

Title: The Last King of Israel
Date: August 12, 2018
Subject: Insights on how to live the Christian life
Scripture: 2 Kings 17:1-21

Today we come to the end of the road for Israel the nation. The northern ten tribes were carted off to exotic locales in the Assyrian desert and the towns of the Medes (2 Kings 17:6). They are done, finished, kaput...until the fulfillment of prophecy many years in their future. The last king of the nation made his way to the throne by assassinating his predecessor (2 Kings 15:30). You may find the meaning of Hoshea's name to be ironic – salvation. He's recorded as an evil king but not as evil as the previous ones. Last week we encountered some of the last warnings from Isaiah and Hosea provided by the names given to their children.

The reasons for the Lord removing them from the land are given in 2 Kings. Before we read them we need to hear these words God put in the book of Romans. "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope" (Romans 15:4). All the saints and ain'ts of the Old Testament are there for the benefit of people who claim Jesus Christ as their Savior. They provide a pattern for how to live and not to live, mostly on how not to live. This is certainly the case with the people of Israel.

READ 2 Kings 17:7-13, 17, 22. That gives us a sense of their lives. We'll pull more out as we go along. Verse 7 simply states that they sinned against the Lord. Verse 17 states that they sold themselves to do evil. V. 22 lays the blame at the feet of the first king – Jeroboam. They rejected the Lord and his words (verse 15). The monumental scope of their sin is vividly demonstrated by their rejection of the One who delivered them from Egypt about 700 years earlier.

Their wrongs are stated in the negative. I want to turn them around to the positive so that we aren't so much thinking about what not to do but about what we should be and do.

I. Worship only the Lord 2 Kings 17:7 - 12, 15, 16

The people of Israel and their kings worshipped other gods. From Jeroboam forward they were led by evil kings. They replaced the Lord with images made of stone, wood and metal. They practiced divination and sorcery. They actively sought out the "gods" of other nations and went so far as sacrificing their children to these false gods (verse 17). There are the mysterious things they did in secret against the Lord. We're left to our sanctified imagination as to what sort of evil that might be. On second thought, it's probably best not to spend much time going there. In short, the key is they replaced God.

We take the opposite tack from the Israelites. We are to worship only the Lord – not just first and foremost but solely. J.I. Packer, "the list of other gods is endless, for anything that anyone allows to run their life becomes their god." He lists some – "Sex, Shekels, and Stomach (an unholy trinity constituting one god:

self), and the other enslaving trio, Pleasure, Possessions, and Position, whose worship is described as ‘The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life’ (1 John 2:16). Football, the Firm, and Family are also gods for some.”

What is meant by worship? A. W. Tozer, “Worship is to feel in your heart and express in some appropriate manner a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder and overpowering love in the presence of that most ancient Mystery, that Majesty which philosophers call the First Cause, but which we call Our Father Which Are in Heaven.” It involves the heart and the rest of the person.

Why are we to worship? The main reason for the Jews to worship was the pinnacle event of their lives -- their deliverance from Egypt, their salvation experience. The believer’s salvation experience is wrapped up in Christ. What has He done for us? The short answer is everything but that’s kind of an easy out and be somewhat unsatisfactory if we don’t spend some thought and energy thinking about what’s involved in everything.

God found us mired in the swamp of our sins, stuck up to the neck. We were struggling to breath and keep afloat. There was nothing we could do, no log to climb onto. There was nothing to alleviate our distress, no one to answer our cries. We were doomed to die.

The Lord threw a lifeline. He didn’t have to drag and pull. He obliterated the swamp and made it into dry ground, a solid rock on which to stand.

What are some aids to worship? Again, we take a clue from the Israelites and do the opposite. Follow the practices of mature believers not of the world or even those followers who are immature. What’s their approach to God? What do they think about him and his greatness? How do they view His Word? How do they pursue God? What time and energy do they invest in the pursuit?

Secondly, act in secret in ways that will build the underpinning. Concentrate on it so that it will come through on the outside. People in the world are always clamoring for “being real.” The best way to do that is to work on the inner person so that what’s lived out in public is genuine and not a false front put on for show.

We know but need to remind ourselves that worship is more than music. It’s the way we live our lives as an offering to him of our talents, time, resources, our whole lives. It’s working on keeping the love relationship strong.

