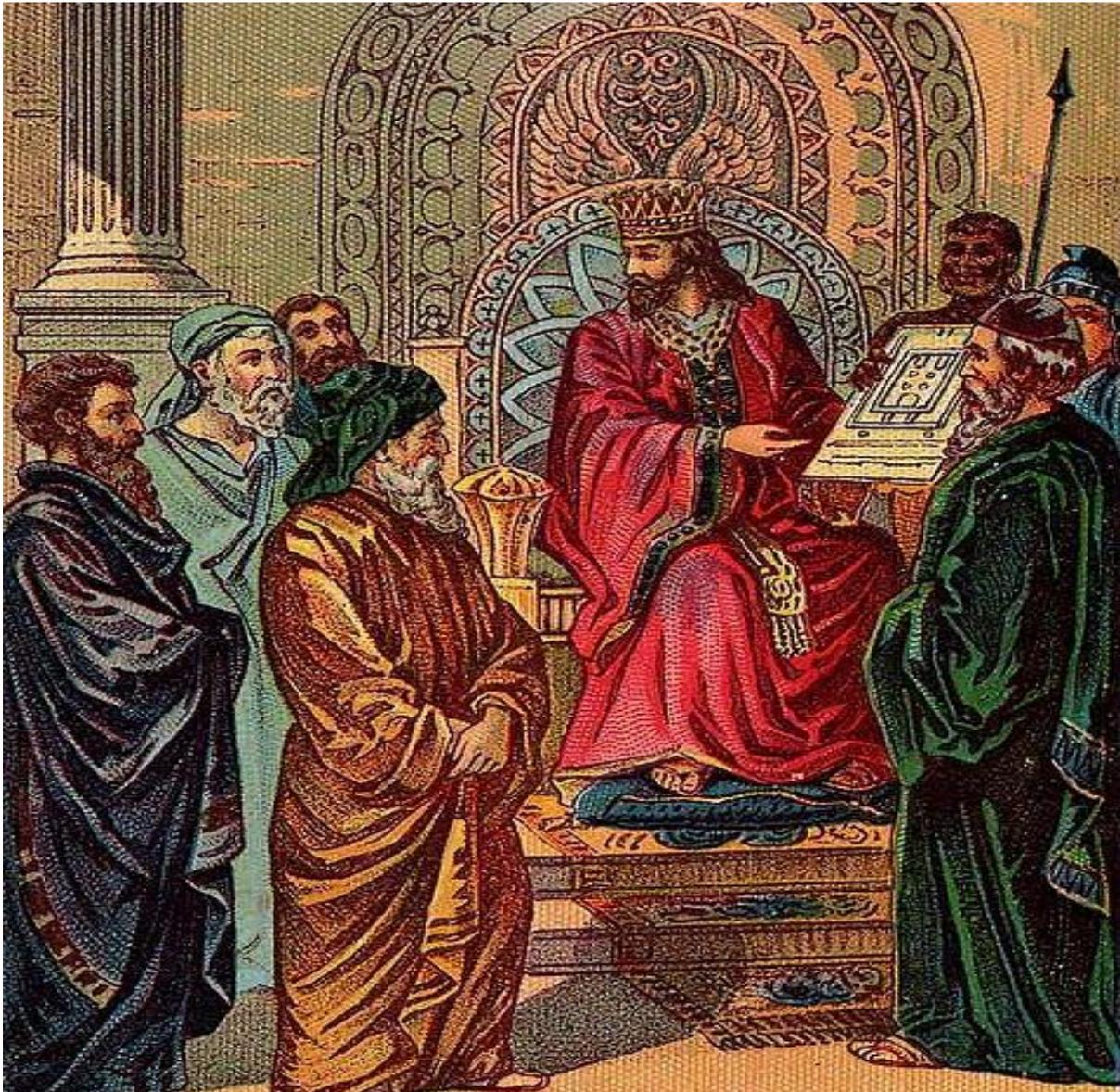


**REFLECTIONS FROM
1 & 2 KINGS
THE DRAMA OF ISRAEL'S MONARCHS**



BY SERGIO R. TANGARI

REFLECTIONS FROM 1 & 2 KINGS

My goal in writing reflections from 1 & 2 KINGS are the following: First, to encourage you the reader that if you will pay attention to the words on the page and listen carefully you will mine a lot of truth for life without the need of a commentary or any secondary source. That is, “take up and read” to enrich your soul Christian.

