

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

BB. Blessing In CLOSELY Heeding Scripture

(2 Kings 18:1-12)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many well-meaning people in Christendom face self-defeating trouble in their efforts to please God:

(1) Nicole Winfield's piece, "Pope says scholars unable to find out if women were once ordained as deacons" (Republican-American, May 10, 2019, p. 7D), reported "the International Union of Superiors General . . . asked" Pope Francis to look into "the ordaining of "female deacons," but when he did so, he claimed "scholars . . . failed to reach a definitive conclusion" on "whether women were ordained . . . in the early . . . church the same way . . . men were."

Some fear ordaining women to the diaconate would signal the start of ordaining women to the priesthood, but "Francis has repeatedly reaffirmed" that "Christ chose only men as his 12 apostles," so the "Catholic Church reserves the priesthood for men." (Ibid.) The pope is thus caught between Jesus' example and political pressure on this issue!

However, we hear that some evangelical churches even in our area have deaconesses, making this a hot issue.

(2) Roman Catholic priest Father Ed Nadolny on "The Talk of Connecticut" radio show has repeatedly lamented the failure of family life as the cause of social ills, but the Republican-American ("Former pastor in Waterbury doing his ABC's in Woodbridge," May 13, 2019, p. 1B) reports another priest will host "workshops" on "The ABCs of Annulment." It may be noble for one priest to lament the failure of family life, but if another Catholic priest hosts workshops on making marital annulments easy, of what practical value is the first priest's lament?

Nevertheless, divorce and remarriage has become all too common a practice in many evangelical circles, too.

(3) Evangelicals face this problem on another issue: "A billion-dollar refugee settlement program" pushed "by the Obama administration poured money into nonprofit, evangelical organizations to resettle immigrants -- including unvetted Muslims -- in the United States . . . (In return, they had to agree not to be involved in any promotion of a biblical worldview or the true gospel." (Brannon Howse, Marxianity, 2018, p. 60) Brannon Howse objected to this program, writing, "(A)mbitious young pastors . . . want huge buildings . . . and a giant audience to hear them preach," so they use such moneys to construct big church buildings, but "(i)f you turn" the "church into a social service center" so "folks will show up to get the goods," the "price . . . is the silencing of the gospel," Ibid., p. 60-61.

(4) We face it locally: a believer last Sunday asked me about an area gospel-preaching church's practice of Faith-Promise Giving where one pledges to give to God's work a certain amount in a year. However, if he pledges \$100,000 but his income ends up at \$60,000, to avoid sinning, must he take out a big bank loan to cover the balance?

(5) Another believer last Sunday asked me if God sends good angels to impersonate deceased relatives to their survivors to assure them that they are in heaven. However, 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 warns that even Satan and his messengers appear as angels of light or ministers of righteousness, so one can be badly deceived by such apparitions!

Need: *So we ask, "How can we AVOID running into self-defeating trouble in our efforts to please God?!"*

I. **2 Kings 18:1-12 is a study in contrasts of blessing between king Hezekiah and king Hoshea, for the Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 2 Kings 18:9 states, "The contrast is startling: under Hezekiah, Judah was being led back to God at the same time that Israel, under Hoshea, was being taken into captivity."**

II. **The passage shows that the CAUSE of this contrast was how CLOSELY each king heeded SCRIPTURE:**

A. Hoshea and Hezekiah contrasted extensively and greatly in the blessings they received from God:

1. Israel's king Hoshea extensively and greatly **lacked** God's blessings:

a. Hoshea ruled for only nine years, a relatively short time span for a monarch, 2 Kings 17:1.

b. When Hoshea ceased paying financial tribute to Assyria's king, the Assyrians invaded his land and took him off into captivity, 2 Kings 17:4.

c. Assyria then besieged Samaria and conquered it, taking its people captive to Assyria, 2 Kings 18:9-11.

2. In **contrast**, Judah's king Hezekiah extensively and greatly **enjoyed** God's blessings, 2 Kings 18:2, 7-8:

a. Hezekiah ruled for twenty-nine years, much longer than did Hoshea up north in Samaria, 2 Kings 18:2.

b. Though Hezekiah rebelled against paying any more tribute to Assyria like Hoshea did (2 Kings 18:7b), God was with him, making Hezekiah prosper wherever he went, v. 7a. As an example, Hezekiah defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its area, defeating both watchtower and fortified city in a complete route of the Philistines, 2 Kings 18:8 ESV.

