



Born to Win

The Book of Kings #23

by Ronald L. Dart

The Middle East is a very curious place, but I hardly need to tell you that. I wonder, though, how many people know that the *Samaritans* are still there. You know who the Samaritans are, from the Bible, from Sunday school, or from sermons in church. *Everyone* hears and learns the Parable of the Good Samaritan. My, if you've ever been in an RV or been around very many places, you've seen this little guy with a halo on his head on a sticker on these travel trailers. That means that person is a member of the Good Sam Club—which comes from the Good Samaritan. And it was a Samaritan Jesus used in one of his parables.

We all know that the Samaritans were *pariahs* to the Jews. They were “bad people”. The Jews hated them and had nothing to do with them. Maybe 1 person in 50 knows the story of how the Samaritans *came to be*. The Assyrians carried *all* of northern Israel captive—all the regions around Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, the city of Samaria, all the different tribes—carried them *all* away into captivity clean on the other side Euphrates river. And lest the land go to waste—just lie there and grow thorns—they *imported* people from other parts of the empire to settle there.

Problem was, they began to have a lot of bad luck (if you might want to call it that) or they had trouble with wild animals [**2 Kings 17**]. There were lions among them and they didn't know...they assumed it was because they didn't know the god of the land. You know, if you live in a country you've got to know about the god in that country. You've got to appease that god, got to work with him. Because if you don't work with the god of the land...well, things don't go well for you.

So the king of Assyria he decided, “Okey dokey, we'll look for a priest that we took from there and we'll send them *back* there to teach them the way of the god of the land.” Now, presumably this priest, when he came back, brought with him a copy of the Torah, because the Samaritans copied it and made it their own.

There is a document called the Samaritan Pentateuch. It's a Hebrew copy of the first five books of the Old Testament. The script, though, differs markedly from the later Hebrew (certainly *way* different from the Masoretic Text). Some presume it is an older, pre-exilic style of letters. There are also some differences between what the text *says* and the Masoretic text. That is (the latter) the text used in nearly all the English versions of the Bible. What is fascinating about it is that there are many places where the Samaritan Pentateuch differs from the Masoretic text, but the Septuagint translation agrees with the *Samaritan* text.

Now, the interesting thing about this is that, apart from the Samaritan [Pentateuch], the Septuagint is probably the oldest witness we've got in hand of what the older Hebrew texts were like. The Septuagint (called this because it was translated by 70 Jewish scholars) is a Greek translation of the Old Testament that was done...oh, what...two, three hundred years BC. Well, it *differs* from the Masoretic text. Oddly, it actually agrees more with some of the Dead Sea Scrolls and, even more strangely, with the Samaritan Pentateuch. But, as it turns out, the Samaritans weren't immune from the same sort of corruption that had afflicted Israel.

2 Kings 17

AKJV

³² So they feared the LORD, and made to themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.

These old... what they really amounted to were houses of religious prostitution... they persisted through almost *any* kind of civilization. It's odd—they:

2 Kings 17

AKJV

³³ [...] feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from there.

In other words, the Israelites who were there had a combined form of religion, if you want to call it. They served the Lord on one hand (at least, they said they did) and on the other hand they followed these asherah and went to these temple prostitutes in the high places. Somehow, people seem to think God won't mind if you serve him right alongside of other gods. You just keep him equal to the other gods; God won't mind. Well, the author of 2nd Kings goes on and says:

2 Kings 17

AKJV

³⁴ To this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, [*They don't keep anything straight.*] or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;

³⁵ With whom the LORD had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, You shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them:

³⁶ But the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a stretched out arm, him shall you fear, and him shall you worship, and to him shall you do sacrifice.

Now, you know, this isn't just a *petty* matter; this is a matter that, if you will just stay away from these other gods... if you go that direction they're going to *ruin your lives*. They'll ruin your families. They'll wreck your society. You'll trash everything. "So stay with me", God says, "Keep covenant with me and we'll be just fine."

2 Kings 17

AKJV

³⁷ And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he wrote for you, you shall observe to do for ever more; and you shall not fear other gods.

³⁸ And the covenant that I have made with you you shall not forget [*Don't let it get away from you.*] neither shall you fear other gods.

Why does he keep saying this again and again: Don't be afraid of these other gods?

2 Kings 17

AKJV

³⁹ But the LORD your God you shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.

⁴⁰ However, they did not listen, but they did after their former manner.

⁴¹ So these nations [*these new nations*] feared the LORD, [...]

And you can put that in quotes. It didn't mean they *really* did; it meant that they actually observed things *about* God. They *claimed* him.

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AKJV

⁴¹ [...] and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they to this day.

Now, it's fascinating that people persisted in combining the worship of God with the worship of others. They just couldn't make the choice. It goes all the way back to Elijah on Mount Carmel (remember him?) who got after the children of Israel and said:

1 Kings 18

KJ2000

²¹ And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long do you halt between two opinions? if the LORD is God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. [...]