Second, I write to give you a model of how observations can be done in scripture that do not read into the text something foreign to the author’s intent. This will help you experience the joy of discovery and increase your confidence in your ability to comprehend God’s word.

Third, by doing the above my hope is that you will be able to hear God’s voice all the more clearly because it is the word of God that is forever settled in heaven, and not our subjective impressions, however valid they may be. That is, we have a more sure word of prophecy according to Peter—meaning the inscripturated word of God—then a glorious experience we may claim to have (2 Peter 1:16-21). Too often we Christians have bizarre ideas of what “God” is supposedly speaking to us and when it contradicts the Bible, be assured we are not hearing his voice.

1 KINGS 4-7: “THE OPULENCE OF SOLOMON—SOURCED IN GOD”

Solomon’s true wealth was not his material possessions (which were massive), but the wisdom God gave to him. This wisdom was given to the young king in response to his petition for; “*An understanding heart to judge Your [God] people to discern between good and evil...*” (3:9). What would occur if leaders and rulers would make this petition the content of their desires, rather than the obvious prestige and power which come along with said positions? I think those following would be more joyful and less oppressed because this mark of a righteous leader mirrors God’s priorities in ruling.

Solomon’s petition God granted but much more; “*I [God] have also given you what you have not asked...*” which was a staggering amount of material treasure (3:10-13). During this time, Solomon had his “team” of co-reigners with him to assist in the ruling of the land (4:1-19), and Judah along with Israel lived in an abundant prosperity never before seen or experienced after Solomon’s reign (4:20, 25).

We must not forget to make much of God here rather than Solomon because the LORD is the source of said staggering wealth, not the king. The Scriptures are clear that God—by virtue of being the creator—is the owner of everything in the earth, not his creatures; *“The earth is the Lord’s and all it contains”*. Solomon’s true wealth (wisdom) shows itself by gathering the needed skilled workers for building the temple of the LORD (5:13-18) and by the ability to organize the labor force. Unless one has tried such an endeavor, it’s difficult to appreciate the difficulty of said task.

The description of both the temple and Solomon’s palace is impressive strewn with its cedar, gold and stone materials used to aesthetically adorn the windows and carvings by the smiths. In all this activity, God essentially tells Solomon; *“What you are doing is good, but if you forsake Me, you won’t be blessed. However if you follow Me, I’ll be with you”* (6:11-13). The fruit of Solomon’s work was grounded in God’s favor toward him, but it was conditioned on his obedience, not his rebellion. That is, above and beyond the material wealth and even wisdom God granted to Solomon, there was and is no greater wealth than to be right with god for here is where His presence is promised for blessing, not cursing. Nevertheless, Solomon like so many of us disobeyed Gods command. He made alliances with the surrounding nations, marrying for political gain which became a snare to him—his spouses led him away to worship other “gods”.

The fact is that such power can turn one to madness if it is not submitted to God.

This was Solomon’s experience (read Ecclesiastes) and yet God remains faithful to his faithless children working out his providential will even through their disobedience (Rom.8:28-29). That’s amazing!

(SDG)

1 KINGS 13-15 “CAN BEING A MAN AFTER GOD’S OWN HEART EQUAL SINLESSNESS?”

For years I’ve considered the refrain, “David, a man after God’s own heart”, as somewhat troubling. He indeed showed tremendous courage in battle, unflinching loyalty in friendship and great skill in leading a nation. However, Scripture also records a David who used deception to save his own skin at another’s expense. He’s infamously known for his adultery, murder and betrayal

against Uriah, his loyal soldier, for having blurred judgment because of past sins, and tragedy that seemed to transpire often in his family.

So while David's life was far from exemplary, he nevertheless is known as the man after God's own heart. What could that mean? Far from being a sinless man, David nonetheless treasured God's word and mercy understanding that ultimately all sin was against God. We see this when he repented after being confronted by the prophet Nathan even though God assured him that trouble would not leave his home...and his family life was horrible after this betrayal of Uriah.

King Asa is said to have been wholly devoted to the LORD all his days (15:14) even though he did not remove the high places (i.e. where sexual acts were performed as part of pagan worship of other gods) from Israel. That is, where idolatry and despicable acts of false worship occurred, Asa did nothing to eradicate it, or so it would seem.