II. Be humbly submissive. V. 14

The people just prior to the exile were as stiff-necked as their ancestors. They were stubborn in their unyieldedness to the Lord. They tested the Lord. They snubbed him and any of his overtures as shown through his gracious acts.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones trained as a physician at a noted London medical school. After graduating he became an assistant to the Royal Physician. It would have been a tremendous career but he sensed God calling Him to the ministry. He left the service of the Queen to preach the gospel to coal miners in South Wales. The press had a field day. The London Times ran a feature story questioning how a prominent young London physician could leave all the money and trappings and respect and honor of his position to give his years to

poor coal miners in Wales? Jones answered "I gave up nothing. I gain all. It is an honor to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ."

As followers of Christ we don't lose but we gain even as Christ submitted to the Father and gained joy, purpose and identity. We gain the same as we proclaim Christ, live for him and even suffer for him.

Jean and I went to the Packer game this week. I'd won tickets through a contest of The Campbellsport News. We didn't stay for the whole game. It was preseason and it was a little boring watching guys play who will never make the team. I understand we missed the excitement of the fourth quarter with lots of points scored. Oh well. We shopped before the game, both legitimate and of the window variety. We browsed around Kirklands where we saw a sign that read "When life gets too hard to stand, it's time to kneel." How appropriate at all times. Kneel literally and figuratively in prayer as well as bowing in submission to the Lord.

This may help us remember better. Neil Marten, a member of the British Parliament, was giving a guided tour of the Palace of Westminster to a group of his constituents. The group happened to meet the Lord Chancellor Lord Hailsham. Having come from or going to an official state occasion, he was imposingly and impressively attired in his legal court dress -- black silk velvet cutaway tailcoat, waistcoat and breeches, white frilly shirt, lace cuffs, black silk stockings, black silk damask robe of state with a long train trimmed with gold lace and ornamental braid and a powdered, flowing wig. The Lord Chancellor was considered to outrank everyone including the Prime Minister with the exceptions of the royal family and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Hailsham recognized his good friend Marten among the crowd and boomed, "Neil!" The entire group of visitors promptly fell to their knees not daring to question or disobey the "command."

John Guest moved from England to pastor in Pennsylvania. He sensed his people were having a difficult time grasping the concept of submitting their lives to the Lord. He found his answer one weekend as he and his wife visited antique shops emblazoned on a Revolutionary War era sign -- "We will have no king to rule over us!" It was part of the English culture to have a king, call someone Your Lordship whereas the American psyche was geared to the independent spirit which helped carve out the nation. The independent tendency can cause difficulty in submitting in human relationships and especially in our relationship with God. The created is to submit to His Creator.

This idea is developed in the next point.

III. Listen as in hear and put to practice v. 13-16.

The people of Israel wouldn't listen to the Lord who sent them numerous prophets who warned the people to turn from their sin and urged them to obey his commands. In my daily reading I've come across the recurring message throughout the historical books and the prophetic books. They rejected and forsook his commands and his covenant. They followed in a long line of people who didn't trust the Lord. It's like they were a little kids sticking their fingers in their ears and repeatedly screaming "La la la la la. I can't hear you."

Followers of Christ are to be good listeners. They have to put themselves in the position to hear what the Lord has to say. Hear God's commands, principles and standards then be willing put into practice what

they hear. Sometimes the application is in the area of acquiring more knowledge. But it can't stop there with all insights gained from the Lord. There's the need to do something about it.

Famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright built a house for industrialist Hibbard Johnson. One rainy evening the businessman was entertaining guests for dinner. The roof began to leak with the water seeping through directly above Johnson, dripping steadily onto his bald head. Infuriated, he called Wright in Phoenix, Arizona. "Frank, you built this beautiful house for me and we enjoy it very much. But I have told you the roof leaks, and right now I am with some friends and distinguished guests and it is leaking right on top of my head." Wright's reply was heard by all of the guests. "Well, Hib, why don't you move your chair?"

Hib heard what he needed to do. It was up to him if he was going to move or not. Followers of Christ hear what he has to say and we say we believe the Lord gives the right advice but sometimes we fail to move.