“Get off this stuff of trying to worship both.” They never did. They just couldn't bring themselves to abandon one or the other. So, the house of Israel is gone after a 253-year history. And here we sit—a mere 230 years into our history. It kind of makes you wonder where will *we* be a mere 23 years from now. Think *that* over.

2 Kings 18

AKJV

¹ Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel [*in the north*], that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign [*in the south*].

² Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah.

Here we have a different sort of guy.

2 Kings 18

AKJV

³ And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did.

And I'm always fascinated when I find remarks like that, because I know that David did a lot of things that he would have been a lot better off if he hadn't done. But the one thing he *never* did was *turn away from God*. He never worshipped another god, never followed a graven image, never worshiped Baal, never worshiped *any* of those people. And thus, the way back to God was *always* open to him. Well, Hezekiah followed that example.

2 Kings 18

AKJV

⁴ He removed the high places [*those houses of religious prostitution*], and broke the images, and cut down the groves, and broke in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for to those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.

That's really funny, isn't it? Here was an image—a brazen serpent—that they held up (God was in favor of it) so that whenever the people looked up to it they were healed of the bite of the snake

[Numbers 21]. But down through the generations, *even the serpent* became an idol. They just couldn't keep from it, it seems like. You'd think there was somebody behind them with a whip, *driving* them to do these things. But he wasn't having any of that.

2 Kings 18

AKJV

⁵ He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

⁶ For he held to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.

With Hezekiah, we hit the high-water mark for all the kings of Judah. And that being the case, we hit the high-water mark for all the kings of *both* kingdoms, because you never had a man that even approached his bootstraps in the northern tribes of the house of Israel.

2 Kings 18

AKJV

⁷ And the LORD was with him; and he prospered wherever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not [anymore].

That may not have been smart.

2 Kings 18

AKJV

⁸ He smote the Philistines, even to Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

Interesting thought about that as you bring yourself down to the modern world: the term "Palestine" comes from the Hebrew word "Philistine" [*Pelishiti*, פְּלִשְׁתִּי, Strong's H6430]. What it means is that he smote the Palestinians of that day, even all the way to Gaza. And here we are, generations after generations later, and we've got people smiting the Philistines in Gaza.

2 Kings 18

AKJV

⁹ And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser [*a new*] king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it.

¹⁰ And at the end of three years they took it: even in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is in the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken.

And the Israelites were all carried away to Assyria, beyond the river Euphrates. Why did this happen? Well, it happened:

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AKJV

¹² Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant [*They wouldn't keep the deal.*], and all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them.

And it all hearkens back to this king named Jeroboam who said, “No, no, no. We don’t need to go down Israel to keep those festivals anymore.” And he established *his own* feast, *his own* worship, and everything else—with golden calves (again) and the lowest of the people priests (again), and so on it went [1 Kings 12]. Well, as it happened:

2 Kings 18

AKJV

¹³ Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

All the cities except Jerusalem, just about, were *gone*. He just knocked down the walls, picked up the people, and began to carry them off.

2 Kings 18

AKJV

¹⁴ And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended [*I made a mistake. I shouldn’t have done that.*]; return from me: that which you put on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed to Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

A *very, very heavy* tribute.

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AKJV

¹⁵ And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king’s house.

¹⁶ At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

It was the only way he could put all that stuff together.

Now, when you read through this, it’s a little unclear about the sequence of events. But what’s important is the meaning of events, so we’ll just plunge on through them.

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AKJV

¹⁷ And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fuller’s field.

¹⁸ And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, which was over the household [*a steward*], and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder.

¹⁹ And Rabshakeh said to them, Speak you now to Hezekiah, Thus said the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein you trust?

²⁰ You say, (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom do you trust, that you rebel against me?

“We don’t get it. You’re rebelling against me. You’re making a problem, here, for yourself. You’re making a problem for us. What are you trusting in that you’re going to do this?”

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AKJV

²¹ Now, behold, you trust on the staff of this bruised reed, even on Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust on him. *[You can't depend on Pharaoh.]*

²² But if you say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said to Judah and Jerusalem, You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?

You know, what he's trying to tell him is: "You know what's happening here? You say you going to trust in Jehovah? But look, Hezekiah your king took away all these altars and high places out here. He's *bound* to have offended Jehovah, and it's not going to work anymore. He's trying to centralize this worship."

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AKJV

²³ Now therefore, I pray you, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver you two thousand horses, if you be able on your part to set riders on them.

You know, what he's doing here (and it's a gross insult) is like in a modern time saying, "Look, I will give you the tanks to fight with and I'll *still* win. If you can do it, give me your pledges. I'll give you the armor. I'll give you the vehicles. I'll give you all this stuff. If you can stick your men in them—if you can staff them—I'll give them to you."

