

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”

November 30, 2016

2 Kings 23:28–25:30. The fall of Judah.

Ephesians 6:1–24. Prayer.

Proverbs 9:13–18. Folly or Wisdom.

COMMENTS.

2 Kings 23:28–25:30. This reading provides details on the fall of Judah. In a mere twenty-two years Judah will have four kings and Jerusalem will suffer three invasions. God’s judgment is breaking over his own people. Jehoahaz is a popular choice for king. His personal name is Shallum. His reign is evil and short. Pharaoh Neco takes him captive, demands tribute from Judah and makes Eliakim king instead. Eliakim is Jehoahaz’s elder brother—they are both Josiah’s sons. He is given a throne-name, Jehoiakim, and rules for eleven years.

Nebuchadnezzar invades Judah around the time he becomes king of Babylon in 605 BC. For three years Jehoiakim becomes a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar, but then he rebels. The writer of Chronicles tells us that Nebuchadnezzar takes Jehoiakim captive to Babylon. Our historian merely says that Jehoiakim ‘rested with his fathers’. Jeremiah predicts that he will have ‘the burial of a donkey’—his body thrown out of Jerusalem and left to rot (Jeremiah 22:19).

Judah suffers invasion by a number of enemy raiders. The writer explains that this is God’s punishment for her sins. Jehoiachin is Jehoiakim’s eighteen-year-old son. He reigns for only three months, during which Jerusalem is besieged by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army (**24:8–17**). Judah is now weakened by the loss of her leaders. She is also divided in her opinions and loyalties. Some people want to rely on Egypt to rescue them. Others (like Jeremiah) preach dependence on God alone. False prophets (like Hananiah) advise that the grip of Babylon will soon be broken. On 15 January 588 BC, Nebuchadnezzar again lays siege to Jerusalem (**25:1–12**). He plans to starve the inhabitants into surrender, and does so over a period of nineteen months. At the end of this time Zedekiah and his army try to break out. They are defeated by the Babylonians on the plains of Jericho. Zedekiah is forced to watch while his sons are killed. He is then blinded and taken to Babylon where he will die. The temple, palace and all Jerusalem’s main buildings are destroyed by fire. The Babylonian soldiers break down the city walls.

Everyone is deported, except for some very poor people who are left to work the fields and tend the vineyards. The Temple is ransacked (**25:13-14**). It is the dismantling of David and Solomon’s dream. It is also the final evidence that God has withdrawn his presence and support from his people. The leading citizens are rounded up, taken to Riblah, and executed. Every source of resistance is snuffed out. Nebuchadnezzar appoints Gedaliah as governor of Judah (**25:22–26**). Gedaliah advises his people to cooperate with the Babylonians. His approach is wise, and agrees with the advice of Jeremiah to the exiles. But this is too tame for a small group of resistance fighters. They assassinate Gedaliah and his pro-Babylonian friends, and flee with the remaining survivors to Egypt. After thirty-seven years of exile, a new king comes to the throne of Babylon. He releases Jehoiachin from prison and gives him a place at the royal table (**25:27–30**).

So the history of the Kings ends on a note of hope in the midst of judgment. The Jews have no homeland, no city, no temple and no royal throne. But there is a descendant of David—alive and well, and living in Babylon.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. “Every great nation fell by suicide.” The British political leader Richard Cobden made that observation, and his statement is aptly illustrated in the history of the kingdom of Judah. Sudden political or military blows from the outside didn’t destroy Judah. The nation committed suicide as it decayed morally and spiritually from within. In this reading we see the steps in their decline and the decisions of their kings who led the people downward to destruction. Had the Jewish people obeyed the Lord and kept His covenant, He would have put them at the head of the nations (Deut. 28:1–14), but their disobedience led to their defeat and dispersal among the nations of the earth. Unfortunately, the church has followed Israel’s bad example and loved the world rather than loving for God *by proper knowledge and by proper love* (2 Tim. 2:4; James 1:27; 1 John 2:15–17). Many Believers think they can live for the world and marginalize God without serious repercussions. Such an attitude, consciously or subconsciously, betrays lack of respect for Him and lack of understanding His goodness that will only lead to seeking other things for happiness, which amounts to idolatry (Matt. 6:24; Col. 3:5) as the world is treasured over God. In essence, God gets the leftovers and is only of interest when one becomes frustrated with the love affair with the world. It is often not until it is too late in many areas of life that one realizes the problem. In the words of Jeremiah 2:19 *“Your own wickedness will correct you, And your apostasies will reprove you; Know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter For you to forsake the LORD your God, And the dread of Me is not in you,” declares the Lord God of hosts.*” This is radically different from the believer who continuously, year by year, grows in *proper knowledge and proper love* of the Lord through all the seasons of life.