- B. The **reason WHY** Hoshea and Hezekiah **so extensively and greatly contrasted** in the *blessings* they received **from God** was **DIRECTLY** related to how **CLOSELY** each king **heeded written Scripture** (as follows):
1. Like all of Israel's kings before him, Hoshea failed to heed written Scripture closely:
 - a. Hoshea like all of Israel's kings before him tolerated Jeroboam I's syncretistic worship of God together with the golden calves in violation of Exodus 20:4 where God forbade Israel from making graven images and bowing down to them in worship, cf. 2 Kings 17:21-23.
 - b. Hoshea also disobeyed Deuteronomy 17:16 in seeking Egypt's help against the Assyrians, for God had warned His people never to return to Egypt for any reason, 2 Kings 17:4.
 - c. In summary, Hoshea failed to heed the **Scriptures** God had given Israel through **Moses**, 2 Kings 18:12.
 2. However, Judah's king Hezekiah **CLOSELY heeded written Scripture**, 2 Kings 18:3-6:
 - a. In **closely** heeding Deuteronomy 12:1-3 ESV, Hezekiah removed the high places of worship, he broke the pagan sacred pillars and he cut down the wooden Asherah poles of pagan worship, 2 Kings 18:3-4a.
 - b. Also, in **sharp contrast to Hoshea's toleration of Israel's long-term SYNCRETISM with the golden calves, Hezekiah broke in pieces the bronze serpent Moses made hundreds of years before in Israel's wilderness journeys, for Judah's people had begun to burn incense to it**, violating Exodus 20:4; 2 Kings 18:4b. God had initially told Moses to make that bronze serpent so the people could be healed of serpent bites when they looked upon it in **faith in God** (Num. 21:4-9), but Judah's people had come to **revere the bronze serpent ITSELF** similar to **pagan Canaanite snake worship**. (cf. Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the O. T.*, 1973, p. 175) Hezekiah called the relic "Nehushtan," what in Hebrew sounds like "bronze" and "snake" and "unclean thing," demeaning the relic as a false idol, 2 Kings 18:4 NIV fn.
 - c. Instead of seeking help from Egypt, Hezekiah **closely** heeded Deuteronomy 17:16 and trusted in the Lord for military success and blessing unlike any other king in Judah before or after him, 2 Kings 18:5.
 3. In summary, Hezekiah **closely heeded written Scripture** that God had given through **Moses**, 2 Kings 18:6.

Lesson: *The big contrast between the lack of God's blessing in Israel's king Hoshea and God's abundant blessing of Judah's king Hezekiah was directly related to the degree they each CLOSELY heeded written Scripture!*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (2) May we learn from the great contrast in blessing between Hoshea and Hezekiah to heed written Scripture CLOSELY for God's rich blessings.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Each problem noted in our introduction is solved in blessing by **CLOSELY heeding written Scripture:**

(1) On the issue of ordaining women as deacons, the pope correctly observes that "Christ chose only men as his 12 apostles" (Ibid., Winfield), but to avoid being cornered in a political vice, we must **also closely** heed Scripture at 1 Timothy 2:12 and not allow women to have authority over men by ordaining them to roles of oversight over men!

(2) On the issue of protecting family life, **every church must closely** heed Malachi 2:16 and 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 and **not allow for divorce**, including easy marital "annulments" as a supposed pious way of getting a divorce!

(3) On the issue of evangelicals taking money from government handout programs that promote resettling unvetted immigrants so the evangelicals can use that money to build big churches for community service instead of preaching the Gospel or the Word of God, evangelicals must **closely** heed Acts 2:47 that claims "the **Lord** added to the church daily such as should be saved" and Matthew 16:18 where Jesus said, "**I will build my church.**" **True** church growth is **God's work, not man's work**. Pastors must not take money from government handout programs that hinder them from fulfilling their 2 Timothy 4:1-2 calling from God to preach the Gospel and the Word of God!

(4) On the "Faith-Promise Giving" issue, **closely** heeding 2 Corinthians 8:12 ESV reveals that one's giving "is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have." God directs that we give **out of** what we **already own** (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), **not** out of what we **hope to gain!** As we give out of what we **have**, God reimburses us with **more** income so we can **increase** our **future** giving, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. This way, we avoid false doubts about our faith or troubling financial reactions that practicing Faith-Promise Giving can produce!

(5) On whether God sends good angels to impersonate deceased relatives to their family to assure them that the deceased are in heaven, God's angels are "holy," separate from sin (Rev. 14:10b), so they do not impersonate other beings the viewer knows, for that would be deceptive like what Satan and his demons do (2 Cor. 11:14-15). Holy angels appear either as God's angels or as strangers (Heb. 13:2), not misleadingly imitating anyone a viewer knows.

May we trust in Christ for salvation. As believers, may we then follow good king Hezekiah's example to heed Scripture CLOSELY for God's maximum blessings!