

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Kings: The Kings Of Israel And Judah From Solomon To The Babylonian Captivity

III. The Latter Era Of The Divided Kingdom, 2 Kings 2:1-27:41

J. Handling Anxiety Over Institutional Decline

(2 Kings 6:8-23)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Many people are concerned about the decline in human institutions: in the wake of the midterm elections, Jonah Goldberg noted: "The decline of strong independent institutions -- religious, civil and familial . . . has people searching. . . to find a sense of meaning." ("The decline of the parties," Republican-American, 11/7/2018, p. 8A)

This decline is worldwide, too: Matthew Harrington reported in the Harvard Business Review that the 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer survey of 33,000 people in 28 nations found a decline of trust in all four institutions of business, media, government and non-government organizations and a "staggering lack of confidence in leadership." ("Survey: People's Trust Has Declined in Business, Media, Government and NGOs," 1/16/2017; hbr.org)

(2) We face it in evangelicalism: John MacArthur and Charles Stanley will speak along with Rick Warren at the 2019 National Religious Broadcasters convention, and the NRB calls its speakers to "refrain from overly dwelling on secondary matters . . . that . . . divide . . . the household of faith." (NRB Board of Directors "Declaration of Unity," 2/6/2018, cited in J. Chavez, "A Response to Wretched Radio & Phil Johnson," 10/10/2018; beginningofsorrows.org)

However, Rick Warren met with the pope in 2015 to try to unite Protestants with the Catholic Church, saying, "Protestants . . . have a long history of heresy. The time for reconciliation is now . . . to ensure a full and dogmatic transition [of Protestants] into the folds of the [Roman Catholic] Church." (R. Hobbs, J. D., "Protestant Leaders Declare Reunification of Churches Under the Holy See," 7/9/2015; realnewsrightnow.com) So, if MacArthur and Stanley "refrain from overly dwelling on secondary matters" to share the platform with Rick Warren who calls Protestants to forsake their alleged heresies and return to the Roman Catholic Church, evangelical believers who view MacArthur and Stanley as spiritual leaders may think it tolerable to leave the Protestant faith and become Catholics!

Local evangelicals have longed urged us to lay aside our "minor" differences with them even if some of them now host joint worship services with Jehovah's Witnesses and Catholic parishes! This with John MacArthur's and Charles Stanley's plan to share the platform with Rick Warren can leave even us wondering, "What shall **WE** do?!"

Need: *So we ask, "How do we handle the temptation to be anxious over institutional decline today?!"*

- I. Due to apostasy, the Arameans raided the declining institution of the nation of Israel at will, 2 Kings 6:8:**
 - A. God had promised to preserve the nation Israel from military defeat if she obeyed His Word (Deut. 28:1, 7, 10) but to allow her to be plagued by invaders if she disobeyed the Lord (Deut. 28:15, 25a).
 - B. For holding to king Jeroboam's syncretistic mixture of belief in God and in paganism (1 Kings 12:25-30), the Lord let the Arameans raid the institution of the nation Israel at will, 2 Kings 6:8; B. K. C., O. T., p. 549.
- II. However, God graciously began to use Elisha to prophesy to Israel's king where the Arameans would camp on Israel's border to make their surprise raids, thwarting the Aramean raids, 2 Kings 6:9-10.**
- III. This left the Aramean king believing he had a traitorous informant in his army until he learned from his men that Elisha was giving prophetic insight to Israel's king about his every move, 2 Kings 6:11-12.**
- IV. Accordingly, when the Aramean king learned that Elisha lived in Dothan, he sent his army and chariots to surround the city by night, trapping Elisha that he might capture him, 2 Kings 6:13-14.**
- V. When Elisha's servant rose early and saw the city surrounded by the Arameans, he asked his master, "What shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:15 ESV) The term "what" is 'aykah, "an exclamation of lamentation" (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 567; G. K. C., Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, 1970, p. 471), so Elisha's servant was at a loss as to how to handle the foreboding crisis, and his question to Elisha was full of fear.**
- VI. Elisha told his servant not to fear, that those who were with them were more than those who were against them, 2 Kings 6:16. Elisha then asked God to open his servant's eyes that he might see the spiritual realm, and what Elisha's servant then beheld amazed and comforted him, 2 Kings 6:17:**
 - A. The servant saw that "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all round Elisha," 2 Kings 6:17 ESV.
 - B. The noun "mountain" in the Hebrew text is singular (Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 567), what can refer to a single hill, to several hills or even to a hilly geographical region, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 249-251.
 - C. Dothan sat on a hill about 1/2 mile square, and some hills around it were miles away (Z. P. E. B., v. Two, p. 159), what would be of no comfort to Elisha's servant if God's army was on those hills and the enemy so near!