Ephesians 6:1–24. The Christ-centered life as it relates to others: children and parents (1-4), slaves and masters (5-9), the spiritual warfare (10-20). Paul made sure believers recognized that as new people who have been granted new life in a new family with new relationships they still would endure spiritual warfare. The closing portion of Paul’s letter explained his account of the Christian’s conflict with evil forces. Believers must adorn themselves with the armor of God to stand against the devil’s schemes. Five defensive weapons are identified: (1) the enabling nature of truth that resists lying and false doctrine; (2) the covering quality of righteousness that resists accusations of conscience and despondency; (3) the stabilizing quality of peace that resists slander and selfishness; (4) the protective ability of faith that resists prayerlessness and doubt; and (5) the encouraging nature of salvation that resists fear and disappointment. Two offensive weapons are included in the armor of God: (1) the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and (2) prayer. It is fitting that this prayerful and meditative letter concludes with an exhortation to prayer (6:18) and a request for prayer (6:19–20).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. As one lives with God by *a second person proper knowledge and proper love* relationship, as opposed to a modern/conduit/Baconian/utility framework, one *naturally* spends a great deal of time communicating with and longing for God. In other words, in a real loving relationship with God in second person, prayer is the cardinal or principal means of expressing and developing the relationship. Note the direction of prayer in **6:18**—prayer is to always be an expression of love for God and for others and awareness of the dangers of evil around us. It is never to be conceived simply thing we do. It is all about the relationship. In other words, when we have a vital second person relationship, we will pray. If we do not, we

will not pray. Given that prayer is all about the second person personal relationship, it is no wonder that the Bible teaches us to pray always, with all prayer, in the Spirit, with awareness (“watching”), with perseverance, and for all believers. Note that Paul did not ask them to pray for his comfort or safety, but for the effectiveness of his witness and ministry. How often and for what do we pray?

Proverbs 9:13–18. The lady wisdom (1–12) contrasts with the woman folly (13–18). Once again, we are dealing only with metaphoric personifications. Like vendors calling for customers to come to their shops, wisdom and folly invite the reader to choose which path to take. It is a decision of life and death (18). The chapter closes with a quick glimpse of the prostitute (Folly) as she calls to the same simple ones and invites them to her house. But if they accept her invitation, they’ll be attending a funeral and not a feast—and it will be their own funeral! Jesus made it clear that in this life we can take only one of two ways, and each of them leads to a different destination. Everybody has to choose either the crowded road that leads to destruction or the narrow road that leads to life (Matt. 7:13–14). There’s no middle way.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Folly’s feast is presented in contrast with Wisdom’s feast. In similar fashion Madam Folly, portrayed as a harlot, made her wares available. She is loud, undisciplined, and ignorant. She is attractive but unruly. Here, as elsewhere, Folly offers immediate gratification whereas Wisdom offers long-term satisfaction. It is folly to look for some quick fix to the problems of life. One cannot resolve the issues of life apart from a deep understanding of life as such. One cannot understand life as such without understanding the Author and Sustainer of life. And one cannot understand Him apart from the light that He provides as we walk with Him *in proper knowledge and proper love.*

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and by proper love,

Pastor Don