Its grievous reading about the kings' of Israel, for most of them did not emulate David or Asa. Instead, they worshipped and served the gods of the Nations Israel once conquered. Thus, when it comes to being one who pleases the LORD, sinless perfection (i.e., the present eradication of all sin now) is not in view. Instead, it's the life whose trajectory is Godward and God-centered even when some of our actions are evil, are sinful.

LORD Jesus, have mercy on me, on us and help us this day honor your great name in word, deed and thought.

(SDG)

1 KINGS 16-18: "DARK TIMES REQUIRE SWIFT MEASURES"

To provoke the LORD God to anger, to do evil in the sight of the LORD, is to lead people into idolatry—the worship of other gods that don't exist; it's embrace and value the creature over the Creator; it's the snubbing of our nose to God by embracing acts of worship that deny His name—Elohim, Yahweh (16).

Kings like Baasha, Zimri, Omri, Ahab Omri's son caused Israel to sin (16:19, 26) by worshipping the imaginary "gods" of the surrounding nations. All the while, God is faithful to bring His word through the prophets in season. Elijah comes on the scene as God's mouth piece and says:

"Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand,

surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.” (17:1)

These words come from one greater than the king; they are sourced in Yahweh, in God who owns Israel and everything on earth. At a time when idolatry was at an all-time high, God is faithful to bring His word, He does not leave himself without a witness—from a word man.

The colorful and dramatic unfolding of Elijah’s story is fascinating. *First, God provides* food through a raven (a bird) and a widow (weak woman) to demonstrate to Elijah that God’s sovereignty over all creation includes Him feeling His own in famine. Here we see that “lack” plus “God” equals “I shall not want”.

Second, idolaters despise God’s heralded word. The truth of God’s word to the non-believer is an abomination to them (18:17) but Elijah pushes back with whose really the abomination; “*you [King Ahab] have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and you have followed the Baals.*” (18:18).

Third, worship that’s acceptable to God is specifically revealed by Him. God will not be approached cavalierly through the whims of the creature revealing both God’s holy character and skill for design (18:22-46). That is, because God is creator of everything, by divine right he says what worship is and how it is to be done. To rebel against Him is to embrace death, and each one of us will give a personal account to Him who is!
(SDG)

1 KINGS 19: “FEAR CAN CRIPPLE EVEN MIGHTY ELIJAH”

The prophet Elijah is one of the most significant memorable Biblical characters especially because of the signs and wonders he through God’s power. He predicts the drought that ravaged Israel for three years (17:1). By Gods command he’s fed by the ravens (17:6); he’s also fed by the widow at God’s direction (17:9-16); he’s the man of God who raised the dead widows’ son (17:21-24) and he’s the prophet who on Mount Carmel demonstrated God’s power vengeance (18:1-40). He showed God’s power as the sacrifice was consumed from heaven and the LORD’s vengeance as he slew the false prophets of Baal, all of which was in keeping with God’s law.

Moreover, after the land was cleansed from idolatry, the drought ends (18:41-46) and the prophet outruns the chariot of Ahab to Jezreel. Something perturbing however occurs when Jezebel hears of the events at Mount Carmel:

she threatens to take Elijah's life and the prophet flees in fear (19:1-4). Why? The queen is a mere mortal but Elijah is God's man as previously noted, so why is he afraid of her threats?

God in the wilderness entreats the prophet, "...*what are you doing here Elijah?*" (19:9), as if God had changed His power and favor toward the prophet. God asks Elijah the same question and he gives the same answer essentially, "I'm sold out for You and Your ways, but Your enemies want to kill me" (19:14). Puzzled by the prophet's behavior, I consulted a commentary [*Expositors Bible Commentary*, Vol.4, pg.148] and several explanations were offered.

First, Elijah could have fled because Jezebel was no mere woman, but a cold hearted fierce, unrepentant queen and because this movement of revolution she knew could not succeed without a leader, Elijah knew he was the target. But the prophet had come to see himself as too important as a result of his God-given success and now pride arose in him [pg.148]. Why did he go from such glorious heights to the depths of despair? Perhaps because Elijah was basking in the glory of the spectacular...but God does not always move in the realm of the extraordinary. To live seeking one spiritual high after another is to have a misdirected zeal for most of life is lived in the valley, in the quiet humble routines of obedience to God's will [Ibid, pg.148]. Jezebel's unrepentant heart after said events seemed to have disheartened Elijah.