IV. Please the Lord vv. 17, 18

There's the saying of "don't poke the bear." The Urban dictionary defines the meaning as "A phrase of warning used to prevent oneself or others from asking or doing something that might provoke a negative response from someone or something else." The Israelites didn't know that message but they had plenty of warnings, all of which they ignored. They kept poking the Lord, much worse than doing so to a big animal. It's as if they made a game out of it. They were a bunch of rebels who provoked the Lord to anger.

Instead we are to "Find out what pleases the Lord" (Ephesians 5:10). It's also worded "carefully determine" (New Living), "try to discern" (ESV) and "test and prove" (Berean Study). Scripture gives us clues about what the Lord delights in. "The Lord takes delight in his people" when they are praising him (Psalm 149:3, 4). "The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love" (Psalm 147:11).

John Piper comments on the thought of God delighting in his children, "At root, what God delights in about us is that we delight in him...One way to get at this is to say the obvious: God approves of what is *right*. He rejoices in our thinking and feeling and doing what is right...Rightness is thinking, feeling, and doing what flows from a true perception of the supreme value of God. It is seeing truly, savoring duly, and showing consistently in action the infinite worth of God. Therefore, we are doing what is right when we are *understanding* the truth of God's value for what it is, and *feeling* it proportionately to his universal supremacy, and *acting* in ways that express God's supreme value...when we say God rejoices in our thinking and feeling and doing what is right, we mean that he delights in our seeing, savoring, and showing *his* own supreme value. God values our valuing him. God delights in our delighting in him...The proper reason to be glad that God delights in our delight in him is because *it confirms that our delight is truly in God*. This fixes our gaze more steadfastly on him and deepens our joy in his beauty. But there is a devastating way to respond to God's commendation of us. What

if we hear God's praise and are drawn away from delighting in God to delighting in God's delighting in us? What if we hear his praise as a tickler of what we really enjoy, namely, being made much of? What if the bottom line of what makes us happy is not God himself, but God's attention, God's praise? If that is the bottom line, then we are not delighting in God, but only using delight in God to get commendations. That would be devastating. When God's delight in us lures us to delight in being delighted in, we are ceasing to do the very thing God delights in... God forbid that his praise of our delight in him would lead us away from delighting in him to delighting in being praised by him" (August 23, 2006, Why God Tells Us He Delights in His Children

David Hocking gives nine ways to please God. 1. By exalting Jesus Christ, His Son (Matt. 3:17; Col. 1:15-19). 2. By proclaiming the message of the cross (I Cor. 1:18-2:5). 3. By believing in God and his promises (Heb. 11:6). 4. By asking for wisdom (1 Kings 3:10, Col. 1:9-14; James 1:5-8). 5. By staying away from sexual sin (Eph. 5:3, 4, 10; 1 Thess. 4:1-8). 6. By sharing the gospel with unbelievers (I Cor. 9:14-27, 10:31-33). 7. By giving to others in time of need (Phil. 4:10-20; Heb. 13:16). 8. By submitting to authority (Rom. 8:7-8, Col. 3:20; 1 John 3:22). 9. By praising God for all things (Ps. 69:30-31; Heb. 13:15-16).

I read a story about a woman who had been pretty rough in her youth before becoming a Christian at age 30. God transformed her. A few years later she was excited to give her parents a 50th anniversary party because it'd be an opportunity to show family and old friends how God can change a life. As she got ready she needed one last spray to set her hair and she'd be off ... except she grabbed bug spray from under her sink instead of hairspray. She showered again but there wasn't time totally redo her hair. She hopped in the car and soon realized it was overheating. She turned off the air conditioning but the problem persisted. She had to add transmission fluid every few miles. She got to the party an itsy bit late—frizzy hair, oily hands, red face. She planned to take a few moments to freshen up. Problem. The heat caused her jar of face cream to explode, covering everything in her bag -- makeup, hair brush and hair spray -- in white goop. Her only option was to just go out and enjoy the party. Later she told God she had covered the day with prayer, and it felt like it all had gone terribly wrong. She had wanted to make such a good impression. She felt like God said, "*Most of your family and friends remember how angry you used to be. They may never bear your testimony, but they saw living proof today of My power to change a life by the way that you handled this situation with humor and grace. I answered your prayers.*"

The nation of Israel rebuffed the Lord. They are a lesson for us of what not to do. May we be a people, a church family, individuals who worship only the Lord, are humbly submissive to him, listen to him as in hear and put into practice his Word so that we please him.