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AKJV

²⁴ How then will you turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put your trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen *[that is, for light armor]*?

²⁵ Am I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

²⁶ Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, to Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray you, to your servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and talk not with us in the Jews' language in the ears of the people that are on the wall.

²⁷ But Rabshakeh said to them, Has my master sent me to your master, and to you, to speak these words? has he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own urine with you?

That's what happens sometimes in sieges, when there was no food and no water to drink.

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AKJV

²⁸ Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and spoke, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria:

²⁹ Thus said the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand:

³⁰ Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in [Jehovah], saying, [Jehovah] will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

³¹ Listen not to Hezekiah: for thus said the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat you every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink you every one the waters of his cistern *[have plenty of water and everything]*

else]:

³² Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey, that you may live, and not die: and listen not to Hezekiah, when he persuades you, saying, [Jehovah] will deliver us.

Now, having said all that, he can't just shut up. He takes this speech *way too far*. He says this:

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AKJV

³³ Has any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? [*No.*]

³⁴ Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? [*Gone.*]. where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?

An interesting statement all by itself. “You look up here. See, we carried Samaria away. They were *servng* the gods of these other nations and they couldn't deliver Samaria.”

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AKJV

³⁵ Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand, that [Jehovah] should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

Basically, he is saying Jehovah is no bigger deal than any of the rest of these gods.

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AKJV

³⁶ But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.

They might very well have jeered. They might have thrown rocks at him. But all he got was silence.

2 Kings 18

AKJV

³⁷ Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

Now, it's at this point—right here about this point in the story—that a prophet familiar to all of us begins to come on the scene. His name is Isaiah. He is *already* a recognized prophet at the time, we just haven't heard much about him up until this point. Now he will begin to play a role.

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AKJV

¹ And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

² And he sent Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz [*this great figure in the Old Testament*].

³ And they said to him, Thus said Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy; [...]

Because, in fact, Rabshakeh had stood right out there and yelled out blasphemy to all these people.

2 Kings 19

AKJV

³ [...] for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.

You know, here we are, we face this problem, and we *have* to deal with it. But we just don't have the strength.

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AKJV

⁴ It may be the LORD your God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master has sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove the words which the LORD your God has heard: why lift up your prayer for the remnant that are left.

⁵ So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

⁶ And Isaiah said to them, Thus shall you say to your master, Thus said the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

⁷ Behold, I will send a blast on him, and he shall hear a rumor, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

⁸ So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

⁹ And when he heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against you: he sent messengers again to Hezekiah, saying,

¹⁰ Thus shall you speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

¹¹ Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shall you be delivered?

¹² Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Thelasar?

¹³ Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivah?

This guy, he's making a big move here, because he knows he's got to clear this thing out with Jerusalem. He's heard the king of Ethiopia is coming up against him and he doesn't want this sitting at his back door. Now, what follows here—when this man has sent this letter down here—is a lesson for *all of us*.

2 Kings 19

AKJV

¹⁴ And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

Now, this example has hung in my mind on *many* occasions. And I have, in the course of my lifetime, had more than one time when, in prayer, I have had to spread something out before God. I mean something physical, something literal—a document; some of my own writings, perhaps; something

someone else has said or written that I have not been able to deal with. I've actually laid it out before God and talked it over with him. And Hezekiah does precisely that. Here it is. He's in God's house; he spreads it out before God.

2 Kings 19

AKJV

¹⁵ And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwell between the cherubim, you are the God, even you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; [...]

“You're not just the God of Israel; you're the God of everything.”

2 Kings 19

AKJV

¹⁵ [...] you have made heaven and earth.

¹⁶ LORD, bow down your ear, and hear: open, LORD, your eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which has sent him to reproach the living God.

¹⁷ Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, [*It's the truth; they've done that.*]

¹⁸ And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

¹⁹ Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech you, save you us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you are the LORD God, even you only.

It's not a long prayer. That prayer lasted less than a minute. It's not an *agonizing* prayer. He's not sweating blood. It's just straightforward. It is a prayer putting a matter into God's hands, *in trust* of the outcome.

2 Kings 19

AKJV

²⁰ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus said the LORD God of Israel, That which you have prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.

Now, I think that is *really* fascinating. God is hearing and answering—not because the words of the king of Assyria were heard that reproached God; he's not merely responding because of what Rabshakeh said about *him*. He's responding because “you have prayed to me against the king of Assyria.” You know, I have to take this as a very important lesson. Because it's tempting, sometimes, to think, “Well, God knows about this. He will take care of it. God saw this happen and he's going to reward it.” But that's not always true. The lessons in two of Jesus' parables [**Parable of the Friend at Night (Luke 11); Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18)**] are: You've got to ask. Sometimes you *don't have* because you *don't ask*. So there comes a time in every one of our lives that we have to come and spread something before God and *ask*...or it may not be done.

That's a lesson never to forget. Until next time, I'm Ronald Dart.

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