Another view rests on the use of a vowel in the MT. According to Allen, "and he was afraid" is not a correct translation but rather, "and he saw" is the proper rendering of the term in line with the MT vowel system. The point is that Elijah fled not for fear but because of a broken heart over the queen's unrepentant soul (Ibid, Pg.149) and paganism's continuing power over the nation.

Third, perhaps Elijah knew that he was no better than his fathers (19:4) and so he desired to die. This extreme request sees the prophet going into the wilderness for 40 days and nights to Horeb. This experience is similar to Moses'; both waited for 40 days without food on Horeb, both experienced God's presence in a new way—Moses with the tablets of stone and glory that shone on him, Elijah found God in a sound that gently blew (19:12). This is not an animistic reference to God where he *is* the gentle blowing wind, but shows that God acts *through* the most insignificant ways of which often we are unaware.

Thus far, a faithful man of God emerges who is burdened with a nation (Israel) that truly does not love nor worship the one true "God". The LORD is despised by Israel seen through their idolatry where the worship of the creature

trumps worshipping the creator. God however is gentle with his prophet and patient with wayward Israel.

1 KINGS 20-21: “THE LORD’S WORD COMES, BUT THAT DOESN’T NEGATE THE VALUE OF OUR ACTIONS”

When it comes to the issue of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, historically Christians of all stripes have differed and often very passionately. The issue of how these two biblical truths interact can be very puzzling. Generally one aspect of the issue is emphasized over the other (i.e., divine sovereignty vs. human free choice) and when this occurs, biblical passages usually end up contradicting the position(s) held.

This issue is particularly vexing for the thinking person who wants to faithfully make sense out of scriptural texts and get to know God more intimately. Consider the life of Israel’s King Ahab which says:

“Surely there was none like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD...acted abominably in following idols according to all the Amonites had done...” (vv.25-26)

Nevertheless, he experienced a measure of Gods’ grace because he decided to *humble himself* before the LORD (vv.27-29). God promised to eradicate Ahab’s name from the earth because he made Israel sin (21:19-22) and provoked the LORD through his idolatry. The point is that Ahab put on sackcloth and ashes (a mark of repentance and humility) before the LORD. God’s response to this:

“Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has...I will not bring the evil in his days, but I will bring the evil upon his house in his son’s days.” (21:29)

Even this wicked king received mercy from the LORD because of his choice to humble himself. His decision was significant indeed and God responded to this image bearer with kindness.

While our choices matter, God is nonetheless absolutely sovereign and in the wise council of the Trinity there’s always much more happening we can immediately recognize. Much like a play where the focus is on the main character, it’s usually the less obvious character(s) which gives the lead role a nuanced landscape of color, depth, breadth, length and height in order to make

the story come alive. So it is with the story of Ahab and even in our own. The choices we make effect and affect not just the main character but a string of individuals in the grand scheme of things. Of this I am often not aware.

(SDG)

1 KINGS 22: “LOVE IT OR HATE IT, GOD’S WORD IS ETERNAL TRUTH”

As this book of Kings concludes I’m fascinated by how Israel’s King Ahab despises the LORD’S word by hating Micaiah’s word. This man was a true prophet who unlike those who tickled the kings ear and spoke of peace in the kingdom, Micaiah foretold the truth that defeat and death awaited King Ahab.

King Ahab is encouraged by Jehoshaphat King of Judah to inquire of the LORD before going into battle. Ahab gathered his four hundred plus prophets but after hearing them Jehoshaphat knew they were not the real deal (Vv.5-7) and asks: *“is there not yet a prophet of the LORD here...?”* Ahab’s response reveals the hearts tendency to reject God’s word:

“⁸ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. He is Micaiah son of Imlah.” But Jehoshaphat said, “Let not the king say so.”

Note here that Ahab hates God’s prophet not because what is said is false, but because it is a message of doom for the hard hearted king. When Christians share the gospel message faithfully and believers reject it, they in essence are acting as Ahab did. We’ve all fallen suit at one time or another in our lives.

Eventually Micaiah’s word came to pass and Ahab died in battle. Before going to war the king imprisoned the prophet and nothing else is stated. Micaiah comes in and out of the story in a heartbeat (Vv.13-28). He assures the king that if what he says does not come to pass, then the LORD did not speak through him. The man of God was willing to be wrong but not at God’s expense. The fact that what he said came to pass was proof that he was a true prophet.