- D. Thus, Elisha's servant saw God's spirit army thronging all around Elisha on top of the hill under Dothan itself!
- VII. As the Arameans moved to attack, Elisha prayed and God "blinded" them, 2 Kings 6:18:**
- A. The word "blindness" in 2 Kings 6:18 translates the Hebrew noun *sanwerim*, what is used elsewhere only in Genesis 19:11 of "mental confusion and bewilderment" performed by God's angels. (Ibid., H. A. W., Theol. Wrdbk. of the O. T., 1980, v. II, p. 629; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftns. to Gen. 19:11 and 2 Kings 6:18)
- B. Thus, the Arameans could still visibly see, but they were mentally confused and bewildered by God's angels.
- VIII. Elisha then told the Arameans that this was not the way nor the city, but that they should follow him and he would lead them to the man they sought, 2 Kings 6:19a.**
- IX. God's prophet then led the mentally disoriented Aramean army into the walls of Israel's capital city, into Samaria itself where they were surrounded by Israel's forces, 2 Kings 6:19b-20a. Then, he prayed that God might open their eyes, and the Arameans suddenly realized that they were in the midst of Samaria, surrounded and completely vulnerable to Israel's forces, 2 Kings 6:20b!**
- X. Though Israel's king earnestly desired to slay the Arameans who were within his control, Elisha noted he would not treat captured soldiers that way, but that he should feed them and send them home, v. 21-22.**
- XI. Israel's king then prepared a great feast for the Arameans, what would bind them by social custom to be at peace with Israel (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 550), and then he sent them home, 2 Kings 6:23a.**
- XII. This event stopped the Arameans from making raids into Israel for some years, 2 Kings 6:23b!**

Lesson: *Though Israel's apostasy from God led to His withdrawal of divine blessing and her vulnerability to institutional decline and thus her being invaded by the Arameans, God used godly Elisha along with His great spiritual army of angelic beings to thwart the Aramean effort and protect the national institution of Israel.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (2) To offset anxiety to institutional decline, may we align with God's current program as Elisha did in his era to see God and His holy angels minister to protect us that we might accomplish God's will in our era. [We detail how this works in the conclusion section below.]*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

If God and His holy angels are aligned to help the godly as they did Elisha at Dothan, we can trust God and heed Scripture for blessing amid today's declining institutions of evangelicalism and secular institutions (as follows):

(1) First, to counter evangelicals' yielding to Catholicism, we affirm Protestantism's Biblical "Five Solas:"

(a) Where the Roman Catholic Church claims its authority is Scripture **plus** its tradition, teachings and papal decrees ("What are the 'five solas,' and what do they mean?"; monergism.com), 2 Timothy 3:14-17 along with Deuteronomy 13:1-3 claim "**Sola Scriptura**," **Scripture alone** is our sole, sufficient authority for faith and practice.

(b) Where the Roman Catholic Church claims salvation is by God's grace **plus** the merits one gains through penance, good works and the merits that the saints before him have amassed, Ephesians 2:8-9 claims "**Sola Gratia**," **grace alone**, that salvation is by God's grace alone without man's works or merits. (Ibid.)

(c) Where the Roman Catholic Church claims one is justified by faith plus works to produce his own righteousness, Romans 3:21-28 claims "**Sola Fide**," **faith alone**, that salvation is by faith without man's works, and that God gives us (imputes) His own righteousness to us as His gift to us. (Ibid.)

(d) Where the Roman Catholic Church claims salvation is by the merits of Christ and the saints and that we go to God through Christ, the saints and Mary, Romans 3:21-28 with 1 Timothy 2:5 claim "**Solus Christus**," **Christ alone**, that salvation is solely by Christ's merits and that we go to God through Christ alone. (Ibid.)

(e) Where the Roman Catholic Church claims the glory of one's salvation is attributed partly to Christ, partly to Mary and the saints and partly to the sinner himself, 1 Corinthians 10:31 and 1:27-31 claim "**Soli Deo Gloria**," **glory to God alone**, that all the glory of man's salvation goes to God alone. (Ibid.)

Thus, opposite Rick Warren's claim, it is not the Protestant faith, but Roman Catholicism that is heretical!

(2) To counter the decline in secular institutions, we noted from Revelation 2-3 that (a) God opened America for liberty in reward for the reformers' Biblical stands [Thyatira], (b) He led the formation of the United States to legalize liberty in reward for Edwards' Biblical stands [Sardis] and (c) He preserved the liberty of the United States in reward for the Biblical stands of the Fundamentalists [Philadelphia]. (d) We also know from the prophesy of our era [Laodicea] that God promises us blessing and great influence if we heed Him. Accordingly, since we affirm the Biblical stands of the reformers, Edwards and the Fundamentalists as **our beliefs** in every Sunday morning service introduction and every communion service, we trust God to meet our needs for adequate secular institutions!

May we trust in Christ for salvation. May we rely on God and hold to and heed His Word for blessing.