Jesus spoke in Mathew 5 about receiving a prophet’s reward because of being persecuted for His sake: *“for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”*. A real prophet like a real Christian will speak the truth, even if it brings persecution because God’s kingdom is of far greater worth than the temporary comforts this fleeting life brings.

This microcosm of events in space time history is much the same like everyone else’s: the word of the LORD comes and how we respond to it

determines our destiny. There's a price to pay for being God's mouth piece. May Christ embolden us to be truth tellers not just truth bearers.

(SDG)

2 KINGS 1-5: "ELIJAH & ELISHA—MIGHTY PROPHETS"

In the ministry of these two prophets the word of the LORD performs signs and wonders. Chapter one for example shows Elijah calling down fire from heaven in the classic account of Yahweh against the prophets of Baal. As a result of king Ahaziah's idolatry, Elijah twice prophesied his death (1:1-18). In this instance, nothing the king attempted even imploring the LORD would stay the swiftness of God's word through the prophet for he, "died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken"(1:17).

Chapter two recounts Elisha asking for a double portion of Elijah's spirit to come onto him (2:9) and in response after Elijah is taken up by a whirlwind (2:11) the prophet's spirit comes upon Elisha where he parts the Jordan's water (2:14), purifies bad water (2:21), he curses mocking youths and two female neers tear-up forty-two of them (2:24)

Chapter three Elisha is called upon by Jehoshaphat to inquire of the LORD for direction before going into battle against Moab. The prophet oddly calls for a minstrel and when he played the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha so that he spoke and delivered the battle strategy for Israel and assuring success (3:14-27).

In chapter four there's the account of the widows oil which Elisha multiplied so she could care for her household and thus pay off her debts (4:1-7); then there's the barren prominent Shunammite woman who gives birth to a son (4:8-17). This son eventually dies but Elisha raises him from the dead (4:28-37). Again, the text reveals Elisha healing the poisonous stew so that the hungry may eat and live during a famine (4:38-44).

In chapter five Elisha heals Naaman's leprosy and Gehazi's leprosy is brought upon by his greed. Especially moving to me is Elisha's word to his servant Gehazi before the leprosy manifested:

"Did not my heart go with you, when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Is it a time to receive money and to receive clothes and olive groves and vineyards and sheep and oxen and male and female servants?" (5:26)

These rhetorical questions demonstrate something very moving and grave—be careful not to use God's gifts as a means to dishonest gain, for freely we have receive and freely we are to give. How different is Elisha's attitude toward money

compared to many American televangelists? I wonder how many today would receive leprosy for their shameless pedaling of God's word for gain. Is not the LORD our portion in this life and did he not always promise to care for us?

Paul said it well that godliness with contentment is great gain! Gehazi's can be mine also, that's why I need the LORD to keep me from such scandalous transgression.

Back to the prophet's exploits. Of the many things that stand out to me is the certainty of God's word that can be trusted. While this very word was vilified and spurned in the Garden of Eden by our first parents, and continues to be denigrated unto this day, it nevertheless remains God's faithful word of power which in its due time, always comes to pass. How weighty God's eternal word is that brings both life and death to creatures.

(SDG)

2 KINGS 6-7: "ELISHA'S MIGHTY DEEDS CONTINUE"

This man of God continues to work God's wonders in the most colorful and extravagant ways. First, ***he makes a sunken axe float to the water's surface***. He does this by using a stick of wood (6:1-7). We know that wood does not attract metal magnetically, a magnet does. Somehow, the "laws of nature" are superseded by God's doing. Some may frown on this as mere fable, but if God created everything that exists out of nothing through his word (Gen.1), most certainly then "bending" or "suspending" his creation's usual function for his purposes is not only plausible but no big deal to him.

Second, ***Elisha hears the king's war plans***. The Arameans were plotting against Israel but the God who is everywhere revealed it to the prophet and the nation of Israel was spared from calamity (6:8-12). Again, there were no "bugs" or high tech devices to hear the enemy's strategy, but the God who is in control of history and the affairs of man hears everything.

Third, ***Elisha petitions the LORD to open his servant's eyes***. Israel's enemy's surrounded it and the ominous sight terrified the prophet's servant so Elisha asks God to open his eyes to see the chariots of fire surrounding Israel's enemies (6:14-17). This reminds me that while I may be unaware of God's help, it is always present.

Fourth, ***Elisha petitions the LORD to blind Israel's enemies***. In every step of the way this man of God's prayers steer how the enemy is crippled such that the blindness is only removed after it is to Israel's advantage (6:18-23). This reminds me of how critical it is for me to do battle in the unseen realm relying on God's

power and word manifested through believing prayer. The times were so bad that famine drove many in Samaria to boil their children to death in order for others to live (6:24-29). That is desperate times.

Fifth, ***Elisha promises the end of the famine.*** But he also promises the death of the king's messenger who doubted God's word (6:32-7:1-2, 15, 20). Whether it's a word foretelling future events or a demonstration of that word's power to make objects respond in ways contrary to their nature, God nevertheless moved powerfully through Elisha. This was the LORDs doing.

In similar ways God moves through His people even though it's often not spectacular, but common. We may not raise the dead, calling fire from heaven, multiply food, or even float axe heads, but we are still called to follow this eternal magnificent God who alone is worthy to be worshipped and adored.

(SDG)

2 KINGS 10-13: "OF KINGS AND YAHWEH—IDOLATRY PERSISTS"

The history of the kings of Israel is primarily a mixture of a few good ones and the rest abysmal, some righteous but most of them were evil. The meaning of evil comes to bear through illustration of the people of God abandoning the covenant. Evil is faithlessness to the God of creation especially from His rescued people Israel.

Often the refrain, "and he did evil in the sight of the LORD" speaking of a king's rule because they, "...departed not from the ways of Jeroboam's sin the son of Nebat..." The accusation was making Israel worship Baal which is no god at all, and the first commandment was continuously being violated, "You shall have no other gods before me."

Doing evil in the sight of the LORD is not being careful to walk humbly before Him which is in accordance to the law of the LORD God of Israel (done with all the heart—10: 28-31). Image bearers are created to worship their Maker, but when He is ignored idolatry is inevitable. Consider the text;

"²⁸ Thus Jehu eradicated Baal out of Israel. ²⁹ However, as for the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin, from these Jehu did not depart, even the golden calves that were at Bethel and that were at Dan. ³⁰ The LORD said to Jehu, "Because you have done well in executing what is right in My eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in My heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." ³¹ But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the LORD, the God of

Israel, with all his heart; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, which he made Israel sin.”

Acute is the sad reality that for most of Hebrew history, the LORD God of Israel is not loved by Israel as a whole. Instead He is despised seen in the berating, hating, persecution and death of Israel’s prophets which God sent to the people. This evil resulted because God’s word was rejected.

This theme is increasingly clear to me as I read the Scriptures and I must confess it never ceases to perplex me. I’m perplexed at the relentless idolatry they fall into and God’s relentless tender mercies in spite of their treason. This mercy of course is because of the covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to bless the nations through his seed (13:22-23). What am I missing here in the text?

“22 Now Hazael king of Aram had oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. 23 But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them and turned to them because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them or cast them from His presence until now.”

Perhaps it’s the sad reality of our rebellion in the Garden where we are created to rule and reign as God’s vice regents but we’ve treated that glorious mandate like sewage excrement. What glory has been given to mankind and the tragedy is deeply lamentable.

In Christ the effects of The Fall are being reversed and yet in this present evil age we the covenant people go to our own “high places” of porn sites, work places, or play places. The idolatry is ever lingering and yet Yahweh for His names sake demonstrates mercy toward us.

(SDG)

2 KINGS 14-17: “THE SAGA CONTINUES IN KINGS BECAUSE OF ISRAEL’S REBELLION”

The history of Israel, my forefathers through adoption, is a deeply disturbing bent toward idolatry and compromise. This pattern of disobedience in

the following four chapters is unrelenting. One king kills another to assume the throne eventually to be overthrown by another monarch.

The worship in the land becomes polluted when Israel, regardless of the king, remains unfaithful to Yahweh by not removing the high places. Instead, they preferred to be a syncretistic people who eventually were exiled in the lands of the gods they chose to worship (i.e., Assyria their first stop).

The sad fact is that Israel had the Law of Moses but ignored it and as a result, the covenant people of God became enslaved to the creature because they did not love their Creator. Israel fell because of idolatry and the list of her abominations is grievous (17:7-23). When a people with such a rich heritage, tramples it underfoot, it demonstrates her hatred and great disdain for her Savior.

Oh God would that Your Spirit move in the church in America, whose golden calves of information glut, leisure, opulence, and sexual idolatry, such that we would take notice and see that all these misplaced affections when not Godward are the entrance into the eternal abyss of fire and damnation.

Move in this land Lord God and show the supremacy of your Son Christ Jesus above all powers, dominions and pleasures and do so in a cataclysmic way. Reveal the surpassing worth of the Creator over the creature to Your rebellious wayward people and embolden them to arise in truth, humility and boldness toward the lost, hostile and indifferent. Have mercy Oh God, have mercy!
(SDG)

2 KINGS 19-20: "WHAT MADE HEZEKIAH ISRAEL'S BEST KING?"

The pain of reading through Hebrew history is beholding Israel's continued cycle of rebellion, idolatry and waywardness especially through its leaders. This was their legacy, a people chosen by God who for the most part, hated Him and rather worshipped and served the creature over the Creator who is blessed forever.

Today however reading about Hezekiah felt like a breath of fresh air, for unlike most of the previous monarchs and unlike any of the rulers in Israel's history, Hezekiah's heart was fully devoted to the LORD God as the text reads in (18:3-6):

"He did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. ⁴ He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan. ⁵ He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel; so that after him

there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him.⁶ For he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses.”

He did not hold syncretistic sympathies with Yahweh, but was instead a faithful ruler in both word and deed. His loyalty to God, according to the text, surpassed all the kings in Israel’s history because he never stopped following God whole heartedly (This includes king David and Solomon who are authors of sacred texts).

And yet, this truth did not keep him insulated from troubled times. On the contrary, evidenced through the Assyrian kings’ taunts of Israel and Yahweh (19:8-13):

“Then Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish.⁹ When he heard them say concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, “Behold, he has come out to fight against you,” he sent messengers again to Hezekiah saying,¹⁰ “Thus you shall say to Hezekiah king of Judah, ‘Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you saying, “Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.”¹¹ Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, destroying them completely. So will you be spared?¹² Did the gods of those nations which my fathers destroyed deliver them, even Gozan and Haran and Rezepth and the sons of Eden who were in Telassar?¹³ Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, and of Hena and Ivvah?’”

Sennacherib defied God including him with the rest of the gods of the nations conquered by Assyria. Despite all this, Hezekiah prays for the glory of God’s name to be upheld (19:15-19):

“Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said, “O LORD, the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.¹⁶ Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God.¹⁷ Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated the nations and their lands¹⁸ and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them.¹⁹ Now, O LORD our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O LORD, are God.”

The zeal of God had consumed Hezekiah and God answered his prayer because it was offered to God (19:20) and the angel of the LORD killed 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp (19:35).

I'm so grieved over the leadership in our country who; daily deny Your name, oppress Your people, and conspire to harm them. Oh LORD, arise and rectify that which is so twisted in the land. My heart grieves; my soul aches so for the sake of Your glory and Name, act now and don't delay.
(SDG)

2 KINGS 21-24: "WARNING COMES BEFORE...JUDGEMENT IS REALIZED"

The last chapters of 2 Kings, concludes with God's judgment being exacted on idolatrous Israel and Judah. The word was given at Sinai, God's dealings in Israel were known, but the people followed their "hearts" to exile. The patience of God was taken for granted such that the mind of the nation became mad due to their calloused hearts.

We're no different. As God used the Assyrians and Babylonians to discipline back-sliden Israel, so He may very well do it again today...even if it's not as clear from a written text. When the herald proclaims his masters will, eventually it will come to pass.

Idolatry at the core propels us to ask, "Has God said..." or question what He has already clearly revealed. We doubt His integrity and treat Him as the creature. The creature ends up calling the creator a liar by implication and decides to become His judge. But those who ontologically and epistemologically are finite can't be trusted to become the infinite One's judges, nor should they be trusted. But as it was then so it is today.

Nothing has changed and nothing will until God transforms the stony heart into one of flesh by His Spirit. In all my studies, I must give myself over to intercession and guard my soul from idolatrous bents the creature constantly encourages. So must the church in a day where what is wrong is called right, what is evil is called good, and what is righteous is labeled wicked.
(SDG)